

Action and Research

Community-based Research at
The Wellesley Institute

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The Wellesley Institute engages in research, policy and community mobilization to advance population health.

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Project Background: This research was conducted as part of the Health Studies Undergraduate Program at the University of Toronto. The Health Studies Program offered through University College at the University of Toronto is a multidisciplinary undergraduate program of critical studies in the determinants of health and health care. The independent research course enables upper-level undergraduate students the opportunity to work with local agencies over the course of an academic year to develop and conduct a community research project. More information on the Health Studies program is available at <http://www.uc.utoronto.ca/healthstudies>.

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Action and Research: Community Based Research at The Wellesley Institute



Abstract

“Community-based research or community-based participatory research (CBR or CBPR) is guided by the core principles of collaboration and partnership where research brings together community and academic expertise to explore and create opportunities for social action and social change.”^{1-3,15} Over the past decade, there has been growing recognition and support for CBR.⁴⁻¹¹ Many CBR researchers believe that the local and participatory nature of CBR allows this work to be more action-oriented.¹¹ Ideally this would enable community members and advocates to make timely interventions based on methodologically sound research evidence, and give rise to local change.^{12,13} However, relatively little is known about range of actions that emerge out of CBR.¹⁴ Using multiple data sources including online surveys and in-person interviews, we wanted to look at some of the actions that have come out of CBR funded by the Wellesley Institute. The findings indicate that many pathways to action were also consistently mentioned as barriers. The role of partnerships, funding, as well as key logistic aspects were noted by survey and interview respondents as key elements that can either foster successful action, or create a barrier to action. The findings of the *Action and Research* project may have implications for local CBR as it clarifies what types of action can be produced following the funding period as well as elements that facilitate knowledge to action and produce barriers to action.

Introduction

“Community-based research or Community-based participatory research (CBR or CBPR) is guided by the core principles of collaboration and partnership where research brings together community and academic expertise to explore and create opportunities for social action and social change.”¹⁵

Over the last several decades, there has been growing recognition of the merits of CBR.⁴⁻¹¹ Through collaboration and partnership, CBR is positioned to bring together community and academic expertise to explore and create opportunities for social action and change.¹² As a tool for addressing health disparities, CBR may offer unique insights and advantages to explore social determinants of health at the grass-roots level.⁸ This approach may lead to local researchers being better informed through a more detailed understanding of the health and social experiences of diverse communities. We believe that it has the potential to guide health related practices, inform public policy and advance research in population health through the identification of levers for social change.

Although there is some variance in definitions of community-based research or community based participatory research, the commonalities are the emphasis of collaboration and action.^{14-16,18} It is believed that CBR may be able to foster action due to its participatory nature.¹⁷ CBR allows for the participation of community members in research, whose voices are typically ignored.¹⁹ Action, however, can be a very broad term that encompasses a multitude of visible and invisible results, therefore categorizing action becomes problematic. Minkler and Wallerstein⁶ note:

“Action may take many forms, including increasing community dialogue about a difficult or taboo topic or securing changed practices at a local school or health care institution, while bringing broader public attention to bear on a previously ignored problem or issue. Such outcomes are important. Yet to influence the lives of large numbers of people, action aimed at changing policy is often critical.”⁶

Information on the outcomes and impacts of CBR remains limited.¹⁴ While many projects are able to offer assessments on the immediate outputs of their projects, they seldom have the opportunity to reflect on actions that occur over time once the project has been completed. Time and budgetary constraints are ongoing for project teams conducting community research. Such constraints may limit the resources that project teams have to dedicate and follow up on opportunities beyond the original project, while others may be able to leverage their project work to forge new initiatives and achieve new outcomes.

The Wellesley Institute (WI) is an applied research and public policy institute focused on advancing population health by reducing health disparities. The CBR Urban Health Grants were a critical part of WI's commitment to foster and support locally grounded research. Our project takes as its starting point the CBR Urban Health grants program that was operational from 2003 to 2011. The Urban Health grants program at the WI sought to support CBR through two granting streams: small seed grants (\$10,000 +) and larger multi-year funding (ranging from \$20,000-\$100,000).

The *Action and Research* project is an opportunity to examine some of the types of action that can be yielded from CBR, as well as particular aspects of CBR that may influence the success or failure of the project. Looking critically at the intended and unintended actions that community research can produce

may help to address current gaps in research.¹⁴ We believe this data will be able to better inform future CBR projects through clarifying the relationship between health and social experience in diverse communities.

