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To cite this article: Juliana F. F. Amauchi, Maeva Gauthier, Abdolzaher Ghezeljeh, Leandro L. L. Giatti, Katlyn Keats, Dare Sholanke, Danae Zachari & Jutta Gutberlet (2021): The power of community-based participatory research: Ethical and effective ways of researching, Community Development, DOI: [10.1080/15575330.2021.1936102](https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2021.1936102)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2021.1936102>



Published online: 22 Jul 2021.



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The power of community-based participatory research: Ethical and effective ways of researching

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ABSTRACT

In this article we explore ethical and effective standards of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as a practice that differentiates itself from conventional research. We emphasize the fundamental and active role of community in participatory processes by legitimizing multiple forms of knowledge through a variety of methods that together provide discovery and dissemination of the findings. The goal of CBPR is to directly or indirectly achieve social transformation and social/ environmental justice. Researchers and community participants equally share control over the research, results and outputs. We present three case studies, highlighting some of the ethical concerns and difficulties encountered in the research process and speak to the implementation of key principles that sustain CBPR. The research follows a “slow” praxis, with relationship building and learning about local contexts, offering diverse ways of involving community, using innovative tools and approaches. Finally, we present considerations on how CBPR research can be done effectively and ethically, drawing attention to some research gaps.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 December 2019
Accepted 17 May 2021

KEYWORDS

Community-based participatory research; participatory action research; research ethics; epistemology; community development

Introduction

Scholars and practitioners concerned with issues affecting the well-being of communities and addressing socio-environmental injustices, and who aim to engage in non-traditional research approaches, need to pay attention to ethical considerations and methodological principles within critical and participatory theory. Within the premises of bottom-up approaches that advocate for the participation of community partners, knowledge is co-generated to address the root causes of issues that affect the community and to bring systemic and sustainable positive transformation (Weaver, 2016). Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) and similar bottom-up methodologies challenge western empiricist and colonial approaches to research, where there is a strong dichotomy between the researcher (usually considered “the expert”) and the participant (traditionally, the “research subject”) (Gutberlet, Tremblay, & Moraes, 2014). To avoid the widespread tendency of asymmetric relationships between researchers and participants, CBPR seeks active involvement of the participants (Brown & Baker, 2019). Only by obtaining legitimacy and reciprocity in collaboration is it possible to truly meet the ethical principles of participation,

reflecting the multiplicity of ideas, knowledge and values of all different social actors involved in the research process.

The purpose of this article is to address the limited understanding of CBPR, helping the reader to better grasp the ways in which we can develop ethical and effective research with community members. Our aims are (1) to distill key ideas and lessons across different disciplines, from scholarly articles and research experiences on CBPR and (2) to illustrate some of the challenges in CBPR with empirical insights from case studies. In order to meet these two goals, the article draws mostly on literature review, active engagement of the researchers in the discussion on CBPR and case experiences.

We begin by briefly outlining our research methodology (section 2). Then we discuss the key elements in CBPR and implications for research practice, based on the literature review (section 3). We present ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that underlie CBPR, providing an overview of the theoretical approaches, key principles and similarities with other participatory methodologies. This section also explores the research practice of CBPR and how this approach aims to go beyond traditional research by incorporating other creative ways of knowing, e.g., Indigenous and arts-based epistemologies, storytelling or other non-conventional innovative methods. The following section 4 presents and discusses our findings. First, we describe three case studies, employing the CBPR framework and then we examine the wider ethical standards and implications that frame the research praxis and knowledge generation. Insights built on our own research and outreach experiences with CBPR. Finally, the conclusion (section 5) highlights the societal importance of CBPR, exposing ethical considerations that scholars and practitioners must consider, while providing guidance for engaging in and developing a deeper understanding of CBPR and contemporary practices of this research approach.

Research methodology

The authors are part of the [Community-Based Research Laboratory](#) at the University of Victoria and have as a team co-designed the research, defining research objectives, aims and research tools during several interactive meetings, online and e-mail exchange. The first step involved a review of recent academic literature and of practitioners' reports, building on the already acquired knowledge of the academic literature of some coauthors who bring more than 10 years of experiences in CBPR. The focus within the literature review was on the methodology, the research process and the results of CBPR and related research approaches. The second step involved the preparation and implementation of a workshop titled: *"Have you talked to them? Building social and environmental justice through community-based research"* during the local public outreach event (*Idea-fest*), at the University of Victoria, in 2018. During the event we presented several case studies that had applied a CBPR lens and we discussed community-engaged research experiences and outcomes, followed by a panel discussion about how to engage ethically and effectively with the community involved in the research. The event was recorded and the questions, responses and feedback from the audience (students, faculty, practitioners) were valued as new insights and reflections, spiraling back into our discussions on CBPR, informing our research. The final step consisted of regular, subsequent CBRL meetings between the authors and other CBRL members to discuss what we had learned from the event and

from the ongoing readings on CBPR. Once saturation had been reached and no new information and insights could be generated from the literature review, we began the write-up of each member's and our collective understanding on CBPR, addressing the key question: How to engage ethically and effectively with the community in research? Key insights from the literature review are presented throughout the next three sections of this article. In our work we take a situated knowledge perspective (Haraway, 1991), contesting universalist forms of knowledge and rather recognizing the embodied, varied and localized experiences and insights from each of the authors, shaping the creation process.

