

Community-Based Participatory Research: Aspects of the Concept Relevant for Practice

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Community-based participatory research (CBPR), a qualitative methodology that emphasizes respect for the individual and a commitment to social change, is emerging as a way to enable research to empower communities. This article examines the origins and characteristics of CBPR, and discusses how the methodology is particularly effective in empowering First Nations communities. Drawing on her own experience as a Person doing participatory research with a community human services organization, the author also discusses the pragmatics of doing CBPR. Though it has enormous potential, CBPR is a difficult, demanding and time-consuming process in which the fact of community participation is not easily achieved.

Introduction

I am a Cree/Métis woman who grew up in rural Saskatchewan, Canada. Throughout my "growing up" years, I experienced many of the painful effects of racial and class discrimination, which was fuelled, in part, by "knowledge" and policies generated from social science research. This experience is common to most people of colour, women, the underclass and other groups who do not have access to powerful decision-making positions in society. Therefore, as a First Nations woman who grew up "dirt poor," I have searched for a way to do social science research that would be more responsive to the needs of First Nations communities and disempowered communities in general.

Knowledge produced by social science research is a powerful and effective means to influence decisions about people's everyday lives (Guyette, 1983; Hall, 1979; Reinharz, 1979). Whether this influence is detrimental or supportive to a group of people often depends on who controls the research process (Hall, 1979; Huizer, 1978). Although there are some examples of research that directly benefit Native communities,

research is more commonly a negative experience (Laframboise and Plake, 1983). Yet research is not inherently bad. It is those who pay for it, conduct it and decide what "good" research is who have contributed to the negative attitude that First Nations people have towards research (Churchill, 1988; Deloria, 1984; Laframboise and Plake, 1985). This is the perspective from which I began to search to understand how to do research with and for First Nations communities.

"Community-based participatory research" suggests a way in which communities without socio-political power can use social science research to support their struggle for self-determination by gaining control of information that can influence decisions about their lives (Bopp and Bopp, 1985; Guyette, 1983; Hall, 1979; Stull and Schensul, 1987). Community-based participatory research proceeds differently from the way research is usually done, particularly because of its emphasis and respect for human interaction. Doing such research is a very different experience both for the researchers and for the communities who have been the "target" of other forms of research. Given the nature of human relationships and the politics of communities, the dynamics of community-based participatory research can be very complex.

I had an opportunity to engage in community-based participatory research while living in Alaska (St. Denis, 1989). The research, involving a needs assessment with a Native organization, brought home the everyday realities of *doing* community-based participatory research — including its strengths and weaknesses. I realized that, though this type of community-based research is difficult, frustrating and time-consuming, it is worth the effort, because in that effort the community becomes empowered. Research can therefore become more liberating than manipulative.

This article reviews the literature on aspects of the concept of community-based participatory research that are relevant to practice. Although I will not describe my specific research project, my research experience helped me evaluate and organize the literature.

Background to Community-Based Participatory Research

Those who have not accepted a positivist and quantitative approach to research have developed and advocated alternatives. At times there seem to be as many specific alternative methodologies as there are proponents of an alternative to the positivist model. Authors often coin their own terms to describe their methodologies, even though they are basically similar to existing ones.

As I reviewed the literature on specific qualitative and post-positivist methodologies, four generic alternative methodologies emerged as

particularly helpful in my effort to delineate the nature of community-based participatory research: feminist research, action research, critical theory research and participatory research. The four are closely related to and help explain community-based participatory research. For example, Light and Kleiber (1981) discuss "interactive [community-based participatory] research in a feminist setting." Brown and Tandon (1983) provide another example in their discussion of "ideological and political economy in action research and participatory research."

Rather than offering a review of these four alternative methodologies – each of which deserves its own special focus – I will highlight elements in each approach relevant to a community-based participatory research approach. For example, feminist research, which critiques both quantitative and qualitative research for failing to take gender as a serious category, states that social science should be *for* and *with* women rather than *about* or *on* women (Cook and Fonow, 1986; Bowles and Klein, eds., 1983). Research for women takes women's needs, interests and experiences into account and aims at improving their lives. Some of the areas with which feminist research concerns itself include the significance of gender relations, consciousness-raising, challenging the norm of objectivity, ethical implications and transforming patriarchy and empowering women (see, e.g., Bowles and Klein, eds., 1983; Callaway, 1981; Cook and Fonow, 1986; Hollway, 1989; Maguire, 1987; Mies, 1983; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Callaway (1981) argues that it is important to reconsider research results in which women are misjudged according to criteria created by men – which is, unfortunately, the vast bulk of social science research (see, e.g., Gilligan, 1982).

