



WORKING PAPER #4

Community Learning and Mobilization Through Research

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The Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning (APCOL) project represents a partnership effort across several post-secondary institutions and a range of community-based groups in Toronto (Canada). This project was funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, under its Community University Research Alliance program (2009-2014). Drawing on carefully designed survey and case study methods as well as a participatory action research orientation - the aim of this research project has been to offer the most intensive study of activist learning and development in anti-poverty work in Canada.

The co-editors are pleased to present its official working paper series. The publications contained in this series are linked to APCOL project work and themes. They are authored and co-authored by academic as well as community-based researchers. The material is the copy-right of individual authors or co-authors. Rights for use in the APCOL Working Paper Series is granted to the APCOL project for these purposes only.

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Abstract: This study examines the learnings, the how and the what, of community researchers involved in a participatory action research CURA. It interrogates the impact of involvement on people's willingness and ability to engage in community organizing at the conclusion of a community survey. The results of this research will enable university-researchers and community organizations to better accommodate the learning needs of community-researchers and ensure that they have an experience that empowers them to become more politically active in their communities.

Keywords: Community-University alliance, participatory action research, community-based learning

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND MOBILIZATION THROUGH RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

In this study, I interrogate community researcher learning -- the what and how of learning in community-based research funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The purpose of this research is to strengthen community development through partnerships and to improve community based research processes, empowering community researchers/activists through community-based research. This research seeks to understand how and what community researchers learn through participatory research and if it facilitates a greater commitment to community development work.

SSHRC launched a funded stream for Community University Research Alliance grants (CURAs) in 1999. The purpose of the program is:

To support the creation of alliances between community organizations and postsecondary institutions which, through a process of ongoing collaboration and mutual learning, will foster comparative research, training and the creation of new knowledge in areas of shared importance for the social, cultural or economic development of communities (SSHRC, 2011).

CURA grants' objectives include developing equal partnership between community organizations and researchers, and reinforcing community capacity while strengthening the work of community groups. Learning is a central, if not explicit, goal of the grant--

the hope being that universities will create and mobilize new knowledge, and that communities will have a say in what is being researched and be actively involved in knowledge production. My interest is in examining the extent to which CURAs are an effective environment for community learning and mobilization.

The Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning Project (APCOL) is one such CURA project that focuses on how people **LEARN** to “engage, re-engage, as well as remain unengaged in various forms of anti-poverty activism” (APCOL, 2012). The project partners multiple universities and community organizations across Toronto to explore this learning in relation to various types of anti-poverty initiatives, campaigns, and programming. A neighbourhood based survey was conducted as part of this project. The process of training community researchers, conducting the survey research, and evaluating the survey process serves as the data for this paper. This allows for a close analysis of what community researchers learned through the process and how their experiences impact their own community engagement.

LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community-university research partnerships are intentional relationships between the two, designed for “knowledge generation, knowledge sharing to improve the functioning of community organizations and the well-being of communities, and research education and training to improve the research skills both of university students and community service providers” (Currie et al., 2005 in King et al., 2009, p. 290). Alliances are a specific form of relationship between the university and community, focused around specific projects that are member inclusive (Lederer, 2005). Community-university research partnerships have three main functions:

- a) Knowledge generation,
- b) knowledge sharing to improve the functioning of community organizations and the well being of communities, and

c) research education/ training to improve the research skills both of university students and community service providers (Currie et al., 2005 in King, 2009).

These partnerships are increasingly popular (Woloshyn, 2005) and attempt to meet the goals of multiple stakeholders. They have the potential to foster strong relationships of mutuality and produce rigorous, relevant research that can be mobilized in multiple sites.

One of the explicit goals embedded within community-university alliances is that of mutual learning, and yet many reports from these partnerships neglect to describe what community members learn through the process of engagement in the research project or how their learning happens. While many CURA recipients comment on the quality of their partnerships in the academic reports and presentations that emerge from their grants (Israel et al., 2006, Lederer and Season, 2005, Williams, Labonte, Randall, and Muhajarine, 2005), few articles focus primarily on the learning that happens within a project, particularly on the part of community partners. These articles overlook the important role community-university partnerships and participatory research projects play as sites of formal and informal adult learning.