What is Community-Based Participatory Research?

CBPR implies building relationships with community members and establishing partnerships which actively engage local stakeholders throughout the research process. We begin by outlining that community transcends the geographical perspective of an interacting group of people living in a particular location marked by boundaries (e.g. neighborhood, catchment) (Lee & Newby, 1991). Community is also a historic product based on sense of identity, solidarity, and relationship building. It is "a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint actions in specific geographical locations or settings" (MacQueen et al., 2001, p. 1926). Community stands for transcending differences that enables effective communication and allows individuals working together toward goals identified as being for their common good (Peck, 2010). This definition resonates with the elements defining "sense of community" which include membership, influence, integration, and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional bond (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Communities are not homogeneous, which challenges the premise of building symmetrical processes to engage local partners in collaborative initiatives.

CBPR requires relationship building with community members, which can be achieved through increased and shared responsibility and recognition of the vulnerability of both researchers and participants. There are different levels and ways of involving those whose lives are affected by the issue at hand, varying from participation as informants (Coughlin, Smith, & Fernandez, 2017; Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Roche, 2008), to deep engagement where community has opportunities to not only participate, but also to lead (Jamison, Brennan, Webster, & Dolan, 2020). By taking the lead participants have a greater opportunity to emancipate and develop the competence and confidence to contribute to the expected outcomes.

CBPR offers the practical advantage in utilizing well-informed community members as partners whose wisdom and experiential knowledge particularly on local issues are valuable and complementary scientific data (Hart et al., 2013). At its best, CBPR applies the experienced stakeholders' knowledge and their insights to gain desired outcomes to inform policy-makers in line with issues at all three executive levels culminating favorable community transitions (Cook, 2008). The application of research outcomes ranges from drafting legislation, developing budgets or designing programs and projects to tackle specific community identified issues (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoeker, & Donohue, 2003a, 2003b). In these knowledge co-creation processes the information flows both ways (from and to the community).

CBPR and overlapping research epistemologies

There is a slight distinction between CBPR and community-based research (CBR), which becomes apparent in the type of partnerships the researchers make in CBR and in the level of engagement between the researchers and the communities. In CBR, community members are consulted and provide input, information and insights to the research, however they do not necessarily “participate” in the research; nor would they become co-leaders in the research process (Flicker, Savan, Kolenda, & Mildenerger, 2007; Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Israel et al., 1998; Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 2000; Janzen, Ochocka, & Stobbe, 2017).

CBPR closely overlaps with Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006; Fals-Borda, 1987), although there are some nuanced differences between these two approaches. In the early 1940s, Kurt Lewin, one of the founders of action research defined PAR as “active involvement in the research of those affected by the problem being studied through a cyclical process of fact finding, action, and reflection” (Minkler, 2005, p.ii4), which Minkler later further developed, based on Paulo Freire’s concept of critical reflections, developed into a dialogical method highlighting co-learning and action. This continuously alternating, cyclical process between action and critical reflection allows for the refining of methods, data and interpretations to understand and further develop the previous stages and steps (cycles) in the research process.

While PAR focuses primarily on the inclusion of key participants in the research and is oriented toward action for social change, CBPR is grounded in the recognition of the participants’ identification, as being part of a community. Different levels of engagement are possible in PAR; for example, research facilitators could work with community members, engaging them as citizen scientists in the data collection or by engaging key stakeholders as participants, throughout the stages of the research process, in providing insider data to the research. CBPR, on the other hand, connects with a specific community, which can be a community of interest (e.g. waste pickers, homeless) or a geographically defined community (e.g. neighborhood, catchment). PAR does not have to involve a community, but could also engage other stakeholders, not included in the same community (e.g. CEOs, academics), and yet also culminate in action for social change. Some authors see CBPR as the fusion of PAR and CBR aiming to change the world through research and action, an approach which has mainly emerged out of the work of scholars from the global South (Giatti, 2019; Gutberlet et al., 2014; Israel et al., 2010, 2005; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008).

The CBPR research cycle

In CBPR, community contributes with their knowledge on the design, planning and implementation of the research project, valued as participant and co-owner of the research. The approach builds on local solutions and social innovations, facilitated by the researcher. This allows the research to inform and involve policy making, to solve complex issues, and to promote democracy (Haroon, Mazur, Wells, & Matsiko, 2015; Jamison et al., 2020). Ochocka and Janzen (2014) examine the CBPR cycle illustrated in [Figure 1](#), showing four key stages in CBPR.

