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Reaching for a Radical Community-Based Research Model

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Two community-based research experiences lead to a conceptual model that puts control in the hands of the community.

Reaching for a Radical Community-Based Research Model

Barri Tinkler

Abstract

This qualitative study contrasts two community-based research (CBR) projects. While the first project fell short of CBR goals, it influenced how the author carried out the second project, which did meet those goals. The two experiences enabled the author to create a conceptual model that can be used to structure and evaluate CBR projects for those who aspire to a more radical form of community-based research.

Introduction

Across the country, institutions of higher education are becoming more involved with their communities (Checkoway, 2001; Maurrasse, 2001; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003; Ward, 2003). This movement is reflected in an increase of community service (Farrell, 2006), service-learning programs (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999), and other programs that link the expertise of the university with community organizations (Boyte, 2004; Harkavy, 2005; Peterson, 2009). Another important component of this movement is community-based research in which students and professors work closely with community partners to conduct research that addresses a community-identified need (Chopyak & Levesque, 2002). CBR is a form of service-learning (Strand, 2000) that draws upon principles of action research and participatory research (Fals-Borda, 2001; Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Stringer, 1999; Whyte, 1991) and utilizes the theory of change that drives the social justice service-learning movement (Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2008). Social justice service-learning is linked closely to the popular education model of Freire (1970), and the goal is to use education as resistance against power structures that maintain domination by the elite. Academics in health fields utilize community-based participatory research to improve community health and knowledge through collaborative research processes that empower community members to take control of health issues (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003).

In this article, two contrasting case studies describe the process of conducting community-based research. One case study explicates my partnership with a non-profit organization I have titled the Coalition for Schools[1]. The Coalition is an organization focused on improving academic achievement in an urban school district in a western city. The Coalition concentrates on a feeder pattern of schools in a quadrant of the city with a high percentage of English language learners. This feeder pattern includes five elementary schools, two middle schools, and three small high schools.

The Coalition is an alliance of non-

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[1] Participants in both projects signed a consent form that promised anonymity. Therefore, I have not named the communities in which the research took place or used the real names of the participants and the organizations with which they were affiliated.

profit organizations, foundations, parent organizations, universities, and the local school district working together to support achievement in these low performing schools. I worked with the coalition for a period of nine months as a data collection specialist.

The other case study describes my work as a volunteer research assistant with two non-profit organizations that provide services to the expanding immigrant population in a western mountain town. I have titled this case Communities in Transition. The town is a small rural community with a rapidly growing immigrant population from Mexico, about half of whom are indigenous peoples from a remote area of the country. I collaborated with two members of the community who work closely with the immigrant population providing English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and immigrant services. Working closely with my community partners for a ten-month period, we collected and analyzed data to improve the services offered through their programs.

While there is considerable CBR activity being undertaken at a number of institutions of higher education (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 1996; Reardon, 1995), there is a paucity of research describing the process of collaborating with community partners on community-based research projects (Wallerstein, 1999). In addition, there are very few studies that depict the challenges of using participatory research methods during the dissertation process (Kneifel, 2000; Maguire, 1993). Numerous issues arise that can facilitate or hinder the collaborative process, and case studies of actual CBR projects have the potential to provide rich lessons of value to both neophyte and experienced community-based researchers alike. Thus, I offer comparisons between two CBR projects, one that met CBR goals and one that did not. The knowledge gained through the first project allowed me to strategically engage my partners in the second project. I then evaluated each of these experiences using an analytic framework constructed from the goals of CBR. Through the application of this analytic framework, I developed a conceptual model that can be used to evaluate CBR projects for those who seek to pursue a more radical model of CBR, a model that advocates social change. The analytic framework is described in greater detail

in the following section, and the CBR model is introduced at the end of the article.

Defining Community-Based Research

"Community-based research is research that is conducted by, with, or for communities" (Sclove et al., 1998, p. ii). It is a collaborative form of inquiry in which academic institutions and community members seek to offset the prevalence of traditional academic research by acknowledging the expertise of community members (Hills & Mullett, 2000). Community members help determine the direction of the research, providing community knowledge and participating in the research process with the intent to solve problems and create change that leads to social justice by "empowering and helping to build capacity among community members" (Strand et al., 2003, p. 14). Community-based research 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 et al., 2003, p. 3). Strand et al. (2003) outlined three guiding principles: 1) collaboration, 2) validation of the knowledge of community members and the multiple ways of collecting and distributing information, and 3) "social action and social change for the purpose of achieving social justice" (p. 8).

The third principle "has its roots in Freire's popular education model, where the process of coming together to educate, learn, and talk about social change serves as a means of consciousness raising and organization among community members, who are then empowered to work for change themselves" (Strand et al., 2003, p. 14). Through this liberatory process community members themselves become agents of change and social justice by "challenging existing social relations and structures of privilege" (Strand et al., 2003, p. 132). The principles of CBR align with many of the principles of social justice education articulated by Bigelow, Christensen, Karp, Miner, & Peterson (Rethinking Schools, 1994) in that CBR is based on using a critical lens and promoting a perspective that is anti-racist, pro-justice, visionary, and activist oriented.