In 1999, Foley argued that “for too long adult education research and scholarship has focused on the minutiae of individual learning and the very restricted area of formal education.”(p. 138). His work established social action as an important site of learning, and other authors have also advocated this position, moving the field more deeply in this direction (Hall, 2006; Hall and Turay, 2006; Walters and Manicom, 1996; Cunningham and Curry, 1997; English, 2004; Crowther, 2006, Sawchuk, 2003; Church et al 1998; Bascia, 2008). These authors offer diverse forms of social action as venues for learning and transformation, including community organizing (Wharf, Clague, and Higgins, 1997; Stoecker and Vakil, 2002; Alinsky, 1972), popular education (Freire, 1970; Foley, 1998; Walters and Manicom, 1996), social movements (Hall 2006; Hall and Turay, 2006; Kilgore, 1999; Welton, 1993;), and civic engagement (Schugerenky, 2003; Mayo, 2000), among others. Crowther argues that these are “dissonant spaces

for learning and dissident sites for knowledge production (2006, p. 171). Additionally, Johnston claims that they “challenge and radicalize far more than any other courses in lifelong learning or community education” (2003, in Crowther, 2006). These authors compellingly argue that social action should be understood as a location for learning.

Participatory action research (PAR) comfortably straddles the literature of community-university partnership and learning through social action. By focusing on local community initiatives and building partnerships between the university and the organizations involved, participatory action research strives to develop research programmes that benefit and include the participation of community members. In this approach the academic and community-based researchers are co-learners and there is community participation in the development of the research and its use for education and change (cf. Minkler, 2000). Since the 1980s, many Adult Education researchers have conducted participatory research and documented the learning that occurs within such projects (Hall, 1985; Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, and Jackson, 1993; Guevara, 1996, Kapoor, 2004; Kidd and Byram, 1979, Gaventa, et al, 1988; Tandon, 1981).

According to Maguire (1987), participatory research is a three-part process, constituted by social investigation, education, and action to share the creation of social knowledge with oppressed people. She claims,

This three-part process of knowledge creation is more than a new set of research techniques. It is a systematic approach to personal and social transformation. Participatory research aims to develop critical consciousness, to improve the lives of those involved in the research process, and to transform fundamental societal structures and relationship (p. 3).

This methodology relies on a Freirean idea of the educative process (Freire, 1970), in which people first reflect on their experiences, then make connections among their co-community members, and then use that information to develop a systemic analysis of

the problematic. Participatory research was born from popular education theory and practice (Hall, 1993) and strives to create knowledge with and for marginalized communities so that they are better able to change their living conditions. Praxis, the unity of theory and action, is a central tenet. All knowledge produced is intended to be mobilized in the interest of social transformation.

As an explicitly liberatory research strategy, it is not enough for people to merely understand the causes of the problems in their communities, they must also work collectively to change the systems that negatively impact their lives (Maguire, 1987; Sohng, 1996; Alvarez and Gutierrez, 2001). Within PAR, significant emphasis is placed on the utilization of research results by the community partners, and many research agendas include the action component as part of the research project data (Paradis, 2009, Gaventa, 1988, Sohng, 1996)). Gaventa (1991, p.121) describes participatory research as “simultaneously a tool for the education and development of consciousness as well as mobilization for action,” underscoring the need for mobilization in relation to the learning and knowledge mobilization components of a participatory research project. Park makes similar connections, declaring that “participatory research should support the empowerment of participants and communities in three ways: it should leave them feeling more capable and confident, it should help them exercise real political influence, and it should build skills which can be applied to other self-initiated projects” (Park, 1993 in Paradis, 2009). These authors make it clear that building capacity for social action is an integral component of participatory research, and that through the dialectically related research-action process, community organizations and universities can create learning spaces that enable and require social action for transformation.

In this article, I explore a component of a participatory action research project as a site of learning. The community-based survey undertaken by community activists in three Toronto neighbourhoods represented a particular type of social engagement that blended research, community organizing, and civic engagement, and which offered participants opportunities to learn skills, investigate their communities, and develop critiques of learning and social change strategies in their neighbourhoods.

CASE STUDY

The paper examines the survey component of a five-year funded alliance between three universities and eight local community organizations in Toronto called the Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning Project (APCOL). Among the many components of this project, the survey represents an attempt to gain a big-picture understanding of the anti-poverty organizing and civic engagement that occurs every day in Toronto.