Source: Adapted from Ochocka and Janzen (2014)

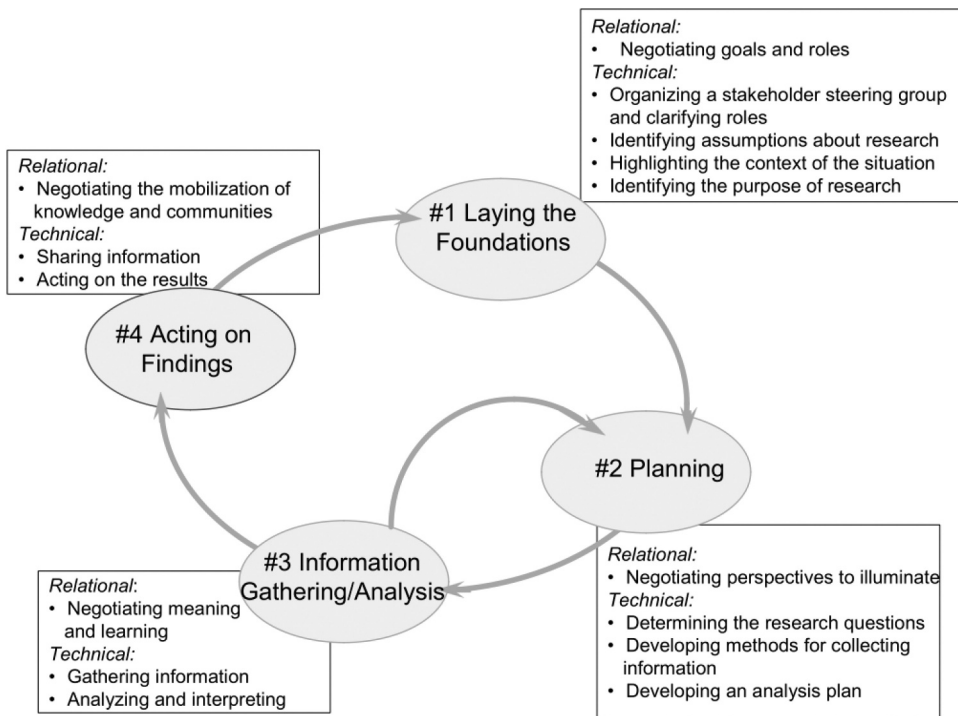


Figure 1. The Community-Based Participatory Research cycle.

Fundamental to CBPR is the recognition of multiple sources and ways of collaborative knowledge building, including traditional and Indigenous epistemologies (Clement, 2019; Howard, 2016). By considering knowledge a non-exclusive domain of academia, this research approach recognizes that community members' involvement co-creates knowledge, maximizes the partnership outcomes and promotes equity. In unison with Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2009), CBPR also recognizes that knowledge creation is a participatory and reciprocal process resulting in different ways of knowing. In multiple respects, CBPR shares a place-based approach, an experiential and oftentimes action-oriented epistemology, as well as a holistic worldview, rejecting the common, compartmentalized pathways to knowledge generation (Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 2013; Wilson, 2008).

Community research partnerships ideally lead to an action which results in emancipation and empowerment of all the participants (Baum et al., 2006; Minkler, 2005). Empowerment is an expression of agency, of "freedom to take action" (Sen, 1999). The intertwined understanding of empowerment and agency, as liberation, of taking control, removing social barriers, increasing the ability to make strategic life choices, which were denied before, has been assessed by Ibrahim and Alkire (2007). Research actions could be the facilitation of a workshop, the involvement of citizen scientists, or the support of an intervention or act of resistance. CBPR follows the PAR cycle of inclusion and transformation (Hutchinson & Lovell, 2013).

All three research processes briefly introduced in this section (CBR, PAR, CBPR) recognize people's experiences as the supporting knowledge that contributes and reinforces

Table 1. Key principles of CBPR and similar methodologies to effectively and efficiently involve community members.*Collaborative, equitable partnerships*

- Successful partnerships must meet partners' primary interests or needs to increase organizational capacities and long-range social change perspectives (Strand et al., 2003a).
- Tensions and potential conflicts among research participants are not ignored, but recognized and democratically addressed.
- Community involvement must occur at every stage (i.e. identifying problems and questions, collecting and analyzing data, interpreting results, and disseminating findings), and this equitable partnership can result in different goals and outcomes (Koster, Baccar, & Lemelin, 2012).