After conducting the two CBR projects described in this study, I evaluated each project utilizing an analytic framework. This framework is derived from the principles of community-

based research introduced by Strand et al. (2003) and is also strongly influenced by the work of Stoecker (2003), who has delineated two strands of community-based research, radical CBR and mainstream CBR. Mainstream CBR combines the philosophy of Dewey, the traditional charity service-learning approach, traditional (versus emancipatory) action research methodology, and functionalist sociological theory. Stoecker (2003) states:

> [Mainstream CBR] sees reform as a gradual, peaceful, linear process…[and] attempts to mediate divisions across social structural boundaries, implicitly reflecting that common interests between the rich and the poor, for example, are more powerful than their differences. All follow an expert model, either through choosing agencies rather than grassroots groups as partners, or through professional control over both the research and teaching processes (p. 39).

Alternately, radical CBR combines the popular education model of Freire (1970) and the social justice service-learning model, participatory research methodology, and conflict sociological theory (Stoecker, 2002a, 2003).

According to Stoecker (2002a), "popular education and participatory research, because of their mutual emphasis on structural change, collective action, and a conflict worldview, are beginning to form a radical version of CBR" (p. 9). Within this radical model of CBR, research partnerships develop with grassroots organizations rather than social service agencies.

Stoecker (2002a) expresses the concern that it is more likely that proponents of CBR will adopt the mainstream approach versus the radical approach. If so, "The question arises whether our distaste for conflict situations and conflict groups and our gravitation toward safe 'middle' service organizations may be making it difficult to achieve the third principle of CBR, which is social change for social justice" (p. 9).

In my analytic framework, (Figure 1) I position radical CBR at one end of the continuum and the traditional expert research model at the other. In the middle is mainstream CBR. Each of these forms of research is defined by its position in relation to the four goals of CBR: community, collaboration, knowledge creation, and change. Each of the four goals also has its own continuum, which aligns with the three categories of research on the CBR continuum (see Figure 1). The closer on the continuum the researcher moves toward radical CBR, the greater the potential for change that is specific to the collaborating community.

Since the ultimate goal of CBR is "social change for social justice" (Stoecker, 2002a, p. 9), the more closely the researcher works with members of the community who are dealing with the problem (Stoecker, 2003), the greater the potential to empower. The community continuum includes grassroots organizations on one end and organizations that do not represent the community or use practices that "disempower the community" (Strand et al., 2003, p. 73) on the other (see Figure 1). In between are "midlevel organizations" (Strand et al., 2003, p. 74) that are a level removed from

Figure 1. Four Goals of Community-Based Research

Traditional Research	Mainstream CBR	Radical CBR
Community ←		→
Non-Representative Organizations	Midlevel Organizations	Grassroots Organizations
Collaboration ←		→
Researcher Holds Power	Partial Collaboration	Shared Decision Making
Knowledge Creation ←		→
Researcher Controls Knowledge	Partial Collaboration	Community Creates Knowledge
Change ←		→
Limited Change for Community	Programmatic Change	Structural Change

grassroots organizations but still seek to represent the community democratically. Conducting CBR projects with midlevel organizations is what Strand et al. (2003) label "doing CBR in the middle" (p. 73).

The meaning of collaboration undergirding this framework is shared decision making. The community should have equal power with the researcher and decision making should be a shared process throughout (Sclove et al., 1998). On the collaboration continuum, decision making as a shared process is at one end of the continuum and at the other end decisions are made primarily by the researcher (see Figure 1). A companion to collaboration is the goal of participation in knowledge creation. Community involvement in the creation of knowledge leads to community empowerment. The fundamental assumption of this framework is that the knowledge of community members is valid (Stoecker, 2003) and integral to creating strong results. At the positive end of the continuum, the community is involved in all aspects of knowledge creation; at the other, the researcher controls the creation of knowledge (see Figure 1).

The determining factor of the analytic framework is change (see Figure 1). If one considers CBR within the radical framework described by Stoecker (2003), the goal for change is "massive structural changes in the distribution of power and resources through far-reaching changes in governmental policy, economic practices, or cultural norms" (p. 36). This goal, however, can be difficult to achieve because community-based research tends toward programmatic changes within an organization or other more limited change. Needless to say, community-based research that does not involve the community in close collaboration and knowledge creation is less likely to create change that will benefit that community.

Methods

In order to examine each CBR experience in an in-depth and holistic way, I utilized a qualitative case study approach. Data collection for case studies usually focuses on three sources of data: observations, interviews, and documents (Merriam, 1998); I collected all three types for each case. Since I was observing myself as I collaborated with my community partner,

all of the observations that I conducted were participant observations (Creswell, 2002). I also collected both formal and informal interview data (Patton, 1990). Informal interview questions were woven into meetings that I had with my community partners in relation to the ongoing CBR projects (Merriam, 1998), and I conducted formal interviews with my community partners in both case studies. Finally, I collected or created a variety of documents including: email communications, a reflective journal, a phone call log, and other items that were provided by my community partners, such as newsletters and meeting minutes.