Feminist research is concerned with process (Stanley and Wise, 1983); central to this concern is the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Bowles and Klein, 1983). Stanley and Wise advocate that researchers reveal themselves: "we must say *how* we find *what* we do, and not just what we find out" (1983, p.196, emphasis added). Cook and Fonow (1986) also make the point that it is important to attend to linkages between how research is done and how it is analyzed. DuBois (1983) makes an argument in support of "passionate scholarship," acknowledging that

science is not "value-free"; it cannot be. Science is made by scientists and both we and our science-making are shaped by our culture. Our science-making, rooted in, animated by and expressive of our values, empowered by community, is passionate scholarship [p.112].

Feminist research challenges the assumption of "objectivity" that has been the bedrock and source of control in the positivistic enterprise.

Kurt Lewin, widely recognized as a founder of "action research," emphasizes that research must bridge the gap between the concrete and abstract, providing the potential for solving practical problems while aiming to discover general laws of life (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Peters and Robinson, 1984). Carr and Kemmis describe action research as a form of "self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out" (1986, p.162).

Contemporary advocates of action research (Grundy, 1982; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Peters and Robinson, 1984) identify the following three requirements necessary for its practice: the subject matter must be a social practice; it must proceed through a self-reflective spiralling cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting; and it must involve collaboration with those in practice and those affected by practice. Grundy (1982) and Carr and Kemmis (1986) refer to an earlier joint paper (Grundy and Kemmis, 1981) in which they identify "involvement" and "improvement" in social practice as essential to action research. Grundy emphasizes "the deliberate strategic action undertaken to bring about change" (1982, p.23).

"Critical theory research" or "emancipatory research" responds to the social reality of people without power – it is research that serves the people (Bredo and Feinberg, 1982; Comstock, 1982; Hamnett et al., 1984; Lather, 1986, 1991). Critical theory research aims to foster a reflexive and critical self-consciousness, enabling a critical understanding of social reality (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Comstock, 1982; Hamnett et al., 1984; Lather, 1986). Self-awareness is possible through critical analysis of one's political and historical context (Comstock, 1982; Lather, 1986, 1991). This awareness is used to initiate emancipatory social action and to develop emancipatory knowledge, which is necessary for radically improving and transforming social reality.

"Participatory research" is offered as a methodology that will facilitate the liberation of oppressed people (Hall, 1979, 1981; Hamnett et al., 1984; Tandon, 1981; and VioGrossi, 1981). Proponents of this research approach stress the importance of a political-economic analysis of the function of research in society. Hall (1979, p. 407) defines participatory research as "a three-pronged activity: it is a method of social investigation involving full participation of the community, an educational process, and a means of taking action for development."

Hall (1979) advocates analyzing the "distribution and production of knowledge." Both Hall and Tandon (1981) argue that knowledge has become a commodity, and more particularly, "knowledge is a social product . . . that is bought and sold" (Hall, 1979, p. 405). They recognize that knowledge has been and will continue to be a source of power; therefore, participatory research must attempt to shift the balance of power by involving the powerless in generating their own knowledge. Hall (1981) and Hamnett et al. (1984) state that participatory research is derived from "dependency theorists" who are concerned with the state of economic and cultural dependency in Third World countries. VioGrossi (1981, p. 46) elaborates on this concern, suggesting that participatory research must attempt to "initiate a process of disindoctrination to allow the people to detach from their own elements those elements that have been imposed on them and are functional to the status quo."

There are others who advocate participatory research but who are not necessarily concerned with the liberation of oppressed people (see, e.g., Elden, 1981; Simms, 1981). These researchers are more interested in the "pragmatic" aspects of participatory research (Campbell, 1987). The pragmatic aspect refers to "involving those who are traditionally the researched in the formulation of problems, collection of data, and interpretation and use of findings" (Hamnett et al., 1984; Elden, 1981). Involvement will vary depending on the research context, but this involvement could effectively raise the consciousness of participants about the dimensions of power and control in the research. Hence the pragmatic focus can merge into a liberating one.

Feminist research, action research, critical theory research and participatory research stress elements that can help explain the emergence and continued growth of community-based participatory research. With varying emphasis they stress, for example, that research should be subjected to a process of political-economic analysis; that research should be for and with the people, especially powerless peoples; that researchers should exhibit a passionate commitment to the process of doing that research and to a reflection on the process; and that there should be collaboration between all participants in the research so that power and control are shared and profound changes in people's social reality can result.

Four Aspects of Community-Based Participatory Research

I have identified four aspects of community-based research that are central to its practice: first, the intent and purpose of the research; second, the nature of human relationships in the research process; third, data analysis and interpretation; and fourth, the use of the findings/results. The

experience of doing community-based participatory research, which is sometimes described in the research literature, indicates the complexity of that research effort and the frequently unseen consequences that develop as a result of its implementation. Community-based participatory research is not a simple matter of going from theory into practice.

