

# Establishing Principles for Community-Based Research: Story & Power in the Community Research Collaborative

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## Abstract

Academic health centers and their universities are increasingly encouraged to engage in more community-based and participatory approaches to research. Yet, traditional ethics guidelines and regulations are inadequate for addressing the dynamics of community-campus research partnerships. In this article, the authors share stories from the Community Research Collaborative (CRC), a collective of community leaders and faculty that published guidelines for community-based research (CBR). The CRC offers a case study in how a collaborative process of developing CBR guidelines can create space for partners to wrestle with the historical and present-day harms carried out in indigenous and minoritized communities in the name of science and to imagine alternative ways of working together collectively. This case study highlights the complex power dynamics inherent in community-campus partnerships and how storytelling can play a role in unearthing and addressing them. It positions the work of the CRC as incomplete and evolving while offering a foundation on which other institutions could carry out similar processes in their localities.

**Keywords:** community-based research, counterstories, research ethics, campus-community partnerships, community engagement

## Introduction

In July 2020, the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Research Collaborative (CRC) gathered on Zoom for its first meeting. Over the course of the next nine months, this Salt Lake-based group developed a set of guiding principles for building equitable community-based research (CBR) partnerships. In this article, we use community-based research as an umbrella term for a large family of research methodologies that share some key characteristics: they are focused not only on understanding or exploring an issue but also on implementing solutions; they focus on questions meaningful to a community and engage both professional researchers and community members as experts; and they involve partners sharing power and collaborating to develop and carry out the research together. The CBR principles — along with stories, advice, and tools — were shared in a report titled, *In It Together: Community-Based Research Guidelines for Communities and Higher Education* (CRC, 2021). The report is now being used as the foundation for developing training, online resources, grants, a community-based review board, and other projects as well as being shared around the country.

Academic health centers and their universities have been increasingly pushed toward more community-based and participatory approaches to research. Some of the forces leading this shift include funding agencies, federal regulations, community pressure to demonstrate value, and paradigm shifts toward focusing on social determinants of health (Teufel-Shone, 2011; Vitale et al., 2018; Wilkins & Alberti, 2019). However, the path toward implementing CBR in a sustained, ethical, and cross-institutional manner is neither clear-cut nor easy. Traditional ethics guidelines and regulations have little to say about the dynamics of equitable research partnerships, which require we ask fundamental questions like: Who decides what research questions are important? Who benefits from research, and who defines those benefits? What kinds of expertise are valued in research operations, and what kinds are marginalized? Who are researchers ultimately accountable to? Questions like these cannot be answered by academic institutions alone.

This article presents the CRC as a case study of how a collaborative process of developing CBR guidelines can create space for academic researchers and community leaders to wrestle with these questions together. The need for the guidelines arose from conversations among university staff, faculty, and community leaders connected to University Neighborhood Partners (UNP), a department of the University of Utah that has been carrying out place-based (Hodges & Dubb, 2012) or hyperlocal (Dostilio, 2019) engagement in Salt Lake City's west side neighborhoods since 2002. Community residents related their frustrations with university-based research and the uncertainties of collaborating with new faculty partners. Faculty and staff, meanwhile, noted that many researchers were interested in partnering with community but often did not have a background in CBR methods.

We, the authors of this paper, do not represent everyone who took part in the project, but we bring a range of perspectives and positionalities. We are gratified by the guidelines and their development and hope that the report can be helpful to other academic health science centers, universities, and community-based practitioners. However, as with CBR more broadly, the process was as important as the product. As we explore in the sections below, implementing a thoughtful, collaborative, and locally relevant process offered benefits to members and served as a springboard for individual and collective action. Along the way, our process provided insights into the complex challenges of power in community-campus partnerships and the role that storytelling can play in unearthing and addressing them.

## About the Collaborative

The Community Research Collaborative was convened and facilitated by a group of four, which included two community engagement professionals and two faculty members. We spent several months identifying and inviting members to join the Collaborative. We knew that the group could not be too big if we were to conduct meaningful dialogue and relationship building. We also knew that to be seen as legitimate at the university and in local communities, it had to be inclusive of as many perspectives and positionalities as possible and include leaders who could champion the work in a different community and university spaces.