Though I came into contact with a variety of people in each case study, my primary research collaborators were the main participants of my study. In the first case study, my collaboration with the Coalition for Schools, there were two primary collaborators, "Marge Bowline", a co-chair of the Coalition, and "Lisa Brown," the director of the Coalition. (Reminder: all names and affiliations have been changed in keeping with the consent agreement signed by the participants.) After completing my work with the Coalition, I questioned whether the experience was truly community-based research. I felt I needed an additional experience to solidify my ideas about how to assess and evaluate CBR projects. Instead of focusing on one experience, I decided to pursue another research option, Communities in Transition, in order to have another experience with which I could make comparisons.

In the second case study, Communities in Transition, I worked with the director of the literacy program, "John Brewer," and an immigrant from South America, "Maria Swenson," who works with a local agency that provides services to the immigrant population. The second CBR project was closer to the goals of mainstream CBR as described in my analytic framework. The two case studies allow me to present contrasting cases that delineate factors that can impede researchers and community members from reaching the goals of radical CBR.

Validity

In order to lend credibility to the findings of my study, I incorporated a variety of validity procedures. The first validity procedure I

employed was prolonged engagement in the field (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I worked with the Coalition for nine months and with Communities in Transition for ten months. During each of these collaborations, I had consistent contact with my community partners. Collaborating with my community partners for this length of time allowed me to develop tentative findings and then follow up on these preliminary findings through observations and interviews (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

I also employed triangulation as another important validity procedure (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 2000). Merriam (1998) defines triangulation as "using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings" (p. 204). I utilized methodological triangulation (Creswell & Miller, 2000) since I collected three forms of data: observations, interviews, and documents. I also used multiple sources of data since interviews were conducted with several participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Through triangulation, I was able to identify points of convergence in the data and to confirm or disconfirm emerging categories and themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Since this case study focused on a study of process, my perceptions were an integral component of the research. However, since I did write interpretations of what I considered to be the perceptions of others, I used member checking to ensure accuracy (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I conducted member checking toward the end of each study so that it would not potentially disrupt the collaborative process. I shared an outline of findings with Lisa Brown with the Coalition and with John Brewer and Maria Swenson with Communities in Transition and allowed them the opportunity to provide feedback. Lisa Brown responded to the findings through email and said, "Thanks for sharing [these findings]. I feel it is accurate, and that it was a learning experience for all of us." Maria Swenson also responded to the findings that I shared. She said, "I looked at [the findings] and it sounds good. I agree with all said." John also said that he thought that the findings "looked good."

Subjectivity

Researcher reflexivity provided another

method of creditability, which I used continuously throughout the research process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I incorporated researcher reflexivity by constantly questioning my assumptions about what I thought was happening. I sought to maintain a heightened sense of awareness of the biases that I brought to the study and maintained this awareness when adding contextual data to field notes, observations transcriptions, and interview transcriptions and when writing journal entries.

Since my perceptions of the research process played a major part in the findings of the study, I carefully attended to the idea of subjectivity. Peshkin (1988) defines subjectivity as "the quality of the investigator that affects the results of observational investigation" (p. 17). Peshkin (1988) points out that an individual's subjectivity is not something that can be removed, and it is therefore something researchers need to be aware of throughout the research process. Though Peshkin does not view subjectivity as necessarily negative, he does feel it is something that researchers need to realize and acknowledge. It was important to examine my own subjectivities throughout the research process so that I was aware of how these subjectivities could influence my interpretations and portrayal of events. As Strand (2000) points out, "The researcher's values, experiences, and personal points of view are as much a part of the research process as those of the people studied, and they should be discussed and acknowledged" (p. 91).

Case Descriptions

The following case descriptions provide an overview of each CBR experience and, more specifically, elucidate the collaborative process. Following this, I compare the two cases to provide a context for the evaluative model that emerged from the application of the analytic framework introduced in Figure 1.

Coalition for Schools

The library at East Middle School became crowded as more and more parents packed into the room. There must have been at least 70 to 90 parents, most of them Latino and some African-American. There was palpable energy and excitement as the meeting began. At the front of the room was a table with people who worked in

various social service and governmental agencies in the city, including the principal of East Middle School, the city council woman for the district, a representative from the police department, and the director of security for the school district. A parent came up to the microphone and began speaking in Spanish; a translator interpreted her comments. The parent stated that the parents of East students were concerned about safety at the school. She asked, "When can we receive a copy of the safety plan for East?" The principal responded that the school had created a discipline committee to address staff and student expectations and school rules, and they would work to develop a plan. Another parent, an African-American woman, came to the microphone. She stated that parents would like to have a monthly incident report that measures school safety and that parents would like to meet with the principal each month to discuss safety and discipline. The principal agreed. Another Spanish speaking parent then came forward and addressed various people at the table. Each person was asked what he or she would do to help the situation. When the head of security for the school district responded that he would try to have more security coverage at East in the mornings and in the afternoon, the woman responded, "Is that a yes or no to our question?" As each member at the table agreed to various support endeavors, the parent at the microphone replied, "We will hold you accountable for your promises."