1. *Intent and Purpose of Community-Based Participatory Research*

What is the purpose of the research? Who will benefit from the research? Why is the research being conducted? The answers to these kinds of questions are of significant importance in the practice of community-based participatory research.

Community-based participatory research sees social science research as in a state of flux and therefore ripe for making changes (Lather, 1986). Community-based participatory research argues that research undertaken just for sake of knowing is pointless (Stokes, 1985), as well as asocial and immoral (Huizer, 1978), particularly in those communities that are experiencing socio-economic crises. The effort must be directed towards a merging of theory and practice in the service of those who are affected (Huizer, 1978; Hall, 1979).

Social science research must be committed to social change, "to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society" (Lather, 1986, p.258), especially if in the course of doing research "you see that there are victims" (Huizer, 1978, p.7). Research must consider the welfare of the people (Stokes, 1985; Lafromboise and Plake, 1983) and must be related to community needs (Bopp and Bopp, 1985; Lafromboise and Plake, 1983; Light and Kleiber, 1981). Typically, social scientists have studied those who have not had the power to resist being studied or at times have lacked the perception of such power (Hamnett et al., 1984); therefore research has only served to enhance the researcher's agenda and career (Hall, 1979; Lafromboise and Plake, 1983; Stokes, 1985). Researchers are challenged to do research for and with the people rather than on or about people (Light and Kleiber, 1981). Huizer (1978) suggests that research become "service work."

Given the deplorable socio-economic conditions of those communities that are often the target of study, research must address and promote social change, program development and development of appropriate policies (Lafromboise and Plake, 1983; Stokes, 1985; Hall, 1979). For example, researchers must seek to "increase the compatibility between research and Indian ways of life, . . . and ultimately promote a better understanding of the forces that restrict the Indian environment" (Lafromboise and Plake, 1983, p.46). Guyette (1983, p. xvi) attributes the

“roots” of community-based research on Native American reserves to “the idea of self-determination,” asserting that research that “comes from within the community is an invaluable tool for community development.”

If the community is not involved in the entire research process, the result is often misinformation and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes (Lafromboise and Plake, 1983; Stokes, 1985). The research ends up serving the needs of those who paid for the research rather than those who are participating in the research (Hall, 1979). Instead, research must actively and meaningfully involve those who are participating in the research. Light and Kleiber (1981) found that early consultation helped the researcher avoid inappropriate decisions, improved input from various perspectives and ensured that the research was relevant. Participation and collaboration between the researcher and communities is possible, as shown in the examples of Bopp and Bopp (1985), Brown and Kaplan (1981), Elden (1981), Light and Kleiber (1981) and Murchie (1984).

The term “community-based participatory research” is used by Bopp to describe a research process employed in his Ph.D. research (Bopp, 1985; Bopp and Bopp, 1985). He was committed to developing a research process that enabled Native communities to use the “knowledge which is an essential part of their culture to develop community programs appropriate to the community” (Bopp and Bopp, 1985, p.1). Bopp and Bopp (1985, p.1) characterize community-based participatory research as having the following capabilities: first, it can “help create a mirror by which a community can see its own eyes, that is, its own wisdom and knowledge”; and second, it can help a “community integrate cultural wisdom with academic knowledge.” Community-based participatory research then becomes a tool through which the community is able to act upon its members’ lives in an informed collaborative manner.

The report *Rapuora Health and Maori Women* by Murchie (1984) provides another excellent example of how community-based participatory research deals with the intent and purpose of research. The report describes the process of research and data analysis by the Maori Women’s Welfare League in a household survey on Maori women’s health status and lifestyle health risks and their perceptions of health. The report documents how Maori people worked and participated in the research because they were committed to their communities and the betterment of their people. It is stated in the foreword that “this is a survey of Maori, by Maori, for Maori.” Foremost for the Maori women in the research has been maintaining “control,” which meant community involvement in all phases of the survey (Murchie, 1984, p.20).

2. *The Nature of Human Relationships in Community-Based Participatory Research*

The nature of human relationships in community-based participatory research has received the most attention in the research literature. A large part of this discussion pertains to the role of the researcher. Another area that receives attention regards the complexity of working with communities that have diverse and sometimes opposing groups. Central to the relationship between the researcher and the research context are the issues of "power and control."

In community-based participatory research, new roles are emerging both within the community and especially for the researcher (VioGrossi, 1981; Elden, 1981). The researcher's roles are very complex because he or she must be sensitive to so many aspects of human interaction. Reinharz (1981) believes that researchers' main instruments are their own self-awareness. Researchers are advised to examine their underlying assumptions and ideological perspectives in regards to the research situation (Hamnett et al., 1984; Huizer, 1978), because their personal values will affect decision-making in the research process (Reinharz, 1979; Brown and Kaplan 1981).