Including the facilitators, the group had 22 participants. About half of the group comprised people who had leadership roles in local communities through networks, nonprofits, institutions, and community-based organizations. They worked in health and health care, mental health, education, youth work, community organizing, and mutual aid. They were rooted in local Pacific Islander, African/African American, Latinx/Hispanic, and Native communities. These members all had some experience conducting research or collaborating with academics, and all worked in communities that have long faced extractive and colonizing practices within academic research (Smith, 1999). We had a very small budget for this project but offered gift cards to community leaders to honor the fact that they were volunteering time outside of work hours.

The other group members were faculty representing the university and academic health science center schools. They came from academic units such as health, education, architecture and planning, nursing, social and behavioral sciences, social work, and cultural and social transformation. They included tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty at different points in their careers, all with significant community engagement experience. We invited two deans, two directors of community engagement centers, and the Vice President for Research as ex officio members who lent their institutional support to the effort and offered feedback. These administrators helped disseminate the report in areas of the university that are less familiar with community-based research and highlighted the importance of extending community engagement beyond the departments and colleges already doing this work. To bring in a broader array of

perspectives, we also asked CRC members to share a draft of the guidelines with a few people in their communities and elicit feedback — we honored these individuals as reviewers in the final report.

This assemblage was the second incarnation of the CRC. The first was convened by University Neighborhood Partners (UNP) in 2007. The original CRC published the report *Guidelines for Community-Based Research* (CRC, 2007), which laid out three core principles for mutually beneficial research partnerships, a description of UNP’s role in CBR, guiding questions, and challenges and opportunities for the future of CBR in the area. The report guided UNP’s work to facilitate research partnerships and advance CBR at the university level. For example, the report was used to launch an internal CBR seed grant. However, over time the document fell out of heavy use, some parts became out of date, such as the list of publication outlets, and research partnerships began to grow beyond this earlier stage of CBR at the university.

By relaunching the CRC and generating a new set of guidelines, we had hoped to bring the guidelines up to date and make them more broadly applicable at a time when equity and justice issues were gaining ground in higher education. Specifically, we wanted to a) integrate new knowledge generated locally and in the broader field of CBR since 2007; b) broaden beyond UNP and put out a report that spoke to groups across the campus and the state; c) build new momentum behind CBR efforts with particular attention to questions of equity and ethics. While UNP was still a major driver of the project, this work was carried out in partnership with the Lowell Bennion Service-Learning Center and other hubs of community-engaged scholarship around campus.

We held six full-group meetings facilitated by Ana Antunes, Adrienne Cachelin, Paul Kuttner, and our colleague Andi Witczak over nine months, along with a series of one-on-one meetings with all members and opportunities for online engagement. In broad strokes, the process began and ended with storytelling. We began by sharing individual stories of our experiences with research; stories that often challenged the dominant narrative of research as an unalloyed good and academic institutions as the main holders of expertise (Dutta et al., 2021). We ended with a collective narrative of what research can be when university-based and community-based researchers build equitable, power-sharing partnerships — when they are truly in it together. Along the way, we grappled with a dynamic and sometimes messy process of eliciting and combining diverse perspectives, uncovering and challenging assumptions, and learning from one another.

## Reflecting on the CRC Process

In the following sections, we describe key steps in our process. In each section, co-authors share stories and perspectives that shed light on different facets of the work. We offer this collage of

short pieces of writing as an authentic reflection of the multivocality and diversity of experience within our group and as a way to reveal insights embedded in the guideline development process.

### Starting Out: Relationships, History, and Trust

We launched our first meeting with a land recognition and song from an indigenous member of the collaborative. We saw this as a way to situate our work within the long history of peoples in Utah building and sharing knowledge about the world — a history that began millennia before any college or university was built — and in the kinds of indigenous knowledge bases that have been simultaneously marginalized and extracted by western researchers (Smith, 1999).

Many members did not know one another, so understanding and trust had to be built. This was particularly important with virtual meetings, which do not make space for informal relationship building over food or before and after meetings. So, we ran a one-on-one relationship-building activity near the beginning of each meeting. We had the participants split into pairs to spend a few minutes answering a question that elicited discussions of identity, culture, and life history, including prompts like “What is your name and what does it mean?” and “If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?”

As we began to work during our first meeting, we had people split up into small break-out groups, a technique we often used to create spaces in which everyone had a chance to engage. We asked people to share what they thought of when they heard the words research and community and to share stories of positive and negative experiences with research. One theme that emerged from these discussions was the history of harm carried out in the name of research and the legitimate distrust many communities have of scientists and experts. Melsihna Folau, for example, shared how the history of atomic bomb testing near her first home in Micronesia has permanently shaped her attitude toward those she calls “important white men.” Below, she expands on the story she shared.

