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# Narratives and critical reflections from researchers and community stakeholders interrogating power and oppression while working in coalition towards social justice: recommendations for social work research and practice

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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Dissertation

**NARRATIVES AND CRITICAL REFLECTIONS FROM RESEARCHERS  
AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS INTERROGATING POWER  
AND OPPRESSION WHILE WORKING IN COALITION  
TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE:  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the processes by which multiple positioned actors in Participatory Action Research or Community-Based Participatory Research (PAR/CBPR) understand, reproduce, and contest systems of power and oppression in the context of their relationships and collaborations to support community-driven change efforts. The first chapter serves as a preface by reviewing relevant literature on participatory action research and power. The rest of the dissertation consists of three empirical papers.

The first of these papers examined the extent to which scholars interrogate systems of power and oppression in (PAR/CBPR) to advance social justice. Scoping review methodology was employed to systematically review scholarly literature written in English and published between 2010 and 2020 across 5 databases. Thematic analysis and data charting yielded six scholarly articles using critical self-reflexive qualitative methodologies to explore manifestations of power within the partnership. Articles

describe researchers employing individual critical reflections to confront individual assumptions, modify individual collaboration practices, and identify multilevel structures restraining participatory action approaches to research.

The second paper explored the perceptions of researchers and community stakeholders regarding key processes questioning and addressing power issues within the (PAR/CBPR) collaborations. Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews (n=23) were conducted with social work researchers (n=13) and community stakeholders (n=10) with current or prior experience engaging in (PAR/CBPR) to examine the ways they define, negotiate, and address power differentials and oppression within their collaborations. Key emerging themes and discourses merged into a conceptual model illustrated with a metaphor of a river to highlight key social sites, paradigms of knowledge production, and the degree to which it aligns with the pursuit of social justice. Downstream strategies that sustain colonial forms of knowledge production included othering, disembodiment, and extraction. Conversely, upstream approaches underscored the centrality of redefining social relationships and ethical commitments within PAR/CBPR collaborations through the cultivation of unsettling counterspaces, counternarratives, and dialogical brave spaces.

Finally, the third paper explored researchers and community stakeholders' conceptualization and understanding of social justice as well as recommendations for social work research, practice, and policy to contest power and oppression in the context of PAR/CBPR. A second wave of individual in-depth semi-structured interviews with social work researchers (n=11) and community stakeholders (n=11) with current or prior

experience engaging in PAR/CBPR were conducted and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings illustrated converging and diverging understandings of social justice, in particular, community stakeholders emphasized an understanding of social justice interdependent of systemic transformations through dialogical processes among stakeholders, researchers, and social institutions. PAR/CBPR was described as a facilitating factor of social justice by fostering counterspaces and counternarratives. Additionally, PAR/CBPR was defined as a factor limiting the pursuit of social justice and deeply entrenched with tenure-track promotion and funding mechanisms perpetuating top-down configurations of power.

Together and independently these papers further our understanding of the ways in which structural oppression and power in (PAR/CBPR) can be addressed. Research findings from all three studies highlighted participatory action research is not exempt from power hierarchies, and that multilevel strategies promoting counterspaces, counternarratives, and institutional changes are essential when redressing, negotiating, and contesting power and oppression. Findings inform best practices for the development of PAR/CBPR collaborations embodying ethical relationality across social work research, practice, education, and policy. Future studies should consider the use of longitudinal and critically in-depth dialogical approaches between multiple positioned actors in PAR/CBPR when defining social justice, PAR/CBPR, and power.



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## Introduction

Historically, the so-called “helping” professions (i.e. psychology, social welfare, social work) have been concerned with “giving voice” or “helping” marginalized communities (Bowers, 1957; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Murdach, 2011). Among them, social work has been explicit as a profession concerned with promoting social justice with and on behalf of disadvantaged communities (Abramovitz, 2017; Bisman, 2004; Hare, 2004). From the settlement house movement and the civil rights movement to the struggles of the twenty first century, the profession’s initial understanding of social justice as a value based on righteousness and morality has evolved throughout history to capture the complexity and tensions between individual rights and the fair distribution of opportunities and common social good (Finn & Jacobson, 2013; Reisch & Andrews, 2014).

Scholars have conceptualized multiple approaches to social justice. These frameworks are concerned with equal treatment and access to distribution of resources and opportunities (*distributive*), equal inclusion in democratic processes to determine resource allocation (*procedural*), recognition of domination of cultural and social identity groups (*recognition*), and redistribution of resources that promote equity by addressing configurations of privileged and disadvantaged groups (*structural*) (Bent-Goodley & Hopps, 2017; Finn & Jacobson, 2013; Reisch & Andrews, 2014). In addition to social workers’ efforts to uphold social justice as a value of the profession, intergenerational grassroots community activists have also organized, educated, and empowered themselves to change inequitable configurations of power (Brulle & Pellow, 2006;

Doussard & Gamal, 2016; Engelsman et al., 2016; Marri & Walker, 2008). Specifically, the exertion of visible and invisible power within human relationships (Foucault, 1980) to influence or impact the actions of others (Hanson & Ogunade, 2016) that is negotiated through rules, structures, and institutions situated in social-political-cultural contexts (Lammers & Garcia, 2017). While scholars have documented multiple applications of social justice in social work practice, the profession has yet to address major barriers that constrain these pursuits such as systemic interlocking forces of power and oppression as well as authentic inclusion of grassroots and community stakeholders in community engaged scholarship (Kwan & Walsh, 2018; Stein et al., 2017; Wallerstein et al., 2019).

The United States was founded on systems of power and oppression based on distinct socially constructed identities where one group is privileged (i.e. wealthy, white, men) at the expense of the oppression of disadvantaged vulnerable groups (i.e. Black, Indigenous, people of color, women, poor) (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Jones, 2014; Young, 2013). These multiple systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, elitism, xenophobia, etc.) operate at multiple levels (e.g. individual, interpersonal, institutional), overlap with one another, and have continued to maintain inequitable access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges which therefore impact disadvantaged groups' wellbeing and social outcomes (Combahee River Collective, 2019; Crenshaw, 2017; Hill Collins, 2016). While social science scholars have placed a disproportionate emphasis on examining social and racial inequities experienced in disadvantaged communities of color, limited critical attention and interrogation has been dedicated to examining the presence and influence of racism, white supremacy, and

power in social institutions and within relationships, particularly in CBPR (Acosta & Ackerman-Barger, 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Chavez, 2005; Darroch & Giles, 2014; Houston & Kramarae, 1991; Tatum, 2010).

Participatory Action Research and Community Based Participatory Research (PAR/CBPR) have presented alternative approaches that challenge inequitable power configurations to promote authentic engagement with disadvantaged communities in the pursuit of social justice. PAR/CBPR has been recognized as a research approach that engages community residents and stakeholders as co-researchers in collaboration with academic scholars to address unjust societal configurations contributing to social, racial, and health inequities (Wallerstein, 2002; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). This approach can advance collective efforts from both social work scholars and community stakeholders in achieving social justice by integrating local expertise, building critical awareness, and promoting collective responses to social change (Healy, 2001). However, in order to realistically apply PAR/CBPR principles, it is necessary to have dedicated attention to explicitly identify and address unequal power relations throughout research processes and outcomes as well as identity, and positionality of researchers (Muhammad et al., 2015). Uncontested power differentials between researchers and community stakeholders in collaborative efforts have been associated with unequal distribution of resources (Braun et al., 2012; Hunt et al., 2014; Puffer et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2018), exploitation of communities' knowledge to benefit researchers (Banks et al., 2013; Brabeck et al., 2015; Braun et al., 2012; Chantler et al., 2013; Tobias et al., 2013), and reproduction of racism (Israel et al., 2017; Minkler, 2005; Muhammad et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2018).

Moreover, the context of the academy and social work research has added layers of complexity when achieving social justice from the “ivory tower” (Atkinson, 2013; Campbell et al., 2008; Stockdill & Danico, 2012). Scholars’ efforts to authentically engage with community partners have been constrained by the academic research institutions’ expectations of obtaining public and private funding that seek to primarily produce knowledge measured by peer-review publications (Loh, 2016; Michener et al., 2012). Furthermore, limited research has explored in depth the ways in which community-university achieved outcomes of these collaborations have benefitted, contributed, or hindered grassroots community-driven change efforts (Loh, 2016; Michener et al., 2012). Even as researchers have adopted participatory action research approaches to contest with extractivist configurations of power to address inequitable access and distribution of wealth and opportunities, covert interlocking hierarchies of privilege and power permeate relationships and collaborations between researchers and community collaborators (Chavez, 2005; Darroch & Giles, 2014; Fox et al., 2017; de Sousa Santos, 2015).

Social justice remains a fundamental value of the social work profession and a heightened critical awareness is required to interrogate the reproduction of multiple forms of oppression. Despite helping professions’ intentions to eliminate inequities experienced by oppressed communities fighting for social justice, these professions have also reinforced colonial, racist, and imperial values and practices of superiority by perpetuating further marginalization of specific communities (Badwall, 2015; Carranza, 2018; Dutta, 2018). Some examples within the conflicting history of the social work

profession include the racial segregation and Whittier settlement house movement that excluded Blacks and African Americans (Hounmenou, 2012; Lasch-Quinn, 1993), the participation of social workers in reinforcing assimilation and eradication of Native American communities and cultures in the Indian Adoption Act (Jacobs, 2013), the involvement of social workers in facilitating injustice in the World War II Japanese internment camps (Park, 2008), and caseworkers' enforcement of punitive state welfare policies that exert control over poor women of color in public assistance (Abramovitz, 2017).

This troubling legacy demands that practitioners develop a critical awareness of the ways social workers are reproducing or contesting oppression. What are the processes by which social workers are developing an awareness of these contradictions and being accountable to the communities most impacted by oppression while aligning with the profession's values? Through an examination of PAR/CBPR, which emerged as a strategy to tackle racial, economic, and social injustice (Fals-Borda, 1987; Mignolo, 2002; de Sousa Santos, 2015), this dissertation research seeks to add to the extant literature by specifically exploring the processes by which researchers and community partners navigate power and oppression as it plays out in their relationships and their work to advance racial, economic, and social justice.

### **Participatory Action Research/Community Based Participatory Research (PAR/CBPR)**

The origins of PAR/CBPR can be traced to South America in the scholarly works of Freire (1970) and Fals Borda (Fals Borda, 2006; Lomeli & Rappaport, 2018) where



PAR/CBPR was characterized for an emancipatory focus by standing in solidarity with social movements. PAR/CBPR expanded to North America and was further adapted by Lewin's emphasis on action research (Lewin, 1946) to tackle racial and social justice matters weaving in critical theory (Stanton, 2014; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010) and feminist postcolonialist frameworks (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Gill et al., 2012; Ponic & Frisby, 2010). PAR/CBPR has increasingly been implemented across interdisciplinary fields including public health (Minkler, 2010; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006) and social sciences such as education (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Torre et al., 2012), psychology (Atallah, 2017; Dutta, 2017; Fernandez et al., 2018; Lykes et al., 2018), and social work (Finn, 1994; Sprague Martinez et al., 2018; Teixeira, 2015).

Scholars have described ten principles that highlight the collective and individual identity of PAR/CBPR (Wallerstein et al., 2018). Among these principles, PAR/CBPR seeks to create co-learning and capacity building collaborations building on strengths and resources within the community where local community members' skills, knowledge, and expertise of their lived experiences and social realities are valued and further developed (Mosavel et al., 2018; Wallerstein et al., 2018). PAR/CBPR strives to promote spaces where individuals with multiple positionalities and realities converge and collaborate by involving individuals experiencing structural oppression in identifying local issues of concern and potential solutions through participatory research and action-based initiatives (Kemmis et al., 2014; Richards-Schuster, 2010; Torre & Ayala, 2009). One of the most important principles of PAR/CBPR is facilitating equitable power sharing throughout research decision-making, knowledge creation, and research action dissemination

processes with an orientation to attending to social inequalities (Wallerstein et al., 2018). While scholars have observed and documented unequal power relations within these collaborations, these issues have been explored primarily from the perspective of researchers through auto-ethnographic methods (Muhammad et al., 2015), leaving the perspectives of community stakeholders on these processes largely unexamined.

### **Benefits and Challenges of PAR/CBPR**

Growing scholarly research has documented individual and community-level impacts of PAR/CBPR including integration of participatory processes into capacity building, securing additional funding and resources to sustain meaningful programs, and influencing the development of relevant policies (Jull et al., 2017; Oetzel et al., 2018; Rodríguez Espinosa et al., 2020). Additionally, PAR/CBPR partnerships have presented promising outcomes including the promotion of collective learning and meaningful partnerships, increasing community-based organizations and residents' capacity and skill development, and changing organizational and governmental policies to be more participatory and supportive of racial health equity agendas (Cohen et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2018; Freudenberg & Tsui, 2014; Lucero et al., 2018; Wallerstein et al., 2019). As a result of increasing research integrating PAR/CBPR, promising practices to advance the science of PAR/CBPR, particularly in maintaining and sustaining meaningful community-academic partnerships have also been identified such as incorporating reflexive processes and mixed-method evaluations in long-term PAR/CBPR partnerships (Brush et al., 2020; Wallerstein et al., 2020). In addition to increased access to resources, funding, and knowledge about research, community stakeholders participating in

PAR/CBPR collaborations have described increasing community credibility when advocating for positive changes in the community as one of the major benefits of the CBPR approach in partnership with universities (Caldwell et al., 2015; Cramer et al., 2018). For example, in one instance, a community partner organization described using data generated from the PAR/CBPR collaboration to reject a proposal that sought to increase truck traffic that neglected the ways this would exacerbate existing severe levels of air pollution (Caldwell et al., 2015).

Although PAR/CBPR presents promising benefits to both the researchers and the community stakeholders involved, major challenges and issues inevitably arise within these participatory collaborations. While PAR/CBPR principles present guiding frameworks to establish equitable partnerships that emphasize long-term commitment to power-sharing and building community's capacity by co-creating a collaboration of mutual learning and support, it is unclear the extent to which scholars report successfully adhering to these principles in their efforts to negotiate issues and challenges that arise (Israel et al., 2017). Research describes these multi-level tangible and intangible challenges as costs of participation in PAR/CBPR partnerships using the concept of ratios that juxtapose individual benefits and costs that shift over time (Lachance et al., 2020). Some of these costs to participation and issues identified in the literature include building trust and rapport between researchers and community stakeholders given the historical power abuse in research, managing competing short-term and long-term priorities and demands of the research and community-driven action initiatives, inequitable distribution of funds and resources between researchers and community partners, balancing the

rigidity of funder-driven and project-based timelines, and sharing power within the partnership (Bettencourt, 2020a; Lake & Wendland, 2018). What remains largely unexplored, however, are the specific nuances of how researchers and community partners understand, discuss, and wrestle with these tensions, conflicts, and power dynamics within the partnerships, which are typically embedded within university hierarchical structures.

### **Ethical Issues and Power Differences in PAR/CBPR**

Research has been published extensively about the application of PAR/CBPR in order to increase community engagement, ownership, and participation in scientific inquiry (Chung-Do et al., 2019; McElfish et al., 2017; Smith & Blumenthal, 2012). However, limited scholarly literature has discussed in depth ethical issues associated with contesting power imbalances; namely, the ways and the actors that specifically benefit from PAR/CBPR collaborations, the substantial investments required in the partnerships, and how the benefits are equitably distributed among the beneficiaries of CBPR collaborations, especially community stakeholders (Coombe et al., 2020; Mason et al., 2013). While researchers and community partners benefit from participating in PAR/CBPR collaborations, individual gains and costs remain inequitably distributed which calls for further interrogating and understanding PAR/CBPR within institutional hierarchies that are part of broader socio-political and economic contexts focused on the privatization and commodification of knowledge (Flicker, 2008; Flicker et al., 2008).

Although building equitable relationships is essential for PAR/CBPR partnerships to succeed and contribute meaningful individual and community-level outcomes,

scholarly literature has yet to document and examine more in detail reflexive practices that can offer effective ways of addressing power imbalances that may interfere with the development of inequitable partnerships. Findings of a systematic review examining evidence on PAR/CBPR's influence in health promotion demonstrated that collaboration between researchers and key community stakeholders is an essential component in reducing health disparities through community-level change efforts (Salimi et al., 2012). In addition, the review also identified a gap in the literature exploring communities' perceptions and experiences of organizational capacity, benefits, challenges, and empowerment as a result of the collaboration (Salimi et al., 2012).

While research has documented extensively about the individual benefits of PAR/CBPR, increasing research has also documented major challenges and limitations of this epistemological approach to research in partnership with communities. Community stakeholders have identified multiple challenges when conducting PAR/CBPR in partnership with universities including trust-building, exploitation, limited capacity and resources, and lack of sustainability and alignment of research with the community's vision for social change (Damon et al., 2017; Israel et al., 2020). Moreover, findings of a scoping review examining ethical challenges that emerged in PAR/CBPR highlight five major ethical areas of concern in the literature: 1) protection of participants' rights from exploitation, 2) insider and outsider membership tension, 3) equitable power-sharing between researchers and community participants in partnerships, 4) validity and research integrity, and 5) conflict between the relational nature of PAR/CBPR and ethics review processes (Wilson et al., 2018). Furthermore, research has also suggested balancing

research rigor (Balazs & Morello-Frosch, 2013; Buchanan et al., 2007), as well as contesting individual and collective identities and power (Denzongpa et al., 2020; Kerstetter, 2012; Tang Yan, Johnson, et al., 2021) as relevant challenges experienced when engaging in PAR/CBPR. Research suggests that in order to achieve PAR/CBPR principles, scholars need to increase critical awareness of power asymmetries and create structures and processes that enable community stakeholders and partners to challenge power asymmetries in conversation with scholars (Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010; Madsen & O'Mullan, 2018; Sánchez et al., 2021).

### **Systems of Power and Oppression in Knowledge Production**

Throughout history, research and knowledge production processes have been embedded within power structures that have advanced the interests of a privileged group and reproduced inequitable and unjust conditions in society. Contrary to defining research as a “neutral” inquiry, research from its early beginnings has been utilized as a tool to exert racial domination and white superiority to advance white racial ideology-based policies by legitimizing flawed scientific evidence on race as genetically inherited trait and determinant of social behaviors and intellectual capability (Byrd & Hughey, 2015; Byrd & Ray, 2015). Moreover, knowledge production has contributed to the development of valuable frameworks used to justify the expansion of settler colonial projects including the indigenous and racial dispossession of lands, lives, labor, and the expansion of racial capitalism, patriarchy, and anti-Black subjection that continues to this day (Baker, 2019; Dorries et al., 2019). While a national Institutional Review Board (IRB) system in the United States emerged in 1974 to protect vulnerable groups from

research exploitation (Howell, 2017), tensions remain throughout research processes, particularly when prioritizing university-based goals of maximizing scholarly publications to maintain racial hierarchy and status quo while dismissing community stakeholders' political goals to achieve social justice (Wilson et al., 2018).

