



Facilitating Co-Creation of Knowledge in Two Community-University Research Partnerships

ACTION-RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Community-university research partnerships (CURPs) can be mutually beneficial but not all manage to co-create knowledge. Though much has been written on conditions for and obstacles to success, less is known about specific factors that may help. This paper adds to emerging literature on this issue by examining how two CURPs, using different community-based research approaches in divergent contexts, found ways to address challenges and co-create knowledge. The Canadian partnership sought to foster knowledge sharing on parenting children with disabilities among researchers, practitioners, community groups and members. The rural Kenyan CURP tested usefulness of a traditional gathering space for fostering intergenerational “sex-talk”, hoping to enhance communication between community stakeholders and make accessing health services more acceptable. After presenting main features of both, we identify factors that helped each succeed in its unique context then explore factors that cut across the two. Three common facilitating factors emerged: early and ongoing partner involvement, presence of a safe climate, and knowledge translation for diverse users. Two of these have received scant attention to date, suggesting some implications for practice. As we cannot assume community partners feel safe sharing, researchers need to identify potential barriers and design strategies to reduce them. We also need to explore, document, and share innovative ways to make knowledge accessible for diverse users. Finally, as flexibility and creativity were key to success of both CURPs, these aspects should be emphasized in teaching community researchers. Further work could document innovations and evaluate their effectiveness in helping co-creation of knowledge happen.

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Community-university research partnerships (CURPs) bring together community and academic stakeholders with different perspectives, expertise and resources to work on community concerns (Schutz et al., 2004). When all parties are engaged and their combined wisdom mobilized, CURPs can be mutually beneficial. However, a gap remains between declarations on the value of co-constructing knowledge, and practice on the ground (Tandon & Singh, 2015). Relatively few partnerships succeed in going beyond traditional one-way transfer of university expertise to passive communities (Moore & Ward, 2010), yet limited information is available on why this is the case.

There is ample literature on conditions that must present if CURPs are to succeed in co-creating knowledge. This body of work stresses that core values of community-based research (CBR) such as mutual trust, respect, engagement, and power sharing must be applied consistently (Tandon & Singh, 2015). Other requirements include focusing on problems of contextual and cultural relevance to the community, mobilizing multiple knowledge sources, and ensuring all partners participate at each phase. This literature identifies challenges to fulfilling these conditions, including the difficult contexts in which most community research takes place, power inequities between university and community partners, and vast differences between their respective knowledge cultures (Tandon & Singh, 2015). Little is known about specific factors that may help overcome such obstacles, though increasingly works are identifying learnings from accounts of successful engagement (Kajner et al., 2012; Kline et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2015).

This paper grew out of the authors' collective reflections and presentations on community-university research and CURPs (Fouché, Home & Chubb, 2016). The authors are university scholars, who are committed to community research that respects different partners' knowledge, brings mutual benefits and is participatory. All three have struggled with practical obstacles that are surprisingly similar despite vast differences in projects, and each has experimented with new ways to overcome them.

This paper attempts to advance this reflection by examining how two community-university partnerships, located in the divergent contexts of urban Canada and rural Kenya, succeeded in co-creating knowledge. Using different CBR approaches, each found creative ways to address contextual realities and circumvent obstacles. By identifying specific factors that helped both CURPs foster multidirectional knowledge sharing and creation, it is hoped this work will contribute to a more practical understanding of these issues. It begins by summarizing relevant literature then outlines main features of the two partnerships. After identifying factors that helped each to co-create knowledge, those cutting across both partnerships are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper is guided by literature on community-university research partnerships (CURPs) and on community-based research (CBR). The latter covers a broad spectrum of approaches, which seek to actively engage community groups or members to varying degrees in co-creating context relevant knowledge (Tremblay & de Oliveira Jayme, 2015). Growing interest in CBR reflects concern that traditional research excludes community participants from decisions about what gets studied, how it is done, and how results are used (Wood et al., 2015). While CBR is understood and applied in varying ways using multiple labels with overlapping definitions (Bivens et al., 2015), scholars concur that knowledge must be co-created with the community and of mutual benefit (Cuthill & Brown, 2010; Davies, 2016). All CBR approaches strive to be participatory, relationship based, process, and action-oriented, (Wood & McAteer, 2017) but some put more emphasis on equity and social change. Certain approaches, such as community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) and participatory action learning and research (PALAR), place researchers in the service of the community, aim to share power equally (Wood & McAteer, 2017), and balance knowledge generation with social action (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015). Using an iterative process, these approaches seek regular stakeholder feedback to inform ongoing adjustments (Hacker, 2013).