Methodology

In October 2012, we began examining CBR funded by the WI to better understand how action was produced in the course of local research. We used a two stage, mixed methods approach for conducting the research. First, a preliminary document review was conducted of funded projects under the Urban Health Grants Program from 2003-2011 to shed light on CBR funded by the WI. Reviewing the WI archives enabled us to look in detail at original proposals, interim reports and final reports, which helped to identify the frameworks and goals of CBR practitioners. This review provided preliminary insights into proposed and realized activities identified by the research teams. The *Action and Research* project obtained ethics approval from the Ryerson Research Ethics Board in January 2013.

Sixty-four WI funded projects were deemed as CBR through an initial document review (Appendix A: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria). We excluded projects that included the WI as a partner, or were commissioned by the WI, and projects that were incomplete or currently being funded. All other self-identified CBR projects were included. Wherever possible, two potential participants were identified per project, mostly primary investigators (PI), or PI organizations. Typically these tended to include one academic partner and one community partner. The first wave of recruitment emails was sent to 93 participants. 30 emails did not reach the participant or bounced back. Subsequently, we conducted a series of searches to identify either a current email address of the participant, or identify another participant through a review of the documents. A total of 85 participants were contacted to participate in the *Action and Research* project.

The second stage of the project involved two data collection methodologies:

i) Online semi-structured survey

The survey represented an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of CBR from the perspective of the researchers. A total of 31 surveys were completed (n=9) or partially completed (n=22). Response rates vary by question. A number of survey questions were adapted or taken from Toronto CBR Networks 2008 Environmental Scan of research by community-based organizations within the Toronto Central LHIN . The majority, 71% (n=20), of survey respondents self-identified as community partners or researchers, whereas 39% (n=11) self-identified as academic partners or researchers. Due to the low response rate the responses cannot be read as definitive and must be interpreted cautiously. Nonetheless, the findings point to trends and patterns that are helpful in understanding what action means in CBR.

ii) Semi-structured in-person interviews

We conducted six semi-structured in person interviews with a sub-sample of seven participants who agreed to partake in the follow-up interview. There was equal representation from academic and community partners among interview participants. Both the document review and surveys pointed towards partnership and action as key factors in the knowledge to action process. The interview questions focus primarily on the role of partnerships in CBR projects and the actions that have come from projects over time.

Results: Background

The document review serves a foundational role within the *Action and Research* project. This process involved reviewing documents submitted to the WI including: letters of intent (LOI), interim progress reports, and final reports. Information extracted from these documents pertain to the type of grant received (enabling vs. advanced grant), the focus of research, the project's goal, the project's outcomes or deliverables, and the outcomes or deliverables that were achieved. Of the 64 reviewed documents, 67% (n=43) were enabling grants and 32% (n= 21) were advanced grants. As a result, the majority of the information was taken from smaller scale grants meant to organize capacity, rather than to complete novel research. This reflects the distribution of community research grants through WI from 2003 to 2011, where the majority were smaller seed grants, with fewer large-scale projects.

The focus of research presented an assortment of results as many projects pursued multiple topics (see Figure 1). Housing is the most commonly funded topic with 38% (n=24) of the reviewed projects pursuing research on housing or homelessness. Youth is the second most prevalent research topic with 29% (n=18) of projects involving youth or adolescents as their target population. The third most commonly identified topic is mental health with 27% (n=17) of projects focused on a population with mental health issues.

The patterns expressed by the document review indicate that the majority of projects completed the action they originally intended. Most of the action that was achieved in the post-funding period involved knowledge dissemination and organization or participation in events. For example some reports highlight that the researchers plan to host community forums to disseminate their findings to the community, or presentations at conferences or events. There was an emphasis on capacity building in the majority of the reviewed project documents. A specific example of capacity building that was frequently identified within the documents was the hiring and training of community members to participate in the research project through data collection, or in project decision-making.

The details we gathered from the document review were helpful but limited. Project materials often focused on the actions and outcomes of initial identified goals. This may reflect some of the expectations that exist between funders and grantees, where grantees report back on expected actions only, seldom discussing the unexpected aspects of their projects. Due to limited timelines, funders rarely received information beyond the completion phase of the study or project. However, a few projects did explicitly provide information on publications or events well after the project completion date. Nonetheless, the document review provided important insights into the nature of CBR projects at WI.

Results: Surveys and Interviews

One goal of the survey and interviews was to explore how the WI funded community-based researchers. To explore this question we inquired about the researchers' motive for using CBR. Two distinct discourses were present in the responses. The first discourse involves CBR being framed as a necessary and an appropriate framework. The majority of the thirteen respondents asserted that CBR was best suited to meet the goals of their project. The second discourse is action-oriented, as one participant describes their motive for utilizing CBR was to "to shift the balance of power" towards community empowerment within organizational planning processes and more generally, the City of Toronto.

