

Principles of Best Practice for Community-Based Research¹

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Community-based research (CBR) offers higher education a distinctive form of engaged scholarship and a transformative approach to teaching and learning. In this article, we propose a CBR model that is genuinely collaborative and driven by community rather than campus interests; that democratizes the creation and dissemination of knowledge; and that seeks to achieve positive social change. We demonstrate how this model translates into principles that underlie the practice of CBR in four critical areas: campus-community partnerships, research design and process, teaching and learning, and the institutionalization of centers to support CBR.

Community outreach has become part and parcel of the missions of an increasing number of American colleges and universities. Several forces are driving this trend toward campus-community engagement. One is growing criticism of higher education's apparent insensitivity to the challenges faced by their adjacent neighborhoods: urban decay, environmental threats, growing economic inequality, and unmet needs of vulnerable children, families, and whole communities in areas such as education, health care, housing, criminal and juvenile justice, and employment (Marullo & Edwards, 1999). A second force for change comes from the widespread perception that the intellectual work of the professorate is unnecessarily narrow and largely irrelevant to societal concerns. This criticism is best developed in Ernest Boyer's (1990) widely-cited *Scholarship Reconsidered*, in which he argues that the "scholarship of discovery"—in the pursuit of new knowledge—should not be the only valued and rewarded form of scholarship. He suggests that the scholarships of integration, pedagogy, and especially application are other forms of scholarship that are undervalued and largely neglected, although they offer the potential for encouraging intellectual work that is truly useful and relevant in modern society. A third force driving the trend toward community engagement has to do with students, particularly the growing concern that despite our best intentions, graduates leave our institutions largely disengaged from political issues, disenchanting with the ability of government to effect positive change, and disinclined and ill-equipped to

assume an active role in civic life. Here the implication is that we need to re-think what and how we teach in order to ensure that we truly engage students, not only with their communities but also with the learning process in general.

As a result of all this, a growing number of colleges and universities have forged partnerships with a wide variety of community groups and agencies—schools, social service agencies, neighborhood organizations, businesses, and health care providers—to share institutional resources and expertise as well as provide students experiential learning opportunities beyond what is possible in traditional college classes. One particularly promising activity that has grown out of these campus-community partnerships is what has come to be called community-based research (CBR). CBR is collaborative, change-oriented research that engages faculty members, students, and community members in projects that address a community-identified need. It differs in important ways not only from traditional academic research, but also from the sort of charity-oriented service-learning that has come to be practiced and promoted at many colleges and universities. Indeed, the distinctive combination of collaborative inquiry, critical analysis, and social action that CBR entails makes it a particularly engaging and transformative approach to teaching and engaged scholarship. Moreover, its potential to unite the three traditional academic missions of teaching, research, and service in innovative ways makes it a potentially revolutionary strategy for achieving long-lasting and fundamental institutional change.

All this suggests that CBR is a next important stage of service-learning and engaged scholarship, and explains the growing interest in CBR among professors, students, and community members—especially those who are committed to service-learning. However, in contrast to the significant body of literature about service-learning that has emerged over the last decade, very little has been written about CBR. In this paper, we draw on our own extensive and varied experiences with CBR as teachers, researchers, administrators, scholars, and community activists to propose a CBR model based on what we see as its three central features: collaboration, democratization of knowledge, and social change. We then discuss how this CBR model translates into principles that govern its practice in four critical areas: campus-community partnerships; research design and process; teaching and learning; and institutionalizing CBR on our campuses.