Since community-based participatory researchers are active participants, they must become subjects of their own investigation (Reinharz, 1979; Torbet, 1981b), which in turn facilitates the development of a sense of solidarity with those who are studied (Huizer, 1978). Given the intimate nature of this research, Reinharz (1979) and Rowan and Reason (1981) advise researchers to choose research issues that coincide with personal concerns, so that one engages in "unalienated labour" (Reinharz, 1979, p. 216). On the one hand, researchers are encouraged to foster self-awareness and a personal commitment to the research situation, but, on the other hand, they are cautioned not to project or impose their particular ideology (Guyette, 1983; Hall, 1979; Lather, 1986). Rather than projecting one's own ideas about development and change, the researcher is urged to acknowledge and respect community leadership (VioGrossi, 1981, p. 44). In this respect it becomes important to choose a community whose concerns mirror the personal concerns of the researcher, although one cannot expect homogeneity in any community on important concerns.

Researchers are also advised to involve and collaborate with as many people as possible and to make use of diverse groups within the community (Brown and Kaplan, 1981; Guyette, 1983; Swantz, 1981). The aim is for so called "subjects" to become co-researchers. Inevitably, community-based participatory research becomes a much "messier" process because

it "brings together parties whose inquiry objectives, research methodologies, and conceptual frameworks are very different, and the result may be misunderstanding, ambiguity, or conflict" (Brown and Kaplan, 1981, p. 312). "It may be quite different for persons of different backgrounds and experiences to perceive a situation in sufficiently common terms to permit agreement of the existence of a problem" (Schensul et al., 1987, p. 29). A researcher will require the insight and diplomatic skills needed to hold together collaborators who differ in ideological, disciplinary and cultural orientations (Hamnett et al., 1984). Finally, the researcher must be capable of developing "participatory techniques" that are compatible with the cultural context (Guyette, 1983; Torbet, 1981b). The researcher must have these interpersonal sensitivities because it is inevitable that some members of the community may question aspects of the research.

Participation is not easily achieved (Campbell, 1987). The effort required to facilitate collaboration requires appropriate organization (Brown and Kaplan, 1981) and determination not to compromise the principles of collaboration, despite probable pressure to do so (Torbet, 1981a), particularly in politically polarized situations (Brown and Kaplan, 1981). An option may include encouraging the various interest groups to agree on certain goals of the research as a prelude to the research (Judi Bopp, 1987; personal communication). In regards to addressing "controversial issues," Torbet (1981b) recommends early exchanges between groups and efforts to establish support from the administration or appropriate leadership. He suggests that the researcher must "try simultaneously to model and advocate a process of self-disclosure, support others' efforts to express themselves, and [maintain] openness to confrontation" (Torbet, 1981a, pp. 336-37). Consensus between a community and its leadership becomes important because sometimes the leadership, unbeknown to itself, will use the research to maintain its control.

Light and Kleiber's (1981) experience of research with a women's health collective exposed the integral role that issues of power and control occupy in social research. In the course of doing their research, they realized that "a good deal of the researcher's power depended on the control of information, in the form of professional expertise and the data generated by the research" (Light and Kleiber, 1981, p.167). They had to admit that their power depended "on a lack of openness with those who [were] being studied." For example, the internal structure and the external goals of the women's health collective were directed towards "the sharing of information"; this was in turn directed towards "the sharing of

power" (Light and Kleiber, 1981, p. 174). Light and Kleiber (1981, p. 174) came to realize that "by hoarding information and thus power," they were violating "the most basic tenet of the organization [they] sought to enter and understand." Their research with the women's health collective "forced" them to make their "professional practices consistent with [their] personal beliefs." If the researchers were not going "to be open" with the health collective members, then the researchers could not expect the health collective "to be open" with them (Light and Kleiber, 1981, p. 173).

For Elden (1981) the concept of "being open" revealed another aspect of social research. Subsequent to doing his research, Elden realized that his role was one of "co-producer of learning," which meant that he had "to be open to deep [i.e., initially frameless] learning, [that] he could not assume that his framework [would] dominate or remain unchanged" (Elden, 1981, p. 263). This also meant being able to "distinguish between and draw the line between not directing the process and being completely non-directive" (Elden, 1981, pp. 256-57).

Community-based participatory research entails an acceptance of "vulnerability" on the part of the researcher; this helps the researcher maintain "openness" to one's limitations and the community's direction of the research process. The researcher in community-based participatory research "is more dependent on those from whom data come, has less unilateral control over the research process, and has more pressure to work from other people's definition of the situation" (Eldon, 1981, p. 261). It is suggested by Katz that if one can risk the experience of vulnerability – defined as a "radical questioning of one's worldview" – then researchers will be able to "better gain access to a different framework and therefore a deeper understanding" (Katz, 1987, p. 27).