Achieving this in practice is not easy. Co-creating knowledge requires recognizing the diversity of legitimate knowers (Davies, 2016), valuing the unique strengths of each stakeholder (Schutz et al., 2004), and mobilizing multiple sources of expertise (Wood & McAteer, 2017). Multi-directional knowledge sharing can happen only if all partners are open to learning from the experience and each other (Kearney, 2015) and if each participates in decision-making throughout the process (Hacker, 2013; Tremblay & de Oliveira Jayme, 2015). To be mutually beneficial, research must focus on problems of contextual and cultural relevance to the community, seek results that can be used for social change (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015), use several data collection methods, and disseminate findings where and when they will make a difference (Wood et al., 2015). Such research also strives to develop capacity and promote community ownership to foster sustainability of changes and learning (Wood & McAteer, 2017).

Scholars have explored why these requirements are so difficult to fulfill, drawing on case studies of community-university partnerships in varied contexts. Most work focuses on basic principles, such as applying core CBR values of mutual trust, respect, engagement, and power sharing, throughout the project (Tandon & Singh, 2015). This requires a research process that encourages a culture of engagement, and involvement of all partners in co-defining both a shared vision

and mutually beneficial, measurable goals (Kearney, 2015). This body of work identifies obstacles to success reflecting differences between university and community partners. Their knowledge cultures diverge widely around research goals, methods, and means of sharing results and crucially, wide power inequities exist between them (Tremblay & Hall, 2014).

Universities still emphasize traditional research, which views communities as subjects and seeks visible, publishable results in a limited time. CURPs, however, must apply community research consistently yet flexibly in challenging contexts which requires building a trust-based partnership (Stemmans Paterson, 2017). This time-consuming work is undervalued by universities whose norms, tangible support, and reward systems are not aligned with participatory approaches (Kasi & Yorks, 2010). In contrast, community knowledge cultures are shaped by a history of oppression and disadvantage. Aware that their agenda and capacity may be co-opted for university interests, community stakeholders can distrust the partnership, process, and results (Kearney, 2015).

Power difference between university and community partners is an even greater obstacle. Academics have recognized expertise, skills, and access to financial support, all of which can be useful to communities whose power to make changes is impeded by external circumstances (Thomson et al., 2010). However, universities and funders also have the power to withhold support and to impose conditions which can limit time for meaningful participation. Communities hold invaluable knowledge grounded in the lived experience of local culture, needs, and networks but society accords little respect to this. If low societal opinion is internalized, community stakeholders may not recognize their expertise and can lack the confidence and skills to share it (Wood & McAteer, 2017).

Acknowledging the existence of such challenges is crucial but researchers must also know how to address them effectively. The scarce literature on this aspect is based largely on observational case studies, such as one that used participatory video to mobilize community knowledge in Sao Paulo. Organizational capacity and relationships among community partners showed improvement, along with confidence, self-efficacy, knowledge, skills, and critical reflection. All these can help participants realize their potential to make changes (Tremblay & de Oliveira Jayme, 2015). Another case study analyzed early sessions to identify specific factors that helped “level the playing fields” in South Africa, where differences in status and culture are powerful barriers to engagement (Wood & McAteer, 2017). Researchers emphasized that the knowledge to make the project a success resided with community partners, so “the rest of us would have to learn from them” (Wood & McAteer, 2017, p. 258). Using first names reduced the impact of status, as did paying careful attention to language. All participants knew some English, but its use was associated with being “educated”, and fluency and

comfort levels varied. Two trusted community interpreters helped everyone understand. When researchers did not, they became aware how it felt to be “left out” and modelled asking for clarification. In conclusion, spending time building trust and foregrounding the value of local knowledge is crucial and authentic participation takes hard work with constant attention to status, language, and culture (Wood & McAteer, 2017, p. 262).