### **Conceptualizations and Applications of Power**

Social scientists have extensively contested multiple definitions and theories of power. These frameworks have been primarily concerned with the main actors who have power and the reasons why they have power. Among some of the most prominent frameworks proposed includes Foucault's definition of power as a discourse that encompasses processes and relationships that influence the restriction or provision of resources between multiple actors including social institutions (Foucault, 1980). Power has been conceptualized within the domain of social relationships where agents exercise their power or have 'power over' others by exerting domination to achieve specific aims at the expense of other individuals (Giddens, 1993b). While scholarly evidence has emphasized power rests on individual skills, experience, money, control of opportunities, and the capacity to mobilize people (Collins, 2019), scholars have also described how power is associated with powerful actors occupying key positions at social institutions where resources are heavily concentrated (Mills, 1959).

Drawing from these approaches, power has also been defined as a structural phenomenon consisting of specific patterns of relationships that exist among actors occupying advantageous positions in a particular setting that creates opportunities to exercise power and shape the ways resources are exchanged equitably, conflicts are

addressed, and how relationships facilitate or limit oppression (Neal & Neal, 2011). These understandings of power focus primarily on how powerful actors at the top of hierarchical structures hold most of the resources while actors in the bottom of the hierarchy experience inequitable access to resources. However, these conceptualizations undermine the power that disadvantaged actors with low status or wealth exercise to mobilize and enact key structural changes in social movements, particularly in the pursuit of economic justice (Piven, 1979, 2014; Piven & Cloward, 2000). Instead of defining power based on resources or individual attributes, scholars have proposed interdependent power as a framework that outlines all actors—who make contributions to systems built on cooperative relationships that depend on one another—have the capacity to exercise power regardless of social status or wealth (Piven, 2008). To actualize interdependent power under changing structural conditions, the crafting and deployment of new dynamic and adaptable strategies to mobilize actors from below is essential (Piven, 2008).

### **Systems of Power and Oppression in PAR/CBPR**

One of the most critical challenges scholars experience when engaging in community research and action is building alliances with social movements that incorporate ethical and just research centering historically excluded voices, knowledge, and lived experiences (Sonn et al., 2017). While there is insufficient scholarly literature examining power and oppression within PAR/CBPR, many studies have explored individual as well as ecological level impacts of PAR/CBPR. There has been a considerable increased interest in research exploring ethical issues in PAR/CBPR including reciprocity (Maiter et al., 2008), power inequities (Sandwick et al., 2018; Torre



et al., 2012) and the vulnerability of populations (Guishard, 2009; Gustafson & Brunger, 2014). However, the majority of these studies have examined these ethical dilemmas through case studies, ethnography, and critical reflexive excerpts from the perspective of scholars. Research has yet to explore the systemic forces influencing ethical issues of power and oppression from the perspectives of youth and community stakeholders through dynamic discourse, particularly from key actors in social work.

There have been extensive reviews of PAR/CBPR and participatory research methods affiliated with this epistemological approach. Many studies have conducted systematic reviews of the literature examining the usefulness of PAR/CBPR in reducing health disparities (De Las Nueces et al., 2012; Salimi et al., 2012b; Sikorski et al., 2014), the dissemination of results in PAR/CBPR (Chen et al., 2010), as well as the potential benefits of using participatory research methods such as photovoice to promote empowerment of vulnerable populations experiencing social injustice and oppression (Coemans et al., 2015; Dassah et al., 2017; Lal et al., 2012). One review examined the utility of PAR/CBPR in the field of psychology (Levac et al., 2010). A few reviews have examined arts-based methods (Coemans et al., 2015) as well as best practices and ethical challenges with ethnic groups (McElfish et al., 2017) and vulnerable populations (Souleymanov et al., 2016). Only one scoping review explored ethical tensions raised by researchers engaging in PAR/CBPR that includes the protection of participants, positionality of researchers, and power imbalances in the collaboration (Wilson et al., 2018). In summary, the field of PAR/CBPR studies has grown extensively as a promising approach to increase equitable community participation and engagement in research

across multiple forms and academic disciplines. Emerging nuances that complicate the ways this epistemological approach can be critically examined and implemented through an ethical and accountability lens has yet to be explored more in depth. Further reviews have yet to document the processes by which researchers and community stakeholders understand, reproduce, and contest systems of oppression when engaging in PAR/CBPR to effect change in multiple contexts.

### **PAR/CBPR, Social Work, and Social Justice**

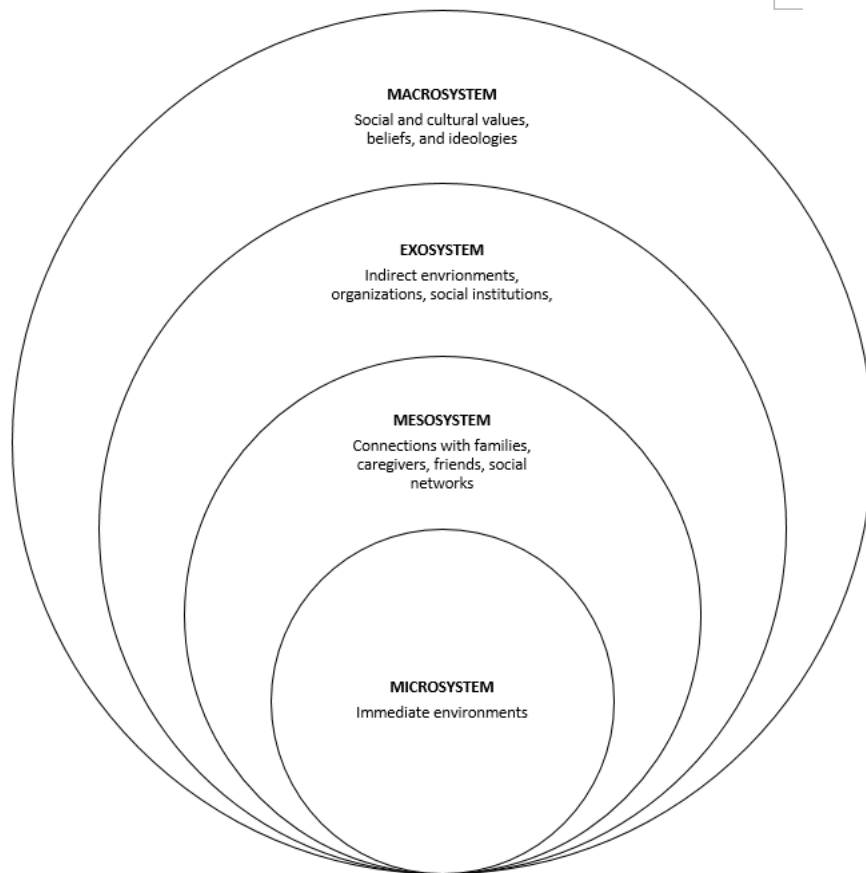
Research has characterized PAR/CBPR as an emerging research paradigm rooted in social justice goals principles (Denzin & Giardina, 2014; Minkler, 2005; Wallerstein et al., 2018). Moreover, PAR/CBPR has been characterized as a potential approach to research that can further advance social work's goals while promoting the profession's values (Branom, 2012). Social justice is one of the most fundamental core values of the social work profession. Following the ethical principal of challenging social injustice, social workers have committed to pursue social change efforts to increase knowledge about oppression, cultural and ethnic diversity while addressing issues of social injustice such as discrimination, poverty, and unemployment (NASW, 2021). Social work scholars contend that in order for the social work profession to advocate truly for social justice and change, a critical exploration and challenge of individual as well as institutional meanings of power and oppression must be prioritized (Hillock, 2011; Rogers, 2012; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005; Spencer, 2008). Even though social work has historical roots in service provision, empowerment, and social transformation with those most impacted by social inequality (e.g. poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing) (Agbényiga, 2014;

Bent-Goodley & Hopps, 2017), social work has been criticized for prioritizing the use of social justice as a means to achieving legitimacy as a competitive and respectable ‘profession’ (Abramovitz, 1998; Abramovitz & Zelnick, 2018, 2022; Olson, 2007; Reisch & Andrews, 2014; Specht, 1994). There is a dearth in the literature examining more closely the ways social work practitioners, researchers, educators, and policy-makers grapple with these conflicting criticisms. These persistent tensions depict social work as a continuous arena of struggle and also as a field with the potential to critically grapple with these challenges while aligning with the values of social justice.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This dissertation is informed by a number of key theoretical frameworks including Ecological systems theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Intersectionality, and Decolonial Theory. To gain a deeper understanding of processes between scholars and community stakeholders contesting systems of power and oppression in achieving social justice, it is essential to examine the ways in which individuals are embedded within multiple systems in society. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (figure 1.1) suggests the development of individuals is influenced by resources and supports found in immediate environments (*microsystems*), its interactions (*mesosystems*), indirect environments (*exosystem*), and social and cultural values (*macrosystems*) that change over time (*chronosystems*) (Bronfenbrenner, 1996). For the purpose of this dissertation, this framework builds an understanding where contesting power and oppression in PAR/CBPR collaborations is dependent on the alignment of supports in a community where key actors across social and educational institutions (e.g., researchers, community

stakeholders) ensure the alignment is achieved. Although this framework highlights relevant multilevel contextual factors, this model fails to recognize the heterogeneity that may exist in the experiences between groups, particularly disadvantaged groups (e.g., women, people of color) exposed to structural oppression.



***Figure 1.1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory model***

Intersectionality theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT) challenge this assumption. With historical roots in legal studies and radical feminism, CRT states that racism is an endemic social construction that is deeply embedded in all levels of society to maintain white supremacy and hierarchical power configurations that privilege some at

the expense of others (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). For the proposed dissertation, the study drew from three essential tenets of CRT to situate the systems of power and oppression in PAR/CBPR collaborations. First, racism is deeply woven into the fabric of society and disrupting this normalization by naming it can contribute to its removal. Second, it is essential that marginalized voices are centered, and lastly, increasing critical consciousness by affirming the experiences of marginalized voices through counter storytelling is fundamental for the eradication of systemic racism (Solorzano, 1997; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). CRT guides this study by providing an understanding of oppression and power in PAR/CBPR as deeply interconnected to all levels of society and disrupting this normalization is key to eliminating systemic oppression and power. Thus, incorporating the voices of individuals with diverse agent and target identities is fundamentally important. Moreover, intersectionality theory provides a critical lens highlighting the interconnectedness of systemic oppression across multiple socially constructed identities (e.g. race, class, gender), and increasing awareness on the implications for communities and individuals' lives (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1990; Davis, 2008). In this dissertation, researchers as well as community stakeholders' identity markers (e.g. race, class, gender), are interconnected with one another and can be associated with complex compounding structural oppression across multiple levels in society (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1990; Davis, 2008). Finally, decolonial theory expands these understandings of multilevel systems of power and oppression by exposing ways of knowing, thinking, and being, de-centering settler colonial dominant Western-Eurocentric logics ascribed in social institutions and social fabric, and cultivating praxis

capable of fostering emergence of new relationalities for healing and justice (Atallah, 2022; Fernández et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2021). By integrating the ecological systems theory, CRT, intersectionality, and decolonial theoretical frameworks, the perceptions and lived experiences of researchers and community stakeholders were understood and further nuanced in the context of multiple interconnected systems of oppression and ways of being.

### **Current Study**

Research to date has not yet explored in depth the processes by which researchers and community stakeholders, working in participatory research collaborations towards generating useful knowledge to advance social justice, understand, reproduce, and contest systems of power and oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, elitism, xenophobia, etc.). As such, the proposed study employs qualitative methods to address gaps identified in scholarly literature as well as practice through both a systematic scoping review of scholarly literature and empirical examination of these processes through individual in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups with social work researchers and community stakeholders engaged in PAR/CBPR collaborations. All data collection took place via Zoom and procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at Boston University. Study findings were reported using the 3-paper dissertation framework and as such each paper is presented in an individual chapter. The four major questions the dissertation sought to explore are described below.

1. What are the processes documented in scholarly literature and in practice through which researchers and community stakeholders engaged in Participatory Action

Research or Community Based Participatory Research (PAR/CBPR) contest interlocking systems of power and oppression to achieve racial, economic, and social justice?

2. How are researchers and community stakeholders engaged in PAR/CBPR interrogating systems of power and oppression when working creatively in coalition to generate useful knowledge to create racial, economic, and social justice?
3. What are researchers' and community stakeholders' perceptions on the ways systems of oppression and power have manifested and been contested throughout PAR/CBPR collaborations? What are their recommendations for research, practice, and policy to contest systems of power and oppression?
4. What are researchers' and community stakeholders' understanding(s) of social justice? How did the understandings of social justice change throughout the PAR/CBPR collaboration? What initial expectations or accomplishments related to social justice researchers' and community stakeholders had and how did it change throughout the PAR/CBPR collaboration?

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how multiple positioned actors (e.g. scholars, community stakeholders) in collaborative knowledge production processes (i.e. community based participatory action research) conceptualize and address interlocking systems of oppression and power to support community-driven social change efforts. By inviting scholars and community stakeholders to reflect upon and describe their understandings and meaning-making about systems of oppression and power from their

personal as well as professional experiences, this study seeks to gain a better understanding to better identify, disrupt, and resist individually and collectively systems of power and oppression.

This dissertation is situated within philosophical research paradigms of social constructivism, critical, race, feminist, queer, disability, and transformative frameworks. Social constructivism states that the understanding of individuals' reality is shaped by the subjective meanings individuals construct continuously (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Kukla, 2000; Neuman, 2006). Critical, race, feminist, queer, disability and transformative frameworks take this further by examining constructed realities focusing particularly on social structures of power, struggle, and oppression with an orientation to address the injustices of marginalized groups changing the status quo (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). A qualitative approach to the empirical studies was taken given the emphasis on gaining a deeper understanding of meaning making processes of different actors across multilevel systems and the exploratory, complex, and contextual nature of the research (Creswell, 2018a; Maxwell, 2013a).

The first study used scoping review methodology to map existing literature on PAR/CBPR collaborations in the U.S. and the degree which researchers and community stakeholders interrogate power and oppression in the collaborations. Scholarly peer-reviewed empirical journal articles published in English between January 2010 and January 2020 across five databases were screened to meet inclusion criteria. The second study used in-depth individual semi-structured interviews to examine the perceptions of social work scholars and community stakeholders on systems of power and oppression in



PAR/CBPR collaborations. Finally, the third study used in-depth individual semi-structured interviews explore social work scholars' and community stakeholders' definitions of social justice and the role of PAR/CBPR in hindering or promoting the advancement of community-driven efforts.

Gaining a better understanding of how researchers and community stakeholders understand and contest systems of oppression and power in community-academic collaborations can inform social work research, practice, education, and policy. Particularly attention is paid to identifying invisible forms of power and oppression that hinder collaborative processes between researchers and community stakeholders as well as adopting transformative co-learning and participatory models that address these challenges. This dissertation presents a review of the literature to highlight current scholarly evidence and gaps. Additionally, a discussion on the research methodology, sampling strategy, and analysis plan across each paper is presented. Limitations of each study are also outlined and the dissertation concludes by presenting potential contributions and implications of the studies when considered together.

## **Chapter 2: Researchers and Community Stakeholders Interrogating and Contesting Power in CBPR: A Scoping Review**

**Objective:** Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) promotes equitable partnerships in health promotion. This study sought to (1) examine discourses on power issues within the collaboration, (2) explore application of CBPR principles, and (3) identify desired and observed outcomes from the perspective of community partners.

**Data Source:** Two health science librarians assisted in developing and implementing the search strategy across five databases (Embase, ERIC, PsycINFO, PubMed, Web of Science). Articles included were published between 2010 and 2020.

**Study Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:** Empirical articles discussing in detail examples of power issues in the U.S. between university researchers and community stakeholders (non-university affiliated members; primary job is not focused on research) within CBPR collaborations were included. Articles failing to meet this inclusion criteria were excluded.

**Data Extraction:** Rayyan's data extraction tool exported to MS Excel.

**Data Synthesis:** Results were analyzed and synthesized by research design, domain, population, sample size, setting, length of collaboration, application of CBPR principles, and examples of power issues.

**Results:** Six articles met inclusion criteria. Autoethnography was commonly used to examine individual biases and exertion of top-down power issues at the intersection of health, education, and psychology. Discussions on research translation and institutional changes to redress power imbalances were limited.

**Conclusion:** This review highlights that equitable participatory research partnership development remains an arena of continuous struggle. Implications and recommendations are provided.

## **Introduction**

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) and other forms of participatory action research (PAR) seek to build equitable partnerships between researchers and community stakeholders towards achieving equity to improve community health and wellbeing (Torre et al., 2012; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). CBPR has been conceived as defying traditional knowledge production by challenging hierarchical norms that situate knowledge in academia and elevating marginalized forms of knowledge and being (Barbera, 2008; Jordan & Kapoor, 2016). Born out of historical social movements in the global south, CBPR has re-emerged in public health scholarship as a valuable approach to increase participation of marginalized groups, translate research to action and policy change, and redress power differentials (Fals-Borda, 1987; Lomeli & Rappaport, 2018).

In order to build transparent and equitable partnerships, it is essential to gain a critical understanding of key practices and processes that may hinder, promote, and sustain the centrality of relationships in participatory research collaborations (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000; Mayan & Daum, 2016). Current scholarly evidence examines ethical issues and tensions that emerge in CBPR collaborations (Minkler, 2004; Wilson et al., 2018). While increasing scholarship has documented the presence and implications of power differentials within CBPR, extensive critical discussion and in-depth examination of the actual impact achieved on community-level outcomes and how power imbalances manifest and are addressed within relationships between key actors in the partnerships remain underdeveloped domains of inquiry (Duran et al., 2019; Visser & Kreemers, 2020; Zeller-berkman et al., 2020).

Power is an important dynamic construct that shapes individual relationships, actions, and equitable access and distribution of resources among multiple actors (Ten Brinke & Keltner, 2020; Torelli et al., 2020). Scholars across various fields including sociology, philosophy, psychology, and social work have extensively defined and explored power. Key domains and bases of power have been identified in sociological literature on how power operates across social interactions including legitimate, reward, expert, referent, coercive, and informational (Collins, 1975; Giddens, 1993a). A form of domination exercised by privileged actors over oppressed groups through the control of resources is one of the most prevalent conceptualizations of power (Giddens, 1982; Lukes, 2021; Weber, 1993). Rather than being commodified or localized in individuals with certain abilities or characteristics, power is characterized as relational and it is exercised within relationships between actors and institutions that constantly reshape truths, knowledges, discourses, identities, and relational dynamics (Foucault, 1980). Furthermore, definitions of interdependent power have been proposed to shift away the emphasis from resources and attributes to the nature of interdependent cooperative relationships and systems where all actors have potential power that depend on one another (Piven, 2008, 2014).

Despite the fact that PAR/CBPR presents strategies for researchers to level the playing field with community stakeholders by sharing power in decision-making processes, PAR/CBPR is embedded in multilevel systems of power and oppression which situates this epistemological approach in a context of continuous struggle for power (Muhammad et al., 2015; Wallerstein et al., 2019). Scholarly evidence suggests CBPR

practices that lack self-critical reflection can generate significant harm, undermine community interests, and exert paternalism and control by reinforcing and further reproducing pervasive power differentials and asymmetries (Hanson & Ogunade, 2016). Harm is particularly pronounced for historically oppressed and vulnerable populations such as children, women, Black and indigenous peoples, immigrants, and communities with limited English proficiency whose rights to protection and participation are more likely to be violated and who have been targeted for abusive research practices (Kwan & Walsh, 2018; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021; Water, 2018). In response to the discourse of power differentials in CBPR, scholarly evidence suggests researchers and community partners' integration of critical reflexive and dialectic practices with regard to power and privilege before, during, and after participatory research collaborations is essential in troubling dominant configurations of power (Garzón et al., 2013).