History and Principles of CBR

CBR has a long history and diverse intellectual roots that are reflected in the terms variously used to describe it: action research, participatory research, popular education, empowerment research, participatory action research, and others. Practitioners of research that is participatory and community-based come from many different fields in and outside of academia and work in many different parts of the world—all of which make a precise history and commonly-accepted definition of CBR a bit problematic. Nonetheless, most community-based researchers draw from several common historical and modern strands. The first is the *popular education model*, which is widely associated with the work of Paolo Freire (1970). Freire advocated for education as a political tool to effect social change at local and global levels, arguing that learning that raises people's consciousness and enhances their understanding of oppressive social conditions can lead to social transformation. This model similarly shaped the work of the Highlander Folk School (now the Highlander Research and Education Center) founded by Myles Horton in Tennessee in 1933 (Horton, 1989). The second important influence on current CBR comes from what might be called the *participatory research model*. This approach grew mainly out of liberation struggles in the Third World over the past few decades and has been adapted, as well, to research with traditionally disadvantaged groups in North America. The PR (participatory research) and PAR (participatory action research) approaches are rooted in a critique of traditional Western social science research, whose rigidity, presumed objectivity, and authority of researchers and research expertise undermine

community development efforts (Hall, 1992; Park, 1992). Finally, CBR also traces some of its roots to the “action research” approach introduced by Kurt Lewin (1948), who used it as a tool to increase worker productivity and satisfaction through promoting democratic relationships in the workplace. Lewin's work is considered a more conservative influence on CBR because it de-emphasized community participation and failed to challenge existing power arrangements.

Our CBR model draws on these diverse historical influences, but also embodies core tenets that make CBR relevant to higher education, especially as a response to the challenges that colleges and universities currently face in exploring partnerships with communities in addressing pressing problems. These features clearly differentiate CBR from “business as usual” in American higher education—that is, both from conventional academic research and from conventional approaches to teaching and learning that have long dominated at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The three central features are:

1. CBR is a collaborative enterprise between academic researchers (professors and students) and community members.
2. CBR seeks to democratize knowledge by validating multiple sources of knowledge and promoting the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination.
3. CBR has as its goal social action for the purpose of achieving social change and social justice.

Collaboration

CBR's purpose is to create or discover knowledge that meets a community-identified need, but the role of community members goes beyond simply identifying the research topics or question. Indeed, the ideal CBR project is one that is fully collaborative—that is, where community people work with professors and/or students at every stage of the research process: identifying the problem, constructing the research question(s), developing research instruments, collecting and analyzing data, interpreting results, producing the final report, issuing recommendations, and implementing initiatives. This sort of collaboration—in which everyone at the research table is a teacher, learner, and contributor to the final product—means that research roles and relationships are very different from those characterizing conventional academic research. Such research, of course, often does not involve communities at all. But even when it does, there is typically a clear distinction between

researcher and researched, such that the researcher is an “outside expert” with a limited and task-oriented relationship with the community, in contrast to the more multifaceted, informal, and long-term relationship that characterizes CBR.

The collaborative nature of CBR makes it a highly effective mode of teaching, learning, and empowerment for everyone involved. Students benefit from the best combination of experiential and intellectual learning strategies. As equal members of CBR research “teams” they learn how to listen to others, deliberate about problems and issues, arrive at solutions mutually, and work together to implement them—all skills that are important in the increasingly team-oriented work world. This sort of collaboration is capacity-building for community organizations and individuals as well. Training and resources brought to the table by the college or university are transferred to the community partner such that the organization may become self-sufficient and research-capable. And collaboration also enhances the quality of the research in myriad ways, as community members bring to the research table ideas, perspectives, language, and knowledge that inform every stage of the group’s work.

Democratization of Knowledge

The second central tenet of CBR refers to the distinctive ways that this sort of research defines and discovers knowledge. In the same way that CBR requires the equal participation of academics and community partners in the research process, it also values equally the knowledge that each brings to that process—both the experiential, or “local,” community knowledge and the more specialized knowledge of faculty and students (who, we should note, often bring “local” knowledge as well). CBR insists on the democratization and demystification of knowledge as it challenges some basic assumptions about knowledge itself: what constitutes valid knowledge, how it is best produced (and by whom), and who should control it.

CBR also recognizes and, where possible, incorporates multiple and unconventional methods of knowledge discovery. Methods of data collection are developed or chosen not only based on their scientific rigor and appropriateness to the research question, but also because they have the potential for drawing out knowledge that is most relevant and useful; and because they invite the involvement of all the research “stakeholders” in identifying, defining, and struggling to solve the problem that has been identified. This focus on relevancy and usefulness also means that researchers must be flexible and willing to rely on a variety and multiplicity of

data collection methods and instruments, to work to develop unconventional ones, and even to change methodological direction mid-study if it means that the results will be more empowering, more useful, and/or more clearly aligned with community needs.