At the time I attended this meeting, I had been working with the Coalition for two weeks, and the organization that set up this meeting at East, Parents Supporting Education (PSE), was one of the member organizations of the Coalition. These member organizations included non-profits, foundations, parent groups, and the schools themselves working to improve academic achievement in the northeast quadrant of the city. I was energized about working with an organization that had grassroots connections like PSE. This was the beginning of a collaboration that I hoped would provide meaningful change for the community.

The collaboration with Coalition was initiated through one of my professors who conducts community-based research. We met with Marge and Lisa to discuss the principles of CBR. They were open to collaborating with

me in conducting community-based research; however, they wanted to pay me for my work feeling they would get better quality work if I were paid. Marge said, "We need data on what is happening in the schools in [this part of the city] to provide a current picture so that we know what is getting better and what is not." She also discussed the idea of what she called community indicators. She wanted to select a group of school related indicators and provide regular reports to the community so the community would begin to push for change. During a subsequent meeting with Lisa, she asked me, "Will it be possible to measure the impact the [Coalition] is having?" realizing that the work of member organizations may not be attributable to the work of the Coalition. She steered me toward several products as examples of what they were hoping I could help them to accomplish. These included reports produced by organizations such as the Rand Corporation and the Education Trust.

In the initial stages of CBR work, the researcher works closely with the community partner to determine the research questions and goals. In my previous experience conducting CBR through a graduate course, these initial questions and goals had already been developed by the professor and community partners. As I began my work with the Coalition, I did not collaborate with Marge and Lisa to clearly delineate research questions and goals. The only direction for my work was provided by the statement made by Marge in our first meeting. Instead of pushing for discourse around the data, I began collecting data that I felt would provide a picture of what was happening in Coalition schools. For example, I began collecting and organizing data on test scores, graduation rates, and teacher qualifications, along with other statistical data.

During these early stages of my work with the Coalition, I attended a multitude of meetings, including meetings with a steering committee of representatives from of all the member organizations of the Coalition. In one of the initial steering committee meetings I attended, Lisa shared some of the statistical data I had collected. I attempted to gain input from the steering committee as to what they hoped to gain from this research that would further the work of the organization. Lisa quickly shut

down the conversation and turned the meeting in another direction. I later received a similar response when I tried to engage Lisa and Marge in a dialogue about the data. I shared a list of possible data that we might collect in addition to the data I had already collected. My intent was to find out what they hoped to achieve with the data and then select specific data points that would best achieve these goals. My attempt was again disregarded, and the end result was that they added additional items to the list and directed me to collect all of them without regard to delineated goals. I tried belatedly to establish the goals of CBR, but I had no power in the relationship. My status as a graduate student and as an employee limited my ability to push for dialogue.

My supervising professors felt that I should continue my work with the Coalition even though the research fell short of the goals of CBR. They suggested I try to reposition my role.

My professors expressed to Marge and Lisa that they felt that the work I was doing was not utilizing my research skills; instead, they recommended that I develop a research proposal and work with the Coalition on a project basis toward specific goals. We wrote up a research proposal, which the Coalition accepted. The proposal included several components: a commitment to continue working on two projects I had already begun, a literature review of best practices in urban schools and the statistical data on each school, an evaluation of what was currently happening with the Coalition based on interviews with various stakeholders, and an evaluation plan to measure the work of the Coalition in the long term. Marge's response was that this sounded like "a gift versus an imposition" though Lisa was mostly silent during the meeting.

One of the intents behind the research proposal was to move my research closer to the member organizations that make up the Coalition. Through having access to parents, teachers, and students who were directly impacted by what was happening in the schools, I hoped to gain insight into what research would benefit the community. In particular, I was interested in working more closely with the grassroots parent organization that represented the predominantly Latino and African-American parents in this region of the

city. When interacting with Marge and Lisa, I received mixed messages about whose input they most valued in the Coalition. For example, when we received input from parents and teachers about which data they would like the Coalition to pursue for the monthly indicators, it conflicted with the input we received from the various non-profit organizations that belong to the Coalition. Marge and Lisa made the decision that we would pursue the data that the non-profits were interested in pursuing.

My goal was to try to provide the community greater voice in the work of the Coalition. I interviewed parents, teachers, principals, and various leaders of the member organizations. What I found in my interviews with parents and teachers was that they were not aware of the work of the Coalition, and that they wanted to have greater involvement in the work of the Coalition. One high school teacher said, "I certainly know the [Coalition for Schools] exists and I have never been real clear on what all the relationships are." Principals, in particular, expressed concerns about the monthly indicators the Coalition planned to collect and how these data would be used. One principal stated:

> I have a huge problem with [the community indicators] and I'm going to tell you why. First of all, the [Coalition] is not doing anything that directly impacts that information. They're not doing anything that impacts our discipline, they're not doing anything that impacts our attendance right now, or our achievement.… So when I saw the mockup…all I saw was another way to hammer our schools…I just thought, why do we need again to highlight the things that we're working so hard to improve? And all you would do when you looked at that data would either pit school against school or, 'Well, you see we told you these schools were bad schools.' And honestly, we're killing ourselves to do all the things we need to do.