Scoping reviews are useful tools to critically analyze a body of literature, synthesize relevant evidence, clarify concepts, and identify knowledge gaps that can be developed into potential questions to be explored in systematic reviews (Munn et al., 2018). Scoping reviews of scholarly literature exploring ethical challenges in CBPR have been conducted. Wilson and colleagues (2017) conducted a scoping review of studies reporting on ethical challenges that emerged within CBPR and found five major ethical challenges: 1) protection of participants, 2) insiders and outsiders partnership, 3) collaboration and power, 4) validity and research integrity, and 5) CBPR and ethics review (Wilson et al., 2018). Additional scoping reviews have also explored best practices and tensions that emerged with specific populations such as American Indian

and Alaska Native (Beans et al., 2019), Pacific Islander Communities (McElfish et al., 2019), people who use drugs (Souleymanov et al., 2016), and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Jivraj et al., 2014). Moreover, reviews have also explored the conceptualization and operationalization of trust in participatory health research (Gilfoyle et al., 2020) and success in long-standing participatory partnerships (Brush et al., 2020).

However, there has been limited in-depth critical examinations of the extent researchers and community stakeholders have interrogated and addressed power differentials within the partnership. Therefore, a scoping review of scholarly literature was conducted in order to systematically map the empirical scholarly peer-reviewed research completed in this area and identify existing research gaps to explore further in future research. This scoping review sought to identify studies in the scholarly literature exploring discourses of contesting and reproducing power and oppression between researchers and community stakeholders in community based participatory research (CBPR). Drawing upon the definitions presented, we define power as the ability to achieve purpose and influence people's states (French Jr. et al., 2015; Keltner, 2016; King Jr, 2010). This definition delineates power in relation to individuals' social location (i.e. intersectional identities including race, class, gender, age, education, among others) that grants advantages and disadvantages that are constantly shifting and present relevant implications and consequences (Anthias, 2013). This review explored the following questions: 1) What is the extent to which researchers and community stakeholders engaged in CBPR interrogate and contest power and oppression within the collaboration?, 2) To what degree CBPR principles are defined and applied? and 3) To

what degree initial community partners' outcomes are centered and discussed throughout the collaboration?. This review focuses on exploring these questions in the context of published academic peer-reviewed manuscripts across five databases.

### **Methods**

A scoping review of academic literature examining peer-reviewed journal articles in English across five research databases discussing community based participatory research (CBPR) efforts between researchers and community stakeholders was conducted. The protocol was designed in partnership with two university librarian specialists following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis Protocols (PRISMA-P) reporting guidelines. Approaches from relevant reviews informed the protocol design (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2018). The final protocol was registered prospectively with the Open Science Framework (OSF) (Tang Yan, 2020). To the authors' knowledge and based on findings of a search on the Cochrane library, this is the first scoping review on this topic.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

Scholarly peer-reviewed articles published between the period of 2010-2020 in English were included. Additionally, articles integrating a CBPR orientation to the study that mention issues of power differentials (e.g. equitable decision-making, conflict, racism) within the collaboration between university researchers and community stakeholders were included. Community stakeholders were defined as individuals whose primary job was not directly in research and were not affiliated with university institutions. Empirical peer-reviewed journal articles that utilized quantitative,



qualitative, and mixed methods were included to examine the extent to which power and oppression were contested in practices and interactions throughout all research stages. Non-academic and non-empirical peer-reviewed scholarly articles such as commentaries, conference presentations, book chapters, and dissertations were excluded from the review. Articles that did not apply a CBPR approach or fail to mention and discuss in-depth issues of power emerging in the collaboration were excluded. Moreover, articles that took place outside of the U.S., were published in a language other than English, and were not peer-reviewed journal articles (e.g., book chapters, conference abstracts, dissertations, reports) were also excluded (See Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1**  
***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Applied to Studies***

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion	Justification
Population and sample	University researchers and community stakeholders (non-university affiliated members whose primary job is not focused on research)	Any other study population other than researchers and community stakeholders, this includes studies between university faculty and students and also animal studies,	Primary inquiry focused on participatory collaborations between university faculty and non-university affiliated community stakeholders
Language	English	Any other language that is not English	Reviewers are English speakers and this review is focused specifically in the context of the U.S.
Time period	2010–2020	Outside this time period	Ability to capture a wide breadth of literature within the time when CBPR has continued to grow and become more prominent and defined in the literature
Study focus	Peer-reviewed scholarly articles that discuss power issues within Community-Based Participatory Research collaboration	Non-peer-reviewed scholarly articles with limited discussion on power issues within partnership	Scoping review's primary interest is in relational power issues that emerged within collaborative relationships
Type of article	Empirical peer reviewed journal articles	Grey literature, theses, dissertations, reports, conference proceedings, editorials, book chapters, unpublished articles, theoretical articles	Scoping review inquiry is focused primarily on the extent power issues are addressed or contested within the partnership
Geographic location	U.S.	Not U.S.	Recognition that examination of power is influenced by context

## **Information Sources**

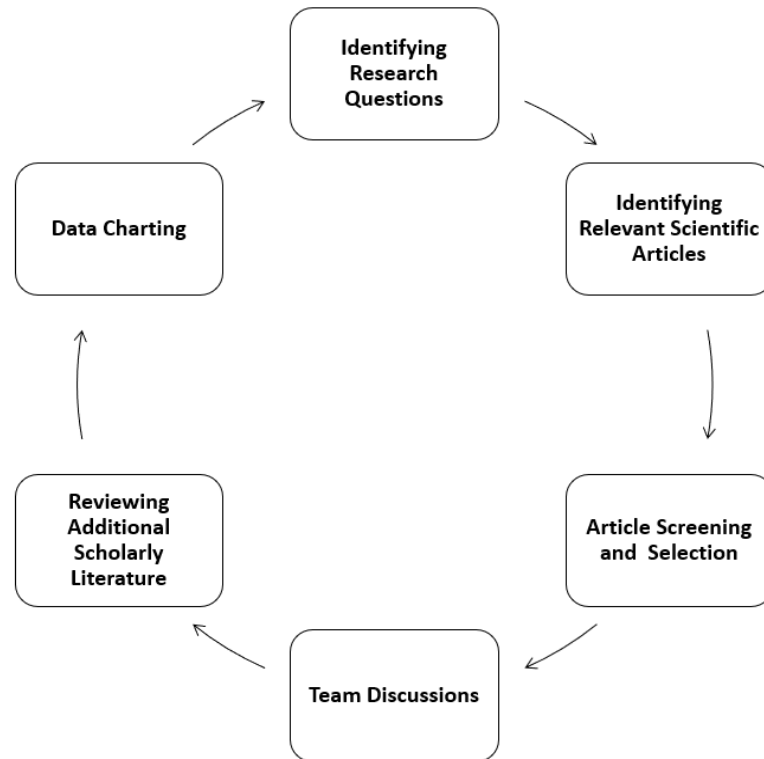
University librarian experts (n=2) in education and information services assisted with the identification of databases and development of the search strategy, which were refined through iterative discussions with mentors and colleagues. With the understanding that CBPR principles of equitable power sharing and addressing racism are embedded within CBPR approaches to research (Wallerstein et al., 2017), the search strategy developed examined within CBPR articles broadly: (“Community-Based Participatory Research” OR “Participatory Action Research”). Articles were identified across five online databases: Embase, ERIC, PsycINFO, PubMed, Web of Science. Databases from various fields and disciplines including education, health sciences, psychology, and social sciences were selected as CBPR has been widely applied across these sectors, particularly in the study of health (Wallerstein et al., 2018).

### **Search & Selection of Sources of Evidence**

The results of the search were entered into the Rayyan QCRI program. Rayyan QCRI is a free web and mobile application that uses a collaborative semi-automation process to expedite initial screening of abstracts and titles for the successful synthesis and analysis of systematic reviews (Ouzzani et al., 2016). Articles were allocated to each coder to screen independently for duplicates and articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria. After duplicates were removed, articles’ titles and abstracts were screened by four coders to review for eligibility according to the inclusion criteria. Articles failing to meet the inclusion criteria were removed. Full text articles were reviewed by three reviewers and articles that did not include in-depth discussion or analysis of power were

excluded. Examples of surface level discussions that did not meet inclusion criteria included brief mention of power issues using a few citations in the introduction of articles, and articles that failed to describe in detail specific examples in which power issues were interrogated and addressed within the collaboration. Two coders were assigned to each article to ensure consistency throughout the process of selecting sources of evidence. Coders reviewed the full text of articles independently and met as a team to discuss and reconcile their results and any discrepancies in the inclusion decision before reaching full consensus as a team. Additional reviewers were consulted in the event coders were unable to resolve disagreements related to article selection.

We used an iterative approach to refine the inclusion criteria in the initial stages of the screening process by reviewing additional relevant scholarly literature and engaging in weekly team discussions (See Figure 2.1). For example, initial articles screened included varied discussions on relational power issues and after reviewing additional scholarly literature and engaging in team discussions, inclusion criteria were refined to exclude articles that only included these discussions in the background sections of the manuscripts.



*Figure 2.1. Iterative approach implemented to refine inclusion and exclusion criteria*

### **Data Charting Process & Data Items**

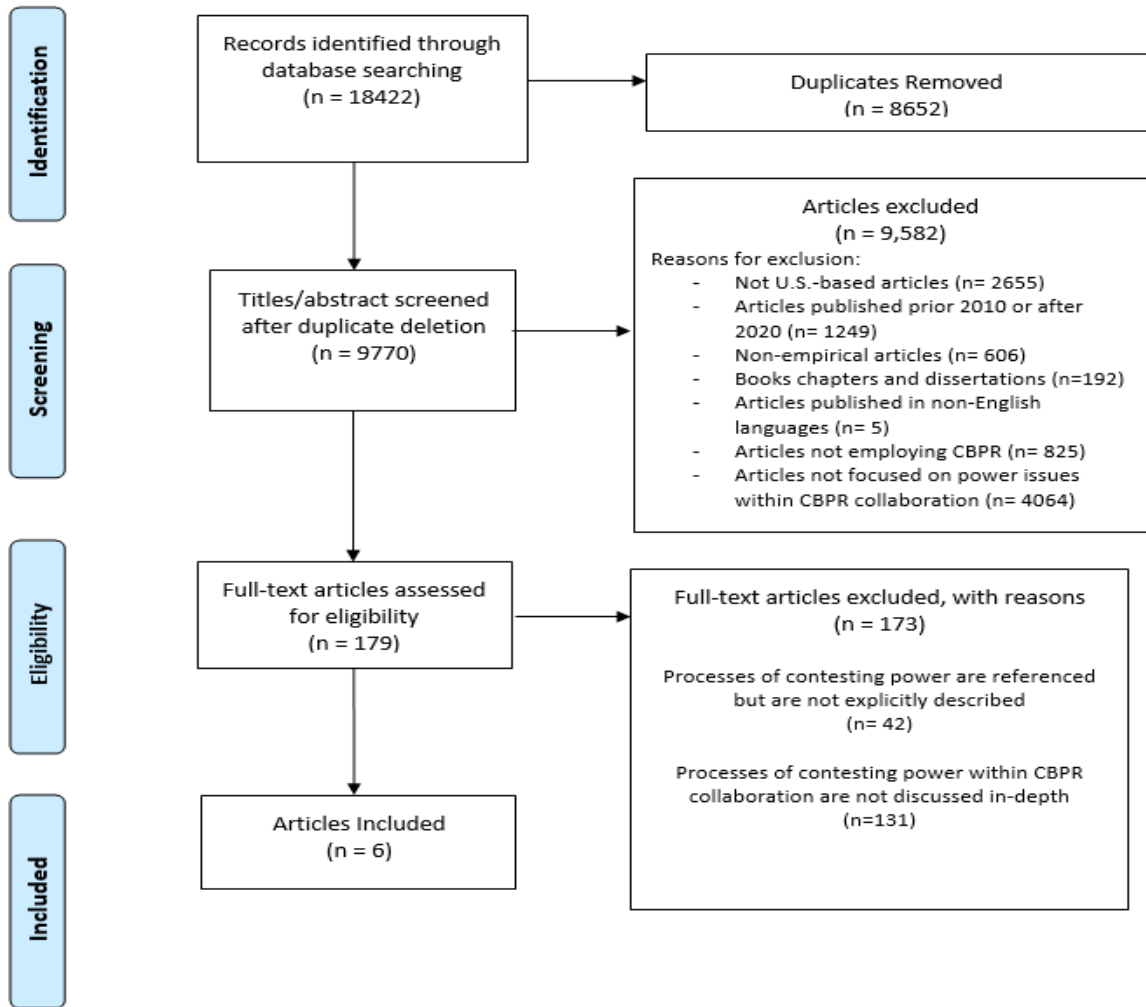
A data-charting form was developed through iterative discussions and meetings between collaborators and coders. Using the data-charting form, three reviewers extracted the information from each article independently and entered these into a standardized Excel form. Reviewers met to discuss the results and update the data-charting form iteratively addressing any discrepancies and disagreements until consensus was reached. Drawing from Wilson & colleagues' scoping review, charting areas of interest included: author, year of publication, study location, study aims, sample characteristics, methodology, collaboration type and length of collaboration, application of CBPR principles (Israel et al., 2017), individual and collective changes relevant to social justice

as a result of the collaboration (e.g., behavioral, individual, institutional), and mention of specific examples of power and oppression issues (e.g., racism equitable shared decision-making). Selection of charting areas of interest were drawn from conducting a preliminary literature review. For instance, CBPR principles were identified from articles defining CBPR key principles and translating its application to practice (Braun et al., 2012; Burke et al., 2013; Israel et al., 2017). In particular, timing and actors involved in the discourses and analysis on power were explored. Moreover, following the recommendations of academic experts in scoping review methodology, (Levac et al., 2010) a thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017) was conducted to extend the scoping review analysis. Data-charting forms were analyzed thematically by all coders using NVivo. Charted interlocking systems of oppression were combined by commonality using thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017) where patterns in the charted items focusing on change efforts, oppression, and power were identified and further developed into emerging themes that were analyzed and interpreted inductively.

### **Results**

A total of 18,422 articles were identified in the initial search and 8,652 duplicate articles were removed. Articles' titles and abstracts (n=9,770) were screened by multiple coders to review eligibility of review's inclusion criteria and 9,582 articles were removed because they failed to meet the inclusion criteria. The remaining full text articles ( n=179) were then reviewed by three coders independently who met to discuss shared themes and reconcile discrepancies until consensus was reached. 173 articles were excluded because power was referenced and was not discussed or analyzed in-depth as a primary focus of

the study (See Figure 2.2 for PRISMA Flow Diagram), leaving six articles remaining to be included in the review.



**Figure 2.2 PRISMA flowchart of screening results**

Four out of six articles reported taking place in the west coast, California. One article reported taking place in an urban Midwest city and another one in the southeast region of the country (Table 2.2). All included articles used qualitative methodology including case study (n=1), quasi-ethnography (n=1), autoethnography (n=3), field observations (n=2), and analytic memo writing. Similarly, all articles reported researchers

conducting systemic analysis of power issues within partnerships and collaborations where they played an active role as PI/Co-PI in contrast to being hired as evaluators and consultants in external partnerships. Moreover, populations of interest reported in the articles included Native American, African American/Black, and Latinx. Specific groups including non-monolingual, English-speaking refugees were reported in one study.

Additionally, four out of six articles reported that youth of color including Latinx and LGBTQ youth were co-researchers and stakeholders. Two out of four studies examined power dynamics that emerged between adult researchers and middle-school/high school aged-youth. Length of CBPR partnerships ranged between 10 weeks and 4 years. One article did not report the length of the CBPR collaboration. The shortest collaboration reported was 10 weeks. Two articles reported collaborations lasting 1 year and the longest collaboration reported was 4 years. One article did not report the specific length of the collaboration. Topics of interest explored across the studies included tobacco use, maternal health, exclusionary and zero tolerance disciplinary policies, and support and services for LGBTQ youth in transition. Articles' disciplines included a range of public health, education, and social sciences including psychology and human development. Three out of six studies reported findings of CBPR projects conducted as part of doctoral dissertation research.



**Table 2.2***Characteristics of Identified Articles*

<b>Characteristics and general information of identified articles</b>							
<b>Authors &amp; Year</b>	<b>Journal</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Sample/ population</b>	<b>Topic of article</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>CBPR Length</b>	<b>Discipline/Field (Authors' Affiliation + Authors' training (CV))</b>
Denzongpa et al., 2020	Reflective Practice	Greensboro, NC	Asian Pacific Islander Americans	Maternal Health Experiences	Reflexive field notes examined through a narrative approach	Not mentioned	Public Health
Felner, 2020	Health Education and Behavior	Urban, midwestern U.S. city	People of Color mostly	Critical reflection on mutually beneficial YPAR processes for early-career scholars	Case study	1 year	Behavioral and Community Health - School of Public Health
Fernandez, 2018	American Journal of Community Psychology	Maplewood Elementary School	Latinx	Education	Autoethnography Ethical Reflective Practice	over 3 years	Psychology/Ethnic Studies
Lac & Fine, 2018	Urban Education	West Coast	Not Described	Institutional Racism in Education	Autoethnography	1 year	Education
Malone et al., 2013	Health promotion practice	San Francisco, CA	African American/ Black	Tobacco use in low-income neighborhoods	Interpretive Analysis of Quasi-Ethnographic Project	4 years	Public Health
Pech et al., 2020	Journal of community psychology	California	Latinx	Gender, Power, and Critical Hope in Youth of Color	Ethnography, Field Observations, Memoing, Thematic Coding	10 weeks	Human Development - Education

**Table 2.3**

*Summary of Articles Included in Study Selection & Application of PAR/CBPR Principles*

Authors (year)	Application of PAR/CBPR Principles Identified	Community unit of identity	Builds community's strength and resources	Collaborative, equitable partnership in ALL research stages + power-sharing processes that attend social inequalities	Promotes co-learning and capacity building among all partners	Balance between research and action to benefit mutually all partners	Public health problems of local relevance and attends multiple determinants of health and disease	System development through iterative and cyclical processes	Dissemination of findings in collaboration with partners Long-term Process	Addresses issues of race, ethnicity, racism, social class, and embraces cultural humility
Malone, R. E., McGruder, C., Froelicher, E. S., & Yerger, V. B. (2013)		*	*	*	*	*			*	*
Lac, V. T., & Fine, M. (2018)		*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*
Pech, A. S., Valencia, B. G., & Romero, A. J. (2020)		*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*
Felner, J. K. (2020)		*	*	*	*	*				

Denzongpa,  
K., Nichols,  
T., &  
Morrison, S.  
D. (2020)

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Fernández, J.  
S. (2018)

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The outcome of the scoping review is twofold: firstly, the screening of relevant articles yielded just six articles. This finding reflects the limited extent to which peer-reviewed journal articles are documenting and analyzing in-depth relational power issues within CBPR partnerships and collaborations. Secondly, after a close reading of the six articles included, we identified three themes representing important key issues and continuous areas of growth and contestation in the field of critical participatory action research. These themes reveal a spectrum of ways in which researchers and community stakeholders were grappling with power. We present the themes in detail and describe implications and recommendations for further research stated in the articles reviewed.