Lastly, a Canadian study analyzed interviews and documents from 20 CURPs diverse in context and scope (Tremblay & Hall, 2014). Findings revealed that flexible partnership arrangements, suitable governance structures, and ongoing application of CPR principles enhanced success. The authors concluded that taking time to agree on common values and develop relationships was critical, as “benefits to the community accrue in direct proportion to the quality, longevity, and trust developed” (Tremblay & Hall, 2014 p. 402).

TWO COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Most literature discusses partnerships located in one country, often in a single community. This section traces the development of two very different CURPs, along with summarizing and comparing their main features (see **Table 1**). Further details are presented in a later section on factors in each partnership that facilitated knowledge co-creation.

“WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS IN SPECIAL NEEDS PARENTING”

The Canadian partnership sought to foster knowledge sharing on parenting children with disabilities among researchers, practitioners, and community groups. As this CURP is described elsewhere (Home, Carter, Scarth, & Warren 2015), it is presented in summary here. This partnership was developed by a university researcher who had been urged by varied community stakeholders to share her qualitative study on special needs adoptive parenting widely. After consulting five key community stakeholders, she formed a CURP with a disability scholar, a national and provincial adoption council, an adoption agency, and a parent-led support group. The team designed a project aimed at sharing research with diverse users and seeking input, fostering cross-role collaboration and mutual learning, and making co-created knowledge widely accessible. Supported by a national grant*, the team created a plan for two invitational workshops on parenting children with special needs to be held in Ottawa, Ontario and Victoria, British Columbia. This core format was adapted by the community partners who organized and led each regional workshop in Fall 2012.

Sixty parents, professionals, and organizations from disability and adoption communities met to hear research

	“CREATING CONVERSATIONS”: KENYA	“WORKING TOGETHER”: CANADA
Project Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth sexual wellbeing at-risk, limited intergenerational dialogue on issue Weak communication between community and NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scarce Canadian research is rarely accessible to stakeholders. Their collaboration is impeded by role/organizational differences
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand above issues Establish traditional gathering space for dialogue on sensitive issues Improve communication between NGO & community stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share research knowledge Invite stakeholder input Build connections Make & keep knowledge accessible
Research Design	Context-specific model to understand & identify urgent issues, using 4 phases: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Team & community training 2) Community discussion, identify focus 3) Mabaraza adapted using new tools 4) Results discussed → action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team planned 2 workshops for study participants & stakeholders, led by community partners. Themes for documents emerged from analysis of WS discussions.
Evaluation	Evaluated by sharing & discussing results at a dissemination baraza.	Interviews with 15 WS participants, team reflections, feedback on docs.
Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model enabled intergenerational dialogue. Community & partner NGO developed separate mentorship spaces for sexual wellbeing dialogues, where youth felt more confident sharing their experiences via photography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WS: cross-role sharing, common concerns identified, experiences normalized, isolation reduced. Safe climate & mixed groups helped. Documents used by varied groups for wide-ranging purposes. Partner did post-project survey.
Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared documents with area NGOs, partner NGO used findings to inform outreach programming. Identified contacts to progress mentorship spaces. Project booklet & results shared with partners, presented at 3 conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 national media interviews by community & university partners. Partner made documents available on-line, others provided publicity & identified key contacts. 1 journal article, 3 conference presentations.

Table 1 Comparing Main Features of Two Projects.

presentations, discuss issues raised, share their experiences in small, themed groups, and identify action priorities. For this dissemination project, ethics approval was needed only for a graduate student’s data collection in one discussion group. Those interested gave their consent or selected an alternate group. Three months later, an independent evaluator conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 diverse workshop participants. Interviewees shared what they had learned, any changes made, and most helpful activities. The research team drew on presentations and participant-generated group summaries to create audio-visual and written documents, which were made available at no cost via the national partner’s website. Document usefulness was evaluated through user feedback, and additional data came from team members’ reflections on what they had learned during the partnership.