Last, CBR also requires innovative thinking about the *dissemination* of knowledge. Here, again, the value of the research resides in its potential to produce results that can be used by the community. This means that academics used to thinking in terms of formal jargon-laden research reports and rigid scholarly standards of proof must think first of the need to present results in a form that is comprehensible to neighborhood organizations, politicians, agency personnel, and others who might make use of the research findings. Although this does not preclude formal research reports, it does require that researchers demystify the language of research reporting, present results with clarity and brevity, and consider multiple and even unconventional methods to communicate research findings.

Social Change and Social Justice

This third tenet of CBR distinguishes it, once again, from conventional academic research, whose primary aim is to advance knowledge in a discipline. CBR is undertaken in the interest of community needs and priorities, and the information it produces might address any of community-based organizations’ numerous purposes: improving their programs, promoting their interests, identifying or attracting new resources, understanding or assessing needs of their target populations, explicating issues and challenges, creating awareness of the need for action, or designing strategies for change. In other words, CBR contributes to an information base from which community organizations and agencies can plan and act. At the same time, the research process itself sometimes contributes to social change by empowering and helping to build capacity among community members. Moreover, simply the fact of their coming together to identify collective needs and talk about potential solutions may help revitalize democracy in the community and set into motion structures and processes for social change that extend beyond any particular research project—an outcome that is suggested by Freire’s popular education model.

Our approach allows for a broad definition of “community” that includes many different kinds of organizations and agencies that work with, by, or on behalf of community members. At the same time, the commitment to social justice that is central to our model means that the communities with whom we collaborate in CBR consist of—or represent—people who occupy positions of social, eco-

nomic, and/or cultural disadvantage: they have fewer opportunities and limited access to resources due to the way that the larger society's institutions, social structures, or policies operate. To say that our ultimate goal is to achieve some measure of social justice, then, is simply to say that while the social change that we are able to effect with any one CBR project may be quite limited, our hope is to make some contribution to changing the social arrangements that create and sustain inequality and injustice.

The CBR model we propose requires campus-community collaboration around meeting a community-identified need; new approaches to defining, discovering, and disseminating knowledge; and a commitment to social action for social change. Now we turn to the task of explicating just how these general features translate into somewhat more specific principles that operate in each critical area of CBR: creating and sustaining campus-community partnerships; designing and conducting the research itself; ensuring its value as a teaching and learning experience; and institutionalizing CBR on our campuses.

Developing and Sustaining Campus-Community Partnerships

Mutually beneficial campus-community partnerships are the bedrock of successful CBR. However, creating and sustaining partnerships that are truly equal, collaborative, productive, and long-lasting presents many challenges. What are some principles that govern successful campus-community partnerships that are at the core of CBR? We have identified ten.

The first three principles of successful community-campus partnerships help us to understand what motivates partners to undertake CBR projects together. They delineate some of the important orientations toward one another that successful partners either bring with them or develop jointly in working together. Specifically, successful partners:

- Share a worldview,
- Agree about goals and strategies, and
- Have mutual trust and mutual respect.

Academics and community members can only work well together when they share those elements of a worldview relevant to their work. These include philosophical assumptions about people, communities, and society (Are people capable of governing themselves? What should be the role of government in meeting human needs in a society?) as well as an understanding of what their "community" is. While community partners may have a

fairly clear sense of the community they represent, it may be more problematic on the campus side as there may be ideological and political ramifications associated with committing resources to one group as opposed to another, and the faculty member may even be at odds with the administration about whose interests ought to be paramount.