### **Theme 1: Applications of CBPR Principles**

All six articles mentioned application of CBPR principles within their collaborations. All articles described addressing health issues of local relevance such as maternal health, zero tolerance and exclusionary disciplinary policies, and tobacco use. Additionally, all articles reported specific communities they partnered with including youth of color who identified as Latinx, LGBTQ as well as refugees. Ongoing mutual co-learning and capacity building efforts in the form of workshops, educational activities, and discussions among all partners was reported throughout all articles. While most of the CBPR principles were discussed in detail throughout the articles, four articles did not include mention of dissemination of research findings in collaboration with partners, three articles did not discuss system development of iterative cyclical processes, and two articles did not describe long-term processes. In the efforts of achieving equitable partnerships, University-based researchers emphasized nonhierarchical communication in

meetings with community partners to value key stakeholders' expertise, knowledge, and lived experiences (Felner, 2020; Fernández, 2018; Lac & Fine, 2018; Malone et al., 2013; Pech et al., 2020). Mutual learning was discussed from both perspectives where community stakeholders developed relevant research skills and researchers gained a better understanding of balancing logistical project pressures and deadlines and making necessary adjustments to meet community partners' priorities and interests (Denzongpa et al., 2020; Felner, 2020; Fernández, 2018; Lac & Fine, 2018; Malone et al., 2013; Pech et al., 2020).

### ***Description of Roles and Involvement of Community Partners***

Articles described community partners serving primarily throughout the implementation and data collection phases of the project. Some articles included descriptions of study design and analysis. Only a few articles described the involvement and engagement of community partners in research dissemination and action initiatives. Examples of research dissemination and action activities in partnership with community stakeholders reported included presentations, community building, and arts projects. For example, in Change 4 Good YPAR after-school program, a university-community collaboration between Community Psychology Research and Action Team (CPRAT) at UC Santa Cruz and Maplewood Elementary School (MES), engaged youth in the development of a school-based mural as part of their action project (Fernández, 2018). Similarly, a research collective of predominantly youth of color who identified as LGBTQ presented their research findings on supporting youth in their transition to adulthood to community-based organizations and scholars at regional and national

scientific conferences (Felner, 2020). Moreover, Denzongpa and colleagues (2020) partnered with ethnic Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugee women in Greensboro, NC to understand maternal health concerns among Bhutanese refugee women and engaged in community building and dissemination activities including community gardening, garden tool dissemination, and community potlucks (Denzongpa et al., 2020).

### **Theme 2: Interrogation and Discussion of Power Within the Collaboration**

Authors raised questions and grappled with emerging conflicts and dilemmas associated with power at multiple levels including at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels. At the individual and interpersonal level, university-based researchers' examination of personal biases and assumptions was most discussed throughout the articles followed by exertion of top-down power that manifested at the institutional level. Articles were described primarily from the perspective of researchers. Researchers' voices were prioritized in terms of analyzing data through introspective critical reflexive methodologies such as autoethnography. Some articles noted manuscript findings were drafted in conversation and in agreement with community stakeholders but lacked co-authorship. Additionally, researchers also used qualitative methodologies such as content analysis and individual semi-structured in-depth interviews with community stakeholders to explore relational power asymmetries in the collaboration. Upon the completion of data collection and analysis, some articles did not mention specific actions taken to change power differentials.

#### ***Positionality and Interrogation of Systems of Power, Oppression, and Privilege***

Researchers' positionality was highlighted as a primary focus of the articles.

Scholars provided reflections on researchers' identities as insiders and/or outsiders and its implications posing facilitators and barriers to participatory approaches to research, particularly in building relationships and navigating hierarchical power structures and cultural traditions (Denzongpa et al., 2020; Felner, 2020; Fernández, 2018; Lac & Fine, 2018; Malone et al., 2013; Pech et al., 2020). Additionally, researchers who had shared marginalized identities and experiences of oppression with community partners in the collaboration included critical and in-depth discussions and analyses of researcher's positionality at the intersection of race, class, gender, ability, and education. (Fernández, 2018a) This careful examination was further applied to consider the implications on how power differentials manifested in relationships, communication, and outcomes in the collaboration. Overall, authors noted the importance of critically examining researcher's positionality as well as the sociopolitical and historical processes and context in which communities have been socialized.

### ***Personal Biases and Positionality***

Using qualitative critical reflexive methodologies, all researchers identified and questioned personal biases, assumptions, and its implications for suppressing community stakeholders' autonomy and exerting top-down power in key decision-making processes throughout the collaboration. For example, Lac and colleagues critically reflect on researcher's authoritative approach to pedagogy as a former classroom teacher and the ways it influenced how power was established through the adoption of unrealistic expectations and ongoing negotiation of student autonomy in daily practices of the YPAR collaboration (Lac & Fine, 2018). Similarly, in the 4-year "Protecting the 'Hood Against

Tobacco' (PHAT) study, the academic co-principal investigator (co-PI)'s prior experiences of being "in charge" of her projects resulted in her making decisions without consulting the community co-PI (Malone et al., 2013)." Moreover, researchers reflected on personal feelings of hopelessness as part of the savior complex (Aronson, 2017; Fisher, 2017; Wilcox, 2021) and also grappled with assumptions made of community stakeholders' interests, feelings, and levels of experience (Pech et al., 2020). Ongoing tensions experienced by researchers who identified as "outsiders" and "insiders" (Minkler, 2004b; Muhammad et al., 2015) were also discussed. In the CBPR study focused on understanding maternal health experiences of ethnic Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugee women, American and Nepali researchers described experiencing ethical dilemmas as well as conflicting barriers regarding research, translational power, and cultural and gender norms in the process of building relationships with community partners (Denzongpa et al., 2020). Moreover, Fernández highlighted the continuous struggle to reconcile personal experiences of marginalization and disenfranchisement that mirrored youth shared experiences and identities, particularly in situations to support youth advocacy efforts that compromised her position within educational institutions that expected researchers to remain 'objective' (Fernández, 2018a). In addition to researchers' discussion of personal biases, researchers also recognized personal assumptions on the outcomes of participatory approaches to research, specifically, the language and semantics used to refer youth as 'co-researchers' as a sufficient practice to build equitable participation.



### ***Exertion of Top-Down Relational Power***

Authors reported individuals affiliated with hierarchical institutions exerting authority through the implementation of executive decisions that disagreed with community partners' proposed ideas and sentiments. For example, in both YPAR projects that took place in education settings, school district leaders disapproved partially and fully of the content of the participatory action-based research projects. Lac and colleagues wrestled with the school district's resistance to support youth researchers' choice of investigating racial, class, and incarceration disparities associated with exclusionary zero tolerance behavior policies due to the fear of compromising the image of the school (Lac & Fine, 2018). Similarly, Fernández describes school leaders' recommendations to remove the text "no more pink slips" from the youth researchers' action project mural as an indication of structures of power limiting youth's agency (Fernández, 2018). In addition to school district leaders, individual researchers also reported actively urging youth partners to choose traditional research protocols (e.g. surveys) instead of nontraditional approaches proposed by youth partners (i.e. documentary) due to the fear of not obtaining IRB's approval (Felner, 2020). Moreover, researchers' actions reinforcing control throughout research activities were also explored. One of the academic co-PI reflects on the ways in which controlling roles were assumed throughout the use of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)'s study's procedures where researchers were scrutinizing people's eligibility instead of allowing people to have control over their cessation experiences (Malone et al., 2013). This was also evident in Pech and colleagues in their reflections assessing the disproportionate amount of time,

presence, and physical space the researcher took to talk throughout the program meetings limiting the participation of undergraduate student facilitators and youth (Pech et al., 2020). Furthermore, exertion of cultural norms, roles, and languages were negotiated and reflected in the ability to have decision-making control over the relay of information between community members and co-PIs as well as dominant perceptions of empowerment and financial literacy (Denzongpa et al., 2020).

### **Theme 3: Negotiating Relational Power - How did researchers and community stakeholders respond?**

Authors reported multiple approaches in response to grappling with relational power issues. Researchers reported feeling unprepared in negotiating emerging tensions and conflicts of power. Most of the articles described researchers engaging in critical reflexive practices that led to transparent conversations with community stakeholders. Additionally, researchers indicated implementing changes in practice to better engage with community stakeholders.

#### ***Collective transparent conversations***

Articles described researchers and community stakeholders taking specific individual actions to address subversions of power. Upon the recognition and interrogation of power differences, instead of reproducing hierarchical power relations within the collaboration, researchers highlighted the importance of having collective, open, and transparent conversations as a key strategy to address relational power conflicts. For example, in the 4-year “Protecting the ‘Hood Against Tobacco’ (PHAT) study, African American community co-PI and Project Director challenged power

asymmetries reinforced by White co-PI in team relationships and decision-making by working out a revised division of labor and proposing consistent consulting sessions among team members (Malone et al., 2013). Similarly, rather than giving a lecture on the importance of paying attention and “nipping it in the bud” right away to make youth switch seats due to their side conversations and attention on their cellphones during project meetings, Lac and colleagues described having a conversation with youth about these observations and as a result, group agreements were outlined to establish democratic practices of participation (Lac & Fine, 2018). Moreover, in response to school administrators’ request to modify and remove certain images of the mural action project, youth and adult researchers agreed on a collective decision strategically through various youth-centered dialogues or debrief sessions (Fernández, 2018).

***Silence and Limited Advocacy: Negotiating professional and personal roles***

Researchers also described often not feeling prepared to respond or have collective transparent conversations. For example, Fernández describes grappling with emerging tensions not anticipated in response to youth’s suggestion to protest at school due to school administrators’ feedback of having to remove an image of protest against exclusionary and disciplinary policies (Fernández, 2018). Regardless of embodied subjectivities of shared identities, experiences, and desires to support youth, the author describes negotiating professional expectations of not jeopardizing the school partnership while recognizing school administrators’ actions undermining youth’s leadership and supporting youth’s work to a certain extent without compromising school’s power and positionality (Fernández, 2018). Additionally, Lac and colleagues describes being

“baffled by the backlash” and “growing narrative of resistance” from multiple school stakeholders regarding youth researchers’ proposed topic, and assess the situation and whether being positioned as a “graduate student near the bottom hierarchy who relied on funding” to pay the bills would be the best contest and space to “put up a fight” (Lac & Fine, 2018). Similarly, when youth discussed perceived individual benefits in the form of small stipends in comparison with PI’s doctoral degree, the author reflects on conflicting feelings of wanting to further explain and discuss further individual fears and instead of engaging in a collective dialogue with youth, the author deliberates internally about whether participatory approaches to research can be a form of exploitation (Felner, 2020).

### ***Changes as a Result of Interrogation of Power***

Change in practices within partnerships was the most common action reported by authors as a result of contesting power within the participatory collaborations. Some changes discussed included 1) deciding to collectively shift away from prioritizing research publications and obtaining IRB approval, 2) adjust content delivery during sessions with community partners to tailor them to community partners’ needs and interests, and 3) considering alternative approaches to address top-down adult-generated suggestions and feedback while centering community partners’ leadership and suggestions. A couple of articles did not mention any changes implemented at the individual, interpersonal, or systemic level as a result of addressing power within the collaboration. Moreover, it is important to note that none of the articles described systemic changes in the collaboration implemented as a result of grappling with power inequities within the collaboration.

## Discussion

This scoping review sought to better understand researchers' and community partners' interrogation and contestation of interlocking systems of power and oppression in CBPR partnerships as represented in the peer-reviewed journal articles reporting on the topic of study. While 179 articles mentioned power and were assessed for full eligibility, six articles that described in detailed specific examples that include relevant processes of interrogating and grappling with power were considered. All studies were qualitative and used critical reflexive methodologies such as autoethnography and analytic memo writing. Evident in our analysis is that power issues in participatory research collaborations are multidimensional and extend beyond the research activities alone. Rather power encompasses a combination of structural arrangements, individual socialization, experiences, actions, and processes that change over time. For example, our findings suggest researchers interrogate power issues by confronting individual assumptions, engaging in collective conversations, changing individual practices, and negotiating structural constraints constantly throughout the participatory action research collaboration.

Our findings are consistent with scholarly evidence documenting growing tensions, ethical challenges, and power issues researchers experienced in their efforts to democratize research through shared power and decision making (Call-Cummings et al., 2020; Paradiso de Sayu & Chanmugam, 2016; Wilson et al., 2018). Similarly to the recommendation of engaging in ethical reflective practices to unravel and illuminate intersections of power, culture, gender, and privilege that is highlighted across included

articles, research suggests using critical reflexive tools, collective values, and power mapping as guiding frameworks to name and negotiate power (Littman et al., 2021). Implications of failing to contest these power inequities need to be further explored and documented. For instance, while findings illustrate critical reflexive descriptions of researchers grappling with individual, structural, cultural, and linguistic assumptions of top-down power hierarchies contradicting PAR/CBPR paradigms of equitable co-production of knowledge, some of these examples lack in-depth dialectic and dialogical strategies to address these challenges in conversation between researchers and community partners. It is unclear from scholarly evidence the ways these important discussions are taking place throughout the PAR/CBPR collaborations and the extent to which these challenges are addressed and redressed in the short, medium, and long-term. This presents substantial implications to strengthen the training of scholars interested in engaging in PAR/CBPR to engage in ethical relationality and apply values of honesty, transparency, and accountability when addressing power differentials within PAR/CBPR collaborations in conversations that may bring discomfort with community partners. Additionally, findings present relevant implications for policymakers to co-construct and implement sustainable mechanisms assessing not only research findings informed by meaningful participation, but also evidence of dialogical practices that prioritize resolution of power differences as well as community stakeholders' ownership and self-determination throughout the research process.

As funding agencies are increasingly promoting community engaged research and translation (Frank et al., 2015; Jenkins et al., 2020), additional research and guidance may

be needed to ensure researchers are equipped with relevant competencies, knowledge, and commitment to establish PAR/CBPR collaborations rooted in ethical relationality, transparency, and accountability. Syntheses of multilevel strategies across various fields are needed to address and redress challenges within the partnership (Hoekstra et al., 2020), particularly power differentials and dynamics within relationships to advance equitable approaches to implement participatory action research partnerships.

There is extensive evidence documenting the positive outcomes of PAR/CBPR and the ways this epistemological approach increase community participation. However, limited scholarly articles discuss in depth these power issues that impact PAR/CBPR collaborations and how researchers and community partners address them. This study contributes to existing literature by examining the application of CBPR principles and the ways scholars report in peer-reviewed manuscripts their understandings and strategies to confront imbalanced power arrangements that impact social relationships, trust building, and the pursuit of social justice. There is no doubt the scholarly literature illustrates thoughtful intentions to build authentic, meaningful, and equitable academic-community research partnerships. However, there is a dearth of research examining critically the role of unexamined and unaddressed power dynamics in relationship building with community partners and the collective pursuit of social justice and health equity. This scoping review revealed the complexity of conceptualizing power within participatory action research collaborations and the importance of attending to it.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

A key strength of this scoping review is the clear and systematic approach

undertaken in reviewing the literature on such an important and less examined topic which can be further updated in future reviews. This review focuses primarily on reviewing empirical peer-reviewed studies with search strategies limited to Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) published in English between 2010 and 2020 across five databases. Relevant additional data found in other databases as well as in books and gray literature that uses different terminology to describe participatory knowledge-production collaborations published in other languages are not captured or discussed in this study. Additionally, this review excludes non-peer reviewed articles such as dissertations, book chapters, and reports in addition to the different geographical, linguistic, and social contexts that influence conceptualization of PAR/CBPR. In addition to the different types of data sources excluded, this scoping review relied heavily on researchers' self-reported perceptions on power differences in published academic articles that outline specific requirements to be considered for publication including but not limited to specific scope of work, content priority, structure, and formatting. Thus, substantial related information documented in other formats and platforms such as non-academic journals, community briefs, commentaries, reflection pieces, and in-person discussions illustrating how power differentials are addressed are excluded from this review. Future research should examine these additional data sources and use complimentary research methodologies such as qualitative interviews and focus groups to draw from these excluded forms of data by exploring the perceptions of multiple actors and not just solely researchers' views not documented in scholarly articles on the extent power issues were addressed appropriately



within the partnerships.

Furthermore, this review examines processes discussing power issues in detail that emerged within participatory collaborations primarily from the perspective of scholars and researchers. This study serves as a key foundation for future studies to examine the perspectives of community stakeholders and multiple positioned actors regarding power issues. Finally, having a limited understanding and analysis of the ways power operates within PAR/CBPR partnerships can negatively hinder the emancipatory goals of this epistemological approach by shifting principles of equitable knowledge production. Drawing from community organizing, social movement theory, and sociological theory literature, scholars suggest various relevant strategies such as power mapping that could deepen individual and collective understanding of all actors in PAR/CBPR collaborations on how power is systematically exercised, sustained, co-opted, internalized, and built across the mobilization of resources, social networks, and relationships (Christens et al., 2021; Noy, 2008). Thus, conducting critical analysis of power within participatory action research collaborations could lead to a more robust shared understanding of how scholars and better approach these power differentials with community partners.

### **Conclusion**

This scoping review has documented relevant implications of relational power dynamics within CBPR partnerships. Findings indicate a dearth of strategies addressing these power dynamics, particularly individual and collective actions to modify dominant power configurations reflected in institutional policies, resource allocation, and research

paradigms. Findings also raise important questions about PAR/CBPR, its limitations to redress power differentials, and the responsibility researchers have to be critically aware and contest power issues. Furthermore, findings further highlight the potential role of training scholars in ethical and critically reflexive practices in addressing these challenges that emerge in the partnerships. In particular, a transdisciplinary curricular approach that adopts a competency that acknowledges the role of individual values, emotions, and relationships, rooted in ethical reflective practice that blends inquiry and action should be considered (Fernández, 2018). Additionally, there is a need to document and evaluate strategies used from both community stakeholders and researchers to grapple with power issues within participatory action research collaborations. Further studies exploring facilitating and hindering factors to explicitly interrogate power and oppression in PAR/CBPR collaborations by multiple positioned actors could inform relevant changes and illuminate gaps in understanding relevant training materials and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

### **Chapter 3: Narratives and Discourses of Epistemic Justice, Power, and Oppression in Community-Based Participatory Research Collaborations**

Research suggests Participatory Action Research and Community-Based Participatory Research (PAR/CBPR) approaches present promising epistemological paradigms to create just scientific and action-oriented knowledge production processes. While studies integrating PAR/CBPR are growing, limited research has explored in-depth discourses and narratives regarding major challenges that emerge within these partnerships, particularly power differences influenced by broader systems of power and oppression. Although scholars have used critical reflexive methodologies to examine these issues in PAR/CBPR, limited attention has been given to the perceptions of community partners. This study examines articulated and not articulated discourses of multiple positioned actors (i.e. faculty and community partners) engaged in PAR/CBPR collaborations. More specifically, this study explores individual narratives and perceptions of the manifestations of power and oppression within the collaboration while mapping micro, macro, relational, and positional discourses. Social work faculty (n=13) and community stakeholders (n=10) from multiple cities in the U.S. with prior or current experience in PAR/CBPR partnerships were recruited and interviewed virtually about their understandings, experiences, and recommendations to redress power and oppression within PAR/CBPR collaborations. Interviews were analyzed using thematic and situational analytic approaches to explore how interviewees conceptualized power and patterns of factors reinforcing or shifting power imbalances within the PAR/CBPR partnerships. Findings highlighted two major overarching themes: 1) downstream

approaches reinforcing hierarchies of dominance, oppression, and epistemicide through PAR/CBPR; and 2) upstream approaches embodying *sentipensante* praxis that disrupts epistemicide through the enactment of *counterspaces* and *counternarratives* of refusal, resistance, and self-determination. Study findings contribute to existing literature by expanding the multiple understandings of PAR/CBPR and the ways this epistemological approach may support or hinder the pursuit of justice. It is imperative for scholars to identify short-term and long-term interpersonal and institutional strategies to redress power hierarchies in participatory knowledge production processes.