#### ***Melsihna Folau, United Micronesian Women***

“This is one child’s story: one of thousands, too small and invisible to the naked ear to be heard. I live in Rose Park, Utah. It is a desert land dissimilar to my childhood home of Pingelap Atoll, one of thousands of islands/atolls that dot the massive Pacific Ocean. Yet, in a visceral, sad way, these two places are similar. Pingelapese and Southern Utahns are atomic bomb ‘downwinders.’ They have experienced similar cruel negligence and insensitivity of ‘important white men’ and their actions.

“For what? For the good of mankind, it has been argued. Southern Utahns are still suffering from atomic testing fallouts from the late 1950s. So are the Pingelapese, as downwinders from sixty-

seven bombs that were detonated from 1946–1958 on the nearby Enewetak Atoll and Bikini Atoll (Hezel, 1995). The magnitude of those bombs equates to 1.6 Hiroshima bombs every day for 12 years. The massive effects are still creating unexplained health problems among the natives of the Marshall Islands, the downwinders like us Pingelapese, and others that eat from the Pacific Ocean, generations later.

“My Dad/Pahpa died from colon, thyroid, and brain cancers at the age of 55. I was barely 13. My Grandpa Ramon passed away from similar cancers four years prior, after years of suffering. (I still remember the wailing and weeping, even from his dogs, that day.) Similar cancers killed Grandma, three of my four paternal uncles, and one of two aunts. Numerous cousins from Enewetak Atoll never made it to their 50’s, nor 40’s, nor their teens. Some never made it out of the womb, known as “jelly babies.”

“As a young child, I learned that there had been so much trust put into the ‘important white men’ and their words. These “admirals” promised a lot. As a college student in the early 1980’s, some 25+ years after the last detonation, all I could find on the “Enewetak and Bikini Atolls Atomic Testing” was empirical data: location selection processes, chemical compositions, half-lives of the elements, etc. Also, I learned that the piece of cloth called “bikini” was named from the intense flashing of the atomic bombs on Bikini Atoll. Yet, I didn’t find the devastating human stories behind the vaporizing destruction. I remembered going down from Brigham Young University-Hawaii to University of Hawaii-Manoa Library to do more research. Hours of microfilms and microfiches later, I still couldn’t find clear human faces of the natives nor their stories. I asked the librarian if there was more information, and I remembered her saying I needed to pay \$50 to do a computer search. That was a lot for a college student.

“It has been some time since that college experience. Yet, today, as a Pingelapese girl/woman, I, similar to some residents of Southern Utah, lost my whole paternal family from the devastating effects of the atomic testing and fallouts. Unlike my elders, I and the younger generation and the survivors of the downwinders, don’t trust the “important white men’s” words, like Henry Kissinger, who was reported to have said, “There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?” (PBS Hawaii, 2017). It is this arrogant mentality that has created a mistrust that still exists today amongst the downwinders like this Pingelapese girl towards “important white men” and their words.”

By sharing her story with the Collaborative, Melsihna offered us a gift. This powerful counterstory undermines the dominant depiction of research as an objective process that inherently leads to human progress. By “centering and attending to situated knowledge that is anchored in lived experiences” (Dutta et al., 2021, p. 4), this counterstory names political and racial dynamics that shape who benefits and who is harmed by scientific experimentation. As Melsihna explains, stories like hers are often erased within the framework of epistemic violence

(Dotson, 2011) that silences the knowledge of marginalized groups while privileging Western research practices — the empirical data that Melsihna found in the library.

Bringing this knowledge into the Collaborative’s discussions was an important step in building trust. Community-campus research partnerships, particularly when carried out across racialized lines, require what Vakil, de Royston, Nasir, and Kirshner (2016) call “politicized trust.” They argue:

Neither trust nor solidarity is gained (nor should it be) by the assertion of good intentions, nor is it accomplished merely once and then set aside. Instead, politicized trust calls for ongoing building and cultivation of mutual trust and racial solidarity. It is thus a trust that actively acknowledges the racialized tensions and power dynamics (p. 199).

The stories of Melsihna and others in the Collaborative helped us begin acknowledging these power dynamics and the long history of racist and colonial practices in research, a context with which our work had to contend.