Examining grassroots popular education and learning strategies in a sample of the highest poverty neighbourhoods, researchers are conducting a survey administered by community researchers and coordinated by university staff. The survey is a mixed method approach that combines Likert scales, multiple choice responses and descriptive qualitative responses. Among the qualitative questions, it asks participants about their assessments of their geographic communities, their involvement in community activity or campaigns, and what they have learned through their involvement. For the purposes of this paper, I examine the role of the community researchers who collected survey data through interviews with people in their communities in order to understand how community researchers' participation impacted their views of community activism in their neighbourhood and their role within that work.

Participants were selected based on their status as community researchers who have completed the survey process for the CURA research project. Participants were recruited from three sites of survey collection. All are active volunteers or staff within the community organizations and represent the racial and economic diversity of their neighbourhoods. Three focus groups representing different neighbourhoods were conducted. The first focus group included two participants from the local community organization. The second included six participants from the community organization and two university-affiliated participants. The third included six community researcher participants and five university-affiliated participants.

As part of the facilitation of a reflective process, community researchers mapped their neighbourhoods. They collectively drew the geographic landscape, identifying

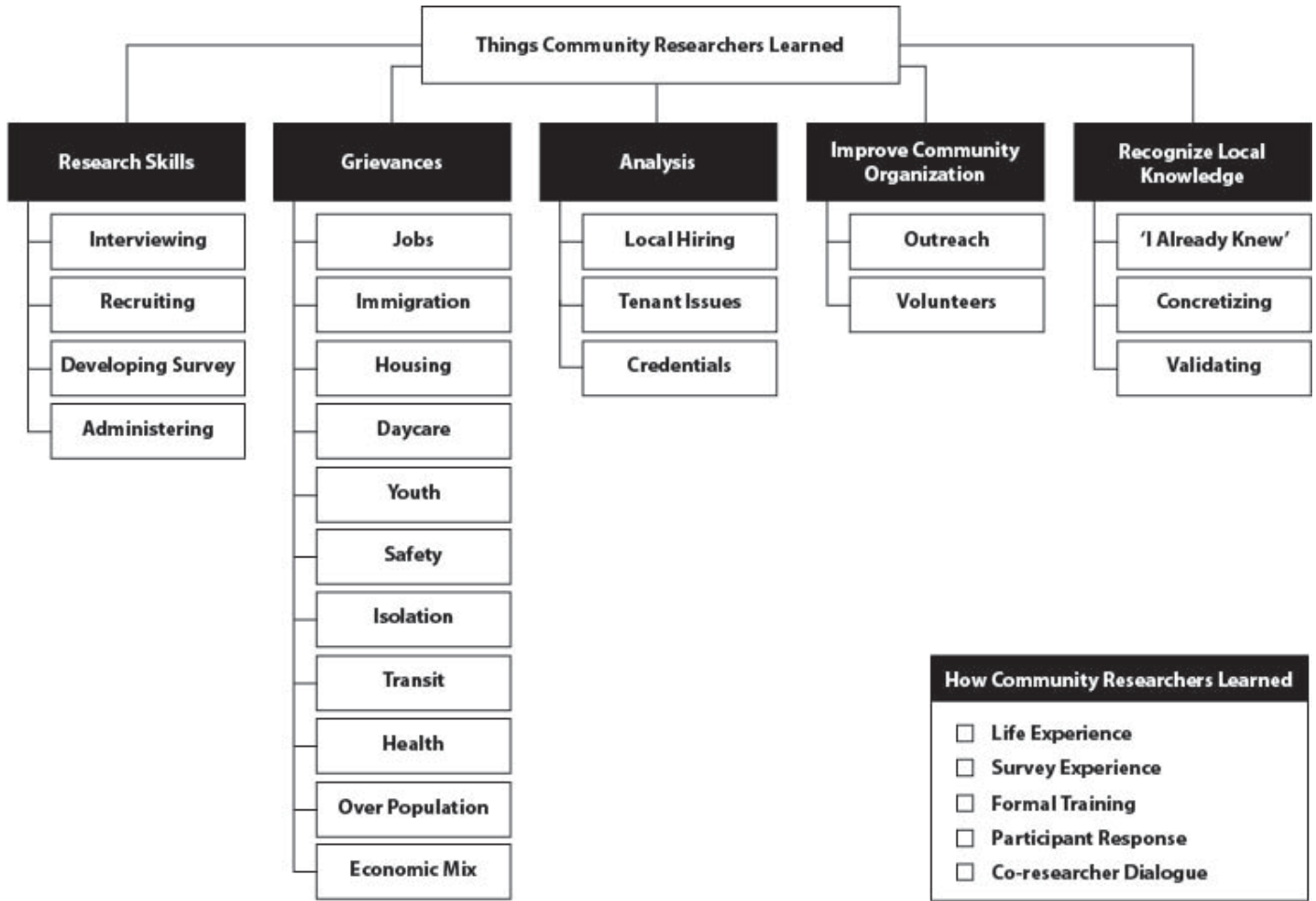
boundaries of their neighbourhood and drawing the important areas of social life. They drew neighbourhood institutions, assets, and places people gather. Then they were asked to note the places they learned about or discovered through the community survey process. This question proved to be instructive, precisely because community researchers said they had not learned about new things in the neighbourhood and could not add anything to their maps as a result.