Evaluation results suggested that goals were attained. Two workshop outcomes, learning/sharing across boundaries and discovery of common concerns, were noted by team members struck by participants’ willingness to learn from and engage with each other. Examples are professionals’ new respect for parents’ strength and resiliency in the face of uncoordinated services, and parents’ realizing how much professionals are limited by budgetary and policy constraints. Reduced isolation and normalization of this parenting experience were other outcomes, as families realized “we weren’t the worst parents in the world because we can’t find help for our child” (Home et al., 2015, p. 30). Professionals

discovered the crucial role of peer-led groups, whose existence was in peril due to inconsistent support. Respondents concurred that a respectful climate (“recognizing all stakeholders’ expertise equally”) and mixed role groups were critical in “allowing people to speak freely” (Home et al., 2015, p. 31).

Documents developed from workshop material made co-created knowledge accessible to diverse audiences, who used them for practical purposes ranging from parent learning to professional development. Creating these documents enabled the university researchers to learn innovative, non-traditional methods for sharing their work. Some community partners increased their research skills and confidence. The national adoption council undertook a survey on similar themes in a larger sample. The results were shared on their website and presented at a conference.

THE KENYAN PARTNERSHIP: “CREATING CONVERSATIONS”

This partnership adopted a community-based participatory action (CBPAR) approach in the area of sexual health. A university researcher (doctoral student at the time) partnered with a locally trained research team and members of a rural Kenyan community. It grew out of a longstanding community development relationship with the Kenyan NGO and their previous study’s findings, which evidenced sustained HIV-related stigma and emphasized that the lack of a conversational space was

contributing to sex-related issues in the community. Thus, the “Creating Conversations” project was initiated, which tested usefulness of a traditional gathering space, *baraza* (*mabaraza* plural), as a tool for fostering intergenerational “sex-talk” on such topics as consent, sexual acts, gender-based violence, protection, and access to health information. It was hoped that this culturally responsive space would make accessing available health services more acceptable and enhance communication between community stakeholders (youth and adults). In gaining a critical awareness of and engagement with sex-related issues in the community, it was anticipated that these stakeholders would be in a stronger position to request that services offered by local NGOs be more culturally responsive.

The university granted ethics approval for this project, which included four cycles of research and the NGO sent out an open call to community stakeholders interested in discussing the issue. At each one, the community confirmed the findings and provided feedback to inform how members of the NGO and researcher designed the next step. Five methods were used to collect data: interviews (semi-structured, photo-journal), focus groups, *baraza* (gender divided and co-gender), and reflective journals (by the university researcher and members of the NGO). Approximately 300 participants were engaged.

Findings indicated that the traditional *baraza* space encouraged sharing, debating, and clarifying of information. The social protocols associated with the space incited respect and shaped an environment that allowed persons with varied knowledge, skills, and diverse backgrounds to dialogue successfully. This allowed community stakeholders to take stock in and devise solutions to self-identified sexual and reproductive health problems, instead of passively participating in Western-shaped programs. An example of this ownership was proposing a plan for separate mentorship spaces for young people and adults, a first step in shaping this culturally and contextually responsive space in a sustainable way. This partnership also encouraged dialogue between community stakeholders and local organizations, while demonstrating the value of culture-centered approaches for addressing problematic sex-related health outcomes.

MAKING CURPS WORK ON THE GROUND: FACTORS FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE CO-CREATION

Both partnerships encountered complex challenges, such as divergent work styles and role priorities, and dealing with several languages. Cultural differences were more pronounced in Kenya, where working with community stakeholders, including a partner NGO with vested interests locally, required balancing different

expectations, commitments, and agendas and using a complex multi-layered feedback loop. Canadian partners had added challenges from differing paces of work, distance, and language-related communication issues. Both partnerships succeeded, however, in co-creating context-relevant knowledge benefitting all partners. The following section discusses specific factors in each partnership that helped to foster this outcome.