### Learning from the Field & Engaging Students

Since 2007, when the original CRC guidelines were published, many more scholars and organizations have developed core principles or guidelines for different kinds of CBR. Rather than starting from scratch, we wanted to learn from these diverse efforts. So, we brought on Anahy Salcedo, an undergraduate kinesiology student and local grassroots organizer, to conduct a review. Anahy read and analyzed 22 different sets of guidelines and presented her findings to the group. We then discussed how the personal stories in the first CRC meeting related to common themes in other guidelines. These themes and our responses to them became the foundation of our own set of principles.

Anahy has since graduated. However, she remains a part of the CRC team in her role on the grassroots organizing team with the local United Way. Below, she reflects on her experience as a health sciences student taking part in the Collaborative.

#### *Anahy Salcedo, United Way of Salt Lake*

“I was still pretty new to CBR when I joined the CRC. I was in charge of doing the literature review, and, wow, I learned a lot! There are people doing this everywhere, and everyone is at a different phase of learning how to best do it.

“It was not easy to gather folks to attend another Zoom call during COVID-19, but because it was something the folks cared about and was being led by great folks, people showed up to meetings and had meaningful conversations. I was impressed by the somewhat large community

of people who care about CBR. As a student and a newbie, I was scared I would not be able to connect, but we all cared about working with community members and researchers to redefine and recreate what CBR can look like. Folks were incredibly open and welcoming to new folks (like me) to ask questions and share our current experience, and to share theirs about how they came to be engaged into CBR. I loved hearing the stories folks had about their work and what challenges or successes they had. Everyone wanted to collaborate and be transparent with the process, which I don't think is as common as it should be in research.

“Why does no one talk about community-based research to undergraduates? It is so versatile and can be done in so many fields. I was a student in Kinesiology at the College of Health, and they only really pushed a traditional kind of lab-based research. I did research in a lab for six months, and I hated it, which made me think I wasn't fit to do research. Then, I was introduced to CBR through a fellowship and got to know CRC co-founder Ana Antunes. She shared about her work with CBR and how it can look so different from traditional research, and I loved it.

“Finding a time that worked for everyone in the CRC was challenging and led to some folks not being able to attend. We met around once a month, and I wonder if we should have met more frequently or met in subgroups to get different parts of the guidelines done. I want us to continue to meet and discuss what we can do next!”

Anahy's reflection speaks to the value of engaging undergraduates in conversations about CBR. We may be losing future researchers like Anahy when we only present a narrow slice of what research can look like. The Collaborative has since built on this idea by launching a CBR course using the guidelines, which brings undergraduates together with community-based organizations to learn side-by-side and develop research projects together.

Anahy's story also speaks to how “traditional lab science” and other deductive, scientist-led approaches maintain dominance within much of academia, including the health sciences. Other approaches, such as CBR, are marginalized despite groups such as the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) naming community-based research as “essential to deepening our scientific knowledge of health promotion and disease prevention and reducing racial and ethnic health disparities” (Teufel-Shone, 2011, p. 118). CBR is systematically devalued and discouraged among faculty through mentorship, publishing, promotion and tenure, and other processes (Teufel-Shone, 2011). For example, policies disregard the longer timeframe to develop community-based research and expect CBR scholars to publish at the same rate as scholars who are not accountable to community partners. This disregard materializes in the hiring and retention of faculty and trickles down to what opportunities are available to students.

## Facilitating Equitable Dialogue

Those of us facilitating the process knew that it was not enough to simply bring together a diverse group of community-based and university-based individuals and expect equitable participation. In fact, we expected that structural power imbalances would inevitably emerge and needed to be explicitly addressed in our discussions and our methods of facilitation (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). Therefore, we started our second meeting explicitly naming power dynamics related to race, gender, degrees, and other axes of stratification. We challenged ourselves as a group to, as we put it in our opening remarks, “shift power; to value multiple forms of knowledge and expertise rather than privileging degrees; to center the expertise of BIPOC communities and communities facing historic marginalization; to hold ourselves accountable.” We also encouraged individuals to reach out one-on-one if things kept them from full participation. Then, together, we set shared norms for dialogue:

1. Honor all forms of experience, expertise, and knowledge around the table.
2. Speak your truth and make space for the truths of others.
3. When things get difficult, turn to wonder.
4. No one person has the whole answer. We are co-creating and learning together.
5. Center the task at hand.
6. We are in the sandbox together; have fun!