Agreement about goals and strategies is also important at the beginning stages of a partnership. Here the partners need to have a clear and shared understanding about what they hope to achieve in their work together and how they hope to achieve it—that is, what the different team members' roles and contributions will be, how much input from other community members will be sought, who will make key decisions at different research stages, and so on. Third, partners must come together sharing, or at least preparing to share, mutual trust and respect. Each partner must trust that the other can be counted on to "do the right thing:" exercise good judgment, keep the other's interests in mind, and work for the ongoing success of the partnership. It is also important that each partner share, or work to develop, a faith in the collaborative process itself. This means they have confidence *in the partnership*: that it is worth developing and sustaining, even as it faces hurdles—and perhaps even failures—along the way. Finally, another important dimension of mutual respect and trust is predicated on the assumption that in CBR, multiple sources and kinds of knowledge are both valid and essential to address community needs. When each person at the research table—professor, student, agency staff, community member—is seen as an indispensable source of ideas and information growing from their own experiences, then mutual trust and respect find a fertile setting in which to flourish and grow.

Successful partnerships also depend on certain interaction patterns and norms. These typically emerge over time and tend to be self-perpetuating, such that effective interactions among CBR team members fuel further effective interaction and collaboration. Specifically, partners in successful CBR relationships:

- Share power,
- Communicate clearly and listen carefully,
- Understand and empathize with each other's circumstances, and
- Remain flexible.

In the context of CBR, with its commitment to collaboration, shared power means that wherever possible, campus and community partners participate more or less equally in shaping decisions

about their work together—ideally, with the balance of power tipped toward the community when it comes to basic project decisions. These include what the research question or focus will be, and shaping and implementing change strategies implied by the research. In reality, however, sharing power presents significant challenges to campus-community collaborations facing embedded hierarchies based on differences in class, race, institutional power, and expertise (Shefner & Cobb, 2002). However, when community members are afforded less authority than their academic counterparts, the research is likely to be less valuable to the community, and the partnership reproduces the very sort of inequities that CBR seeks to challenge and change. This makes the goal to share power especially compelling.

Clear and careful communication is another essential principle of effective partnerships. CBR brings together a mix of people from very different worlds and requires that they engage in conversations to accomplish a challenging and complex task: designing and executing a research project. To do this, partners from both sides must work to avoid the dangers of what Freire calls “alienating rhetoric” (1970, p. 77). All participants must strive to understand and be understood, and this means avoiding the inaccessible language of their discipline or community, clarifying meanings and assumptions that might be obscure to outsiders, and otherwise working to develop a common discourse that make subsequent partner interactions inclusive and fruitful. And it almost goes without saying that everyone at the research table not only must be an effective communicator, but also a patient and careful listener.

Just as successful partners learn how to communicate across sociocultural divides, they must also learn to recognize and deal with the various institutional constraints that may obstruct their working together. Community organizations and higher education institutions are very different in size, financial stability and cash flow, organizational structure and accountabilities, levels of bureaucracy, interorganizational relations, and reward structures. They also operate on very different schedules and have different priorities that shape deadlines, due dates, and “time off.” Although these differences can frustrate the growth of strong CBR partnerships, they can be overcome by partners who are committed to good communication, trust, and empathy with one another’s circumstances and constraints. Perhaps more than anything else, *flexibility* (along with some good humor) can go a long way toward helping partners work through logistical and other challenges.

The last three principles governing effective partnerships have to do with desired outcomes or results

of partnering. A CBR partnership’s most obvious objective is to produce useful research. However, successful partnerships are also ones in which:

- Partners’ primary interests or needs are met,
- Partners’ organizational capacities are enhanced, and
- Partners adopt shared, long-range social change perspectives.

Academic and community partners’ needs and interests are bound to diverge in some significant ways beyond their common goal to produce useful and quality research findings. On the academic side, some priority is likely to be given to providing students a valuable learning experience, and perhaps enhancing the faculty member’s teaching credentials or producing publishable research that otherwise furthers their career. The institution might have some goals as well, such as improving its community image, and recruiting and retaining students. On the community side, partners seek concrete benefits for the agency and individuals involved in the research. They need research reports of sufficient quality and usefulness, but also may have some subtle interests: satisfying funders, smoothing inter-agency political tensions, or bringing together a disorganized community. Recognizing and helping each other meet these different needs is important to strong CBR partnerships.