FACILITATING FACTORS IN THE CANADIAN PARTNERSHIP

Early consultation of stakeholders and an unusual funding opportunity were key to establishing this partnership. As practical Canadian research on special needs adoptive parenting is rare, the researcher was urged to share her qualitative study widely. She learned of a public outreach funding program, which aimed at increasing access to and use of research, facilitating multidirectional knowledge sharing, and building connections between researchers and users. To gauge relevance and interest, the researcher consulted five community informants: an agency director, a social worker, coordinator of a parent association, a policymaker, and an adoption council board member. They concurred that despite shared concerns, adoption and disability communities rarely work with each other or with parent groups. Efforts to learn what is needed and works are hindered by lack of mechanisms to share knowledge and connect with researchers. They suggested bringing together parents, professionals, and community groups from varied sectors to learn from researchers and each other, then make co-created knowledge accessible. A partnership was formed between two university researchers, an adoption agency, a parent group coordinator, and two adoption councils. This team was successful in obtaining a grant.

Team members met to plan the core workshop format, which included two research presentations, a networking lunch, themed mixed role discussion groups, and a plenary for sharing summaries and priorities. To recognize partner expertise and ensure ongoing engagement, regional committees were tasked with adapting this core format to a local context and with generating an invitation list across disciplines, organizations, and roles. Each committee was responsible for organizing and leading a workshop.

The research team adopted measures to reduce external and internal obstacles to full participation. These free events were held on Saturdays and parent participants in the original study were reimbursed for all costs. To counter societal perceptions around valued types of knowledge, invitations, and opening statements highlighted the importance of lived experience. Group and community expertise was recognized by asking organizations to bring display table material and inviting group coordinators to host lunch tables. In response, a disability group leader offered informal support over

lunch and an indigenous agency director brought a creative art display. Using only first names reduced the impact of status differences, but other measures were needed to ensure parents felt safe sharing in groups with professionals who might have child welfare authority. Written assurance of confidentiality was provided and identifying information was removed before verification of summaries by group members.

Regional teams took care to adapt for context and culture. Accommodating the francophone minority was paramount in the National Capital Region, where a minority French-speaking population struggles to protect linguistic rights. Ottawa invitations and handouts were translated, while the plenary and one discussion group were conducted bilingually. Vancouver Island is home to many indigenous peoples, whose cultural traditions are not fully reflected in services. The Victoria team reached out to diverse indigenous stakeholders and held offered a discussion group on the theme of culture and disability.

The final goal was to disseminate co-created knowledge in accessible forms for future consultation by varied community stakeholders. To capture content for videos, the Victoria presentations and plenary were filmed as were interviews with a parent, a policymaker, a practitioner, and coordinators of two parent associations. Excerpts were blended with research content to produce four videos designed to decrease parent isolation and raise public awareness. User groups had expressed the need for practical tools providing information on key issues and strategies for managing them. The team created short monographs on three themes emerging from analysis of workshop findings and group summaries: disentangling disabilities and finding support, advocacy for these children, and culture and disability. The latter was written by the graduate assistant who led that group.

The research team agreed on writing roles and content guidelines. Researchers wrote drafts and partners provided feedback, imagining they were exhausted parents or overworked professionals. Writers balanced information with accessibility by using a clear style following a common outline: project introduction with French monograph summary, core content (issues, supports, strategies), and resources for further learning. A graphic designer finalized web and print versions, ensuring the documents were engaging and accessible to all readers, including those from varied cultures or living with disabilities. A video and monograph were translated for French users.

Academic dissemination included two conference presentations and an article in a scholarly journal. The national adoption council made the video series and monographs available at no charge on their website, while other partners promoted them via their networks and identified strategic organizations to receive hard copies. The lead researcher, the national adoption council director, and two adoptive parents did national

media interviews (some in French), which helped them learn media skills while raising public awareness across the country.