Post-Funding Action

One goal of the surveys and interviews was to shed light on types of action that take place following the funding period. According to the survey, the most frequently achieved project outcome within 12 months of completion of the project was knowledge dissemination and organization or participation in events with 53% (n=8) (see Figure 2). This is followed by advocacy and education with 27% (n=4) each.

The most prevalent outcome achieved one-year post-completion of the project identified by the survey was knowledge dissemination and organization or participation in events with 40% (n=6). The second most prevalent outcomes one-year post completion were informing programs, policies or resource distribution and prescriptive recommendations to alter existing programs, policies or resource distribution with equal results of 33% (n=5).

The survey results mirror some responses from the interviews. From the interviews it was observed that all participants were able to identify specific forms of action that has taken place since the completion of their WI funded project. The most common post-funding action identified by all six interviewees was involvement or participation in events to disseminate information and provide knowledge transfer including presenting research at conferences, contributing to book chapters, and writing journal articles. Three of the six interviewees directly mentioned capacity building as an action they have completed either during or after their project:

“Plenty has happened [since the completion of the WI funded grant]...we were able to get funding for the other two components [of our project] and were able to complete the research and we actually were able to generate a whole host of action from the research..we used component three, which is the development of best practice model, to actually engage the affected community in a very innovative exercise to develop...[a]... component ...[that] would constitute improving their mental health...The outcome that was generated has been guiding our coalitions work and program ever since, for the last 5 years” - Interview Participant 1- Academic partner.

Five of the six interviewed participants mentioned that WI funded research has led to informing or developing programs or has led to another grant which has since informed programs, policies or resource distribution. For example, one participant noted that “based on that piece of research, we decided to have a case management program, and we still have it” - Interview Participant 3- Academic Partner.

Pathways to Action

We felt it was important to explore factors that community-based researchers felt led to action within their project. There has been relatively little literature exploring pathways to action in CBR.²⁰⁻²¹ Within this report, we have categorized the results into intended and unanticipated pathways to action.

Community Engagement

Positive intended action was attributed predominantly to community engagement in the survey, which was mentioned by eight of the thirteen respondents (62%). One interview participant highlighted the importance of community engagement by stating:

“I think the things that did well with this one [project] versus the other one [other WI funded CBR project] was that the target community, affected communities, were actively engaged and mobilized in the project. Rather than the other project, which was very provider heavy, the end point was when we tried to engage the communities a little bit... without sufficient resources to build on that process...nothing’s going to happen...I think over the long-run the people who really drive societal change really have to be the people most directly affected by the issue” - Interview Participant 1- Academic Partner.

Similarly, building connections was identified by three of the nine survey respondents as being an important way for community organizations and academic bodies to foster meaningful action. This was corroborated by interview participants, many of whom identified as having a diverse cross-disciplinary team as part of their key to success, with engagement from a diverse community.

Partnerships

The role of partnerships in fostering action was another theme that emerged from the data. Partnerships were mentioned by seven of the survey respondents (54%) as facilitating positive action within their project. Within the interviews, all respondents mentioned the role of partnership on several occasions as the key to their projects success. Several interview participants mentioned that dedicated partners were essential for action beyond the funding period. For example, one participant stated “this coalition [of the CBR project] came together because of a very acute need and gap in the community” – Interview Participant 1- Academic Partner.

Another commonly identified aspect of partnerships that fosters action was identified as shared decision making. Specifically one survey respondent emphasized the need for “shared decision-making and resources”. One interview respondent specified the need for partners to have aligned interests to maximize possible action. The role of building a relationship with partners on the research team was listed by two interviewees as key to the success of their project.

Nine of the eleven survey respondents (82%) identified that they have collaborated with project partners since the completion of their CBR projects. Many survey participants identified that they have worked with partners on a variety of projects and tasks. For example one survey respondent noted there has been collaboration in the realm of “knowledge translation; service provision and further research projects”.

Logistics

Logistical and organizational elements were identified as important knowledge to action pieces by interview and survey participants. The role of data ownership was emphasized by survey and interview participants as a key pathway to action. For example, two interview participants emphasized the importance of the community perceiving that they own and have access to the data. One interview participant emphasized that because the community felt they “owned” the data it led to the creation of action within the community.

Other logistical elements that were identified include the need for flexibility in regards to timelines, clear mission statements and terms of reference as important ways that academic and community bodies can foster meaningful action. Budgeting time for in-person meetings was noted by two interview participants as crucial to develop a successful team, which has the potential to increase the knowledge to action pathway.