Democratic process

- Besides recognizing power differences, it is relevant to break down hierarchies, addressing imbalances and making researchers and subjects equal in searching for collective solutions.
- CBPR strives to democratize knowledge by valuing equally the experience that each partner brings to this process (Strand et al., 2003a).
- Research projects may even take a different methodological direction if it is better suited to the communities' needs.

Long-term process and commitment

- CBPR requires a long-term commitment and process in place to empower and expand opportunities for the communities.
- It needs sustainability mechanisms such as a collaboratively-articulated vision, ongoing support, and strong leadership.
- Communication, ongoing evaluation and follow-up are important to reassure that the community's needs are still a priority and to ensure quality research and effective partnership (Strand et al., 2003b).

Promoting co-learning and co-creation of knowledge

- Co-learning is considered as the act of mutually sharing ideas, experiences, knowledge and power between partners (Stringer, 2015; Bull, 2010).
- Co-learning enables the generation of knowledge that will be useful to the communities involved (Bull, 2010), being a "process of constructing meaning with others and learning through sharing and exchanging ideas" (Stringer, 2015, p. 30).

Dissemination process that involves all partners

- Sharing findings with all partners ensures that data has been interpreted in the correct way, and this requires presenting results in a way that is comprehensive to those who may make use of the research findings (Strand et al., 2003a).
- Community representatives may be coauthors for both academic and non-academic products (Ross et al., n.d.), or they can be written into the text, particularly the methodology, or in the acknowledgments.
- Values community's expertise and encourages partners to take ownership and responsibility for the research process (Janzen et al., 2017).

Mutually beneficial action

- CBPR supports social action that mutually benefits all partners, empowering communities to address the root causes of inequity with appropriate solutions (Coughlin et al., 2017).
- Privileges collective ownership of research products and outcomes.

Systems perspective

- CBPR uses a systems perspective in the sense of a "Humboldtian" transdisciplinary approach in building understandings of human – environment relations and deriving outcomes (Gutberlet, 2019).
- Nature (including humans) is considered as "oneness", and this perspective looks for the organic, messy connections, instead of imposing clear cut-and-dry distinctions and classifications (Gutberlet, 2019).
- The inclusion of local knowledge contributes to a better understanding of local interactions, allowing to diagnose the linkages or missing links in the community (Gutberlet, 2019).

the community's position in society and engage similarly in participatory, reciprocal and collaborative ways with community benefiting the individual and the partnerships (Baum et al., 2006). Table 1 summarizes the ethics that guides CBPR methodologies.

Source: Elaboration by the authors.

CBPR praxis

From the onset we recognize that the Southern emancipatory research tradition has profoundly influenced and shaped CBR and CBPR (Gutberlet et al., 2014). One of the

major contributors to this perspective is the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire who laid the groundwork for the popular education model, which advocates for education as a political tool to inspire social change at the local and global scale (Brandão, 1987; Fals-Borda, 1987; Thiollent, 2011; Wallerstein, Duran, Oetzel, & Minkler, 2018). The popular education approach uses collective dialogue to facilitate “consciousness” in becoming an agent and applying a praxis for social change (Freire, 2005; Wallerstein et al., 2018). Praxis in relation to CBPR is the continuous cycle of action-reflection-action to improve community conditions, and to allow for the constantly changing social, economic, cultural and political fabric that shape society. Freire’s inherently participatory approach promoted learners as the subjects of their own liberation through the process of coming together to educate, learn, and discuss social change. This pedagogy applies to CBPR, generating greater consciousness among the participants, stimulating their agency to work for change (Strand et al., 2003b).

CBPR prerequisites

Structural change is more likely to occur when community members contribute to all research phases and play a central role in the study (Flicker et al., 2007). Israel et al. (1998) posit that using CBPR with local stakeholders increases policy-makers’ assets and their awareness about community demands and challenges to change the current policy toward satisfactory outcomes. Thereby, researchers try to establish a connection among all stakeholders in the project to build durable relationships that result in a better understanding of the thematic challenges and the power dynamics that affect the research (Strand et al., 2003b). CBPR ideally begins by generating a research question in consultation with community members and a final acceptance of the commitments together with all partners consenting to the process (Becker, Reiser, Lambert & Covello, 2014).

Israel et al. (1998), highlight that it is essential for all research participants to understand that CBPR requires a considerable amount of time to be conducted, as the participants need to meet and discuss the community challenges, forge stable relationships, collect data, organize and analyze the findings, generate a diagnosis, return the data (or diagnosis) and capture the feedback to be incorporated in the analysis, and implement the desired actions. This process can take longer than conventional research. All participants should consider this a long-term process and commitment.

In this research process, the organizers of engagement activities should possess an appropriate knowledge about the barriers, assets, partnership problems, the capacity of contributors to the community, and the required research instruments in conducting a community-based project (Strand et al., 2003b). In addition, expectations for meetings with key leaders and community members should be discussed in advance by the community engagement team and the researchers to discuss the feasibility of the research.