FACILITATING FACTORS IN THE KENYAN PARTNERSHIP

This partnership began with a five-year period of relationship building with a Kenyan NGO, allowing the researcher to become well-versed in customary organization and community practices. This extended time also allowed the NGO to receive input from the community about some of the key social, economic, and political issues community stakeholders were facing, which resulted in the focus on sex-related issues impacting young people's lives. Before starting the research, several points of access had to be negotiated at the university, international, and community levels. The strong trusting relationship eased navigation of complex national and community structures, as well as a ubiquitous cultural environment in Coast province. During this phase, organization volunteers and those also working in the community were invited to three qualitative collaborative research training workshops. Upon completion, attendees submitted a letter of intent indicating their interest in participating and a team of five was assembled.

In the first phase of community and team training, independent learning strategies, including formal homework and reflective journals, helped build basic research capacity for NGO members to conduct future research studies independently but was mainly a way for individuals to explore their practice with communities from an increasingly analytical lens. Formal homework included writing annotations of literature articles in conjunction with explaining their relevance to the study context, transcribing the first round of data collection, and creating individual codebooks to conduct an initial analysis of the data. Sharing journals in weekly meetings facilitated mutual learning and exposed team dynamics and perspectives on the community. It also opened the opportunity for the local research team to teach the university researcher cultural etiquette and share topical issues around sexual and reproductive health ideas in the community.

To capture perspectives of adults as well as out-of-school youth on sex-related learning and exposure experiences, focus groups and individual interviews were held in the second phase of community discussion with intergenerational groups of community stakeholders. Young people were engaged separately through arts-based activities that included a photo-journal and writing stories in an interview with a member of the research team. To protect their identities but still enact their agency, young people chose their most representative stories to share and discuss in the baraza setting. In phase three, the mabaraza were adapted using innovative tools. These included storyboards (photographs taken

by young people representing their sexual learning and exposure experiences with written stories they assigned to the image) and open-ended drama to facilitate discussion of sex-related topics. The facilitator shared a blown-up version of the storyboard within each baraza session. This generated learning around new ways for young people to represent themselves.

After following cultural and social processes inherent to the baraza, storyboards, and open-ended recorded dramas served as starting points for discussion around sex-related issues. This allowed testing the space as a means for helping adults to acquire the tools to talk (i.e., relevant terminology), which those participating in the partnership had identified as a major barrier to conversations with young people on sex-related topics. While adults worked on this, the partner NGO began planning separate mentorship spaces that would provide young people with a safe environment for raising sexual and reproductive health questions and concerns.

In phase four, the findings were shared with volunteers at a partner NGO, which actively employs a community change strategy called *edutainment* (education through entertainment). Together with the research team, the NGO volunteers used the findings to formulate and film a short skit that was culturally and contextually accurate, with an unfinished ending to a sex-related scenario common to the community, for which attendees were invited to imagine a solution. In addition, the research team formulated a book of narratives in both Kiswahili and English to be used as a learning resource in community programs for teachers in schools or facilitators of community organizations. The team is also working with NGO volunteers to develop a training manual, which will translate the data into a form that could serve as future culturally derived educational materials for the organization's varied partners.

FACILITATING FACTORS CUTTING ACROSS BOTH PARTNERSHIPS

Given divergent contexts and CBR approaches, it is not surprising that these partnerships differed in how they were developed and carried out. Nevertheless, a comparison of facilitating factors revealed three that fostered co-creation of knowledge in both: early and ongoing partner involvement, presence of a safe climate, and knowledge translation for diverse users. In Canada, early stakeholder consultation identified community needs and stimulated creative ideas, which informed the project focus, specific goals and activities. The consultation period was limited by the grant application deadline, but funders' program parameters focused the team on essentials, such as agreeing on roles and ways to work together. In contrast, the Kenyan partnership was developed over five years, allowing the extended

time needed in this context to learn about local culture, build trusting relationships, navigate complex social structures, and provide training while building capacity.

Community partners remained involved in all phases of both. Canadian partners were consulted regularly on important decisions, met as often as vast distances permitted and were involved in all activities. Flexibility was needed to accommodate family and community group crises that erupt regularly in child welfare and disability fields. In Kenya, partners were strongly involved at each stage, due to the iterative approach and feedback loop built into the design, in keeping with the CBPAR approach used. Partner participation in Kenya was further enhanced by using multiple feedback methods, including reflective journaling by team members.