This gave us a foundation for equitable dialogue. However, making sure that everyone’s perspective was fully shared and honored was an ongoing project, and we struggled with it throughout, as co-facilitator Ana Antunes describes below.

### *Ana Antunes, Gender Studies*

“To say that I felt being a facilitator for the CRC was over my head is an understatement. As an immigrant woman of color and a career-line junior scholar, impostor syndrome was real. Despite my passion for community-engaged work, I felt like most of the other faculty involved in the CRC had more to contribute than me. On top of feelings of inadequacy, there was also the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Salt Lake City and around the world, communities of color are still the most affected by COVID-19. Despite my position of privilege as a university faculty living in the United States, the meetings started at a time when my family abroad was severely affected by the pandemic. So, I entered my first CRC meeting feeling overwhelmed. At the same time, being in a (virtual) room with passionate people who could envision, through the despair of the current realities, building a better, collective future did inspire hope.

“I cannot say that the process was always easy. I think it is important that we recognize not only where we succeeded but also where we failed spectacularly. While the discussions and

conversations around community-based work were pretty successful, our attempt to co-write the document brought up new challenges. Halfway through our process, it seemed logical that we would use some of the meeting time to write and edit together. Because we had spent time working together and building relationships, we naively ignored the fact that for some (especially for those of us whose native languages are not English) having to type live while a bunch of university professors watch is not the most comfortable situation. It was painful to see how a group that was having such lively conversations and important discussions quickly became silent.

“After the meeting, the co-facilitators met, and it became pretty evident to all of us that the way we had envisioned the process was not going to work. So, we regrouped. We decided to talk individually with each of the CRC members. First, we wanted to make sure that, in our attempt to be as collaborative as possible, we had not caused damage to relationships that had been flourishing. Second, we wanted to give people the opportunity to share their thoughts about the emerging principles and document in whatever way felt most appropriate to them. Some went methodically through each principle and offered thoughts and feedback. Some told stories about past experiences. Some focused on what they wanted this document to be used for in the future. Not only did this allow for rich, authentic feedback; it also provided counterstories and examples that we used in the final document.

“I hope that those who interact with the document learn as much from it as we did through the creation process. The process of creating the Guidelines reminded me that community work succeeds when differences are not erased or diminished but rather acknowledged and engaged within the open.”

Ana’s story speaks to how racial, linguistic, and other power imbalances play out between academics and community leaders, as well as within the academy itself. Research has shown that faculty of color are more likely to engage in community-based research and teaching approaches and otherwise connect their scholarship to social change (though recent data is hard to come by) (Antonio, 2002). They are often the ones pushing for academia to engage with communities outside the campus meaningfully, and are more likely to dedicate time to work that is not seen as scholarship but rather as service (Hirabayashi, 1995). Meanwhile, even as faculty diversity has increased, faculty of color are underrepresented in tenure-track positions and overrepresented in career-line positions like Ana’s (Finkelstein et al., 2016). Thus, the issue of how CBR is (under)valued in an academic context is inextricably connected with questions of faculty diversity.

In addition, Ana points out how chosen communication and dissemination methods can amplify or limit participation from different partners. Writing and editing articles and reports in English is part and parcel of being an academic in the United States. Yet, this form of collaborative

meaning-making can alienate those whose first language is not English, who are not steeped in academic writing, or whose sensemaking processes are not aligned with linear academic prose (Gordin, 2015). Community-based partners pushed us to think beyond a report and consider how stories, videos, and online engagement could reach a wider audience. We have since received funding to do this. That said, we acknowledge the value of written documents that can hold legitimacy in academic or policy settings, as well as their potential to alienate or subjugate other forms of communication. Therefore, finding multiple ways to give input and feedback on all products is critical (Community Alliance for Research and Engagement, 2013).

### Community Groups Engaging Academics

Members of the collaborative argued that our guidelines needed to speak equally to university-based and community-based audiences. We worked hard to create something that would support faculty who want to do CBR while also putting CBR tools into the hands of the community groups who could hold researchers accountable to equitable power-sharing. Community-based and multilingual members of the Collaborative critiqued an early draft of the principles for their inaccessibility, like the use of excessively academic language and an overemphasis on the professional researcher audience. We made improvements toward this balance, and while we are not there yet, we hope we can do more to make the guidelines accessible and relevant through our web-based tools.

Laneta Fitisemanu was an avid advocate for making our work accessible to community groups. Below, she describes her experience and what she learned as a community-based member of the collaborative.