It was a consistent comment from principals that they did not want these data used to point out the shortcomings of the schools.

The interviews I conducted for the evaluation report included interviews with Marge and Lisa. These interviews provided insight into how

Marge and Lisa's views differed on the use of data. In my interview with Marge, for instance, I found that she viewed data as primarily a means to provoke people out of complacency, versus a means to inform the work of the Coalition. When I asked her about the role of data in the work of the Coalition, she said, "I think there's nothing as provocative or engaging as having a really good data set presented in a way that tells the kind of story that encourages people to action." When I interviewed Lisa, she expressed concern that data could be "dangerous" and potentially alienating. This statement stemmed from the fact that the Coalition had decided not to pursue the monthly indicators after protests from school administrators. After completing the interviews, I wrote an up an extensive evaluation report.

Though the goal of the research proposal was to try to position my research closer to the community, it had the effect of moving my research even farther away from the goals of CBR. I gained more power in making decisions about data, but the Coalition did not collaborate in this process. In the end, I became more of a traditional consultant who collected data for evaluation purposes without any meaningful collaboration with the organization with which I was working.

When I contacted Lisa for a follow-up interview a year later, she said, "[you] did a fine job for us. We have a very broad project and [you] could have delved into any one of a multitude of statistical arenas regarding high needs, urban, minority, etc. Instead, [you] stuck with the 'Bigger Picture' and brought us some reliable information about all of our subject areas." However, Lisa did not provide any feedback on the last two pieces of work that I did for the Coalition, the evaluation and the evaluation plan, though I specifically asked about these two reports in the follow-up interview.

Communities in Transition

The hot afternoon sun slanted in through the window of the coffee shop causing "Manuel Alvarez" to sweat. "You have to learn to plug yourself into the social system," Manuel said as he wiped the perspiration off his upper lip with a handkerchief. Manuel was providing ideas as to how to begin the process of organizing the immigrant population in this small, rural, western mountain town. He was describing the networks that exist in any immigrant population. "You have to identify the gatekeepers and informal leaders who control access to the network."

Maria asked, "What if the leaders are not good people?" I perked up. "In the [Indian population from Mexico] the leaders are witches," Maria shared confidentially.

"Leonora Garcia," a native of Mexico who serves on the ESL advisory board, glanced across to me and we both smiled in surprise. "Ah, they are brujas [witches]," Manuel exclaimed. "Yes," Maria said, "The people are afraid of them, and they have all the power in the community because they cast spells." Smiling, Maria added, "But they are my friends, so I am safe." "Are they good or bad?" Leonora asked. "I don't know, but I don't want them to be the leaders," Maria said. Manuel interrupted, "It's not up to you. If they are the leaders, you have to go through them."

I was starting to realize that I should begin to expect surprises in my work with John Brewer, who was also at the table, and Maria Swenson. Though I had done research with immigrant populations before, this population is unique in that it includes an indigenous population from a remote area of Mexico of which I know very little about. Manuel, a community organizer who is himself an immigrant from El Salvador, came to meet with the community members with whom I was collaborating to give us some ideas about how to begin the process of organizing the immigrant community. The meeting was an important step in my collaboration with John and Maria.

After completing my work with the Coalition of Schools, I was very aware of the challenges that can impact the collaborative process. I brought this knowledge to the Communities in Transition project and used this knowledge to create a successful collaboration. When I first started working with John, we had an extensive discussion about what we hoped to accomplish with our collaboration. I wrote a memorandum of understanding that detailed the principles of community-based research and our decision to pursue a research agenda that would benefit the community's immigrant population. We decided helping them learn English through the ESL program would come first, and we also began to explore ideas for ways in which they

could have greater voice in city affairs. During one of our initial meetings, John said, "I want to have this group become less invisible and recognize they can have a voice and need to have a voice."

As we continued our collaboration, more often our conversations included Maria. Through our discussions about the research, I came to understand John and Maria's views about research, and we found that we had very similar ideas about what kinds of data we might collect and how we could use these data.

In order to determine how the ESL program could improve services to the community, we decided to develop two questionnaires. One of the questionnaires was administered to the clients that utilize Maria's office; this questionnaire sought information on the factors that limit participation in the ESL program. The second questionnaire was designed to gauge whether the students currently attending ESL courses were getting what they needed from these courses. We developed these questionnaires through a collaborative process with input from John, Maria, a focus group of ESL students, and two community members who utilize the services of the Maria's office. These two community members also helped to administer the questionnaire to Maria's clients.

This collaborative process continued through data collection, data analysis, and even in writing the final report presented to the ESL program's advisory board. Through the questionnaire, we found that there were several factors that limited participation in the ESL courses, including limited access to transportation and concerns that the beginner level ESL course was too difficult. We also found that the issues limiting participation were intensified for the indigenous population from Mexico. These data were used by the ESL program in several ways. First, the advisory board used the information in program planning. One board member stated during the meeting, "This will be very helpful in program planning." The board began to consider how to reallocate funding to support the creation of a very basic introductory course for the indigenous population. John also used these data as a basis for requesting additional contributions and donations from other community organizations in order to offer transportation services. Finally, these data were used in a grant proposal that was written by the health department to acquire a substantial grant for immigrant integration.