A third common facilitating factor was the safe climate which reduced barriers to full participation. Removing cost and scheduling obstacles while making maximum use of local and minority languages weakened external obstacles. Both teams also designed measures to counter internal barriers arising from status differences, confidentiality concerns, and low societal value of community knowledge. Emphasizing community partners' expertise encouraged them to share it, while use of pseudonyms or first names, de-identification of pictures, group summaries, and journal entries helped everyone feel safe. Creating innovative ways to elicit sensitive knowledge from Kenyan youth was particularly effective in allowing them to share sex-related experiences openly.

A final common factor was knowledge translation for diverse users. Both teams involved partners in making co-created knowledge accessible for future use by varied community users. Canadian partners helped develop practical documents for parents, professionals, and community groups, and participated in national media interviews in English and French. Community dissemination was strongly tailored to context in Kenya, using an arts-based strategy employed by a local NGO (i.e., turning transcript data into a short-script to be performed at community outreach events). The team also worked with the latter to develop a training manual for future educational use.

Some factors cutting across both partnerships are discussed extensively in the literature while others are only touched upon. The importance of early and ongoing partner involvement is widely acknowledged as critical. Scholars stress the need to invest time early in partnership development to build trust, foster mutual respect, agree on shared goals (Kearney, 2015; Tremblay & Hall, 2014), co-define roles, and foreground the value of community expertise (Hacker, 2013; Wood & McAteer, 2017). They caution that developing these qualities takes a long time and sustained effort (Stemmans Paterson, 2017). Many authors emphasize the importance of partners remaining involved in all phases, though few discuss how to ensure this happens, other than adopting methods that

nurture engagement (Kearney, 2015). Some state that community partners will benefit from such involvement only if knowledge is translated for diverse users (Hacker, 2013), with findings made available when and where they will make a difference (Wood et al., 2015). Finally, existing literature implies that a safe climate is needed for open sharing of knowledge, but few scholars discuss it directly or offer ways to foster it. Some authors noted usefulness of strategies discussed in this paper, including using first names, being careful with language, and finding non-traditional ways to protect anonymity while mobilizing community knowledge (Wood & McAteer, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Our findings reiterate the importance of applying CBR principles consistently, as is often pointed out in the literature. Our work emphasizes, however, that this must be done in ways that adapt carefully for the realities of each context. Two factors facilitating co-creation of knowledge in both partnerships, despite differences in context & CBR approach, have received little scholarly attention or are discussed only broadly. First, our work suggests that it cannot be assumed community partners feel safe sharing openly. Researchers need to work with community partners to identify potential barriers, both general and those unique to context, then design strategies to reduce them. Additionally, we found translating knowledge for diverse users to be important for enhancing benefits for the community. Researchers need to explore, document, and share innovative ways to make this happen.

Finally, an overarching theme running through both CURPs was creativity, an aspect that adds to the small but growing pool of literature on how to co-create knowledge within such partnerships (Hall et al., 2015; Hill et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Mountz et al., 2008). Both CURPs developed non-traditional, often arts-based, ways to reduce barriers, recognize and capture community knowledge, along with making it available to a range of users. Researchers can become preoccupied with overcoming the many obstacles to applying CBR principles consistently in difficult circumstances. Flexibility and creativity were essential to the success of these partnerships, yet not all researchers feel free to seek novel ways to address such challenges.

To think anew about how CURPs can facilitate co-creation of knowledge, partners need to be flexible while also giving themselves permission to mobilize their creativity. The importance of these aspects should be emphasized in the teaching of community researchers, incorporating specific examples and ample opportunities to practice. Further research is needed to examine and

understand these points more fully, for example, by considering what other exemplars of this flexibility and creativity look like on the ground. Community researchers could do this by documenting innovations used and by evaluating effectiveness of the latter in helping co-creation of knowledge happen.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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