Throughout the mapping process, participants were asked to discuss what they had heard from the people they had interviewed, what they learned about their communities and how, and how they planned to integrate this new information into their lives.

Focus groups were transcribed in full and community maps were photographed and entered as part of the transcription. Codes and categories were developed through an abbreviated grounded theory process and iterative cycles of analysis. After the first transcription, initial codes emerged. Those codes were added to and categorized after the review of the second transcription. Major themes of what people learned included skill building, grievance construction, systemic analysis, and acknowledging local knowledge. Unfortunately, people did not learn community organizing skills or feel like they could take action based on this information, and this led to feelings of disempowerment. This study is only partially complete and is limited by several factors. The first is that only three focus groups were conducted, one of which had only two participants. The focus groups were shorter than expected and did not saturate the categories in a way that the community researchers could have. Additionally, the focus groups were conducted before the survey data was processed and analyzed, and reflect only the learning that happened through the training and data collection process. This paper represents a mid-process review and highlights both the successes and challenges of the research process. Many of the challenges identified here have been addressed in later research processes, as other authors describe within the APCOL Working Papers.

ANALYSIS

Based on the three focus groups, community researchers' experiences were categorized and broken down by categories and themes to explicate the vast amount of data available. The diagram below visually organizes the things community researchers learned and how they learned them.



THINGS THAT WERE LEARNED

Community researchers immersed in survey collection learned through formal and informal means and in multiple environments. They acknowledged the value of the knowledge they already had about their neighbourhood, gained research skills, learned how to improve their community organizations, developed grievances based on the

survey interviews, and constructed an initial analysis of the causes and potential solutions to some of those grievances.

RECOGNIZING THEIR OWN KNOWLEDGE

Notably, what was relearned or acknowledged was the amount of information and knowledge community researchers already had. They said that they didn't really learn new things from the process, but it helped them to know what they already knew. When asked if they had learned of any new resources that people access in their neighbourhood, one researcher said, "No. We already knew! I learned about the issues and needs of the people, but not about any new things." Repeatedly, community researchers said things like "Yeah, I knew it from living here." The process helped them to bring together what they knew from their experiences and to situate those experiences within a larger understanding of their communities. This recognition of the local knowledge also motivated some community researchers to do something about the problems they perceived in their communities. When asked about how the research had affected her, a community researcher said, "It didn't change what I really knew. It just made me more, ok things need to get done. More like, Ok, Action, that's what I'm about."

RESEARCH SKILLS

One significant thing community researchers learned was how to do research. This is the area where learning was most evident. Community researchers gained interviewing and research administration skills that informed their practice.

The interview skills community researchers gained happened through formal learning in a training setting, where faculty and graduate students facilitated lectures and practice sessions for community researchers. The more important environment was through the experience of interviewing. From the experience, community researchers developed strategies for improving their interviews. Community researchers were quite reflexive in

their learning, and with each survey they conducted they refined their practice and informed each other's practice.

Community researchers also developed their own language for talking about the survey and why it was important, rejecting the framing the university provided. Several said things like, "I think you should not go with this 'anti-poverty' thing. People don't understand this, so go something like house issue, home issue, employment issue, then they'll understand you." They developed strong critiques of the survey and in some instances supplanted the sections that did not work for them with different explanations or descriptions that they felt were more appropriate to their community and suggested changes. This included reframing the questions in the survey to be less repetitive, developing the survey with more resident input, incentivizing participation, and employing someone from the community to serve as the liaison between the community organization and the university. These suggestions represent significant learning about how one conducts research and may enable the community researchers and university researchers to become better researchers in the future.

IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Through the process of interviewing community members and reflecting, community researchers developed several recommendations for improving their community organizations. Organizational outreach to the community was a key area that community members reflected on. In one site, community researchers connected immigrants' need for Canadian work experience through volunteer work to the organization's need for outreach volunteers in an innovative way. One researcher said,

"This office, they need to communicate with everyone in the neighbourhood, so they should use volunteers for this purpose. I can take their brochures, or their literature or whatever to buildings. So it can be a small job. But whenever there is some seminar [at the community organization], they have to struggle a lot to gather people, so volunteers

can do this work. The problem is that there are potential volunteers, but they are not being used.”

Other community researchers learned how limited the outreach of the community organization was and were surprised by how few people were familiar with the services available to them. Some community researchers immediately began to develop strategies to close the gap between services offered and what was perceived to be available in the neighbourhood.

Additionally, the research process gave community members a space to critically reflect on their community organization. One set of community researchers made connections between the widespread lack of local hiring in their neighbourhood and the lack of local hiring within the organization. As one posed, “So if the [community organization] is not doing that, how do you expect some big place like Coca-Cola to do it?” The researchers recognized the inconsistencies that were playing out within the organization and wanted the community organization to modify its hiring practices so that it would be more aligned with the values the community researchers held.

GRIEVANCE CONSTRUCTION

The community researchers involved all conducted surveys in their neighbourhoods. Through these interviews, they learned about the specific problems that the survey probed, focusing on housing, food security/nutrition, safety, education and health. From this process, community researchers gained an intimate understanding of the problems of their communities. This was a process of “learning about the problems of the people,” as one researcher said, as they interviewed and learned from their neighbours. This process enabled community researchers to construct grievances, as they became experts on what was going on in their neighbourhoods. In each neighbourhood the responses were different, but reflected the specific concerns of the community members. The areas researchers commented on included youth issues (such as gangs, lack of activities, and youth as targets of police), housing issues (including affordability,

low-quality, security, and poor management), unemployment (especially for newcomers), immigration (including deportation and credential problems), transit, daycare, isolation, over-population, the economic mix of a neighbourhood (such as gentrification), gender roles and culture, and others. One community researcher said, “I learned a lot of the issues. I was thinking, I am living in this area I surveyed last year also, but this survey was different from last year.”

SYSTEMIC ANALYSIS

In some cases, researchers were able to identify patterns in responses and move beyond the basic iteration of grievances. They began to develop an analysis of the causes of problems and think systemically about the broader phenomena. Out of the more than 15 grievances named, community researchers only began to dig deeper on three.

From the grievance of unemployment, both groups of community researchers identified the lack of local hiring as a central impediment to people from the community gaining employment. One researcher said,

Another thing is that here we have a big mall, lots of stores, but the people who are working here, most of them are coming from the other communities. Why they are not giving us – we have qualifications, we are hard workers... like, most of my participants they said, “Why they are not giving us chance to work here first?”

Many other researchers shared this assessment. They looked at the mall, the stores, the local factories, and identified that the companies hired from outside the community and could have provided a significant numbers of jobs to people within the neighbourhood. They did not understand why this was happening, but questioned the bigger picture. They understood that it was endemic to the area and that this could be a key improvement if they could change the hiring practices.

Also related to unemployment, one group of community researchers interrogated the problem of recognizing credentials for well-educated newcomers to Canada. They not only understood that unemployment was a problem in their neighbourhood, but also understood the reasons so many newcomers could not get good jobs. In some cases, the analysis was coming directly from the community members who were interviewed, and with other researchers the analysis came from hearing multiple stories and fitting the pieces together themselves. Community researchers felt obligated to act on what they perceived to be a systemic injustice, saying,

I want to write to people, the Canadians who work in embassies back in my country, and ask why are they encouraging people to come here, when we say “This is the qualification we have, this is the type of professionals we are,” why are they encouraging and saying this is available, and when we come here we're left alone? Because that's what happened to ALL these people here! And ask them why? It's not that people are desperate to come here, they want to come here because Canada is a better place, but they *are* professionals in their field. Once they come here and they say “No, we are not recognizing you, I don't recognize this'.” It doesn't make any kind of sense.