In seeking to provide the immigrant population with greater voice in the community, we began to explore the process of community organizing. Since community organizing is a long-term process, during the ten months of our collaboration I focused on helping John and Maria obtain information about how to begin the process. This included meeting with Manuel, who offered to continue working with John and Maria as they pursued a dialogue with community members. Manuel suggested that we start with one-on-one conversations with individuals to figure out the networks of communication and that through our conversations with people we pay attention to the primary issues with which they are concerned. He said, "Look for themes that emerge and that are actionable. If you change something that is an issue for them, then they will be interested…. It becomes a victory that everybody talks about and it starts the momentum…. It may not be your interest, but it is theirs." My collaboration with John and Maria ended with the knowledge that they planned to initiate these conversations and to continue to create opportunities to promote greater equity in the community.

Comparison Between Cases

The analytic framework in Figure 1 delineates the differences between these two CBR experiences. The collaboration with the Coalition for Schools did not meet the goals of CBR. As Maguire (1993) would describe it, it was an *attempt* at community-based research. Based on the four goals of CBR included in Figure 1, my work with the Coalition could be characterized initially as mainstream CBR, but when my role was repositioned to allow me to have greater input in decisions about data, the process moved toward traditional research. On the other hand, the collaboration with Communities in Transition was a successful collaborative process, and I believe this process did meet the goals of CBR. My work with Communities in Transition would be characterized as mainstream CBR; however, we moved slightly toward radical CBR through initiating the community organizing process.

In comparing and contrasting these two cases, I return to the four goals of the analytic

framework: community, collaboration, knowledge creation, and change. Considering these four goals based on the continuums presented in Figure 1, one can compare the facets of these two case studies. Table 1 provides this comparison (see Table 1).

Community

Stoecker (2002a) defines community as the people who are dealing directly with the issue. Based on this definition, I did not work directly with the community during either CBR project. However, the two cases present differences in how closely my collaborators worked with the community and how committed they were to seeking community input. My work with the Coalition for Schools was what Strand, et al. (2003) would describe as "doing CBR in the middle" (p. 73). The Coalition was a midlevel organization that did have some community grounding, but the organization presented conflicting messages about how much it sought and valued community input.

In working with Communities in Transition, I felt a direct connection to the immigrant community. Both John and Maria work closely with the community, and they are intimately aware of the issues challenging the immigrant population. John and Maria are what Stoecker (2002a) describes as bridge people in that they provide a link between the immigrant population and the broader community. Since I was not working directly with the community when I was collaborating with John and Maria, I did make an effort to bring the community into the research process as often as possible.

The issue of proximity to the community is something that comes up consistently in CBR work. Given that the goal of CBR is social change that leads to social justice, it is imperative

to work as closely with the community as possible. This can be difficult to achieve at times since it may be challenging to find a grassroots organization with which to partner. Not to mention that midlevel organizations are often better equipped to partner with university researchers (Strand et al., 2003).

Collaboration

Collaboration is quite simply shared decision making. Collaboration relies on developing relationships, and relationships can be impacted by communication and issues of power. In my work with the Coalition, our initial relationship did encompass some shared decision making. However, this initial collaboration did not last. My collaboration with John and Maria was successful because decision making was shared throughout our work together. There were no detrimental power dynamics because we agreed to work together based on a shared understanding of the research we would pursue as explained in the memorandum of understanding.

Regardless of whether the researcher partners with a midlevel organization or with a grassroots organization, in every CBR process the researcher needs to be cognizant of the issue of power. In my work with the Coalition, my lack of power interfered with my ability to develop a collaborative relationship. When working with John and Maria, as is typically the case with community-based research, I had to be more aware of the power I held as a researcher, and I made sure that our work together was based on shared decision making. Communication can be significant in ensuring that all participants in the CBR process are being heard. During both CBR projects, communication was the primary issue in determining whether I was able to develop a successful relationship.

Table 1. Contrasting Cases of CBR

	Community	Collaboration	Knowledge Creation	Change
Coalition for Schools	Midlevel Organization	Limited Collaboration	Limited Participation	Potential for Minimal Programmatic Change
Communities in Transition	Bridge People Working Closely with the Community	Shared Decision Making	Partial Participation	Potential for Substantial Programmatic and Structural Change

Knowledge Creation

One of the goals of community-based research is that the community should participate in all stages of the research process. There is a reciprocal process of knowledge sharing between the researcher and the community. In my work with the Coalition, the creation of knowledge was not a shared process and the community never realized a substantive increase in knowledge. With Communities in Transition, the community did participate in knowledge creation. Determining the goals of the research at the beginning of the collaboration is one important factor that facilitates this process of knowledge creation. If the researcher and the community are not able to come to a consensus, they will not be able to move into the beginning stages of the research process. This factor was a significant hindrance in my work with the Coalition. A memorandum of understanding that defines these goals can be useful. This type of document requires that the participants put their shared goals in writing. Using this type of document in my work with John and Maria helped create a successful collaboration.