## Introduction

Scientific research has been described as a major site of ongoing struggle. Throughout history, research has promoted pervasive discourses of biological determinism and racial essentialism which have shaped public beliefs and social policies on racial superiority and dominance (Byrd & Hughey, 2015; Byrd & Ray, 2015; Gould, 1996). Additionally, research has been described as “one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” due to the ways it has been implicated in dehumanization, dispossession of lands, cultural genocide, and colonization of indigenous communities (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Scientific research is influenced by particular paradigms, namely philosophical stances or conceptual frameworks consisting of socially constructed assumptions, values, and beliefs that inform individuals’ worldviews, knowledge, choices, priorities, and actions (Pidgeon, 2019). Research paradigms are intertwined with power, particularly in the way knowledge has been collected, classified, and represented through a Western-Eurocentric discourse to reinforce hierarchical power configurations of the West over the Other and to promote a settler colonial imperialistic agenda (Quijano, 2007; Said, 1979, 1993). At the heart of this agenda, Black, Indigenous, and communities of color were dehumanized through gendered, racial, colonial and hierarchical systems and social relations that sought economic expansion through exploitation and knowledge production processes (Fanon, 2004; Hobson, 1975; Lugones & Lugones, 2003).

One of the ways scholars enact resistance and contest these entrenched entanglements of scientific research and power is by creating counternarratives in

participatory action research or community-based participatory research (PAR/CBPR) collaborations. Born in the context of social movements in the global south, PAR/CBPR critiques the coloniality of research and proposed an alternative epistemological, methodological, and political commitment to transform research by engaging communities most impacted by power and oppression (Fals-Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003; Vega-Casanova, 2021). Social work scholars have developed an increased interest in participatory action research and community-based participatory research (PAR/CBPR) as potential research paradigms committed to sharing power equitably with community partners in knowledge production processes (Healy, 2001). Contrary to positivist research philosophies that outline research participants as passive “subjects”, an epistemology rooted in PAR/CBPR conceives individuals as active co-researchers, agents with autonomy, self-determination, and valuable knowledge and experience (Fine & Torre, 2019; Wallerstein et al., 2018). Additionally, PAR/CBPR seeks to build knowledge and engage in action-driven processes to effect change in partnership with communities (Bertrand, 2016; Sandwick et al., 2018). While there is a large growing body of scholarly literature that highlights the benefits associated with PAR/CBPR, there is relatively limited discussion from the perspective of multiple positioned actors within the collaboration on how researchers and community partners identify, discuss, and resolve issues related to ethics and power differentials.

Despite PAR/CBPR’s relevant contributions to social work research, particularly in co-producing knowledge equitably in partnership with oppressed and dispossessed communities, scholars have raised critical questions and challenges around ethics

associated with PAR/CBPR (Kwan & Walsh, 2018). In particular, working with vulnerable populations, negotiating power dynamics and relationships, navigating conflicting ethical requirements between community partners and institutional review boards (IRB), strengthening research validity and integrity, and insider-outsider tensions (Granosik, 2018, 2018; Wilson et al., 2018). Additionally, scholarly evidence suggests social work scholars engaging in PAR/CBPR feel pressured to meet the demands of neoliberal academic institutions, specifically prioritizing specific outcomes (e.g. academic publications) over relevant social and relational processes (e.g. building relationships and rapport with community partners), which are exacerbated and more pronounced for scholars of color (Cosgrove et al., 2020; Kramer et al., 2021). Moreover, there is scholarly evidence that suggests even regardless of the efforts in defining differently the power structures within the PAR/CBPR collaboration, power remains in academic scholars and established institutional systems to receive funds and conduct ‘ethical’ and ‘valid’ research with more credibility and legitimacy compared to the community counterparts (Travers et al., 2013).

Postcolonial and decolonial analysis of PAR/CBPR limitations in achieving a liberatory praxis have illuminated the ways PAR/CBPR has been utilized as a vehicle to access “over researched” communities appropriating community knowledge and labor (Janes, 2016). Scholars propose instead a praxis that illuminates the existing distance between scholars and community stakeholders in ways that disrupts, shifts the gaze, and engages in the “painstaking labor” of talking to each other about the power differences within social locations to resist colonial relations (Dutta, 2018b; Janes, 2016).

Additionally, researchers suggest engaging in a continuous praxis of critical reflection by using autoethnographic methodologies of ethical reflective writing and centering the voices of communities in achieving meaningful and equitable collaborations (Fernández, 2018a; Johnson & Flynn, 2021). Similarly, “*pedagogies of refusal*” are generative practices that honor indigenous people’s sovereignty, recognize participants’ refusal and resistance to research, and turn the gaze back to systems of power and oppression to build transparent ways of knowledge production away from damage-centered research (Tuck & Yang, 2014). However, limited scholarly literature, particularly within social work, has explored in detail additional strategies to address power differences from the perspective of multiple positioned actors, particularly community stakeholders in participatory action research collaborations.

### **Power, Oppression, and Epistemic Justice: A Continuous Arena of Struggle in Social Work**

Although a growing body of literature exists around anti-oppressive critical social work, limited evidence on the preparedness of social workers to confront power differentials, oppressive practices, and social injustice in research and practice, exists. Despite the profession’s ethical mandate to achieve social justice and the increasing scholarly literature emphasizing the renewal of this commitment, implicit and hidden individual and institutional challenges that have yet to be addressed in depth remain. For instance, although this commitment is stated in the profession’s mission and values (NASW, 2021), findings of a nationwide sample of social work syllabi found little clarity on how social justice topics have been effectively integrated into social work pedagogy



(Teasley & Archuleta, 2015). Additionally, analysis of social work's course assignments suggest instructors need to challenge students in course assignments to address issues of power, privilege, and oppression explicitly (Atteberry-Ash et al., 2021). Moreover, many social work students graduate with limited knowledge and skills to eradicate systemic barriers that maintain systems of domination in their communities (Fisher & Corciullo, 2011).

These gaps are exacerbated by broader institutional factors that influence the extent the profession's mission is actualized such as market pressures that privilege 'mainstream' hidden curriculum that limits advocacy in resisting structural oppression (Bhuyan et al., 2017; Grady et al., 2011). To address this gap in social work pedagogy, scholars have proposed developing anti-oppressive practices through the use of reflexivity, ethical and intersectional frameworks, and experiential learning to create brave spaces to discuss oppression and develop practical problem-solving skills to engage in social change efforts (Caron et al., 2020; Goode et al., 2021; Houston & Marshall, 2020; Jewell & Owens, 2017; Nicotera, 2019; Simon et al., 2021).

Social work research is another domain of continuous contestation of power and oppression. Social work research has shifted away from examining the structural causes or roots of social problems due to the profession's pressure to embrace scientific methods in order to gain legitimacy and compete with other professions (Kirk, 2002; Okpych & Yu, 2014). For instance, the adoption, emphasis, and research of medical empirically-based paradigms such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) that disproportionately labels Black, Indigenous, and People of Color as violent

and severely mentally ill (Riquino et al., 2021). As a result, classification of behaviors and attributes that are socially acceptable, deviant, or desirable are generated with unexamined epistemological and ontological assumptions that contribute to increased social control (Foucault, 2006).

Additionally, while social work scholarship has explored issues of oppression such as racism experienced by racially dispossessed and oppressed communities, findings of content analyses suggest social work researchers rely heavily on micro-level interventions and have yet to address critically institutional racism (Corley & Young, 2018; McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992). This lack of attention to structural causes and interventions to individual and structural oppression, racism, and inequity has been characterized by scholars as an epistemological issue, in particular a failure to co-create knowledge in ways that recognize knowledge as fluid, nuanced, context-specific, and socially situated (Harding, 1992). Although social work values highlight the importance of meaningfully including the voices of oppressed individuals, social work research continues to be driven by epistemological approaches that privilege the voices of researchers and scientific objectivity. In order to address this epistemological issue, scholars have proposed alternative critical, feminist, and participatory frameworks to co-create knowledge that considers the sociopolitical and cultural context of research, challenges the value of scientific neutrality, and centers the worldviews of dispossessed and oppressed individual (Brown, 2021; Collins et al., 2018; Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2015).

International social work research has also interrogated epistemological processes and ideological forces that prevent the profession from actualizing its mission and values.

International social work literature has examined more carefully the ways coloniality of power, namely multidimensional and historical colonial power arrangements, generate tensions and struggles in knowledge production, education, and action research community partnership developments (Carranza, 2018; Mathebane & Sekudu, 2018; Uda, 2021; Weisman, 2016). However, the language ascribed remains vague and specific forces remain invisible and not further explained. In order to dismantle these mechanisms of oppression, it is necessary to name these forces and understand them in-depth (Beck, 2019; Lavoie, 2012). Similarly, social movement scholars have proposed to incorporate an ethics of anti-oppression and prefiguration that interrogates the invisible politics that influence all stages of the research and develops concrete alternatives to revoke dominant socio-political and economic narratives (Luchies, 2015).

### **Researcher's Positionality**

Research suggests individuals in PAR/CBPR have multiple social locations as *insiders, outsiders, or somewhere in between* which shape researchers' views and grants them advantages or disadvantages (Denzongpa et al., 2020; Muhammad et al., 2015). These social locations encompass social relationships, lived experiences, and societal ascribed and achieved identities which confer status, power, or marginality on researchers such as levels of education attained as well as racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, class, ability, linguistic, and religious identities (Kerstetter, 2012). Beyond acknowledging individual social locations, scholars underscore the importance of enacting embodied subjectivities (Fernández, 2018) using reflexive practices to engage in heart, hand, and head work, which requires acknowledgement of individual values, emotions (heart), relationship

development, practices, and actions (hand), that are in a dialectic praxis with the individual's way of knowing (head) (Langhout et al., 2016). While researchers' identities of privilege and marginalization serve as key sources of motivation to pursue PAR/CBPR, scholars have reported navigating significant tensions that emerge continuously due to conflicting values and processes of PAR/CBPR between scholars and neoliberal academia (e.g. competitive publication metric reward system that regards human dimension of scholars) (Cosgrove et al., 2020).

In what follows, I briefly describe my positionality in the context of this study. While I write as leading author of this paper, I acknowledge my ontological and epistemological approaches are influenced by a genealogy and collective of critical feminist and decolonial scholars, writers, organizers, advocates, and practitioners committed to resistance, liberation, and justice. I carry multiple social locations and subjectivities of power and oppression as an insider, outsider, and in between. I identify as a person at the intersection of cultural, racial, and ethnic identities as an able-bodied cis-gender woman born and raised by Chinese parents in Colombia. I identify as a multilingual immigrant and first generation in my family with the privilege of enrolling and completing higher education. I have a range of experiences that have influenced my interests in community organizing and participatory action research including lived experiences growing up in the global south, working as an organizer and youth worker in community-based settings, and leading PAR/CBPR projects. As a doctoral candidate trained formally in the university's school of social work, I continuously struggle to reconcile my personal experiences of oppression and community-based organizing with

those I seek to address through PAR/CBPR collaborations in partnership with economically dispossessed working-class communities of color, particularly Black, Latinx, and Asian youth and caregivers. These tensions have surfaced when I engaged in ethical unsettling reflexive practices when I work with communities I identify with and stand in solidarity. In particular, I have experienced mixed feelings of frustration, anger, disappointment, indignation, and guilt when engaging in previous PAR/CBPR collaborations where I have stood by or reinforced oppressive practices and not being accountable for the harm enacted to community partners. In relation to the social work scholars and community partners engaged in PAR/CBPR collaborations interviewed in this study, I position myself as a comrade, a scholar, and a colleague who seeks to further understand the ways community and academic collaborations can be equitable and just in alignment with the profession's values and community partners' pursuit of justice.

### **Current Study**

This paper focuses on understanding how researchers and community stakeholders understand, embody, and contest the systems of power and oppression while participating in PAR/CBPR collaborations. More specifically, this paper seeks to explore the processes by which multiple positioned actors engage in collaborative knowledge production processes to advance community-driven social justice efforts. The research questions informing this study are:

1. From the perspectives of social work scholars and community stakeholders engaged in PAR/CBPR collaborations, what is their understanding(s) of power

and oppression in their personal lives as well as in the context of PAR/CBPR collaborations?

2. How have these systems of power and oppression been reproduced or contested?
3. What strategies, if any, of resistance to interlocking systems of power and oppression have social work scholars and community stakeholders utilized in the PAR/CBPR collaboration to support community-driven change efforts?
4. What are their recommendations for research, practice, and policy to contest systems of power and oppression in PAR/CBPR collaborations?

This paper uses two analytical approaches to explore the perceptions of multiple positioned actors in PAR/CBPR on power and oppression within the collaboration. The first, a thematic approach, inform the findings by examining the patterns of co-constructed definitions, processes, and recommendations. The second, a situational approach, inform the findings on identifying and interrogating articulated and not articulated discourses present in PAR/CBPR partnerships regarding power and oppression within the context of the academic-community collaborations. Together, these approaches seek to contribute to existing scholarship on participatory and equitable knowledge production, particularly through alternative paradigms such as PAR/CBPR. In particular, this study underscores the inclusion of multiple perspectives and actors in PAR/CBPR within the field of social work research and examines how individuals conceptualize, contest, and redress power and oppression within PAR/CBPR collaborations.

## **Methods**

### **Research Philosophy and Study Design**

The philosophy of science informing this study is consistent with social constructivism as well as critical theory, feminist, and queer theory paradigms. Social constructivism recognizes the existence of multiple realities of a phenomenon that is context specific and the co-construction of knowledge through a collaborative approach between researchers and participants (Cannella et al., 2015; Kamal, 2019). Critical feminist and queer theorists expand this paradigm by acknowledging the presence of unjust power configurations that lead to social injustices and using appropriate research methodologies and epistemological approaches to minimize exploitative processes and challenge the status quo and dominant narratives (Chan et al., 2019; Denker, 2021).

This paper uses qualitative research methodology to explore the main inquiry of the study (Cannella et al., 2015). Qualitative methods consist in the systematic exploration of meaning making processes from individual's lived experiences situated in specific sociopolitical and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2018b). This type of research methodology allows researchers to build rapport with participants and elicit rich descriptions and perception on a phenomenon in a specific context (Maxwell, 2013b). In particular, in-depth individual semi-structured interviews were identified as appropriate qualitative methods for the study given its exploratory approach to gain an in-depth understanding of interviewee's experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes while accounting for nuanced understandings of each interviewee based on their experiences and social positions (Gubrium et al., 2012; Jamshed, 2014)

**Participants**

There were two major types of participants engaged in this study: 1) social work faculty and 2) community stakeholders. Social Work faculty were defined as individuals with a doctoral degree in social work or with a faculty appointment at a social work school in higher education institutions in the U.S. Conversely, community stakeholders were characterized as non-affiliated university individuals whose primary job did not include conducting research. Faculty and community stakeholders did not have experience working together in the same PAR/CBPR projects. All participants included in the study had prior or existing experience with PAR/CBPR collaborations (see Table 3.1). Faculty served as primary investigators in the projects and community stakeholders reported playing roles of facilitators, advisors, consultants and outreach coordinators.



**Table 3.1***Sociodemographic Characteristics of Interview Participants*

Sample Characteristics	Faculty		Community		Faculty and Community	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	10	77	4	40	14	61
Male	3	23	5	50	8	35
GNC		0	1	20	1	4
<b>Racial Identity</b>						
Black/African American	4	30.8	7	70	11	48
Asian, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander	2	15.4			2	9
Asian						
Latinx	2	15.4	2	20	4	17
White	5	38.5	1	10	6	26
<b>Annual Income</b>						
Less than \$25,000			3	30	3	13
\$25,000-\$50,000	1	8			1	4
\$50,000-\$75,000	1	8	1	10	2	9
\$75,000-\$100,000	3	23	3	30	6	26
\$100,000-\$125,000	4	31	1	10	5	22
\$125,000-\$150,000			1	10	1	4
\$150,000-\$175,000						
\$175,000-\$200,000	2	15			2	9
Chose not to disclose	2	15	1	10	3	13
<b>Highest level of education</b>						
Some High School			1	10	1	4
High School/GED			1	10	1	4
Some College			2	20	2	9
Some Technical Training						
Associate degree						
Bachelor's Degree						
Master's Degree			6	60	6	26
Doctorate Degree	13	100			13	57
<b>Languages</b>						
English	13	100	10	100	10	43
Spanish	2	15	2	20	4	17
Other	4	31			4	17
<b>Disability</b>						
None	11	85	7	70	18	78
Learning disability			1	10	1	4
Visually impaired			1	10	1	4

Other	2	15	1	10	3	13
Religion						
Catholic	2	15	2	20	4	17
Christian	1	8	4	40	5	22
Taoism			1	10	1	4
Agnostic	3	23	3	30	6	26
Other	3	23			3	13
Undisclosed	4	31				
Number of PAR/CBPR collaborations involved						
1-3	3	23	4	40	7	30
4-7	3	23	3	30	6	26
8-10	2		1	10	3	13
11-19	2	23			2	9
20+	1	8	2	20	3	13
Undisclosed	2	15			2	9
Min length of PAR/CBPR collaboration						
1-6 weeks			3	30	3	13
3-6 months	6	46	3	30	9	39
1-2 years	4	31	4	40	8	35
3-5 years	1	8			1	4
Undisclosed	2	15			2	9
Max length of PAR/CBPR collaboration						
0.5 year	3	23	1	10	4	17
1-3 years	5	38	5	50	10	43
4-7 years	1	8	2	20	3	13
8-11 years	1	8	1	10	2	9
12-15 years			1	10	1	4
20+ years	2	15			2	9
Undisclosed	1	8			1	4

*Note.* Faculty (n=13) were on average 47 years old (SD=7.6), and community stakeholders (n=10) were on average 42 years old (SD=18).

### Data Collection approach

Upon IRB approval, non-probability sampling strategies including quota, snowball, and convenience sampling (Taherdoost, 2016) were employed to identify social work scholars (n=13) and community stakeholders (n=10). Given the study's goals to explore the perceptions of individuals with specific memberships and identities, non-

probability convenience sampling strategies (Farrugia, 2019) were used to recruit interview participants. Stratified purposeful sampling strategies (Farrugia, 2019) were employed to select participants from specific subgroups of a population of interest. Potential participants that identified as Social Work scholars engaged in PAR/CBPR were recruited from multiple sources including scoping review findings, university listservs, and personal networks. Additionally, a manually and self-generated list of the top 50 social work schools in the U.S. was also developed and used to recruit Social Work scholars engaged in PAR/CBPR by reviewing individual faculty profiles in public websites and identifying key words such as “community-based participatory research”. Furthermore, I used snowball sampling strategies (Farrugia, 2019) by asking interviewed participants to share with me the contact information of potential participants or by sharing my information with colleagues who would be potentially interested in participating in the study. This sampling strategy was used primarily to identify and recruit participants who identified as community stakeholders. Additionally, emails were sent to professional organizations, groups, scholarly and community listservs to recruit participants. Finally, I leveraged from my personal and professional networks which included my advisor’s colleagues and community partners in PAR/CBPR collaborations and invited them to participate if fitting.