The researchers in the example provided by Light and Kleiber (1981) had to come to terms with their own fears and feelings of being threatened by having those in the research context have inside knowledge of the researchers and their work. "Openness on both sides helped resolve questions of ownership and personal vulnerability" (Light and Kleiber, 1981, p. 177). The researchers were able to acknowledge that "a fear of vulnerability is not unique to the research situation but is a condition of human relations in general. [Therefore] it should be dealt with as such [and] not elevated to [the] realm of professional necessity" (Light and Kleiber, 1981, p. 177). "Openness and close cooperation" between the researcher and the researched will result not only in more "moral research" but in research that more "clearly reflects the reality it seeks to study" (Light and Kleiber, 1981, p. 167). Once the issues of information and power were dealt with openly, the power of the researcher became a

positive rather than a negative force (Light and Kleiber, 1981). They found that "professionalism and confidentiality clearly became negative concepts that supported an unequal distribution of information and power between researchers and collective members" (Light and Kleiber, 1981, p. 174). Confidentiality is a very complex issue. The need for collaborative sharing between participants in the research process must be balanced against personal needs for privacy. For example, in the case of personal information revealed during the research, it becomes imperative that the researcher check back with the participant before disclosing such information in the research report.

Community-based participatory research is a dynamic process, and the events that transpire can never be totally pre-determined (Brown and Kaplan, 1981). Campbell raises the possibility that the "outcomes of participation may not be necessarily positive . . . , that the promise of participation may be empty" (1987, p. 165). For example, Stull, Schultz and Cadue (1987, p. 47) identify the following five factors that impeded their ability to collaborate successfully in discussing the intention to do community-based participatory research in Native communities: "shifts in federal policy and funding, university politics, the history of tribal relations with non-Indians, individual ambitions and personalities, and cultural differences." In the event of a negative experience, Torbet (1981b, p. 339) urges researchers "to recognize that all professionals share the dilemma of how to learn from experiences which generate negative feelings in them."

3. Interaction with Data in Community-Based Participatory Research

The issues of concern in this aspect of community-based participatory research are related to the development of research instruments and the collection and analysis of data. Kushner and Norris (1980-81) have written specifically on the need to collaborate with the people in the research context on the interpretation of data. They believe that the task of understanding can only be successfully pursued when provisions are made for people to "move from merely articulating what they know (i.e., providing us with data) to theorizing about what they know (i.e., creating meanings)" (Kushner and Norris, 1980-81, p. 27).

Inviting participants to engage in data analysis can be quite difficult for a number of reasons. For Elden (1981, p. 260), it was difficult because in this process he realized "that the more [he] understood things from their point of view, the less meaning [his] own categories had" — it was difficult to give up his own interpretations! Elden makes a really important admission because researchers must realize that different people and cultures will have contrasting attitudes to knowledge, and as Stokes (1985,

p. 6) states, there are "other dimensions to the value of knowledge." For example, the Maori have different concepts of private, community and public knowledge, which makes it imperative that Maori communities are involved in the interpretation of data collected in and on their communities (Stokes, 1985, p. 8). Stokes points out the need for the "interpretation of Maori data to be perceived in Maori terms, not forced into preconceived European methodologies or systems of categorizing knowledge" (1985, p. 7). Hall also has illustrated the need for collaboration in the analysis of data. He is concerned that, despite "all the best intentions in the world, the [researchers were] never going to fully comprehend, much less intuitively grasp, the conditions and priorities of survival and growth in the villages. . . . By virtue of the fact of our class positions and our class interests, the knowledge we created about their lives was bound to be in error" (Hall, 1979, p. 398). Bopp and Bopp (1985) and Kushner and Norris (1980-81) provide excellent examples of research where data were analyzed collaboratively and the final version approved by the people.

The outcome of community-based participatory research reveals complex perspectives on social realities. This kind of research often produces ambiguous and inconclusive statements about behaviour. Brown and Kaplan (1981) found that, even when parties agreed on the general outcome of inquiry, specific emphases and interpretations might vary. Community-based participatory research does not produce unambiguous explanations of a reality; on the contrary it often produces competing explanations that reflect the multiple realities experienced by different parties to the inquiry (Brown and Kaplan, 1981, p. 314). Furthermore, it is possible – even likely – that the research will alter the reality it seeks to explore. Light and Kleiber (1981) found that this could work to their benefit. By feeding their data back into the research context, they were able to study how this feedback influenced further action, thus enabling them to test the validity and the significance of the social knowledge they were generating.