Community researchers also identified patterns in the low quality of affordable housing, where one building management company was not meeting its obligations to tenants in numerous buildings within the neighbourhood. Because researchers were interviewing multiple people, they were able to see the bigger picture in a way that individual respondents could not. Below is an example of the way the community researchers identified broader problems in the social housing in the neighbourhood:

Robin: One of my respondents, she was living in Flemingdon, I think she was living in 'housing,' one of the problems she mentioned was security, security is not safe. Because if they lock their stuff in the downstairs, then

they break the lock and remove everything. Her main concern was this, that it's not safe.

Linda: It's the same thing in Thorncliffe. We have a problem in 26, 27 and 50 – it's the landlord, you wrote the letter, or you have a problem in the apartment, he only just wrote the letter to say you have to pay the rent, and that's it. So that problem is, because I live in 27, and we have the same problem – they broke the locks, and they steal all the things. So I think yeah, we have that problem in 27, 26...

Keith: I think the administration is the same for these buildings. Transglobe. I haven't seen such unprofessional people in my life. Whatever – you abuse them, you scold them, there is no result.

Jenny: Wait, you live in one of those buildings? Ah, you live in 26...

The conversation continued, as community researchers began to discuss the ways they could hold the management company accountable for the poor conditions in their buildings. This was among the most concrete examples of community researchers translating their community surveys into an analysis and strategizing around collective actions they could take.

These examples demonstrate an initial interrogation of the grievances that community researchers were introduced to through the surveys and their lived experiences in the community. I would argue that their understandings of the issues, while sophisticated in some respects, are still in the formative stages, and with more time, reflection, and investigation, they would deepen their analysis and identify root causes and potential interventions.

HOW COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS LEARNED

One of the interesting outcomes of the community mapping sessions was the learning that happened during the focus groups. Many of the learnings became concrete for community researchers through the mapping and reflection processes. As they discussed the problems they faced in attempting to arrange or conduct interviews, they identified their solutions. The space to reflect and share proved valuable to the community researchers. One said, “Mind you, I’m new to this place, so it’s learning as...so this is actually a good activity for me to just visualizing the area.” The process of documenting what she already knew was helpful in concretizing and validating knowledge. Other exchanges between community researchers allowed them to share information about their communities as they negotiated the co-construction of their maps. They shared resources and assets, such as services or a daycare, discussed current events, for example, recent police raids, and identified cultural spaces that other community researchers had not known before, like a Sri Lankan community mosque, a Filipino church, or a Colombian community group. This process of reflection was important to their learning and something one community member specifically wanted more opportunities for. She said that having more reflective spaces within the project would “strengthen it, it would support the volunteers who are doing the research, and at the same time, the agency who’s trying to sort it out.”

DISCUSSION

While researchers learned through their experiences of conducting research, there was one particular gap observed. As described in the literature, participatory action research entails a commitment to social action and should build capacity for social change within the community. Yet within our survey process, as participants identified grievances and built skills, they did not yet reach the point of self-organizing to address the problems they identified in their communities through the survey process. The survey in and of itself was an insufficient tool for generating a strong enough critique and mobilizing people to action, which led to complicated feelings about the research project.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING SKILLS

Among the more surprising findings was that community researchers felt disempowered by the survey process. They reflected that they had learned/relearned about all the problems in their communities and they felt like there was nothing they could do about all the grievances they were constructing. When asked what they would do with the information they learned, one respondent said, “What do you mean? Like we have to take action or something? If we had power we could say anything. We don’t have power.” Another said, “Mostly the problem is employment, so we can’t do anything about it, you know. We can’t hire them, because we don’t have jobs for ourselves.” The process of survey collection left community researchers feeling “powerless” and without a clear means of acting on their problems. Where some participatory research clearly focuses on collective action, this case leaves community researchers in a gap between information and activation. Most troubling was the statement by a community researcher about her feelings: “It’s not powerless, like we take our issues, like for example our meeting today. You people (the university) know about our issues, we, hopefully, like you said you will be talking about these things in the future, so we feel a little bit powerful, because we brought those issues to you.” She abdicated her power to the university, and rather than feel obligated (personally or as a community researcher) to fight to change her community, she sees the university affiliates as responsible for taking the information and creating whatever changes they see fit.