### **Procedures and Ethics**

While the study’s data collection plan was initially designed to be a hybrid model integrating in-person and virtual interviews, this plan was revised and data collection procedures took place remotely via Zoom due to safety concerns with the rapid spread of

COVID-19 pandemic in the early months of 2020. This was also identified as the most appropriate approach due to the unprecedented challenges that faculty and community stakeholders experienced in their efforts to sustain equitable learning modalities and organize rapid relief efforts amidst the world-wide crisis (Leitch et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2020). An initial email including the study's scope, inclusion criteria, expectations, and compensation was distributed to potential participants (recruitment email is presented in Appendix A). Individuals who confirmed their interest in participating in the interview received an electronic copy of the consent form and questionnaire to review in advance prior to the interview scheduled date in addition to a calendar invitation with the zoom link information. Participants were encouraged to contact the researcher at any point via email to clarify any questions or concerns they had. Interviews ranged between 60-90 minutes and each participant received a \$25 electronic Target gift card for their participation. At the beginning of the interview, I presented a brief introduction of myself and the project by describing participant expectations, potential risks, benefits, compensation, and the right to omit questions, withdraw or decline participation in the study (interview protocol guide is presented in Appendix B). Specific information on video recording, deidentification of data, and procedures to safely monitor the data were described as well. Upon the completion of this introduction, participants were provided the opportunity to ask any questions and clarify any concerns they had before proceeding. Once verbal consent to participate and video-record the interview was obtained from participants (see verbal consent form in Appendix C), the video recording feature in Zoom was activated and the semi-structured in-depth interview protocol was followed.

The individual semi-structured interview protocol sought to gain an understanding of seven major areas. The first couple areas explored participants' positionality and intersecting identities of power and oppression. The following areas focused on understanding participants' perceptions of PAR/CBPR and previous or existing PAR/CBPR collaborations. Open-ended questions asked participants to define PAR/CBPR and describe in detail an assessment of the collaboration's strengths and areas of struggle, as well as expectations and agreements between scholars and community stakeholders in the PAR/CBPR collaborations. Next, participants were asked a line of questions regarding their understanding of interlocking systems of oppression and power and how they were present and contested in the CBPR collaboration. Open-ended questions asked participants to describe in detail specific examples that illustrated scenarios and situations where interlocking systems of power and oppression manifested and impacted the PAR/CBPR collaboration. Finally, participants were asked to provide their recommendations to scholars and community stakeholders engaging in PAR/CBPR collaborations in addition to adding relevant information they felt important to share that the semi-structured interview protocol was not able to capture. Interviews took place in participants' preferred language of communication. While majority of interviews took place in English, one interview was conducted in Spanish. I manually transcribed, proofread, and translated the interview to English for the data analysis phase. In order to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and translation, a research assistant supported with corroborating the transcriptions and translations.

Upon the completion of the individual interview, participants completed a brief

demographic questionnaire via Zoom (see demographic form in Appendix D). In the event participants had additional commitments and had limited time, participants received a follow-up email including an electronic version of the demographic questionnaire for them to complete and return via email. All data collected was deidentified during the data analysis and dissemination phases of the study. All interviews were video-recorded and transcribed using zoom education plan features.

### **Data Analysis**

Given the exploratory nature of the study that aimed to understand deeply the individual perceptions and embodiment of internalized, person-mediated, and institutional oppression, a combination of thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017), and interpretive constructivist grounded theorizing situational analysis (Clarke et al., 2018) was used. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method that seeks to systematically identify, organize, and offer insight on patterns of meaning (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This approach was selected for its utility in identifying and analyzing patterns inductively which was in alignment to explore the study's research questions. Additionally, situational analysis was used to represent and delineate abductively complex visible and invisible structural, relational, and power elements present in situational discourses within CBPR collaborations (Clarke et al., 2018). This study conducted an integrative mapping and analysis approach which focused on analyzing extant discourse materials and data sources together to what they have to say about the phenomenon of interest (Clarke et al., 2018). Rather than conducting comparative mapping and analysis between the perceptions of distinct actors involved in PAR/CBPR collaborations, integrative mapping

and analysis was utilized to examine articulated and not articulated discourses, relationships, and patterns across all interview transcripts to further understand the phenomenon of addressing and negotiating power and oppression within PAR/CBPR partnerships.

Prior to conducting data analysis, all transcriptions and video recordings were stored safely in the university's school of social work shared drive. Only the lead author and her advisor had access to the data and both monitored and managed the data. Participants' identifying information such as names and affiliations were removed and replaced with pseudonyms and anonymous descriptions to protect participants' confidentiality during the analysis, writing, and dissemination stages. The research team consisting of the lead author and two research assistants, proofread and verified all transcripts by listening to each video recording entirely and making any necessary corrections to the digital transcripts directly to ensure accuracy. Once the transcripts were verified, all data was uploaded to NVivo 12 for an in-depth data analysis process.

### **Thematic Analysis**

In the first thematic analysis approach, multiple steps were conducted to become familiar with the data, develop a codebook, perform coding, and identify emerging themes. First, the research team consisting of two graduate research assistants and the lead researcher conducted initial iterative line-by-line readings of all the interview data separately to enter the participants' worlds. Next, each team member annotated descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments in the margins of each transcript separately which were later used to develop initial codes to capture relevant meaning and

interpretation across the data. Research team members engaged in constant discussions to share with one another the marginal annotations in each transcript to co-develop an initial codebook. Upon the completion of the development and revision of codes based on the initial highlighted annotations, excerpts from the data related to the codes were identified and applied. For example, the parent code *roles in PAR/CBPR collaboration* emerged which included subcodes such as *thought partner*, *funder*, *active co-researcher*, *community liaison*, and *data collector*. These codes alluded to perceived practices from researchers and community stakeholders that highlighted the spectrum of authentic participation and power-sharing in PAR/CBPR. Research team members coded all 23 transcripts independently and met as a team to discuss discrepancies and reach full consensus. After the data were fully coded, research team members met iteratively to identify patterns across the coded data and develop emerging themes after examining clustered codes more deeply and emerging relationships. Overlapping themes were collapsed and refined to increase clarity and ensure these themes were uniquely distinct and answered the research questions. Finally, the research team met to discuss the ways the collectively identified themes agreed with individual team members annotations, comments, and observations from the coded data throughout the research data analysis phases to check for quality. Research team members spent time answering specific prompts in writing and reviewing coded transcripts and annotations prior to meeting as a team to discuss key reflections in relationship with the themes identified.

### **Situational Analysis**

Thematic analysis was followed by situational map-making analytic exercises.



Situational analysis seeks to “portray the assemblage of elements and the ecology of relations among them, major collective actors and fundamental issues and debates in the broad situation you have chosen to study” (Clarke et al., 2018). In order to explore the relational ecology of PAR/CBPR collaborations, upon reading each interview transcript, research team members engaged in memo-ing and developed three ecological-relational maps (i.e. situational maps, social world/arena maps, and positional maps) independently using Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel worksheets, PowerPoint, and NVivo to capture relevant human, nonhuman, discursive, and contextual elements (Clarke et al., 2018). Research team members met iteratively to discuss memo notes and maps to arrive at consensus on major elements and discourses identified from each transcript. During this stage of the data analysis, visual displays using maps, diagrams, figures, callout shapes, and color-coded labels were used to analyze the elements and the relationships between them in the situation. The lead researcher generated and revised maps prior to the data collection as well as during the data analysis stages of the study in partnership with research team members. The various steps and maps are described in detail.

### ***Messy and Ordered Situational Maps***

First, messy, ordered, and abstract situational maps were made and remade to “analytically attend to what’s in the situation as a whole” (Clarke et al., 2018) by illustrating all human and non-human elements of the situation of inquiry (i.e. PAR/CBPR collaborations) (Abstract messy and ordered situational maps presented in Appendix H and I). Human elements/actors such as major issues, political/economic, temporal, collective, and individual elements, including myself as a researcher, as part of

situational analysis' interpretive turn and reflexivity (Clarke et al., 2018) were mapped. Additionally, Non-human elements/actants such as implicated silent actors/actants, sociocultural/symbolic, spatial, and historical discursive elements were also mapped. Guiding questions including “What humans and nonhuman things taken for granted really matter in this situation of inquiry? To whom or what do they matter? What facilitates access? What hinders it? Are these represented on the map?” (Clarke et al., 2018) were used to facilitate the development of messy situational maps. Upon the completion of each mapping session, memo-ing was conducted to document new insights, shifts of attention, and directions for future data gathering and theoretical sampling (Clarke et al., 2018).

### ***Relational Maps***

Second, once messy situational maps were developed, relational mapping followed to explore the relations among elements identified by drawing distinct lines characterized by different colors and contours between them specifying the nature of the relationship out loud and also memo-ing (relational maps presented in Appendix J). This analysis was focused primarily on the nature of the relationships between elements, its significance, and changes provoked between each of them.

### ***Social Worlds/Arenas Maps***

Next, social worlds and arena updated maps were designed iteratively (social worlds/arenas maps presented in Appendix K) to illustrate the size and power of discursive sites where “various issues are debated, negotiated, fought out, forced and manipulated by representatives” (Strauss, 1978, 1982). Similarly to the previous maps,

memo-ing was followed by mapping describing in detail the major social worlds and arenas identified.

### ***Positional Maps***

Finally, positional maps were developed to analyze the discourses of inquiry more broadly and lay out the major positions taken on issues in the CBPR collaboration. Major positions articulated by key actors in the interview data and thematic analysis findings from the CBPR collaborations were represented in two related axes. Multiple issues and positions were analyzed systematically by designing multiple versions of positional maps (positional maps are presented in Appendix L). Multiple versions of all four descriptive maps were designed until inductive thematic saturation (Saunders et al., 2018) was reached where important re-emerging themes were all captured in its entirety.

### ***Writing Analytic Memos***

Upon generating three maps for each transcript, research team members engaged in analytic memo writing independently. Analytic memo writing is an appropriate reflexive strategy used to document researchers' critical reflections throughout the data analysis process (Saldaña, 2013). Analytic memos provide a dialectic and reflexive space for researchers to 'dump their brain' and think critically about the specific phenomenon under investigation by interrogating choices, confronting individual assumptions, and recognizing the ways individual thoughts, actions, and decisions shape the research (Leavy, 2014). Upon the completion of thematic coding and development of situational, relational, and positional maps of each interview, researcher and coder engaged in individual analytic memo writing to reflect on individual assumptions and also observed

emerging patterns and possible networks in relation to the study's research questions and choices on operational definitions (memo guide template and questions presented in Appendix F and G).

### **Toward a Theoretical Model of Epistemic Justice**

Lastly, the lead author engaged in a final cycle of *theoretical coding* which focused primarily on identifying theoretical codes to co-construct a theoretical framework (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2013). The lead author reviewed focused codes and engaged in iterative discussions with faculty, doctoral candidates, and multiple positioned actors in PAR/CBPR collaborations to identify underlying logics, ideas, terms, or models that could have potential relationships with relevant theories. The lead author collapsed overlapping codes and compared theoretical frameworks identified with the constructed codes and categories. The lead author integrated the input and feedback from the multiple positioned actors to identify the most appropriate theoretical codes through an abductive approach. This final stage of theoretical coding included the review of the situational mapping exercises and thematic analysis coding which led to the development of an integrated representation of epistemic justice in the context of PAR/CBPR collaborations. This representation is conceptualized within the metaphor of the cultivation of life and transformation: a river which consists of large streams of water with bi-directional water flows and channels representing possibilities of knowledge production. This representation is in alignment with the upstream-downstream metaphor introduced by John B. McKinlay that has evolved over time has described strategies and approaches to redefine determinants of health that address the roots of health inequity (Butterfield,

2017; Mckinlay, 1981).

### **Rigor and Trustworthiness**

Reliability and validity are key components that illustrate the quality, rigor, and accuracy of research findings in qualitative inquiry (Barusch et al., 2011; Cypress, 2017; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). In order to increase trustworthiness, credibility, and validity of the study, multiple strategies including reflexivity and member checking were used (Creswell, 2018b). Member checking consists of having participants review preliminary findings of the research and engage in critical discussions on potential misinterpretations, gaps, or confirmation of the findings presented (Candela, 2019; Torrance, 2012). Member checking has been described as useful for obtaining participants' approval for the use and representation of information provided in group and individual interviews (Candela, 2019; Torrance, 2012). Thus, the lead author conducted individual member checking sessions via zoom. Using a dialogical approach to confirm research findings (Harvey, 2015), the lead author shared synthesized analyzed data in the form of PowerPoint slides with participants, provided time and space for participants to recognize shared experiences within the synthesized themes, and solicited expansive feedback or additional information not captured in the analysis. Participants received an email invitation to participate in a 30-60min Zoom session. Nearly all participants (n=20) attended the member checking session via Zoom between 2020 and 2021. Three participants were unable to join individual respondent validation sessions due to competing priorities and limited time and capacity. Once participants expressed their interest, participants received an electronic calendar invitation with the zoom link

information. An overview of the agenda was provided and verbal consent to participate and video record from each participant was obtained. A brief slideshow presentation describing the research questions, methods, and preliminary findings was projected in the screen during the session using Zoom sharing screen features. Specific examples were presented using deidentified participants' illustrative quotes. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of participants. Upon the completion of the presentation, participants were asked to share initial reactions, comments, feelings, and suggestions on additional areas of inquiry to further explore and include in the event their experiences were not captured accurately. Upon the completion of member checking sessions, the research team reviewed participants' comments and integrated relevant suggestions and feedback in the research findings. For instance, participants' comments confirming specific themes in the findings were emphasized and additive data expanding participants' experiences was underscored as complementary perspective generated during the member checking sessions.

Additionally, researcher subjectivity and bias are fundamentally important to address in qualitative research. A review of published social work research articles found that a significant portion of the articles examined (86%) failed to acknowledge subjectivity by providing critical reflexive information about the authors (Barusch et al., 2011). While limited research has described specifically practical uses of disclosing individual subjective identities and positionalities (Darawsheh, 2014), scholars have indicated the value of recognizing authors' individual contributions to the constructions of meanings and lived experiences throughout the research stages (Palaganas et al.,

2017). Individual reflexive practices such as narrative memo-ing and peer debriefing have been identified as relevant reflexive practices to enhance processing and render thinking and awareness visible to the researcher and colleagues (Probst & Berenson, 2014; Richards & Hemphill, 2018). In order to be cognizant of how my individual experiences and values in community based participatory research as well as my identities as an able-bodied, cis female, middle class, multilingual, immigrant woman of color influenced the research, I engaged in individual reflexive techniques such as journaling to document my observations and responses across all stages of the research. For instance, upon the completion of each interview, I engaged in reflexive journaling and narrative memo-ing, reflecting on my personal experiences and possible themes and mapping elements that emerged, highlighting new insights, questions, and further areas of inquiry. Moreover, I also engaged in reflexive practices with my colleagues, peers, and faculty advisor. During my weekly meetings with my advisor, I shared relevant observations, dilemmas, and difficulties experienced in the interview process to elicit feedback and suggestions, particularly on my individual perspectives and biases. Additionally, I also engaged in iterative reflexive meetings to discuss additional concerns and questions with faculty from the dissertation committee, faculty mentor, and colleagues throughout the research processes.

## Findings

*“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in”*

– Desmond Tutu

Findings of thematic and situational analysis illustrated key themes depicting social work faculty and community stakeholders’ views, emotions, and experiences wrestling with power and oppression within collaborations. This rich and nuanced analysis of patterns and discourses also suggested a reframing of the initial study’s main inquiry. While initial research questions explored the perceptions of multiple positioned actors (i.e. faculty and community stakeholders) on power and oppression within participatory action research collaborations, findings underscored the centrality of shifting emphasis from individual perceptions to broader discourses articulated or not articulated in the partnership. These major themes are illustrated through the use of a river analogy. The river of epistemological possibilities emerged from the theoretical coding phase. This model drew particularly from decolonial frameworks (Lugones, 2020; Said, 1979; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005), participatory and action dialectic epistemologies from the global south opposing epistemological imperialism (Borda, 1979; Dutta et al., 2021; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), critical race (Delgado, 2017; Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018; Ross, 2017; Shirazi, 2019) and feminist theories (Crawford & Marecek, 1989; Rankin-Wright et al., 2020; Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019), and emergent strategy (brown, 2017). Additionally, it was also inspired by concepts used widely in social work and public health. In particular, the river parable that highlights ‘upstream’ (e.g. policy and structural changes that address issues at the root in the long-term) and ‘downstream’ (e.g.



access to services and care that alleviate issues in the short-term) factors that shape the social and environmental factors to promote health equity (Douglas et al., 2020; Oni et al., 2019). The following section elaborates this analysis, summarizes the themes, and explains in detail through illustrative quotes outlined in the emergent theoretical model (See Table 3.2 & 3.3 for River of Epistemological Possibilities Components).