One interview participant mentioned how meeting and connecting personally with team members has the potential to improve partnership relations through the fostering of trust, as well as promote action through a successful partnership. This interview participant mentioned:

“We did team building all the time, right? And we did it through ceremony, so we had a prayer, we had a smudge, we had a teaching every time we had a meeting and we ate together a lot, which I now do with a lot of my other teams: we eat together. I think that helped keep us together and get to know each other and to trust each other. I think it also helped us focus on our purpose” - Interview Participant 2- Academic Partner.

Funding was stated by three (23%) of the survey respondents as a crucial pathway to action for their project. One survey respondent communicated “having the funding was critical to the success of the project” whereas another respondent replied that “multi-source funding support” contributed to positive action within their CBR project. Five of the six interview participants identified the necessity of receiving funding post-completion of their project as essential to turn the research into action.

A clear understanding of project goals was identified as a key pathway to action as it would allow for equity and a common understanding of roles within the team. An interview participant emphasized the importance of evaluation and reflection of past projects and to apply that knowledge to future projects.

Unanticipated Action

The intent of inquiring about unexpected action was to gain insight on what types of actions are common, and how they can contribute to both positive and negative outcomes. Several themes emerged from the survey and interview questions about unintended and unanticipated positive outcomes that resulted from the participants’ project. Successful community engagement was identified by three out of the nine total respondents as an unanticipated result. A successful partnership, hosting of a policy summit and the informing of a food distribution program were all mentioned by survey respondents as examples of positive unanticipated action.

When asked about unexpected action from their CBR project most of the interviewed participants could not recall unexpected action; most respondents believe they simply accomplished what they set out to do. However as the interviews progressed, interview participants had an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in more detail. This prompted them to identify multiple unanticipated events and outcomes both throughout and post-completion of their project. A positive unanticipated action noted by four of the six interview participants was that many peer researchers have continued to work on projects or have been hired to work on other projects/organizations. One participant noted the team:

“used peer researchers for this project and that was a bit of an unknown for [us] at the time...[the organization] had a lot of client involvement employing people with lived experience of homelessness or drug use in service delivery, but in research it hadn’t been done...so that was a positive experience, really positive...I think the impact for peer researchers was something that we didn’t expect, maybe something we hoped” - Interview Participant 3- Community Partner.

There were many examples of unexpected partnerships. For example, one interview participant noted that her team was approached by a professional filmmaker to create a documentation of the teams' research findings. This partnership complemented and contributed to the dissemination of the research findings to a broader audience. While another interview participant mentioned the group facilitators, who within the project were only employed for several hours, took ownership of the project by taking the information they learned back to their communities. This relates to why many community-based researchers have chosen to use CBR as an approach.

Barriers to Action

Several themes emerged with regards barriers to action identified by survey and interview participants. The most frequently cited barriers were funding issues, partnership issues, logistical issues and structural barriers.

The most frequently identified barrier listed on the survey was insufficient financial resources or lack of funding with 84% (n=21 tn =25) of participants reporting this. Three survey respondents (23%) identified funding constraints as a factor that hindered action in their project. Specifically, factors identified were:

- “lack of resources for follow-up on all learnings”,
- “lack of funding”, and
- “limited funding and funding support for staff hinders taking on new research initiatives”.

Partnerships were identified by survey and interview respondents as both a pathway and a barrier to action. One participant mentioned that “navigating the partnership piece” (Interview Participant 5- Community Partner) can be one of the largest challenges for community-based researchers. This participant mentions that power dynamics need to be equitable and ensure the right to data access. Three survey respondents (23%) identified various challenges of partnerships that hindered the action including:

- “change-over of personnel in partnership”,
- “challenges in maintaining equitable partnership”, and
- “negative outlook on part of some agencies”.

With regards to future collaboration with partners, two survey respondents noted that there has been no collaboration since the completion of the project due to “no further funding opportunities” and issues surrounding “organizational capacity”. Several interview participants asserted that their inability to receive post-project funding to disseminate their findings was a key barrier to action.

Logistical and organization aspects were also identified by survey and interview respondents as key barriers to action. Rigid timeframes and project timeline issues were asserted by many survey and interview participants as a barrier for their CBR project. For example, one participant stated, referring to the community in which the team was researching, “time is a constraint that can enable but also can profoundly damage some of these relationships and these families” - Interview Participant 2- Academic Partner. Furthermore, three survey respondents (23%) recognized timeframe issues as a hindering action within their project. Specifically, respondents mentioned:

- “CBR depends on people who are often marginalized and who suffer from the chronic issues of poverty and precarious housing, which makes their ability to perform within narrow timelines and parameters challenging”,
- “challenge of balancing the real pace of community-based decision-making and action planning with funder/policy level expectations about faster timelines”, and

- “variable understanding of time frames. Unequal commitment to deadlines but there was commitment to completing the project”.