Innovative research methods for CBPR

It is essential to clarify how the data will be collected, what research tools will be used, and which group of stakeholders will be involved and how. Applying a “citizen” or “street scientist” approach to CBPR means involving community members in data collection and

monitoring (Cunha et al., 2017). The approach enables peoples' strong connections to place and community to take steps that contribute to the problem-solving processes. Citizen scientists rely on the wealth of social capital in the community (Overdeest, Orr, & Stepenuck, 2004). As a result, committed volunteers can provide a reliable way of gathering data with critical informants who sometimes researchers could not reach. Citizen scientists help validate the data gathered and ensure it is trustworthy and appropriate for the intended use (Overdeest et al., 2004). It is a process that also fosters trust-building between academia and communities (Pocock, Chapman, Sheppard, & Roy, 2014). "Public engagement, scientific learning and education, socialization, capacity building and awareness raising are often important results from citizen science programs" (Cunha et al., 2017, p. 2230).

The research design often draws from a diverse set of tools ranging e.g. from workshops, assemblies, diagramming and mapping Participatory Video or Photovoice approaches that explicitly provide opportunities for collective knowledge creation. When working with Indigenous communities, these tools can be adapted to specific local and cultural contexts (Castleden, Garvin, & Nation, 2008). The information collected comes in different forms (notes, video footage, photos, voice recordings, maps, graphics, laboratory results) and is then applied through transcripts and video edits to be systematized for the analysis and presented in text, pictures, tables, graphics, flowcharts or video. Time should be dedicated to returning the results to the participants to receive their feedback, which then gets incorporated into the analysis.

CBPR challenges

CBPR also presents challenges to researchers. A major difficulty is related to the time intensity and the cost, since dedicated funding for conducting this kind of research is not always available and may be harder to find. CBPR tends to be focused on local, case study-based research and the findings cannot always be generalized on a larger scale. There could be competing views, conflicting interests or various priorities in a community, and consultation meetings between the researchers and the community could unveil challenging power struggles. Facilitating the team members' involvement with different perspectives and priorities may fail to result in a productive outcome (Wilson, Lavis, Travers, & Rourke, 2010).

Furthermore, Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) state that different priorities will emerge, depending upon consulted groups and accordingly to how these groups or communities interpret the researchers' intentions. Also, St. Denis (2004) claims that participants may provide unreliable data if they fail to understand the defined research questions, do not have the opportunity to negotiate with partners or feel under pressure (e.g. due to power dynamics). While citizen science has been identified as an empowering tool, it can also create a situation where "hired individuals under the rubric of co-researcher may have ambivalent feelings about their role in the research process" (Bennett, 2004, p. 119).

Citizen scientists, in particular, may suffer from a lack of transparency, or the uncertainty of undergoing change and adapting to controversial expectations of the community (Pocock et al., 2014). The absence of broad participation and the "introduction of new groups" to the scientific community bring about new approaches, data interpretations, and methods which could incentivize data manipulation, as was pointed out by Pandya (2012). Also, substantial investment in resources is often required in citizen science, for example to set up a project, to monitor, and to implement the actions (Pocock et al., 2014).

Pocock et al. (2014) believe that participants may get discouraged when they see an intended outcome of their project not being realized. In order to manage the expectations of the participants, it is crucial to explain the aim of the project to participants and to be transparent throughout the process. Also, the analysis of the data may require sophisticated approaches, while the data may not even be suitable for the intended purpose. These steps in the research process need to be duly communicated with the community partners.

Findings and discussion

In this section we introduce three case studies as our findings based on empirical work using a CBPR lens and conducted by three coauthors and supervised by one of the coauthors. Then we engage in the discussion of our central questions related to the application of ethical principles and values in this kind of research praxis and knowledge generation process.

Experiences with CBPR

All three coauthors who have conducted the case studies described below here are new to community-based research approaches. We first provide a brief context for each of the case studies and then in [Table 2](#) answer the questions: How have ethical principles been integrated into the research? What were the hurdles or difficulties encountered? How did we address these barriers?

Case study #1: Waste governance with Bidders (informal waste reclaimers) in Vancouver

As part of a Master's Thesis this study documented the contributions of the bidders community to municipal waste management in Vancouver, the challenges they face while navigating the binning landscape and the influence grassroots innovations have on promoting participatory waste governance. Prior to the research, two preliminary visits were conducted to introduce the student to the [Bidders' Project](#), to which the supervisor had already established a relationship through previous research and to meet some of the members of this community to solicit their collaboration in this project. These visits were instrumental in expediting the research process. Six bidders volunteered (compensated with an honorarium) as co-researchers and were trained in the application of the survey to a total of 60 bidders. While the survey was designed by the researcher, the bidders had input in the revision of the questions during a pilot study. The six co-researchers also participated in a Photovoice training and then went on a "photographic mission", contributing with three photos to be discussed in a focus group, which was videotaped and used as key data set.