**Table 3.2**

*Introduction to the River of Epistemological Possibilities*

<b>Ecosocial Sites</b>	<b>Downstream: Epistemicide</b>	<b>Upstream: Ruptures and Praxis of Epistemic Justice</b>
Social worlds embedded in PAR/CBPR collaborations	Symbolic Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Praxis of Reflection, Action, Accountability, and Embodiment</li> <li>• Enactments of Refusal               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Saying no</li> <li>○ Staying vigilant</li> <li>○ Walking away</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Ecosocial-site 1: The Academy</b>  Funding mechanisms Institutional Review Board Tenure Promotion Policies	<b>Armoring and Pipelines: Maintaining Forms of Colonial Knowledge Production to Maximize Capitalism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production</li> <li>• Extraction</li> <li>• Gatekeeping</li> </ul>	<b>Counternarratives and Counterspaces</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counterspaces</li> <li>• Counterstorytelling</li> <li>• Internal work and dialectic discomfort</li> </ul>
<b>Ecosocial-site 2: Community</b>  Community residents, leaders, advocates, and organizers mobilizing for change Resiliency and resistance in the face of power and oppression	<b>Normative Whiteness, Othering, and Disembodiment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulation and Limited Transparency</li> <li>• Racism</li> </ul>	<b><i>Emergent Strategy: Sentipensante and Hicotea Human Beings</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialectic and vulnerable spaces of collective learning</li> <li>• Long-term commitment to struggle</li> <li>• Humanizing and redefining relationships</li> </ul>

**Table 3.3***Definitions and Descriptions of the River of Epistemological Possibilities*

<b>River Domains</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
<b>Downstream</b>	<b>Epistemicide</b>	Systematically bounded and defined situations of domination that silence discourses outside of the Eurocentric and colonial knowledge production paradigms	Practices include knowledge production processes focused on production and extraction. Additional practices include symbolic changes, namely, superficial changes that are not necessarily redressing power hierarchies at the root.
	<b>Armoring and Pipelines: Maintaining Forms of Colonial Knowledge Production to Maximize Capitalism</b>	Establishment of harmful pipelines to control river routes and resources to maximize settler-colonial, capitalist, and neoliberal priorities	Practices include controlling and limiting the access to resources and opportunities (i.e., gatekeeping). Additional practices included deemphasizing and shifting attention from the contradictions between academia and community stakeholders' visions and approaches.
	<b>Intellectual Exercise: Othering, Disembodiment &amp; Alienation</b>	Viewing natural and human elements intrinsically different and alien to oneself. Knowledge disconnected from the physical, material, and bodily form.	Practices include prioritizing theory and intellectual knowledge over bodily and sensorial connections within relationships, limited transparency and vulnerability, as well as failing to acknowledge individual agendas, false promises, and limitations of the partnership.
<b>Upstream</b>	<b>Ruptures &amp; Praxis of Epistemic Justice</b>	A praxis of reflection and action contesting contradictions of knowledge production processes as a result of power and oppression. Embodiment and enactments of refusal, resistance, and self-determination.	Practices consisted primarily of enacting critical resistance and transformation. These include upholding principles and commitment with communities impacted by injustice, refusing to partake in partnerships that reinforce inequity and oppression, and being accountable and willing to approach uncomfortable conversations to identify, wrestle, and redress power differentials within the partnership.
	<b>Emergent Strategies: Counternarratives &amp; Counterspaces</b>	Critical reflections and actions at all scales to be in right relationship with nature and with one another. Creating counterspaces and	Practices consist primarily in creating counterspaces and counternarratives that challenge master narratives while being in the right relationship with one another. Some of these include reflexive critical reflection and action

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	counternarratives that highlight the interdependent ecology of knowledge production processes	in small and large scales, being attuned with the vision of community partners in alignment of social movements, removing barriers for community partners to fully participate, co-creating spaces for community partners to share their perspectives and exercise their power in decision-making.
<b><i>Sentipensante and Hicotea Human Beings: Buen Vivir</i></b>	Harmonic way of living centered on thinking-feeling, struggle, and joy. This approach values equally intellectual, social, emotional, and inner-life skill development.	Practices include adopting and embodying an unwavering commitment to struggle and resist with a shared understanding of balancing not only scientific and intellectual knowledges, but also local heart-centered wisdom and ways of being.

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### **The River of Epistemological Possibilities**

The River of Epistemological Possibilities consists of three major themes: (1) ecosocial sites, (2) downstream approaches, and (3) upstream approaches. Thematic and situational analysis illustrated discourses of power and oppression within PAR/CBPR partnerships operating within specific sociopolitical/environmental/historical/ contexts which are represented as two major ecosocial sites: (1) academy and (2) community. These ecosocial sites represent contexts associated with epistemic injustice and challenge the just co-creation of knowledge aligned with social justice. Scholars and community stakeholders described the context of the academy and the coloniality of community, namely, an understanding of community constructed from the colonial gaze as an object of inquiry and dehumanized subject that maintains hierarchical domination. Additionally, social work faculty and community stakeholders described power as an ongoing arena of struggle within PAR/CBPR collaborations. This is represented through two themes: (1) Downstream: Epistemicide, and (2) Upstream: Ruptures and Praxis of Epistemic Justice.

Each theme has subthemes describing in detail the practices that depict specific knowledge production processes. For instance, under ‘downstream: epistemicide’, there are two major subthemes: (1) Armoring and pipelines: maintaining forms of colonial knowledge production to maximize capitalism, and (2) normative whiteness, othering, and disembodiment. Conversely, under “upstream: ruptures and praxis of epistemic justice’, there are two subthemes: (1) counternarratives and counterspaces and (2) emergent strategies: *sentipensante* and *hicotea* human beings.

***Downstream: Epistemicide***

Epistemicide has been defined as colonial, dehumanizing, and violent processes of dispossession, erasure, and killings of knowledge systems through colonization, conquest, slavery, and assimilation mechanisms (Grosfoguel, 2013; Santos, 2014). While scholars and community stakeholders recognized PAR/CBPR as an approach to co-create knowledge equitably, PAR/CBPR was also embedded in historical and sociopolitical contexts reinforcing epistemicide. Anne, a social work practitioner working at a community health clinic that serves primarily Black, Brown, and residents of color states: “It's never going to be good because research would have to undo itself... Research was used to maintain racial hierarchy in the sciences, in housing, and education... nothing about research will work until research understands that research is racism”. Anne further adds: “The whole codification of research as a way to maintain white on top, Black and indigenous on the bottom, everybody else in between. And that's what research was used for, chattel slavery, Jim Crow....”. Similarly, even when PAR/CBPR may mitigate exclusion of community participation shaped by positivist research paradigms in

knowledge productions processes, this epistemological approach remains bounded by academic restrictions. Chris, an early career scholar describes their experiences partnering with youth researchers in a PAR collaboration and the ways their efforts in creating an egalitarian approach were constrained by academic boundaries:

We live in social structures where that carries a lot of power and influence and even if I am intentionally trying to dismantle that and have an egalitarian approach to this research, I think that something does happen when I enter a room full of young people... a question would be asked and everybody in the group would turn to me or ask me, is this okay? can we do this?, like permission seeking. And I definitely think some of that was necessitated by some of the processes required by the IRB and by my institution... we were following a protocol by my university that I had submitted... some of that is the result of us being socialized in these systems that even in environments where just because we intend to deconstruct these power dynamics doesn't mean they're deconstructed. That may be our intention, but they are still very much present. And even when we reach the point in which our relationships and work together felt truly collaborative. I am sure, there were ways in which my positioning was influencing things.

Scholars described challenges experienced when trying to center the cultural and experiential wisdom of community throughout the PAR/CBPR collaboration. Similarly to Chris, Mana explained the obstacles experienced to obtain the Institutional Review Board (IRB)'s approval to distribute *kupu* (i.e. gifts) to community elders following local cultural traditions: "That's how you enter an elder's home. You don't leave the gift when you leave. No, you enter with it. And what the pushback was first of all you have to call it compensation." Mana further described their challenges requesting for cash instead of gift cards: "I asked for cash...They don't have credit cards... elders won't have any place to go to use gift certificates. And that was a pushback because we don't want to have the appearance of coercion or buying their story...". Mana concluded: "Those are little things, but they were such barriers. It took forever to go back and forth...". In summary, scholars

and community stakeholders underscored the importance of recognizing the sociopolitical and historical contexts in which PAR/CBPR is embedded and the ways it manifests throughout the research phases. Finally, within this domain, there are two major subthemes that outline specific practices of epistemic injustice in PAR/CBPR and are explored more in detail in the following sections: (1) armoring and pipelines: maintaining forms of colonial knowledge production to maximize capitalism, and (2) normative whiteness, othering, and disembodiment.

### **Armoring and Pipelines: Maintaining Forms of Colonial Knowledge**

**Production to Maximize Capitalism.** Examples of interlocking systems of power and oppression manifesting in knowledge production processes were evident in three major practices: (1) production, (2) extraction, and (3) gatekeeping, namely, mechanisms and actions of controlling and limiting access to resources, supports, and opportunities. Even when PAR/CBPR calls for collaborative approaches to empower community stakeholders, interviewees described the presence of funding mechanisms which reinforce power hierarchies and minimize community autonomy and ownership over the research aims. Mary, senior faculty with extensive clinical and research experience locally and overseas explains:

The key is the money. If the university or if you're collaborating with an NGO. The NGO gets in the university because they're the recipients of something, a grant, right? And the community needs whatever scraps of good money they're going to get from to figure out how they're going to nibble. Right? Basically. So right there. You've got a system of power and oppression. Because all of these are coming from the agenda of somebody. In our world is usually the state department. Somebody who's got an agenda. That's funding and you have to look into WHO those donors are and they've got the agenda, and they drive, and they're putting their money there for reasons, and those reasons are what keeps local people disempowered.

Moreover, Interviewees highlighted how PAR/CBPR's emancipatory goals of participation, action, and justice are shadowed by academic production and tenure-track promotion measures. As a result, community stakeholders serve as "incidentals" or "means" to an "end". Susan, a senior faculty of color with extensive experience working with various community stakeholders in PAR/CBPR explained:

Folks in the community are like, *I don't trust researchers*. They have no reason to trust us because we come in, we take all that they have, we take their opinions, we take their lived experiences, we go off, we write about it, we get money for it and we forget they ever existed. And we never bring it back. So I say all of that to say that is ALL of what it means and probably more around community based participatory research.

These extractive practices operated interdependently of academic production and performance standards. Kasey, a Black junior faculty who was motivated to pursue a faculty appointment based on her former PAR/CBPR experience as a community resident in her local community describes academic expectations and pressures: "they want you to research, they want you to write and they want you to be involved in the community. You have all these pressures and you are judged every year... there's a level of demand in different ways." She further adds: "I still have demands of faculty members... the department... I have an obligation to the dean and the provost ... I have to do all this stuff... and then you have your personal life, so it's really a juggle." Similarly, Justin, a junior faculty with experience in community-based participatory evaluation collaborations questioned:

What have we really done? what are we really doing? Social work practitioners who've been in the field for years, but have been holding up the systems that are extremely oppressive and they think they're doing good. Or academics who claw their way to tenure and promotion and all the accolades and turn around and oppress people of color trying to join their ranks. What is knowledge? How do we generate knowledge? What constitutes knowledge? Who gets to decide what that is? those things haven't been questioned very much because The idea is that the systems that we have, work. And we take that for

granted, because they don't. They work for some but not all. And so who is this system working for? And the very fact that some people have to work harder in those same systems than others. THAT's problematic.

Extractive practices were described simultaneously with gatekeeping mechanisms that limited the extent to which community stakeholders' visions of social change were fully achieved. Stephanie, a grassroots Black organizer with disabilities who has extensive advocacy and organizing experience in food justice, racial, housing, and economic justice describes:

It's tokenism, extraction, it's not transparent. It's not honest... there was no commitment between the university or anyone else. There was no transparency... And I said from the very beginning to [Name of PI]: *I want to bring people, Black and Latinx change makers, professors doing this data scientists, all types of different people, entrepreneurs to come and work with us, show their experiences and show what they do. And maybe that opens up doors and career opportunities and other stuff for us.* And she said, *Yeah, yeah, we can do that.* Didn't bring one person in. NOT ONE person. So it's like at the end the day. NO, you brought us in because...we're going to take some knowledge from that. Oh, we might be able to give her a spot at [Name of University]. She might be a token to train other young people and make no system change. And we don't really have to worry about uplifting supporting these young people... we'll get them bus passes, but we're not going to do the deeper shit. We're not going to give them the real support, but we're going to extract.

Even when community stakeholders participated in PAR/CBPR partnerships, there were discussions on how even this approach solely focused on research and failed to actualize community's visions of transformative changes. Anne, shared her reflections and mixed feelings when partnering with social work faculty in multi-year national grant that did not necessarily achieve community's initial vision and as a result she felt reproducing oppressive patterns of manipulation throughout the partnership:

She [Name of PI] had to bring in all these kinds of White people who had the chops to get the NIH grant. We had some really powerful conversations in that space. But the design DOOMED it and it was hard for me because I used my street cred to get the people in the room on the CAB (Community Advisory Board). And so I felt a certain kind of way. By the end of the two years... I was like, *'wow, I really, I was a true social worker, I gatekept, I negotiated, I used my relationships and essentially got people to*



*do a lot of work on behalf of this research that fundamentally never ever been benefited the community'. So I don't know, there was a lot of it that I ended up being like that feeling you get when you're like participating in your own oppression but also oppressing other people at the same time.*

Similarly, Marc, a Black community organizer, advocate, and artist with extensive experience empowering Black and Brown youth described how PAR/CBPR can also serve as a form of oppression by controlling resources. March explained: “It's like, power and oppression in these university partnerships are like power and oppression 2.20 you know, it's just a new version of how can we maintain power over people and contain and hold on to all the resources.” He further added: “It is a tricky thing, because it looks on the one hand, it looks like altruistic, like *hey, we're giving back* type of thing, but to the trained or the more trained eye, it's just another version of oppression.” He describes in detail his previous experience partnering with university faculty on a PAR/CBPR research project and points out the lack of action-driven outcomes and meaningful engagement with all youth and adult staff from the organization:

Ultimately, at the end of the day, I think we kind of missed a huge opportunity... once the study was completed. I don't even think anybody from the staff read the report... none of the young people read it...what was the point of that?... it's not like your typical - holding your foot on someone's back or someone's neck while they're down - type of oppression, you know, it was just kind of like *we're just gonna keep this information over here and not give people the opportunity to kind of sample it or whatever...*you know, ultimately everything comes down to stealing. Telling a lie. It's robbing someone of the truth...that's the way that I'm thinking of it in terms of oppression. It wasn't like the proactive, we're going to stamp you, beat you down, and hold you down, but it was just kind of like - *yeah, we're not really going to help in that situation, and we're just going to allow* - like THAT type of oppression.

In summary, PAR/CBPR emancipatory goals of redressing power imbalances by meaningful engagement of community stakeholders may seem altruistic in the short term,

but it is insufficient to fully transform the structures that reinforce colonial, neoliberal, and capitalist-driven production and commodification of knowledge.

**Normative Whiteness, Othering, and Disembodiment.** Critical Race Theory scholars suggest assimilation to whiteness in the form of passing, namely a form of racial subordination related to historical patterns of white racial domination, is associated with increased access to public and private privileges to meet basic needs of survival (Harris, 1993). This is consistent with academic structures that perpetuate normative whiteness, namely, the construction of a racialized other through the lens of white bodies that are left uncontested (Bilge, 2013). Interviewees described instances of wrestling with these power structures that reinforced normative whiteness and whiteness as property. In particular, social work scholars interrogated the ways university hierarchical structures shaped their roles and relationships with community stakeholders and their efforts to share power while adhering to neoliberal and colonial university priorities of production and research rigor. This was evident in Justin's experiences, a senior faculty who reflects on the challenges experienced when engaging in community-based autoethnographic collaboration to document community organizers' strategies to advocate for labor justice. (Justin) recalls: "All the training I had... especially community engaged research... was always like this is extremely slow process, you build relationships, you do not overstep, you do not insert yourself. It was not the case in my experience." Justin described the ways she was asked by community stakeholders to be actively engaged by distributing snacks, speaking into a megaphone to provide instructions to protesters. Justin further adds:

It makes sense why they [partnering organization] are asking, they're overburdened, they don't have enough resources, they're looking around, they need some support, and this woman here knows how to do an agenda. This woman knows how to do the minutes. This woman knows how to corral the group. It makes sense that they would ask, but at the same time is very stressful... There are different dances in terms of roles and responsibilities, but that was truly my first exposure and I had not seen that reflected in training manuals. I had not seen that reflected in research.

Faculty also described contesting power and oppression with larger institutions that perpetuated normative whiteness and anti-Black racism, particularly towards Black youth researchers. Eastie, a Black senior social work faculty with extensive experience leading YPAR projects explained that in working in school systems, as much work as she tries to do "... around helping young people gain some sense of empowerment and leadership, it can easily be struck down by the district... It is very... dictatorship. They get to make the decision about when kids can leave a classroom...". She explains in detail the ways school district leaders denied Black youth researchers the opportunity to present their research findings they have been working for almost a year due to the fact that Black youth researchers should be under surveillance. Eastie narrates her exchange with school leaders and shares her thoughts:

*Well, I think you need to make sure that you have hired security to watch them - why do I have to hire a security guard? - we just don't trust them - They came to those meetings consistently, there was never an example of misbehavior, never... These young people have done nothing but perform exceptionally for me... Their lives have changed. So we missed an opportunity on that... that makes me very hesitant to continue my work because the last thing I need is as I'm pushing forward for all the work to be undone. And then there are broken promises for young people. So... I'm operating as a true outsider, not a part of that district system I don't get to change that discourse about the kids need security... I think there are some significant implications when you have that level of interlocking a power and oppression. You know ultimately we're talking about young people's development that is impacted.*

Interviewees discussed many examples in which normative whiteness manifested throughout the collaboration, particularly in how university structures determined the

range of financial compensation of all stakeholders in the collaboration based on education degrees obtained, which contradicts PAR/CBPR principles. Mary, a white Latina senior faculty who has worked with a community advisory board in PAR/CBPR over 10 years explains this issue in detail and describes engaging in transparent and honest conversation with her community partners:

How do you pay people... disparities in terms of salaries... it's a total contradiction and paradox to the work that we do... we want to blend the science in knowledge, and we don't want science to be valued more than experiential knowledge. But yet, when we are paying people, we are paying people based on their educational backgrounds, because that's what the university requires. They want to see their CVs and what they're able to do or not to do and then kind of like the rates that we're supposed to be paying. That's not equitable... the board has access to all the budgets, they know what's going on and we acknowledge and we try to be as fair. In our projects, usually most of the funding goes to the agencies as opposed to the university. We have dialogue about those things to acknowledge what they are and figure out what are things we can do to address those pieces.

Community stakeholders also highlighted the ways institutions serve as contradictory sites with enormous potential to enact meaningful changes in partnership with communities but only to a certain extent. Lucas, a Black young high school leader with experience participating in two YPAR projects describes the challenges experienced with youth retention and withholding of wages for months: "... some of those people left may have been because... they weren't getting paid on time or they felt like they weren't being compensated probably enough... we haven't been paid in like two months... why am I doing this?" Lucas interrogates: "When am I going to get paid?... are they actually going to pay me for the time I work more?... these projects have enough money, but they just don't know how to divide that money up..." Lucas concludes describing the dual contradicting nature of the university by juxtaposing the learning opportunities gained

with withholding wages, insufficient compensation, and structural barriers of contracting with universities. Lucas, elaborates:

So, like, [Name of University], is a system of power that they have the resources to carry out things... and then at the same time, it can be a system of oppression... I'm gaining a lot of knowledge. I'm gaining the resources to carry out this research. But AT THE SAME TIME through... their HR department, trying to get hired, having to go through THAT many steps just to carry out the research is a way of, you know, it's a system of oppression in a way, because they're creating so many barriers, just for me to get paid, just for me to do this type of research. So in a way, It's kind of like You have to go through, you know, ALL THESE steps, ALL these challenges to get to your final goal.

Finally, community stakeholders highlighted the limitations of researchers' support to achieve community-driven transformative changes, particularly when it required individuals in power including researchers to take major risks that would compromise their power by giving up certain privileges and resources. Michelle draws from her personal lived experience partnering with scholars to achieve environmental justice and admits:

Ella dice que está comprometida con las comunidades de color, con la justicia ambiental, pero mentira, porque si estuviera comprometida haría más investigación o tomaría más cuidado para tomar estas decisiones. Y nosotros cuando les hemos pedido a nuestros aliados que nos apoyen y empujen a las personas que están en el poder, se les hace demasiado complicado... Y yo siento de que eso realmente es una representación de cómo las organizaciones que tienen mucho dinero, las organizaciones ambientales y dicen estar comprometidos con el cambio climático y las comunidades de color. Lo están hasta cierto punto. Hasta que se les hace incómodo. Porque cuando se les hace incómodo luego ya no. Y yo digo esto también de las entidades grandes como las universidades. De que las universidades, las organizaciones grandes estatales, dicen estar comprometidas, pero siento yo, que

She says she's committed with communities of color and environmental justice, but lies, because if she was committed, she would do more research or be more careful to make those decisions. And when we have asked our allies to support us and push people who are in power, it gets very complicated for them... And I feel like that's a representation of how organizations that have a lot of money, environmental organizations say to be committed with climate change and communities of color. They are until a certain point, until it's uncomfortable for them. Because when it gets uncomfortable, they no longer are in it. And I say this also for large entities like universities. Universities and large state organizations say they're committed, but I feel like, they're committed until a certain point. They won't walk through it until the end.

están comprometidas hasta cierto punto. Que no van a llegar hasta el final. No van a poner el cuello, el pellejo. Están en demasiado peligro, pues. Si pierden el financiamiento del estado - son demasiadas relaciones importantes para ellos - relaciones de poder que no quieren perder.