In the survey, too many competing demands to make time for CBR was listed as the third most prevalent significant barrier to action with 32% (n=8) (View Figure 3).

High turnover has the potential to complicate projects as it necessitates the involvement and training of new members, or the team must continue the project with reduced capacity. 56% of survey respondents identified insufficient staff resources to support CBR (n=14, tn=25) as a significant barrier. Three of the six interview participants mentioned that a high organizational turnover was a common barrier for CBR.

One participant mentioned communication with past partners becomes difficult due to team members changing organizations and employment positions. Further, one participant highlighted a unique conflict between organizational demands and research recommendations while working in a social service organization:

“When you’re working...from an organizational perspective...you need to go deep into a person and look at their whole life...you look at all the things that affect and impact on their recovery. In the reality based world that we live in...[there are conflicting] demands where the funders are looking for numbers, like how many clients you served and how many contacts you had with the clients versus working long-term with someone...connecting with someone...unfortunately the way the reporting is...it doesn’t allow you that. It’s about numbers” - Interview Participant 7- Community Partner.

Two interview participants mentioned that as funding institutions change their mandates and funding criteria, many projects fall through the cracks and are unable to apply for funding. One interview participant stated, “We had a few meetings with the funders. They keep changing their funding criteria as the government changes” - Interview Participant 1- Academic Partner.

Several barriers to action were identified through in-person interviews at the individual project level and at the structural level. Five survey participants identified difficulty in getting their project approved by ethics boards as a minor barrier (n=3) or as a significant barrier (n=2) to conducting CBR. Several themes emerged regarding structural barriers to action including ethics review processes and funding barriers. Three of the six interview participants identified that the ethics review process can be difficult for CBR projects. For example, two interview participants stated:

“In funding and in ethics there is that catch 22: our whole intent is to be very community based but that very thing sometimes makes it harder for us to access funds and to access things like ethics review, which in one sense you could say is much more important when it’s [characteristic of a] community engaged process to ensure that everybody’s rights are preserved, but at the same time we have created these systems that set up the whole us and them sort of structure...[When facing] anything that is academically funded, we are considered knowledge users or collaborators at most and generally, from those perspectives, we are not considered to have any intellectual direction over the process... Up until quite recently, there was no place that we could take a project for ethics review, so we would have to have a partner that had access to an ethics board” - Interview Participant 5&6 Community Partner.

One participant noted that “research funders were not respectful of the process” and felt that the funding body (WI) did not demonstrate equity in their practices with grantees. Although this response was unique in this sample, the respondent also raises a valid concern that the funder and grantee relationship is fraught with difficulties, including power differential and at times miscommunications. The current political climate was identified by one survey participant as hindering action; “difficult political context, neo-con ideology and provincial austerity”. At the same time, survey participants identified difficulty finding or engaging community members (72%) (n=18, tn=25) and the belief that limited results or action will be produced (68%) as barriers to action (n=17).

Most of the unexpected action identified was positive. However, several interview participants were able to identify negative unexpected action. For example, one participant recounted how an agency attempted to shutdown their project. This was unexpected because the participant was not familiar with the community their team was researching. Another participant mentioned the team did not anticipate the amount of work required to complete the CBR project. This team wanted their research to be timely and easy to use. As a result they felt pressured to disseminate the research quickly to organizations and policy-makers.

Discussion and Implications

The role of partnerships, funding, as well as key logistics were noted by survey and interview respondents as key elements that can either foster successful action or create a barrier.

Partnership and collaboration were identified by survey and interview respondents as potential pathways and barriers to action. The respondents identified the role of partnerships as an essential yet precarious aspect of CBR. Participants identified that successful and committed partnerships can facilitate the knowledge to action pathway. However, respondents have also identified that partnerships can create conflict should values and roles not be aligned.

Data from the surveys and interviews revealed that many researchers, community and academic alike, felt that there needs to be funding available post-completion of the project for dissemination. Having funding post-completion of projects was identified as a crucial pathway to action and a crucial barrier to action should the research team not find additional funding.