Research participants are invaluable in identifying sources of data, as well as helping to develop the appropriate questions to ask. Stull and Schensul (1987) found that collecting data in a community in a rigorous, predetermined manner can be difficult. They found there must be agreement reached through some form of consensus with community members regarding collection of data. Collaborators in the research process must see the collection of information as being in their best interests; otherwise, further problems can develop when the various audiences for research have different views of the role of research and the information to be collected (Stull and Schensul, 1987). In their research,

Stull and Schensul found that negotiations with community members and the research team broke down and irreconcilable positions developed concerning group articulation and clarification of the theory or theories of action underlying explanations of the problem. The problem was then resolved through political means rather than in the scientific arena (Stull and Schensul, 1987). This kind of outcome is highly likely because in community-based participatory research scientific discourse is not extracted from its political context.

4. *Use of Findings in Community-Based Participatory Research*

In community-based participatory research, the use of research results is a political process (Schensul et al., 1987). Cassel (1980, p. 32) warns that serious harm is done when findings are disseminated or published and "only the conduct not the consequences of fieldwork are discussed." Some of the harm can be prevented if the research results are reviewed by the group or community prior to publication (Guyette, 1983).

Although the researchers may see themselves producing products for the collaborators, the collaborators may see these same products as belonging to the researchers; consequently, the products will not be used by collaborators to their full potential (Stull et al., 1987). Light and Kleiber were challenged on the ownership of research information, and they found that "openness helped resolve questions of ownership" (1981, p. 175). If the community is actively involved in developing recommendations that they see arising from the research, then it is more likely that the research will have an impact on the community (Murchie, 1984; Bopp and Bopp, 1985) and that the material will be used for the development of the community (Bopp and Bopp, 1985; Stokes, 1985). It is important to make sure that the information in the research report is written in a form understandable to all, which means writing it in the language understandable to the people (Guyette, 1983; Murchie, 1984; Elden, 1981).

In Gibson's research, a loophole became evident only later because "in spite of a wish to maximize the utility of findings to the host community, the research design included no adequate structures for diffusion or change" (Gibson, 1987, p. 119). Gaventa and Horton (1981) discovered that, unless specific plans were developed in regards to the dissemination and use of the research results, it was more than likely that effective dissemination would not occur.

As has been mentioned, community-based participatory research is a complex and dynamic process. One must be able to risk the uncertainty of what the outcomes may be. The impact of the research on the researcher and the participants cannot be predetermined. Community-based

participatory research is not suitable to the classic research design, where "control" resides with the researcher; it was not meant to be. Community-based participatory research is an important process for those groups of people who need to gain access to "scientific" methods of generating knowledge about their world so that they can make the necessary changes in their world as *they* see it.

Selected Dimensions of Practice

My doing community-based participatory research confirmed points raised in the literature, and expanded upon them, revealing more of the everyday and at times ironic obstacles to this kind of research. The pragmatics of practice, it turns out, provide a formidable challenge.

Effects of Interpersonal Dynamics

Like Brown and Kaplan's (1981) factory research, community-based participatory research is described as being "messier" than "conventional" research. Community-based participatory research does not follow a standard formula; instead it depends on the interpersonal dynamics of all the research participants. Dependence on community dynamics makes it difficult to predetermine transpiring events that may influence the outcome of the research (Brown and Kaplan, 1981). For example, the research process can be affected by unforeseen community dynamics and organizational change in the sponsoring agency.

Part of the "messiness" of community-based participatory research comes from the process of facilitating the participation of diverse and possibly polarized groups of people. Community-based participatory research depends on the interpersonal dynamics of all research participants, including both the researchers and collaborators. Community-based participatory research "brings together parties whose inquiry objectives, research methodologies, and conceptual frameworks are very different; and the result may be misunderstanding, ambiguity, or conflict" (Brown and Kaplan, 1981, p. 312). It is unrealistic to expect homogeneity in any community or group. Inevitably there will be diverse opinions, likely including opposing views. The issue of how to accommodate the participation and involvement of diverse groups of people is difficult. The key is to facilitate an open discussion of people's expectations and to negotiate common grounds.

The researcher must first acknowledge the inevitability of working with diverse groups of people when doing a community-based project and then attempt to build a relationship of trust and respect between groups. The researcher needs the insight and diplomatic skills to bring together

collaborators who differ in ideological, disciplinary and cultural orientations (Hamnett et al., 1984). It is also helpful to have some skill in conflict resolution or, at least, a willingness to discuss disagreements. The goal is to assist the various groups in developing a commitment to the project through the negotiation of common goals. Commitment is fostered by facilitating open discussions about the research in the language of the people and involving the people in decisions regarding the research. More than likely, some common ground will develop. This is particularly relevant as First Nations communities have begun to disassociate themselves from the term "Indian," pointing out the fact that they are very diverse people, whose needs and aspirations are also diverse.