The most successful CBR partnerships are also those that work to increase participants’ skills and knowledge on both campus and community sides of the partnership, so that at the project end, everyone is better prepared to make subsequent partnerships even more productive. This is true for faculty and students who—if they acquire technical skills, information, and familiarity with the community—are able to do more and better work on their next project. Similarly, community members and agency staff who develop a solid understanding of the research process, along with strategies for working effectively with students, can use that knowledge to make the next project more successful.

Last, an important principle of successful CBR partnerships is that partners need to develop and share a long-term perspective, meaning they keep a collective eye on long-term goals and recognize that each short-term CBR project can make an incremental contribution toward the larger goal of fundamental social change. These longer-term goals are likely to fall into three general areas. The first is change in higher education: helping to make the institution more relevant to the community and more effective in preparing students to be active, engaged, knowledgeable citizens. The second has to do with the balance of power in the communi-

ty—to help marginalized groups gain more influence by becoming better organized, more proficient advocates for themselves and their constituents, and better able to mobilize resources on their own behalf. The third area of change is in society-at-large. When it is done well, CBR models participatory democracy at its best and helps participants acquire knowledge, skills, and commitments that they carry to other projects, organizations, classes, jobs, and communities throughout their lives. Given the modest impact of most single CBR projects, a long-term perspective is also important to avoid burnout and retain commitment to the ongoing work of the partnership.

Research Design and Process

A second critical part of CBR is the design and conduct of the research itself. Here, again, our concern is how the central features of the CBR model that we propose—collaboration, democratization of knowledge, and social change—bear on the myriad decisions about the research itself. CBR is both different from, and similar to, conventional academic research. CBR draws on conventional methodological protocols and procedures defined within each discipline and insists on systematic and rigorous inquiry that characterizes research at its best. At the same time, CBR demands new ways of thinking about every aspect of the research process.

First, *collaboration* means that, ideally, everyone involved participates in discussions and decisions at every stage of the research. This helps to ensure that the research is both useful and valid—a result of incorporating the perspectives and ideas of community members into decisions about measures, samples, and modes of data collection. And when community members also participate in carrying out the research, their commitment and capacity are enhanced. However, in reality, this sort of uniformly equal participation throughout the research process is often hard to achieve for various reasons related to the nature of the project, type of community represented, characteristics of the organization with which one is working, and the interests and inclinations of participants from both the campus and community sides of the partnership. Nonetheless, we would argue that involving the community is absolutely critical in two research stages in particular: identifying the research question and making decisions about how the results will be used. Here we suggest that that community involvement is non-negotiable and despite the many challenges, every effort should be made to give priority to the community's voices and interests.

Second, CBR's *unconventional approach to defining and discovering knowledge* has many different

implications for the design and execution of research projects. The important validation of many types of knowledge that comes with true collaboration is one such implication. CBR recognizes multiple sources of expertise: abstract, generalized knowledge of the professor, detailed hands-on experiential knowledge of community members, and the fresh perspective brought by students unencumbered by community traditions and academic canons. This does not mean that academics have nothing special to contribute to the research. On the contrary, they bring both their research expertise and an outsider's perspective that may reveal trends, patterns, and questions not apparent to those immersed in the community's social world. At the same time, as we have pointed out, nonacademics contribute to the research in many important ways: providing language, perspective, history, insight, and much practical information that strengthen the study and enhance the validity and power of results.

Another way that this new approach to knowledge bears on the research itself is that researchers must be prepared to employ any number and variety of data collection methods to achieve the goal of producing information that meets CBR's most important criterion: usefulness to the community. CBR requires that we eschew a rigid "cookbook" approach to social research in favor of flexibility and creativity—which might mean using not only qualitative as well as quantitative approaches, but also even creative media such as video, art, community theatre, or song to present results. CBR must be "user-friendly," hardly a requirement that academics usually consider in research design and execution.

CBR also frequently requires that researchers step outside their discipline and explore topics that may be quite outside their own disciplinary boundaries. Here again, community needs drive the research, and real-world problems are seldom just sociological, or biological, or economic, or physical. Because answers to questions raised in CBR transcend disciplines, here again everyone becomes both a teacher and a learner, willing to acknowledge the limits of their own knowledge and go outside their intellectual "comfort zones" to pursue new information and understandings.