The logistical aspect of partnerships, such as data ownership and flexible timeframes, was identified as common pathways to action by data from the surveys and interviews. This was confirmed by both interview participants as a pathway to action, as it allows multiple partners to circulate or utilize research results in various domains. Another practical aspect of working in partnership is the importance of in-person meetings for the research team. This was mentioned on both the survey and in the interview. Respondents agreed that because partnerships can be precarious and have the potential to act as a barrier to action, the research teams budgeted and planned in-person meetings or training sessions.

One interview participant proposed a problem-solving approach to enhance equitable partnerships. This participant suggested the creation of a partnership agreement as a means to promote both logistical and relational equity in partnerships. The implementation of a partnership agreement component may ensure all partners have a common understanding of their goals, roles within the partnership, and data ownership and access.

While the findings of this project cannot be extrapolated beyond WI funded grants from 2003 to 2011, it is clear that there are several issues many community-based researchers face.

Based on the findings of this pilot study, we offer the following observations:

- The role of partnerships within CBR surfaces as a critical one for local projects. This was one of the most prominent themes of this research project. It was observed that an equitable partnership would be beneficial to research. It was identified by multiple participants that partners need to collaborate based on mutual interest in the topic as well as a need for research in that area.
 - There are a growing number of local resources to help community-based researchers identify and mediate conflict or disconnect within their CBR projects. This growing body of literature is a valuable tool for researchers that could enhance the partnership and potentially lead to action.
- Several participants identified during the interview that the creation of appropriate and accessible ethics review process for CBR projects would be beneficial.
 - Allowing community-based organizations to complete ethics review applications may reduce the necessity of seeking out a partner with an academic institution simply to obtain ethics approval. This may also help bolster successful partnerships between community and academic researchers as it removes the necessity of finding a particular partner with access to a Research Ethics Board (REB), and allows for partnerships to form based on mutual interest in a topic.
 - There are several operational CBR REBs in Canada. These are highly valuable and necessary, however, there continues to be issues surrounding the capacity of review boards to accommodate requests.
- Another observation highlighted by the *Action and Research* project is a lack of project follow-up. We believe this represents a missed opportunity for both the research team, who do not get a chance to share their project's progress, and the WI, who could continue to promote research post-funding period.
- Available funding during the post-project period was identified as essential to maximize knowledge and research. Knowledge translation and dissemination was continuously identified as the most common post-project action. Therefore, to ensure that project teams have the ability to disseminate their research, it was observed that funding should be made available specifically upon completion of a research project.
- Community engagement and capacity building were recurring positive actions that many survey and interview participants identified. This highlights the beneficial nature of CBR as an approach, which engages and involves community members in the research process.
- Many participants noted that timeframes and timelines should be more flexible to promote project completion and project continuation. Due to the variety of stakeholders or partners involved in CBR projects and potential organizational turnover, it is important to allow teams the time and the flexibility to ensure project completion.

Strengths and Limitations

There are several notable strengths and limitations of the *Action and Research* project. The project had good representation from both academic and community partners as participants in both the online survey and the individual interviews. We consider this a substantial strength in our research as both

perspectives of academic and community are acknowledged and incorporated into our data. The multiple data sources utilized in this project are also a positive aspect of the *Action and Research* project as this allows for multiple perspectives to be considered for observational patterns and trends.

There are, however, a number of limitations that warrant mentioning. Principally, the low response rate of the survey and interviews does not allow for internal or external validity as the results cannot be extrapolated to represent CBR funded by the WI, nor can it be extrapolated to CBR in general. However, despite the low response rate, the trends and observations can be invaluable.

It is probable that community-based researchers who had successful project outcomes may have been more willing to participate in the survey and interview components, as compared to community-based researchers who did not realize their project goals. Therefore, there is a potential for an over-representation in the survey and interviews of researchers who accomplished project outcomes. Many of the open-ended questions offered more insight into the opinions of researchers. However, open-ended questions had significantly fewer overall responses.