Case study #2: Participatory video to document perceptions/solutions about global changes with youth in the Canadian Arctic

As part of a PhD Thesis, one of the research objectives was to use participatory video to document perceptions of global changes (climate change, plastic accumulation in the environment) in Tuktoyaktuk, NWT, Canada. The community of Tuktoyaktuk has

Table 2. Selected case studies.

	Integration of ethical principles in the research (beyond standard ethics protocol outlined by the Tri-Council policy on research ethics)
Case study # 1 <i>Binnners project in Vancouver, Canada</i>	Key ethical considerations focused on privacy, harm, confidentiality, and consent. Co-researchers were prepared to apply the consent form to research participants. Consent forms were attached to survey and interviews, outlining the study, its purpose, contact information, benefits, and confidentiality issues. The forms stated that participation was voluntary and that participants had every right to withdraw without any consequence. Confidentiality was ensured by assigning each participant with a pseudonym to protect their real identity. Pseudonyms remained in the thesis write-up.
Case study # 2 <i>Participatory Video in the Canadian Arctic</i>	Ethical considerations were applied by starting slowly, focusing on listening and building relationships first. Then, when recruiting student participants, going through the school board making sure standard consent forms were read and signed. Due to the type of medium chosen, video, confidentiality is limited. Participants consented to parts of the video clips be shared publicly, unless they decided not to after the interview.
Case study # 3 <i>Marine debris in São Sebastião, Brazil</i>	Following the standardized ethical procedure for informed consent all participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and signed a consent form allowing their data or photographs to be used in the dissemination of the results. Participants were excited to have someone looking into the issue of marine debris, and were not worried about consent. For the researcher it is sometimes more stressful to make sure that everything is in place and all forms are signed.
	Hurdles or difficulties encountered
Case study # 1 <i>Binnners project in Vancouver, Canada</i>	1) Accessing the community and gaining the trust of its members; 2) Lack of sufficient time to involve the participants in all aspects of the research process; 3) Language barrier with Asian binnners, and; 4) Difficulty identifying/selecting participants as co-researchers. While CBR and CBPR methods seek to promote fairness and power-sharing with community partners, these challenges can lead to power imbalances.
Case study # 2 <i>Participatory Video in the Canadian Arctic</i>	1) Having regular communication with community members; 2) Keeping the participants engaged; 3) Remoteness of the community; 4) Being an outsider and thus taking a long time to build trust within the community
Case study # 3 <i>Marine debris in São Sebastião, Brazil</i>	1) Lack of trust in the researchers, particularly among more marginalized community members; 2) Concerns based on the experience with previous researchers who had come in to collect data and never shared the results with the community; 3) Distrust not only with researchers but also the municipality.
	Ways to overcome the barriers
Case study # 1 <i>Binnners project in Vancouver, Canada</i>	A staff member of the Binnners' Project offered to assist in the selection of co-researchers providing selection criteria, including reliability and number of years binning. This method helped eliminate any form of bias or prejudice in the selection. The language barrier was overcome by recruiting a member of the Asian binner fluent in English to administer the surveys. Trust was established by constantly maintaining openness, and showing that the community needs were well-understood. This was done by reviewing the research questions and survey questionnaires with the co-researchers, asking for their feedback and integrating suggestions provided to align with the research objectives.
Case study # 2 <i>Participatory Video in the Canadian Arctic</i>	Frequent communication and listening practices made sure the community felt included at every step of the research. The researcher made sure to have allies in the community to help explain possible misunderstandings. Reassuring collective goals with the community and working collectively. Youth were invited to show their film at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP25) in Madrid, which was a common goal that brought the community together.
Case study # 3 <i>Marine debris in São Sebastião, Brazil</i>	Given the difficulties in relationship building and the local sensitive mangrove environment near that community, the community suggested a different beach for the clean-up activity, but the community continued to partake in the research discussions, particularly on how to overcome some of the issues they have experienced in the past. Listening and being flexible is key in building trust. Meetings helped discuss ways of addressing these concerns

a population of 1,000 people, 90% of which are Inuvialuit. The village is located at the edge of the Arctic ocean and subsistence livelihoods and activities are very important. An initial connection between the researcher and the community had already been established through a personal connection who acted as community liaison and local partner.

The first visit, which lasted for 10-days, was conducted in 2017 with the aim of meeting the community and listening to their interests and concerns. The second visit was conducted during five weeks in 2019, with the researcher's family, to deepen relationships in the community and to facilitate a film workshop. Seven youth participated in the film workshop and they conducted a total of 12 interviews, which involved two elders and one hunter and seven youth.