Finally, CBR's *social action* orientation has important implications for the way we think about and conduct research, starting with the important realization that although social change is CBR's ultimate purposes, academics in particular should not take on a project thinking that the research itself will somehow "save the day" for the partnering group or organization. When the partner is an agency, even the most compelling research results

will likely bring about, at most, a minor change in policy, programming, or service delivery—or perhaps a small change in the organization itself. Successful social change at the grassroots level is even more problematic, as academic researchers (and even more, students) are typically unwilling or ill-equipped to engage in the sort of organizing work that is requisite to bringing about any sort of “popular education” or political mobilization of the community (Stoecker, 1999). Rather, a more realistic and useful stance is one that recognizes CBR’s limits—particularly, one that sees it as just one part of the larger social change agenda of an agency or organization. By seeking to understand that larger agenda, the researchers can more effectively tailor their research to its aims, while at the same time accepting the very real limits of their own social change objectives.

Teaching and Learning

Next we consider how the principles governing CBR are brought to bear on teaching and learning. Although much evidence documents that service-learning generally produces a range of positive attitudinal, interpersonal, and academic learning outcomes, researchers and practitioners have recently acknowledged that some service-learning experiences are more valuable than others. They have also begun to identify some different benefits and limitations associated with different kinds of community-based learning experiences. Eyler and Giles (1999) find that positive student learning outcomes are in part dependent on the quality of the service-learning placement and that a “high quality” placement is one in which students can do meaningful work, exercise initiative, have important responsibilities, engage in varied tasks, and work directly with practitioners or other community members, and where their work is clearly connected to the course content. Along the same lines, Mooney and Edwards (2001) suggest that what they call “advocacy service-learning”—emphasizing social justice, social change, real community collaboration, and critical analysis of the structural roots of problems—produces benefits for students that may be absent or de-emphasized in more conventional or “charity-oriented” service-learning experiences. That is, students whose community-based experience requires that they collaborate with community members, critically analyze the sources of problems, consider alternative responses, confront political and ideological barriers to change, weigh the merits of legislative or other political strategies, and experience their own potential for social action are more likely to develop the leadership skills, political awareness, and

civic literacy that represent developmentally richer forms of service-learning. The CBR model we propose here would seem to provide students with just these sorts of experiences.

Another and related appeal of CBR is that its core features—collaboration, democratization of knowledge, and a social change/social justice agenda—dovetail well with the goals of what is often called “critical pedagogy.” Varieties of critical pedagogy, including feminist pedagogy, have made their way into classes at every educational level and inspire the work of teachers committed to teaching and learning in ways that fundamentally challenge and transform—rather than reproduce and legitimate—existing social arrangements, including what are considered some of conventional education’s most oppressive features. Although definitions of critical pedagogy vary, they tend to center on three major goals (adapted from Hartley, 1999), each of which is also embodied in CBR’s principles and practices.

1) *A focus on collective/collaborative learning that de-emphasizes hierarchy, including authority differences between teacher and student.* Perhaps the most obvious consequence of collaboration that is part of our CBR model is that it undermines conventional status differences between campus and community partners. However, with students participating as equal members of a CBR team, other status and authority differences—between professor and student as well as those based on age and experience—are blurred as well. When students work alongside community members and the professor as teachers, learners, and researchers, they are also empowered as they acquire a sense of efficacy about their own abilities and potential contributions.

2) *A demystification of conventional knowledge, including the notion that objectivity is impossible, that knowledge is not neutral, and that people’s “lived experiences” are valid sources of knowledge.* CBR contrasts with conventional academic research, as it also resembles critical pedagogy, with its insistence that scientific research can never be value free, that knowledge is a form of power that should be collectively produced and controlled, and that “local knowledge” of the community is as valid and important to the research as researcher expertise (Small, 1995). In critical pedagogy, these principles are most often applied to the classroom setting, where the students’ experience and knowledge, rather than the teacher’s authority, is the starting point for learning. This becomes a way of validating “positionality”—the distinctive perspectives and worldviews of students with diverse social characteristics that render them marginal in conventional classrooms and within

conventional knowledge frameworks. In CBR, the affirmation of “lived experience” extends to and empowers both community members and students, two groups whose authority does not hold sway in conventional educational or research contexts. Moreover, CBR models for students alternative ways of thinking about the production and control of knowledge: why we do research and who should control knowledge that is produced (Strand, 2000).