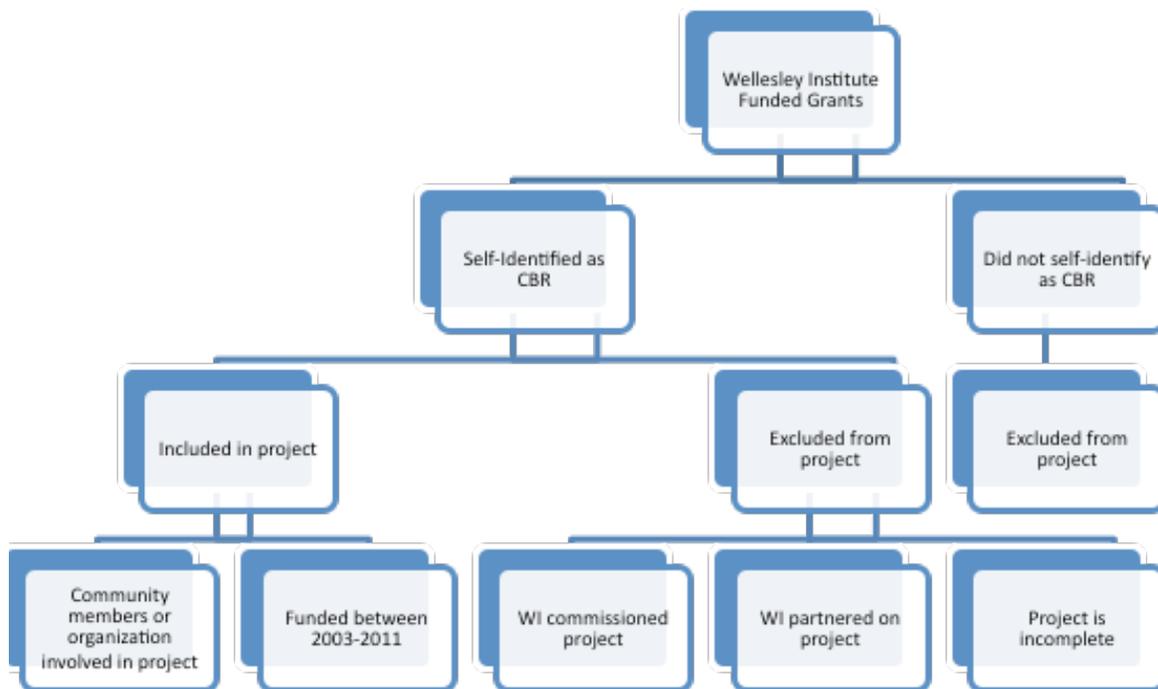
The project was conducted over a relatively short time period (nine months from start to finish). Time constraints and the limitations of resources dedicated to the project meant we were able to pursue only a small number of individual interviews. An additional few weeks or months would have enabled us to pursue a greater number of participants.

Due to the long span of research, there have been many institutional changes from 2003 to 2011 within the WI, which may have influenced the grants program. For example, the application/LOI requirements have changed several times creating some discrepancy in the information available. Moreover, WI funding requirements and mandates may have directed or influenced how applicants identified and framed their research project goals. Despite these limitations, the WI implemented few restrictions on their call for proposals.

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Appendix A: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for WI CBR



Appendix B: Methodology

iii) Online Semi-structured survey

A link was emailed to prospective participants inviting them to take part in a brief semi-structured survey through Survey Monkey. The survey was comprised of a mixture of open and closed-ended questions.

The online survey, through Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>) included questions which focused on the specific outcomes and impacts of their work in CBR. The construction of these questions was informed by the document review process. This allows our data collection methods to be attentive to the observations and learnings of stage one. We asked participants to reflect on their specific project and to consider the anticipated and unanticipated outcomes of their projects. Participants were asked if they were interested in taking part in a more in-depth interview (in person or over the phone) to explore in greater detail the challenges, opportunities and reflections on the range of actions and outcomes of CBR in Toronto. Survey responses were kept anonymous to ensure participants would reflect honestly about their project, without fear their answers would impact their relationship with the WI. Participants who chose not to participate were able to opt out of the survey immediately. Survey participants were asked to indicate if they were interested in taking part in a follow up interview. The interested participants inputted their contact information into another survey to ensure their contact information was not linked to their survey responses.

iv) Semi-structured in-person interviews

We conducted semi-structured in person interviews with a sub-sample of 7 participants who agreed to partake in the follow-up interview. The intent of this interview was to discuss in greater detail the circumstances of their CBR project and the actions that have developed from the project. Participation in the interview was completely voluntary. Interview participants self-identified themselves through the survey. The interview questions were constructed following a review of the online survey data. With participant permission, all seven interviews were audio recorded and summarized. There were many benefits from conducting interviews with participants. We found two primary advantages: an in-depth understanding of the participant's research project, and the ability to follow-up on themes and questions that arose from survey data.