#### ***Laneta Fitisemanu, Utah Pacific Islander Health Coalition***

“The CRC meetings were a unique space for community members and university faculty and staff to voice their concerns, experiences, and opinions regarding research. I haven’t experienced a space like that elsewhere. We are usually just approached by researchers to participate or recruit, not to discuss it in this capacity. The meetings were well facilitated, and small groups provided an opportunity for greater participation and discussion. There was a lot of great input and conversations that moved the work forward, especially given that participants were volunteering their time and effort.

“From a community perspective, working with university folks can be very intimidating. I wasn’t sure I had much to contribute. I worked for the university for several years, but I still struggle to fully grasp institutional jargon and processes and academic language and references. I sometimes felt like I needed to defer to faculty because they are actual researchers. It took me a while to feel comfortable fully sharing experiences, thoughts, and ideas while trying to not be so

intimidated. Another challenge was facilitating such a large group of people over a long period of time. Sometimes it was difficult to move discussions forward when people had missed meetings. And I know that my contributions have their own limitations. I would have liked to have more voices from my community contributing.

“About half-way through the process, a separate research team reached out to me about a study they were doing with the Pacific Islander community. A few of our community members met with them because we had concerns and reservations about the study. We felt they didn’t really discuss the study with the community or pay attention to the several initiatives we were already running on the topic. We were told that someone from our community was already involved and would help them recruit and facilitate discussions. We voiced our concerns about the lack of representation and reliance on one person to recruit and facilitate for such a diverse population group. We gave them numerous recommendations on how to better outreach with our community and the need for greater support, especially for groups that need greater assistance for them to participate (like translators). They were supposed to follow up with us on the discussion questions they were going to ask participants, but they never followed up after the meeting.

“I really appreciated the conversations we were having in the CRC at this time. It reconfirmed the need for more authentic collaboration and care when conducting research with communities. The study was rushed<sup>1</sup> and not thoroughly representative. We helped advertise it because we didn’t want our community to miss out. I was able to share this perspective during the CRC meetings. Last month, I emailed the coordinators that we met with for a follow up on the progress of the study, asking when the results can be shared and what they plan to do with them. Our coalition has not received a response. I normally would just let this go, but after participating in the CRC, I felt emboldened to email and hold them accountable.”

This reflection speaks to the complexity of power relationships between researchers and researched, even within efforts to be collaborative. Laneta describes how her community’s concerns with a research project and ongoing work on the topic area were dismissed because of a limited approach to community representation. Defining the community in CBR is more difficult than rhetoric suggests, and we can fall into the trap of relying too heavily on individuals as representatives of communities that are highly diverse with multiple interests (Carty et al., 2008).

Laneta’s story shows that the CRC was not immune to these unequal power dynamics. We inevitably brought our ideas about expertise and our insecurities into the CRC, which shaped our

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<sup>1</sup> The author of this counterstory chose to not directly name or cite the study, as the purpose of the story is not to shame researchers but to draw attention to the issues from a community perspective.

interactions. Moreover, Laneta worried that her voice would be read as representative of her whole community, suggesting the need for broader inclusion. This counterstory highlights the importance of recognizing the multitude of experiences among individuals who share a similar identity marker. Although researchers rationally understand that one person cannot speak for their whole community, this knowledge does not often materialize in the research design. That said, Laneta's increased sense of being emboldened to hold researchers accountable suggests the potentially power-shifting impact of creating spaces that situate community partners and university researchers as equally valued members of a collaborative.

### Fostering Institutional Change

When we carried out one-on-one meetings with all CRC members, some university-based members noted that the guidelines focused on what the partners in a research partnership could do but did not speak to the larger structures of academia. If we want to see more and better CBR at our university, they argued, we need to address the structural barriers that often marginalize, discourage, and even dismiss this kind of research (Teufel-Shone, 2011). Below, Sara Hart speaks about her experience as a faculty member in the health sciences and what it will take to shift the culture and structure of our academic health science centers and universities to support CBR better.

#### *Sara Hart, College of Nursing*

“The conversations we had, the stories we shared, and the guidelines we created within the CRC were unlike any I’ve experienced within academia. The goals and values established created a collaborative environment where shared learning and multiple forms of knowledge were embraced. The work of the CRC ultimately reflected the Six Principles for CBR as defined in the guidelines: shared goals and values, community strengths, equitable collaboration, collective benefit, trusting relationships, and shared results. It was a privilege and an opportunity for professional growth to explore, discuss, and challenge research processes with a diverse group of voices representing community partners and academia. I learned much more than I contributed.