3) *A focus on teaching for social change.* Critical pedagogy asserts that education ought to be liberatory rather than oppressive, transformative rather than oriented toward maintaining the status quo. It should contribute to social betterment by challenging existing social relations and structures of privilege, and by empowering students with knowledge, skills, and inclinations that prepare them to be active agents of social change in their lives. CBR does all this. In the course of their involvement in CBR, students develop: the capacity to think critically and analytically about existing structures of oppression and injustice, skills that prepare them to operate as effective change agents in the public sphere, a commitment to values of social justice and human dignity, and a belief in their own and others’ ability to apply their knowledge and skills to bring about improvement in people’s lives.

A final and related way that CBR translates into effective teaching and learning has to do with what is commonly referred to as “civic education.” Most colleges and universities share a commitment to graduating students who are prepared for democratic citizenship, and yet there is widespread concern about the apparent failure of institutions to achieve this, as evidenced by the political apathy, cynicism, disengagement, individualism, and pessimism that characterize even many of our most accomplished graduates. While service-learning (and, indeed, any sort of volunteer work) does seem to raise students’ social and civic consciousness (Eyler & Giles, 1999), a number of critics suggest that preparation for active citizenship requires more than just moral commitments and predispositions. More important are the knowledge and skills necessary to take thoughtful and concerted political action to bring about social change (see Astin, 1999; Barber, 1992; Boyte & Kari, 2000; Kahne & Westheimer, 1996). These include what CBR is most likely to impart: the capacity to think critically about social policies and conditions, the ability to access and evaluate information, the skill to work with others on projects that recognize and require multiple contributions, and a sense of political efficacy that will drive one to take on the challenges of active citizenship in a participatory democracy.

Institutionalizing CBR and Transforming the Academy

Last, we turn our attention to the principles underlying CBR’s effective institutionalization on our campuses and in our communities. When we talk about social change in relation to CBR, we typically think first about its contribution to change in the community. However, in important respects the most significant kind of transformation CBR promises is in colleges and universities themselves, to define, support, and reward their historical missions of teaching, research, and service. In a more immediate sense, CBR practitioners are calling on these institutions to provide organizational and administrative structures necessary to support and sustain CBR work and community partnerships. It is possible (and not uncommon) for individual faculty members to develop partnerships and involve students in CBR projects quite on their own, without any formal institutional supports. However, the different tasks or functions connected with CBR are accomplished far more effectively when institutions organize formally to support this work, in the form of a program-based CBR office, a campus-based center, or even a local/regional consortium.

CBR is complex work that is most effectively carried out with the help of an administrative structure, campus or community-based, organized to address seven functions or tasks. Institutional organization for CBR must do more than carry out these seven functions, however. It must also embody the core features of the CBR model that we propose. In other words, true collaboration, new approaches to defining and acquiring knowledge, and a commitment to social change must become manifest in the structures constructed to undertake this work. The seven tasks or functions are:

- mobilize resources,
- build multiplex (deep) relationships among collaborators,
- create appropriate divisions of labor,
- manage information and authority relations,
- devise rules and control mechanisms for undertaking research projects,
- manage external relationships, and
- construct sustainability mechanisms.

The research process is complex and requires multiple skills and concurrent tasks, and individual researchers are limited by how many activities they can undertake at once, and their own skills and resources. Any given CBR project might require administering an office, coordinating logistics,

ordering supplies, designing a Web page or flyer, translating a questionnaire, attending community meetings, identifying funding sources, managing a staff, producing a mailing, and many other tasks—all of which require resources such as time, money, transportation, technical support, equipment, and familiarity with certain aspects of the community. An administrative structure that engages in ongoing and development activities makes it far easier to identify and *mobilize the many different kinds of resources*, including people, that are necessary to support and sustain CBR.