Research Participants Learn New Roles

Community-based participatory research requires that both the researchers and the collaborators learn new roles as research participants. In the literature, the nature of human relationships, particularly as they affect the role of the researcher, is addressed extensively. Both the researchers and the collaborators must learn new ways of relating and interacting with each other as their respective new roles and responsibilities emerge. As Carr-Hill (1984) found in his research, the collaborators did not know how to participate as equals in the research he was conducting. This is also particularly relevant for First Nations communities who have for so long been led to believe and forced to accept that members of the colonial society can and should act on their behalf.

It is the responsibility of the researchers to initiate modes of collaboration with community people, though the ways in which people are actually able to participate will vary from community to community. This initiation of collaboration needs to be done in a way that respects leadership and cultural traditions. The researchers must do a lot of groundwork before the work – the formal research project – even begins.

Participation Is Not Easily Achieved

The literature on community-based participatory research points out that participation in research is not easily achieved (Campbell, 1987); it cannot be assumed nor taken for granted. For example, participation depends on the quality of relationship that the sponsoring organization of the research has with the community. Effort and time are always needed to convey to potential collaborators that their involvement is sincerely desired and that the invitation is more than just "lip service."

If people do not understand the research and/or do not have the opportunity to negotiate a direction for the research to take, they will be reluctant to participate in that research. It is important to remember that

community people are not academicians, and they will not take seriously or get involved in a research project that they do not understand. People want to know how the project will practically and concretely be helpful and/or useful. The purpose and intent of the research must be negotiated and communicated with these considerations in mind. Researchers and collaborators must come to some common agreement about the nature of the research before proceeding, or at least early on in the research process. To facilitate collaboration requires appropriate organization and the determination not to compromise the principles of collaboration despite pressure to do so, particularly in politically polarized situations. With regard to inevitable "controversial issues," early exchanges between groups and efforts to establish support from the administration or appropriate leadership becomes a necessity. Facilitating community-based participatory research requires consistent, clear and common-sense communication.

In this paper, I have tried to extract implications for practice from my own experience and from the literature. Making community-based participatory research a reality in and for people's lives is the aim of that approach; therefore attention must be devoted to the often mundane specifics of practice. With that in mind, I would now like to summarize some possible guidelines to practice.

Summary Guidelines for Doing Community-Based Participatory Research

- A. Community-based participatory research takes time. It should not be seen as an efficient way of doing research. For example, time needs to be set aside for everyone in the research process, researchers and community people alike, to get to know each other; and time is needed to allow all opinions, some in conflict with each other, to be heard.
- B. Community-based participatory research is more an interpersonal than a technical process because of its emphasis on involving people and eliciting their opinions. Community-based participatory research is a human exchange.
- C. In community-based participatory research it is important to have regularly scheduled research meetings because then all participants can know when and how they can give input over the life of the entire research process. The meetings must be well publicized.
- D. Community-based participatory research is very much about developing trustworthy relationships between all participants in the process.

- E. In community-based participatory research the process of doing the research is more important than the research product because the emphasis is on the relationships between people. Community participation emphasizes connecting people and encouraging mutual learning. Whether something is written that is appropriate for publication is a separate consideration, though publication, when effective, becomes an integral part of the process.
- F. In community-based participatory research one must be sensitive to the leadership in the community, and ensure that all the appropriate people are properly involved.
- G. Participation cannot be taken for granted. For a variety of reasons, people may be unwilling or unable to participate. For example, community participants may feel they lack the expertise. Others may assume that, since community-based participatory research is still "research," it is the researcher's job to do it. And others may just be too busy.
- H. When a sponsoring or funding agency is involved, it must be sincere about and committed to the idea of community-based participatory research. However, this commitment creates a dilemma because the agency is not likely to fully understand the implications of community-based participatory research, such as involving potential critics of the agency.
- I. If there are professional researchers with primary responsibilities, they must be aware of their own limitations. For example, a philosophical understanding of community-based participatory research is not enough; some experience in facilitating group discussions and the open flow of information is necessary.
- J. Power and control are central to the process of doing community-based participatory research. Decision-making must be shared. For example, professional researchers, if they are involved, must give up their assumed control over the research. Power and control must be constantly negotiated between all participants, but power and control are abstract notions and are often identified only after the fact.
- K. All must be willing to examine their assumptions about each other. For example, researchers must examine their assumptions about the

community. Do they really trust the community? Is the community capable of interpreting data? Likewise, community participants must examine their assumptions about what the researcher can or will do, and their assumptions about their role in the research.

- L. Professional research language – research “jargon” – should be avoided. This is not a sign of disrespecting the community’s intelligence but rather a way to facilitate understanding.
- M. Since the community is probably the participant least familiar with doing research – though they have had research done “on them” – community participants in particular need to know what is expected of them and what they can contribute to the research process.
- N. Community-based participatory research is like a community development project. For example, it takes time, must be responsive to a variety of voices and must be sensitive to those outside the immediate research team and research establishment. It is a process of facilitating communication and understanding about the needs of the community.