Case study #3: Investigating ways of reducing marine debris and plastic litter in São Sebastião, Brazil

The purpose of this Masters' Thesis project was to investigate ways of reducing marine debris and plastic litter at the beach. The research was conducted in the city of São Sebastião on the north coast of São Paulo State, with the involvement of local community members. Participants included local activists, researchers, school children and teachers, local NGOs, and members of the local government. São Sebastião is a major tourist town during the summer months, and sees a massive increase of waste found on the beach during those months. The researcher was introduced through her supervisory committee and lived in the community from January to April 2019. The researcher conducted a beach clean-up, followed by a brand audit, involving 35 participants and about 60 overall community members interacting with the researcher and beach cleaners.

The following [Table 2](#) summarizes key aspects that help answer our research question: How can CBPR be conducted more ethically and efficiently?

Discussion: Ethical standards in research praxis and knowledge generation

All research needs to follow ethical guidelines to protect informants and participants as well as to guide the researcher toward ethical practice. In fact, "ethics and research are intertwined and inseparable" (Zy Vanl & Sabiescu, 2020). Reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the research and knowledge outcomes is an intrinsic part of CBPR. While not all research involving community is necessarily participatory and action oriented, and while it may be theoretical or empirical in nature, CBR and CBPR must be community needs-driven and follow ethical research procedures which include confidentiality, ensuring community feedback, and highlighting the voices of community partners. It is also recommended to produce a protocol or agreement with the community. All case studies mentioned above went through the university ethics license process and created consent forms for the participants involved. Being ethical in research means so much more than just following the protocol. It is about respecting different worldviews in an ongoing process of communication and fostering relationships.

When working with Indigenous communities, extra levels of engagement and knowledge of the local culture, customs and protocol are required, including acknowledging the order of engagement, the different political groups to involve, the permits/licenses needed, the specification as to where the data was held, how it was shared, etc. In our case, the trailer of the final video is already in the public domain, after the youth protagonists had presented the video at the international conference, COP 2020. The

local partners have all raw video files and are now preparing a version to be submitted to film festivals.

We recommend to follow the local, regional or national frameworks on doing research with Indigenous communities. In Canada, e.g. this includes the framework titled: “*Ownership, Control, Access and Possession -OCAP*” (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2014) and Chapter 9 of the tri-council policy statement (Tri-Council Canada, 2018). These frameworks offer ethical guidance for researchers to work respectfully with Indigenous communities. Direct engagement with the community is required as each community is different. Working with an Inuit community (Inuvialuit in the case study #2) encompassed a specific way of engaging with the community to ensure proper consultations and community input. A research permit was required by the territory, which took about three months to be approved, with multiple local community inputs/approvals. At the local level, the community corporation, the hamlet (city council), and the school were all involved in the engagement process as well.

Indeed, relationship building means continuous engagement as well as communication with the research community, which takes time, more so when working with Indigenous communities, because it requires specific protocols, permits and licenses. The listening phase is perhaps one of the most important steps in CBPR (Castleden, Morgan, & Lamb, 2012). Flexibility and adaptability are key requirements in CBR, PAR and CBPR, since research questions and priorities can change over the course of the project and the researcher has to adjust (see case study # 3). Research ethics councils need to adapt to these difficulties in the process of granting research ethics permits. Ethics is a lived experience, constantly emergent and relational, and not just a set of rules, assumptions and codes of conduct (Zy Vanl & Sabiescu, 2020).

Decolonizing the research praxis e.g. enabling Indigenous epistemologies to inform and shape the research are important challenges for the researcher. Along the line of participatory feminist research, which was developed to challenge gender-related injustices and inequalities; Indigenous research builds on a relational understanding and accountability to the world as well as a focus on an epistemology of place. These are core values in CBPR.

Banks et al. (2013) argue that in the context of social research, ethics usually covers themes such as the overall issues and benefits of research, the rights of participants to information, ensuring privacy and anonymity, and the duties of researchers to act with integrity. Due to its complex and often challenging transformative approach to research, CBPR requires particular attention to ethical issues that may arise from the dynamics of unequal power relations between the researcher and partnering communities (Banks et al., 2013; Macaulay et al., 1998; Sinclair & Diduck, 2001).

CBPR scholars embrace an ethics of civic responsibility, social justice and advocating for public policy and other drivers that promote fairness and sustainability. We suggest that it is imperative that researchers acknowledge the dialectical tensions between impartial principles and rules and responsibilities that occur with relationships of trust and care between themselves and the research participants.