An organization's *division of labor* is how it uses the resources it has mobilized—in this instance, the range of specialized knowledge and experience that different people bring to a CBR project and partnership. An administrative structure makes it far easier to coordinate and ultimately integrate people with complementary expertise and interest, and create working teams that are more effective and efficient in completing a project. This structure also makes it possible to manage the *multiplexity of relationships* that may emerge from the many different roles and role interrelations of CBR partners and participants. Community organizations in a CBR partnership are also involved in delivering services or organizing their community, managing grants, fundraising, doing community outreach, and advocating in various ways for constituents. Students involved in a CBR project are also taking (other) classes, holding jobs, volunteering in the community, and participating in campus clubs and organizations. Faculty members engaged in CBR may be working on more than one research project, teaching courses, involved in service projects on and off campus, writing grant proposals, and working on articles or books. In short, CBR participants are all likely to be juggling multiple roles and relationships—which may even include interacting with one another in different capacities and along different dimensions. Managing these multiplex role relations is easier when there is an administrative structure in place to help coordinate and support them.

Every CBR project, but especially larger ones, also requires some organized means for *managing information and establishing ordered interactions among the components of the process*. Decision-making authority in modern organizations, and particularly in CBR enterprises, is typically delegated throughout a structure, with participants at various levels being empowered to make particular decisions. Likewise, information flow usually works best when it proceeds in all directions so that those at the top are sharing knowledge and information with others at all levels, thereby enhancing the capacity for sound decision-making throughout the

organization. The development and widespread use of electronic information sharing via email, the Internet, and the Web make greater information flow possible, but they also pose extra challenges in the form of information overload. This makes the development of clear, effective, and relevant communication channels among all the research participants—students, faculty members, and community members—all the more important.

An administrative organization is also useful as a source of *rules and control mechanisms for the research process*. Because CBR must be a multi-person partnership among stakeholders with different roles, expertise, and vested interests, organization mechanisms are needed to govern the process—in contrast to traditional academic research, where the “expert” researcher makes unilateral decisions about the research design and process, guided by the principles and norms of the institution and discipline. CBR centers or offices develop both informal and formal mechanisms to govern the CBR process. Formal mechanisms might include memoranda, research protocols, and agreements about control and ownership of data. These more formal agreements must be supplemented by informal everyday practices: face-to-face interactions, email communication, informal memos, and regular staff meetings of people from every constituency involved in the research.

Because any CBR project is part of a larger social change initiative, a CBR organization also works to influence the larger society through lobbying, organizing, advocacy, and effectively using media. In the most sophisticated CBR structure, the work of *managing external relations* may be handled by professional experts, such as information specialists and lobbyists. More commonly, these tasks are shared by many different people from the campus and community sides of the project. Finally, the ultimate goals of CBR—to empower those in need, to expand opportunities and resources to the disadvantaged, to mitigate structured inequalities—are obviously long term and thus require sustained efforts. Even a CBR center or office that successfully carries out the tasks necessary to complete one or more successful research projects will have difficulty continuing its work over time without seeing that some *sustainability mechanisms* are in place. These include a clear, collaboratively-articulated vision; diverse and ongoing sources of support; strong leadership; an organizational administrative structure well-suited to its work; a plan for continuing mobilization and building human resources (internal and external); and an ongoing evaluation process to ensure quality research and effective partnership practices (adapted from Torres, Sinton, & White, p. 23).

Conclusion

We have proposed a CBR model that is collaborative and community-driven, that democratizes the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and is committed to social change for social justice. CBR offers higher education a powerful and innovative means for combining the traditional academic missions of teaching, service, and scholarship. It also has the potential to help colleges and universities become relevant to their adjacent communities in ways that can ultimately transform both. As CBR gains momentum on campuses and in communities across the country, the challenge is to ensure that these ideals are translated into principles and practices that do not simply reproduce old arrangements, but bring real benefits to communities and fundamental changes to higher education.

Notes

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