“Our work around terminology, phrasing, and definitions often presented challenges but these conversations ultimately served to promote greater understanding among the participants. Learning how words and information are understood and experienced across diverse partners provided each participant with opportunities to deepen their partnership work. The bulk of this work occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, with most in the group subjected to new professional and personal challenges. However, the use of virtual meetings likely increased regular participation and allowed for easy recording and sharing of information. The use of virtual meetings may have also reduced the active participation of some CRC members.

“The boundaries between academia and community are blurry when the product or outcome is health care. Although it shouldn’t surprise me, I am still struck by how challenging it is to define community-based research in the health sciences. In addition to confusion generated by the varied terminology, institutional review boards may not be prepared for the complexity and ambiguity that often exists when our research is conducted in partnership with communities.

“My work with the CRC served to highlight the many layers and diverse perspectives that exist within communities and across academia. This experience also provided an opportunity to identify elements of academic health science centers that can support or trip up well-planned partnerships. For example, one faculty member’s community-based research partner may be another department’s clinical practice site. Community-based clinicians may serve as community partners while also being on faculty at the university. Administrators may see established community partnerships as opportunities for revenue generation in ways that change the dynamic between partners.

“It is my hope that our next steps can involve creating more structured support for learning and partnering for community-based research. This will increase the quality and volume of CBR in our state and help to achieve buy-in from diverse stakeholders. One of the stakeholder groups who has potential to accelerate this work is university leadership. This will require framing CBR to highlight the specific benefits and opportunities it provides to each subset of this population. For example, leadership in the health sciences would benefit from learning about CBR through a health equity lens with value for the health system highlighted. When leadership recognizes the benefits of CBR for the institution and for the broader community, this work will be more widely resourced and embraced.”

Like Laneta and Ana, Sara points to language and power as central challenges in CBR. Sharing language and definitions across fields, disciplines, and communities is an ongoing process. Still, as Sara explains, it can be a springboard for valuable dialogue and help people explore how language choices privilege some perspectives over others. Sara also names university leadership and the Institutional Review Board as key areas where changes could lead to stronger support for CBR. This aligns with what engagement scholars call the institutionalization of community engagement, which is a process that builds on the work of faculty, students, and community partners with attention to how engagement fits into institutional culture; how campus leaders communicate the value of engagement; and how systemic factors such as hiring and tenure policy shape the capacity of an institution to engage (Welch, 2016). Institutionalization, at its best, is a system-wide commitment to fulfill institutional responsibilities of working toward a more just future.

## Conclusion

The process of developing our CBR guidelines was valuable and gratifying. It was useful in informing higher education and community collaborations and the insights it offered into the nuanced functioning of power in campus-community partnerships and the possibilities for strengthening anti-racist and anti-colonial approaches to research. The process offered a platform for counterstorytelling and pushing back against the epistemic violence that silences the knowledge of marginalized communities. It highlighted the importance of engaging undergraduates in CBR and disrupting taken-for-granted approaches to science that often reinforce inequity and injustice. It reminded us that creating truly collaborative spaces takes ongoing attention to power dynamics and how they are intertwined with questions of language and communication. It challenged simplistic definitions of community and expertise and pointed out the dangers of defining these concepts too narrowly. And the process focused our attention on the idea that the burden of creating equitable partnerships should not fall on individual academics and community leaders alone, but also on the structures and policies of higher education, which can be redesigned to help institutions better fulfill their responsibilities to the creation of a just society both locally and globally. For instance, revising tenure and promotion policies to give equal weight to community-based research as traditional research or committing as many funds to community-based research as traditional research.

Dutta and colleagues (2021) remind us that “any counterstorytelling project is necessarily incomplete. Therefore, even as we envision possibilities, we recognize the situated nature, the fluidity, as well as the limits of the very counterstories we coproduce” (p. 10). Similarly, the CBR guidelines we developed are inherently incomplete and will continue to evolve as they are used and reflected in workshops, research projects, and other spaces. By creating a web-based version of the guidelines, we will be able to update regularly and expand upon the original ideas dynamically and collaboratively and create more diverse tools for communication. We encourage other communities and higher education institutions to take what we have created and adapt it to their contexts or, even better, to convene their local collaboratives in which to build relationships, establish shared language and values, and learn from the incredible expertise and insights that exist in all our communities.

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