Through the process of developing a memorandum of understanding, it becomes obvious how all of the participants view the use of data. Views about the uses of data can be a significant factor that can either facilitate or hinder collaboration. The researcher and community partner need to have extensive dialogue as they clarify goals in order to make sure that there is agreement about the purposes for which the data are being collected. The community partner's previous experiences with research can, of course, influence how she views the use of data. Though data can be used for many purposes, all parties need to agree on how data will be used in a given project.

Change

Social change that leads to social justice is the ultimate goal of community-based research (Marullo & Edwards, 2000). At this point it is difficult to know whether either CBR project will lead to change. While both projects have the potential for change, it seems likely that my work with the Coalition will lead to only minor programmatic change. However, my work with Communities in Transition was much more successful and has the potential to create greater change. With Communities in Transition, programmatic change will potentially make the English program more accessible for all immigrants as well as prompt revisions to classes so that the classes better meet the needs of the students currently attending the program. In addition to programmatic change, the groundwork we laid in initiating the process of community organizing has the potential to even lead to structural change, which could allow the immigrant population to have more power in the community.

When working toward change within a CBR project, the researcher can control only certain aspects of the context that may limit or support change, particularly when power structures within the community desire to maintain the status quo. Even if power structures allow for change, communities dealing with complex and unwieldy issues may confront limits put in place by government bureaucracy and competing communities. The researcher cannot control these contextual factors. However, the researcher can focus on empowering community participants through the research process by encouraging community members to become co-participants in the research process. An individual project may not lead to structural change, but the research process may change the life of an individual co-participant. Individuals who are empowered will be more likely to push against existing power structures.

A Radical Model of CBR

After completing these two CBR projects, I had a stronger understanding of what I sought to achieve with my CBR work, and I began to conceptualize a structure to aid my thinking. The conceptual model of CBR that I designed (Figure 2) is based on the analytic framework that I used to assess each case, and it incorporates the continuums included in Figure 1.

As one moves out toward the positive on each point of the continuum, the work has greater value. Value is defined as the potential to empower community members who are participating in the research process as well as the potential to bring about beneficial change for the community. I position Stoecker's (2003) construct of radical CBR as the form of CBR that has the most value in that it has the greatest potential to empower community members

and the greatest potential to create substantial change. Mainstream CBR does have value but it has less potential for significant change. As one moves toward the center of the model, the value of the work decreases.

Though Stoecker (2003) points out that the underlying theoretical foundations of mainstream CBR and radical CBR are in some ways contradictory, in my conceptual model, mainstream CBR is embedded within radical CBR. I see CBR as a continuum of practices with radical CBR as the goal. This model provides a way to conceptualize the elements that need to be in place to support greater value in CBR work. For each continuum within the model, the researcher must make a decision about how to create the most value for the work being conducted. In order to understand the model more fully, it is important to consider the four continuums incorporated in the model.

In relation to community, the goal is to work with those who are marginalized or disenfranchised. This typically means collaborating with a grassroots organization. If the researcher is unable to locate a grassroots organization, the options are to assist in the process of creating a grassroots organization or to partner with a midlevel organization. Working with a midlevel organization means that one moves inward on the continuum toward mainstream CBR, and the work has less value; however, this can be counteracted somewhat by using the midlevel organization as a means to facilitate community involvement in decision making during the research process (Strand et al., 2003).

Shared decision making throughout the CBR process which leads to the development of lasting and positive relationships between university partners and the community is the primary goal of effective collaboration. These relationships are developed through communication and can be hindered by issues around power and trust. However, one of the most challenging goals to achieve in pursuing the radical model of CBR relates to the creation of knowledge. The goal is full participation of the community in all aspects of knowledge creation. As Stoecker (2002a) points out, "The highest form of participatory research is seen as research completely controlled and conducted by the community" (p. 9). This can lead to

empowerment for the community through the democratization of knowledge. However, full participation can be difficult to achieve, particularly if community members do not have the time to participate in all aspects of the research. The greater the participation of the community in creating knowledge, the greater the potential for empowerment. Therefore, the researcher is obligated "to do whatever is possible to enhance participation" (Greenwood, Whyte, & Harkavy, 1993, Our View section, para. 8).

The further the researcher moves toward the positive on the continuums of community, collaboration, and knowledge creation, the greater potential for change that "transforms the structure of power relations so that those without power gain power" (Stoecker, 2002b, p. 232). If the researcher is partnering with a midlevel organization, the research will likely lead to programmatic change rather than broader social change. Though any change is important in that small changes can lead to greater overall change, limited programmatic change has less value within an individual CBR project.

Conclusion

Reaching for a radical model of CBR may not be as compatible with higher education norms as is the mainstream model of CBR (Stoecker, 2003), but if the goal of CBR is social action and social change that lead to social justice, then it is imperative that we pursue the radical model. As Freire (1970) states:

"The radical committed to human liberation does not become the prisoner of a 'circle of certainty' within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it" (p. 21).