One exception occurred where community researchers identified mobilization as a possibility that emerged from their interviews. Another emerged as a response to a university faculty member. When prompted about starting a campaign, one community researcher said, “If you have a demonstration or a walk-out, I’ll be there.” While this respondent is willing to take action, he, like his other community researcher colleagues, defers to the university affiliates to take responsibility for coordinating the action. Rather than building a sense of capacity, the survey process inadvertently left community researchers feeling dependent on the university to address the issues raised by the survey questionnaires.

Community researchers were ready to act and looking for an outlet for the grievances they had constructed and the analyses they were developing. One researcher said, “Unless we get someone who is in power, like a government representative, or some employer, unless we engage such people, it is useless. I mean, sitting together and having a cup of tea, or having dinner or lunch – afterwards it is of no use.” He identifies the reflection process as useless and sees no connection between the research work and the potential to change policies. Despite the clear desire among the community researchers to improve their communities, the survey process seemed disconnected from any actions that might be taken on with and on behalf of their communities.

At the other site, participants also struggled to put their information into action. One community member asked of the data:

“Where is it heading? Like, ok this research takes place, we get all this information, it’s a great initiative, it’s a great work, and I’m glad that we are doing it, ‘cause one thing is to make sure people’s stories are told, but where are we heading? But how impactful will it be? How realistic will it be? Are specific people going to be engaged in the process of achieving whatever it is?”

Without a focus on action or a clear venue for community researchers to continue their involvement, the community researchers struggled against feelings of disempowerment and irrelevance.

CONCLUSIONS

APCOL’s survey process demonstrates that community-university alliances do produce important sites of collaborative learning. What is clear, though, is that learning more about one’s community, gaining skills, affirming one’s knowledge of the community, and developing grievances are critically important, yet insufficient in themselves to constitute participatory action research partnerships as defined in the literature. We discovered that if our goal is indeed to strengthen the community engagement work that is going on

in neighbourhoods, we must do more than train community activists to survey their peers. The critical learning opportunities lay in developing a collective analysis of what their respondents have said, why they have said it, and what it means for their community. This analysis must be tied to mobilization strategies that enable people to feel empowered and begin to challenge the problems their surveys unearth. Through this reflection process, it became clear that much of the learning opportunities available through this community-university survey partnership would be embedded in the analysis and action, and that without concerted attention, the opportunity to truly leverage and mobilize community action based on the results of the survey could be lost.

The disconnect between learning and action became a central discussion point among the university-affiliated participants, and steps were taken to continue the survey process beyond what was originally planned in order to address feelings of irrelevance. In collaboration with community partners, we designed and implemented an innovative Collaborative Data Analysis process that we hoped would bridge the praxis gap that our initial survey process failed to address.

This CURA survey process served as an environment for learning, and continues to undergo an ongoing process of refinement, analysis, and partnership between and among community and university researchers. Through research training and practice in interviewing, community researchers built capacity for further research and knowledge mobilization. They learned how to recruit participants for surveys and developed recommendations for improved administration of the survey. From the surveys they conducted, community researchers understood the problems in their neighbourhoods and developed grievances. From some of these grievances, community researchers began to develop a structural analysis of the problems they faced. They also learned ways to improve the community organization they were a part of. Finally, they recognized and validated all the information they already knew about their community. While the survey alone was insufficient to mobilize the kinds of social action that participatory action research seeks, we remain hopeful that later stages of Collaborative

Data Analysis and community reporting of results will move us closer to fulfilling the goals of empowering data-driven community development campaigns.

The community survey may yet be an important tool for constructing grievances, developing a systemic analysis, and planning actions to address the problems the community members and researchers identified. But the initial process has so far only facilitated community researchers through part of a Freirean process (Freire, 1970)—we have asked people to reflect on their experiences and made connections, but have only begun to develop the systemic analysis that would provide the foundation for a campaign that would seek to address the root causes of the concerns community members raised. In all, the process was ripe with opportunities for learning, and though the survey component may have fallen short of its potential to catalyze collective learning for social change, there are opportunities to continue to leverage the experience and data in ways that will strengthen the communities involved and fully realize the goals of partnership in community-university partnerships.

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