Relevance and Implications for First Nations Communities

The need for First Nations communities to access the right to generate knowledge about their world and to use that knowledge to influence decisions regarding their lives is paramount. For too long, the knowledge of Native people generated by research has been about or on them and seldom has it been for and with them. Community-based participatory research is a process that provides the means through which research can be for Native people.

Community-based participatory research is important because it seeks to involve the “researched” in defining the direction and purpose of the research. This is particularly important for First Nations communities because, as Stokes (1985) points out, for too long the social research done on First Nations people has generated theories about the shortcomings of First Nations people rather than generating knowledge about the inadequacy of the social systems in which they must survive. Not enough research has focused on identifying those strengths of First Nations communities that will ensure cultural and economic survival. It is only common sense that First Nations communities should be involved in identifying the problems that need to be addressed. Community-based participatory research provides a means to do so.

First Nations communities need to develop the knowledge and skills required to carry out social science research. Community-based participatory research offers this opportunity with its invitation for communities to participate in research and its efforts to make that collaboration possible. Most First Nations communities do not have enough awareness of how research can work for the community. If they are aware of this, they do not have the necessary skills or the experience to do the research. By engaging in community-based participatory research, the First Nations community can gain experience and knowledge of the process of doing social research and in that way be less dependent on outside researchers. This is imperative because, as Stull et al. (1987) found, "even after years of mutually beneficial association with the tribe, the white researchers were still mistrusted by many" (1987, p. 49). In light of the power and control that Euro-American society has had over First Nations communities, it is not a simple question of researchers – or those in charge – giving up their power and control.

The concept of research as something that can benefit the First Nations community may itself be alien to First Nations communities. There is the possibility that First Nations research participants may experience the effort to collaborate, as did the participants in Torbet's research, "as just [another] piece of unfamiliar jargon that someone else was just using and imposing on them" (1981a, p. 341). This experience is not uncommon for community-based participatory researchers. For example, Carr-Hill discovered that, in his effort to involve participants in the design of the survey instrument, the "participants were occasionally disoriented because they expected to be treated as typical respondents" (1984, p. 284). Elden (1981) also found, in his effort to involve the participants, that the participants were confused and unclear about what was expected of them. He eventually realized that one of the problems was "the abstract level and conceptual orientation of [his] social science language" (Elden, 1981, p. 260). It is important for researchers to plan out the research program thoughtfully, always considering how best to involve the community without alienating them. It is important that researchers are aware that community-based participatory research can become "another form of manipulation" (VioGrossi, 1981; Campbell, 1987).

The process of community-based participatory research is much more demanding than the classical quantitative and positivist research. It takes time, careful planning, genuine and personal commitment to involvement, community acceptance, appropriate research methods and a conducive cultural and political climate (Campbell, 1987; Elden, 1981). Given these requirements, it is obvious that community-based research will be difficult

to achieve, and there is growing awareness of the demands it makes on the researcher (Blackwell, 1992; Stacey, 1991). However, given the conditions of First Nations communities, it is worth trying because the potential benefits to the community are enormous, as shown in the research by Bopp and Bopp (1985) with First Nations communities in the North-West Territories of Canada and by Murchie (1984) with Maori women in New Zealand. Community-based participatory research offers a way for First Nations communities to gain more control over their lives and, in gaining that control, to exert the power needed to effect decisions regarding their lives.

Conclusion

Doing community-based participatory research has helped me as a First Nations person to understand in a practical sense the importance of community collaboration in the analysis and presentation of the data. We must ask ourselves: What role do the collaborators play in structuring the final report? Do they edit parts? Do they direct revisions? Or will they only participate in the analysis of the data?

I feel uncomfortable with the obvious power and control I would have if I were solely — or even primarily — deciding what data to present and how to present the results. I do not want the presentation to offend the community or my research colleagues. I want and need their assistance in deciding what data would become public and how it would be presented.

I also grapple with doubts about whether or not this type of research is "scientific." It is easy to doubt whether or not one is following the "right" procedures. I think this is exacerbated by the unpredictability and the ambiguity of doing community-based participatory research. However, as a First Nations person, I feel the responsibility to do research that is applied and, more specifically, useful. Given the conditions of our communities, research must benefit the community in practical ways. I believe that community-based participatory research offers a way for people who have been denied access to the control of research to regain that control. With a community-based participatory research approach, we can determine what happens in our communities through our collaboration and participation in research affecting our communities.

Note

This article is a revision of several sections from the author's master's thesis (St. Denis, 1989), which presents an in-depth discussion and analysis of the author's own experience in doing community-based participatory research.

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