Existing realities point to the need for significant changes in our society. As Stoecker (2003) argues, the gap between the wealthy and the poor is continuing to widen, and economic and political decisions are being made primarily by the wealthy. "The only way for the poor to gain a seat at the table, then, is for them to counter the power of money with the power of

Figure 2. CBR Conceptual Model
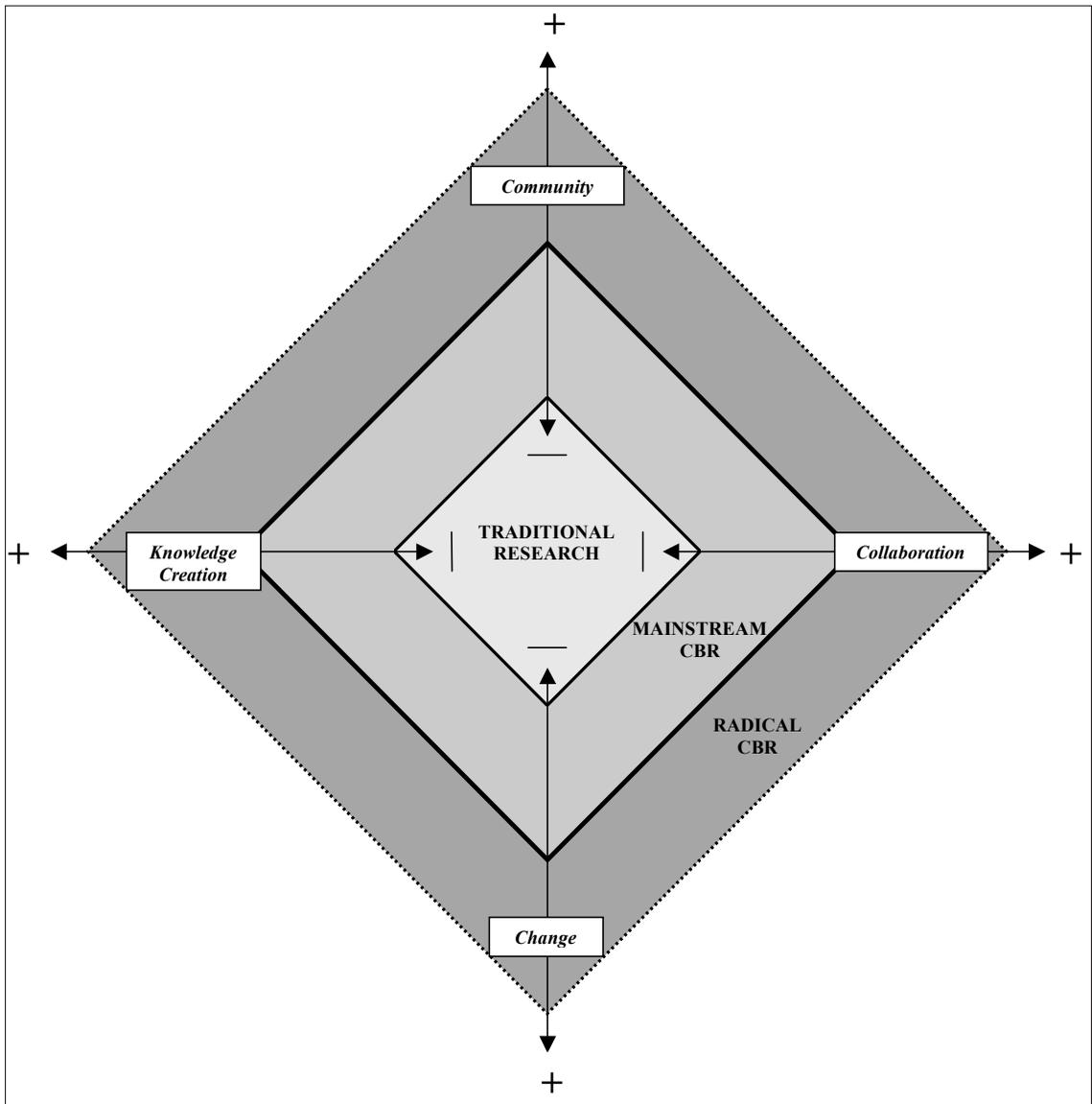
numbers" (Stoecker, 2003, p. 43).

If we want to expand democratic participation to include those individuals who have been excluded because of lack of economic and social capital, we need to push for radical changes. These kinds of radical change call for a radical model of research.

If we push for a radical model of CBR, some faculty and students who are interested in pursuing CBR projects may feel that it is impossible to achieve this goal and thus decide not to pursue community-based research at all. As Strand et al. (2003) point out, "We caution the current or would-be practitioner against becoming paralyzed by imperfections from these ideal principles, acknowledging that no CBR practice is perfect in its design and execution and that at some level, we need to do the best we can under our current circumstances" (p. 74).

I agree with this statement, and I feel that conducting mainstream CBR is better than not pursuing CBR at all. However, I do think that those who carry out community-based research should consistently seek to reach for a more radical form of CBR that has greater potential to impact the conditions of the people for whom the work is targeted.

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Acknowledgements

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