Figures

Figure 1: Document Review: Research Project Focus

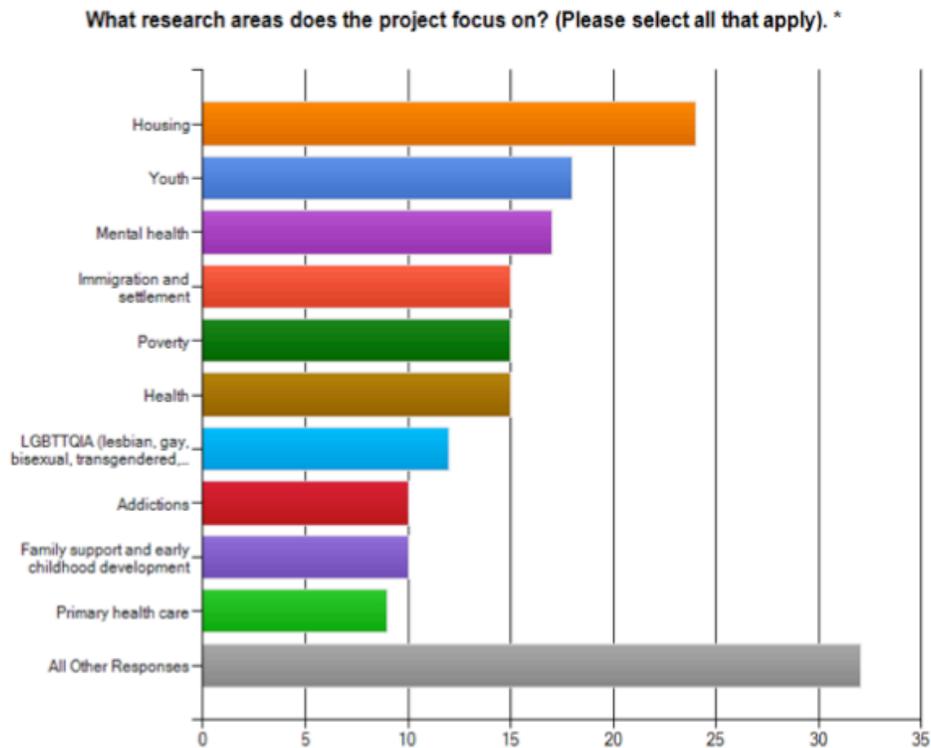


Figure 2: Achieved Outcomes and Deliverables

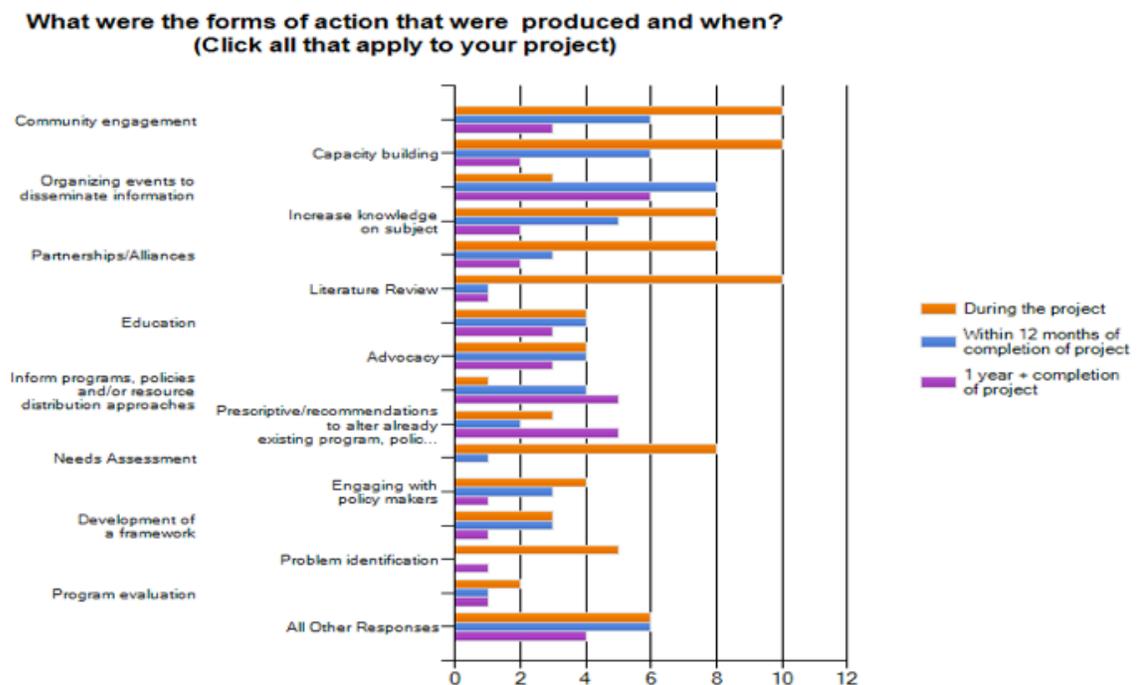


Figure 3: Barriers to Community-Based Research