As we have seen in all three case studies, building trust is a big challenge and rapport building with research participants is crucial (Christopher, Watts, McCormick, & Young, 2008). Building trust can be challenging as an outsider, especially for Master’s students who have limited time to complete their research, thus reduced time to build

relationships. Working closely with organizations or academics who have those long-term relationships with the community can be a solution (case study #1 and #2). Furthermore, the collaborative construction of the ethical scope of research and the interactive mediation to overcome hurdles reinforce the premise of a dialogical approach (Freire, 2005) involving researchers and the community, that is, a perspective of sharing power through ongoing adaptive processes for a more symmetrical approach (Giatti, 2019).

Community-based approaches to research value knowledge co-generation, which means that the research seeks a reciprocal appreciation of the research participants' knowledge and skills. An emphasis on emancipatory transformation is often implicit, in the tools applied (e.g. video and photography) and interventions can transform the lives of the participants. The goal of CBPR is to produce accessible scholarship that is useful in multiple settings, including social and political conversations, as well as in the academic setting.

Often research findings need to target a variety of audiences and the communication of the results needs to find the appropriate language and format, in order to benefit the relevant audience. The content and distribution of research findings for the community must be accessible, clear, and brief. Some forms of dissemination among a non-academic audience include: brochures, posters, newsletters, public presentations, policy briefs, blogs, reports, etc. No matter what the format, returning the results to the research participants is a critical stage in ethical research practice (Leavy, 2017). As with all other stages in CBPR, the community can be fully involved at the dissemination stage, as has been demonstrated with case study #2. Academic publishing is also important for sharing and reproducing knowledge and methodology. While often local in scale and situated in specific local contexts, scholars also need to be concerned with the replicability of their research.

Finally, another key ethical principle is the commitment of the researcher to maintain long-term, trusting relationships with the partnering communities and to maintain communication open (Macaulay et al., 1998), to avoid mistrust in research affecting future researchers, as described in case study # 3. The expectation is also that community members communicate regularly with the researcher, promote the project, offer guidance for interventions and data interpretation, and assist in writing and disseminating the research findings.

Key implications and conclusions

In this article, we addressed the key question on how CBPR can be done more ethically and efficiently. After highlighting the key principles in CBPR we have briefly introduced some of the main approaches and tools used, highlighted also through three research examples. Our three case studies touched at some levels on the five key principles mentioned in Table 1, from collaborative partnerships, to using democratic processes, and committing to long-term involvement by researchers, employing a knowledge co-creation approach, disseminating results with the partners involved, and using a systems perspective.

While CBPR is well-established in local and international research, in everyday practices of conducting this work there still remain theoretical and operational challenges. Despite the strong conceptual grounding in participatory methods and strategies of action research, the operating principles that guide CBPR in practice often remain broad in scope, and seldom reveal an immersive process by which new social relationships are

created, and through which new knowledge is co-created. CBPR embarks on a new territory, illuminating the knowledge that comes from popular and Indigenous experience, and uses these insights to help construct practical and achievable outcomes that informs and involves decision-makers and policies.

CBPR offers unique, innovative and participatory epistemologies of creating knowledge. We have mentioned some of the alternative methods used to foster greater inclusiveness and to highlight community perspectives. The rise of interdisciplinary, new, larger scale funding options, the creation of CBR offices at universities and the design of community engagement awards suggests that we are at an important juncture for CBR. Having acquired more visibility and having shown the contribution of research outcomes also to the scientific community, this approach is at a new turning point in its development receiving increased mainstream acceptance. Despite these developments, CBR and CBPR are still questioned by some in terms of the data collected, the integrity or soundness of the measurements and the evidence gathered, as well as its “scientific credibility” overall. Practicing “slow research” translates into investing time to set up connections, build trustful relationships and become a participant observer in the community to engage with. CBPR researchers need to bring additional skills and commitment to their research and justify their outcomes and impacts.

To develop ethical research relations and to conduct research ethically CBPR demands far more responsibilities and commitments than under conventional extractive forms of social science research. As such, mutually beneficial actions are the drivers in our three case studies. This research is concerned about the impacts in the community, even long after the research is concluded.

CBPR highlights the context-specific negotiation of knowledge, the necessity to accept local contexts and uncertainties, recognizing the entanglements and interconnectedness of societal and environmental natures, which are complex. Knowledge is power, and as in many other situations, our past has shown how maps, surveys, inquiries and censuses, all have contributed to certain forms of colonialist regulations, often accompanied by repression and violent resource extraction. CBPR is about knowledge co-creation, working toward knowledge democracy, where our experience is agency geared toward its application.

Acknowledgments

We want to thank the reviewers and the editor of the Journal Community Development for the constructive and insightful comments and suggestions that have benefitted the manuscript. We acknowledge the input from the many participants in our conversations during the regular Community-based research meetings as well as during the Idea-Fest event in 2018. This article is the result of an ongoing process of knowledge co-creation between scholars, students and practitioners.

Disclosure of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) under Grant Number 890-2016-0098. LLG received support from São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP, proc. n. 2019/12804-3).

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