They are not going to put themselves out there. They are in too much danger, I guess. If they lose state funding - It's too many important relationships for them - relationships of power that they do not want to lose.

In summary, faculty and community stakeholders illustrated multiple examples in which individual roles, treatment, and commitments were constrained by subtle and implicit mechanisms of power racial domination. Community stakeholders shared instances in which access to resources, opportunities, and supports was denied.

***Upstream: Ruptures and Praxis of Epistemic Justice***

Findings of the thematic and situational analysis revealed the importance of integrating an ongoing praxis of critical reflection, critical action, accountability, and embodiment to disrupt hegemonic forms of knowledge production that exclude, silence, and devalue alternative worldviews, knowledges, and experiences. Rather than just integrating strategies to mitigate negative impacts of unjust forms of co-creating knowledge in PAR/CBPR, scholars and faculty described the importance of transforming fundamental structural issues that reinforce epistemic injustice. In particular, enactments of refusal to bring more visibly to the forefront invisible discourses of power differentials. There were three major forms of refusal that emerged: (1) saying no, speaking up, (2) staying vigilant, and (3) walking away. This was evident in Elaine, a Black woman with extensive experience with faith-based organizations and health advocacy work. She described in detail her refusal to allow researchers to recruit solely participants from the Black faith-based coalition network she has helped establish for

COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials:

*I can't do that. I said, I can't do it with a good faith effort. I said, Now, what I CAN DO is provide the space for us to talk in generalities about the vaccine and maybe to let people know that there is in fact, clinical trials being made available, but for me to think that you want to utilize this mechanism to recruit individuals and SOLELY recruit individuals to engage in a clinical trial, THAT doesn't work. And so I work in this space in a way whereby do I recognize that social justices injustices exist? Absolutely! Do I recognize there are the haves and the have nots, OF COURSE I DO. I know that.*

Community stakeholders also described the importance of upholding integrity of their commitments in alignment with their actions and values. This was reflected in the ways community stakeholders adopted a careful and skeptical attitude towards any partnerships. Huey, a Black grassroots community organizer, activist, and leader stated: “You have to be an activist true and true. I just happened to work in healthcare ‘cause that's where I started I went pharmacy major intending on being a doctor. Oblivious to the rest of the world.” He described how he got involved with key social movement groups that increased his consciousness on the ways academic institutions and pharmaceutical industries were implicated in perpetuating structural racism and oppression. Similarly, Stephanie agreed: “Don't do it. That's how I'm feeling about it, like, don't do it. We're our own research. It sounds hard. We'll be our own researchers. The institutions need to hand that shit up...” She later added how university faculty embody white savior complex trying to ‘fix’ problems with no lived experiences on the phenomenon or communities they’re examining. Instead of creating more harm, she suggests faculty and institutions to promote community’s autonomy and self-determination by transferring power and granting ownership over resources:

Because there's people that come into this wanting to be saviors that are not about this life and they can't understand this life because they ain't never been close to it. So just because you're reading books about it, like it doesn't. I'm just like, why!?! can you NOT do it!?! It sucks. I'm just like, can you change profession? Open the doors and move, you open the doors for other people. Yes, get out of the way. Get out of my way, open the doors for me.

Moreover, community stakeholders reported the act of declining university faculty's requests for letters of support or joint research grant applications as important acts of resistance and self-determination, especially when these requests were inequitable. UJ, a Black male leader, educator, and advocate in public health stated:

I'm really skeptical. when someone comes to me and says, *hey, can you write a letter of support? but we're not going to give you funding, but we'll give you an intern...* so you're not going to give me any money, but you're going to get 50% you're going to get all this type of stuff and you want a letter of support for me?...

In summary, scholars and community stakeholders underscored the importance of interrupting normalized knowledge production processes in partnerships that present inequitable arrangements to community partners. By refusing, rejecting, walking away, and remaining skeptical, community partners described these dialectic generative strategies important in negotiating equitable terms of collaboration and avoiding community participants to be solely “research subjects”. Finally, within this domain, there are two major practices that emerged and are explained more in detail in the following section: (1) emergent strategies, counternarratives, and counterspaces, and (2) *buen vivir: sentipensante* and *hicotea* human beings.

**Counternarratives, and Counterspaces.** Faculty and community stakeholders reported a series of practices to shift from supporting the ongoing development of damage-centered narratives-based research. These practices consisted primarily in creating counterspaces and counternarratives that prioritize being in right relationship



with one another through attunement and re-envisioning of collective purposes to achieve a shared theory of change. Drawing from Critical Race Theory (CRT), counterspaces are defined as affirming educational spaces where individuals interact in ways that challenge deficit notions of marginalization based on social identities reinforced by racist institutionalized spaces (Brooms et al., 2021; Case & Hunter, 2014; J. Schwartz, 2014). These spaces were evident in Ana, a Chicana-mestiza junior faculty with experience leading YPAR with youth of color living in urban and rural settings. She shares her reflections when trying to create intentional and thoughtful counterspaces with youth researchers and recognize the ways each individual is implicated with one another when examining racial, economic, and religious factors shaping segregation:

...we can't assume... because of the kind of interlocking systems of oppression that are affecting them in that specific context. We were able to examine kind of the nuances of how segregation was manifesting in the city... disparities between the city and the suburbs... I had to be really mindful of... facilitating the group because we were all from kind of different backgrounds... I had to be really conscientious of not really tokenizing our city youth. To make it a learning experience for the suburban youth so like our exchanges weren't about *Oh, let's examine how the city is messed up*. Instead... it's a suburb and city issue. How are we both implicated in this? So if you're a suburban kid and you didn't know anything about this, well, why haven't you learned that there was white flight from the city that had economic impacts for neighborhoods?... it was again for me just being mindful of those power differences and making sure that we were ALL contributing. And that while we were surfacing the experiences of those who are most marginalized, we weren't tokenizing them or using them to enrich one group over the other... People were really torn about like, well, whose responsibility is it? should people in the suburbs be also providing funds for the inner city, if they are coming into the inner city to enjoy it outside of those institutions?

In addition to being mindful of facilitating conversations with youth researchers regarding segregation, Ana also described making modifications to the curriculum and programming to accommodate to students' different religious practices: "...we had to be

more mindful of being inclusive... building into our curriculum opportunities for prayer. Or if they were fasting, what was that going to look like if it was going to be like an all-day event?”. Creating counterspaces went hand in hand with creating counternarratives, namely, centering marginalized voices and narratives that hold significant value in understanding oppressive racialized experiences through storytelling (Delgado, 2017). Ana highlighted another example when engaging in action and dissemination initiatives with youth researchers:

The other piece where I was trying to be really intentional, again once we shifted into the more action. Response. Right. So after we've collected the data. We did - so they tried to focus mostly on education right to how segregation was affecting them in their schools. And so we did some lobbying and advocating at the state level at the state capitol. And then also, we did a trip to DC where they spoke with legislative aides and decision makers and so at each of those points, making sure that all students felt like they had the voice. So even within our group because we had groups who were stellar school leaders, and then others who maybe this was their first time being involved in an extracurricular program. To be able to say: *All of us have been part of this project. So when we go to speak to our policymakers, we're not just going to rely on one or two spokespeople we're all going to prepare. We're all going to have a role and we're all going to practice.* So again, making sure that those opportunities for action or engagement weren't falling back to those identities that are most amplified in kind of dominant society. So that might be, often extroverts, men, and boys might be seen as leaders and so adult facilitators, or even young girls or women might think that that's normal, that they're going to speak for the group. And so making sure that we point that out that we want to encourage girls to speak first and then the boys can chime in, or make sure that our white students, maybe let the students of color talk first, so helping them develop a skill for collaboration across racial and economic and gender differences, again, to go back to that motivation of like centering counter narratives entering the voices of those who are most marginalized.

Lastly, in order to sustain counterspaces and counternarratives, Ana underscored how fundamental it is for scholars to do the “internal work”, specifically, work that requires individuals to examine privileges and leverage them to redress power:

... there is a lot of work that needs to happen internally individually for myself and the staff on learning and unlearning our privilege, our power, or using our privilege as a leverage, right? rather than as a tool of oppression. So that's that piece of like doing the work for yourself so that you can model it for your participants. The implications are also the types of questions that you asked when you're facilitating, right? these kind of

generative dialogues around the data or when we're brainstorming how we're going to collect data? Right. So I think it will speak into EVERY single piece of the process. And if you haven't done the personal internal work, just because of the way privilege functions... So in many ways it's a form of neglect, if you have, if you're not being conscientious of it... So I didn't think of it because I wasn't Muslim... Christianity is essentially the dominant religion in the US... And if we hadn't had kind of those partnerships with our parents or our students who felt comfortable to say like *can you make adjustments?* and then us being humble enough to say: *we're sorry, we're going to do better.* And then doing better because other folks might have not made those changes right or modifications. So I think it's like those little things to make a space more inclusive. Again, the types of questions that you're helping your participants, think through or come up with.

Faculty agreed on the importance of integrating training opportunities for adults with a specific focus on how to engage community stakeholders in key decision-making processes to enact structural change. Eastie, agreed and reiterated it's about "... young people having knowledge about issues that impact them and being involved in decision making regarding how they're going to change that particular structure. So I think adults need to be trained in it." This was in alignment with community stakeholders' perspectives on the essential role of having honest, uncomfortable, and important conversations between all partners in the PAR/CBPR collaboration, particularly around equitable resource distribution. UJ, city employee explains:

And so thinking about like from the community end... what is the bottom line? First of all, what is it that you want to do? What's your objectives? and then also, what are your financial objectives, and how is this partner coming equitably in it? Are they going to tell you the budget? are they gonna tell you the budget of the grant? are they gonna tell you how much they make? Are they gonna be transparent like that?

As a city employee, you can look up anyone salary. And so if on a grant, the community partner, researchers are coming to you and saying, *hey, we want you to partner on this grant.* And they're not willing to tell you the grant, and not willing to tell you what their end is That's a flag. I mean, it's not a comfortable conversation. We have researchers making all 6 figures... \$300,000 \$200,000, that's a hard conversation to talk to community partners, making 50 K and saying, *oh, yeah, I'm going to get \$30,000 or 10% of my salary, \$20,000 or \$30,000 from this, and I'll give you \$5,000 for stipends for young people,* that's a tough conversation, but like if you're not going to have that tough conversation, then you're not going for a partnership, you're really just want someone to

get the grant... that does not mean that what you're doing is CBPR, right? like CBPR is mutually beneficial, and even if it's not in funding, it's in resources. And even if it's not in resources, it's in relationships. And if you can't cross the dots around all those three things, then my recommendation to community partners is to walk away... you need to see someone who's invested being in the community.

In summary, *Counternarratives*, and *Counterspaces* emerged from the data as a subtheme of *Upstream* approaches to epistemic justice. Interviewees reported engaging in individual critical reflexive practices as essential to sustain affirming spaces for voices in the margins to share narratives that can further assist in understanding configurations of power and oppression.

***Emergent Strategies: Sentipensante and Hicotea Human Beings.*** The centrality of committing to accountable relationships and engage in ongoing struggle through holistic approaches that center the body, heart, mind, and spirit emerged as vital components of upstream strategies to enact epistemic justice. *Hicotea* human being is defined as the individual being that is *aguantador*—one who is able to endure, approach, and overcome life adversities—and *sentipensante*—one who combines reasoning with love, heart, and body to reclaim the harmony of truth (Fals Borda, 2002; Rendón, 2009). This was evident in the ways interviewees described equitable collaborations that recognize the humanity of all multiple positioned actors. For instance, Chris, a white junior faculty described the importance of creating dialectic spaces to share failures and mistakes that can serve as learning lessons embodying honesty, humility, and collective learning to better engage in equitable collaborations. Chris stated:

I think in academia it's really hard to accept and talk about our failures or the mistakes we've made. And I think that that's so necessary like across the board. It's necessary for everybody. We should be having those conversations... I don't think you can do good community engaged work without that level of honesty and humility and I think that

finding other people who are doing similar work. Peers or mentors can help facilitate you know that type of conversation, which is so necessary.

Faculty also reported maintaining a resilient spirit in the face of adversities and challenges that emerge throughout their PAR/CBPR collaborations. Mary is a white Latina senior faculty who has worked tirelessly in partnership with community members on issues of substance use and health equity. Regardless of having her tenure-promotion application denied from the first higher institution she was employed, she continued working with the same coalition of community advisory board members at another institution from afar. Mary describes how important it is to have a long-term commitment in these collaborations to sustain the struggle collectively in community feeling supported with one another:

We've been fighting this thing for 10 years and it's like, what has changed? Sometimes it feels like is it really making any significant impact? Or is there a way out of oppression or not?... the only answer is to continue to fight, no matter what, no matter what it means to continue giving and sacrificing and that's very hard part. But then at the same time, there's the whole thing of community and the relationships that you build along the way and also the support, because a lot of times when this whole thing is happening, you can kind of fall in one another for support and that makes a big difference as well.

Similarly, when community stakeholders were asked to share their understandings of power and oppression, community stakeholders underscored how important it is to recognize oppressed communities' resilience in connection to feelings of pain and suffering. Stephanie stated:

These systems are forever interconnected and locked down by these people that love their titles and thrive off of other people's oppression. If they didn't have these systems, these people wouldn't have jobs. It's hard and it's not alright. I mean the communities are hurting too. So you don't even like the people that are hurting in the community. When people really hurt, people are really oppressed, they take risks, sometimes, and sometimes not the best risks. That puts us, that keeps us locked down too. It keeps us stagnant.

Moreover, community stakeholders also described being in right relationships with one another means for individuals to be emotionally attuned, participate in support networks, and be accountable for their actions at the individual and institutional levels, particularly if they have enacted harm based on desires to gain more power at the expense of others.

Mayinde, a gender fluid spiritual healer, artist, and passionate youth worker and organizer with learning disabilities explained:

Everything should be rooted in the wellness of the physical, emotional, spiritual and mental for everybody. That's the community approach... I've experienced and what works. Our circles in dynamics of people... I have a supervisor. I'm also supervising and those people are also getting supervised... different networks and intertwining of holding people accountable, but also reminding people of why they're there. Professionalism and all these different things... that's just a made up thing to suppress people's nature... Everything that you do affects someone, every little thing that you do is affecting someone that and if it's affecting one person, it's affecting the whole different, like how are you actually taking accountability or for the actions on an institutional level? How are you creating that bridge from institutional to personal and honoring in everything that you do? Because if you're not doing it, then you're playing a role in the maximum problem. It's about like reevaluating. It's about taking accountability, but on a more realistic level... These universities need to look... be like, I'm trying to be like that. And I'm trying to take out and cut out all these things... But in order for us to in order for them to even do that, at least one person has to have conviction. And at least one person has to be moved and... there's a saying that that's between you and God, like if you are comfortable facilitating so much harm, that's for you to sit with. Like we're gonna still be harmed, we're it's still going to be, but you're gonna have to if you ever change, you're gonna have to look at yourself and forgive. Are you going to be able to do that? As much power as they have, as much as I want power to be able to effect change. I WOULD NOT be able to sit and enjoy my life knowing that.

These reflections were in alignment with emergent strategy frameworks, which encompasses a series of principles for organizers to build movements for justice by leveraging social interactions to create complex systems and transformations (brown, 2017). In particular, transformations related to relational components such as interdependence, decentralization, and creation of nonlinear, iterative, and new changes (brown, 2017). Interviewees reported a paradigm shift in terms of how we understand and

view relationships. Rather than approaching relationships as transactional or means to an end, interviewees described redefining relationships as interdependent to achieve justice and transformation through collaboration. Lucas explained:

Oftentimes researchers interact with community in a way that that they view communities as subjects... or incidental to the process, NOT partners... which is problematic and if they're incidental to the process as opposed to the critical importance of the process, then that is your interaction. Because how you perceive people is how you interact with them... Participatory Action Research HAS to involve, in my view, value in both sides in power sharing, shared decision making... it's critically important.

Similarly, faculty highlighted those relationships are central in PAR/CBPR collaborations and therefore it is essential to have a commitment in the short and long-term to address, wrestle, and redress power issues that emerge within the partnerships. Mary explains:

I think that it's really important for people to understand that CBPR is not about you working with an advisory board. It's not about just asking people thoughts and going about doing what you always do. It's not about thinking that you know better than the people in your board... If your board is not participating and getting in conflict. And being involved and caring about it and doing the work. And if you're having to bug the heck out of them to be involved. There's something wrong. So you better fix it because if you're doing something that's really meaningful to that particular community when you are listening and trying to do the power and all of that, there's this magical process that happens that, that just makes the work very, very different. And if you don't like CBPR that's cool. It's not for everybody. And, you know, secondary data analysis and individual work it's extremely important too. There's a huge place for that kind of research and I respect that. And by all means, but if you don't like CBPR, don't get in the way. Just be respectful of CBPR researchers, just like they're going to be respectful of your work. So don't create problems for them and understand that it takes them probably three or four times the time and work to do what they do, that it would take you to get your data ready and run your analysis and write your paper... and you're going to be publishing and in very high impact factor papers because you're dealing with national data sets that have implications... And with community is a very different world. So get out of the way.

In summary, faculty and community stakeholders identified important practices to redefine the meaning and centrality of relationships, particularly in PAR/CBPR. Rather than fulfilling instrumental purposes, faculty and community stakeholders highlighted the importance of understanding relationships as interdependent and essential for equitable

partnerships. By blending multiple knowledges that also include the body, heart, and spirit in addition to the mind, faculty and community stakeholders can be better equipped to approach collaborations that recognize individuals' humanity, resilience, and shortcomings while holding high expectations and collectively agreed upon principles of accountability and resistance.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the processes by which social work faculty and community stakeholders conceptualize, contest, and redress power differentials and oppression within PAR/CBPR collaborations. To accomplish this goal, this study used a qualitative research design to interview social work faculty (n=13) and community stakeholders (n=10) with prior or existing experience in PAR/CBPR. Through a social constructivist (Cannella et al., 2015; Kamal, 2019) and critical theory, feminist, and queer theory paradigms (Chan et al., 2019; Denker, 2021), this study implemented a thematic (Clarke & Braun, 2017) and situational analytical approach (Clarke et al., 2018) to examine emerging themes as well as articulated and not articulated discourses present in the data. Rather than reducing the experiences of social work scholars and community stakeholders within singular contexts, situational mapping contributed to the development of a fuller understanding of the ways power operates within participatory research collaborations. In summary, faculty and social workers voiced emerging themes and discourses that coalesced into a metaphor of a river of epistemic possibilities. The river is embedded in two ecosocial sites (i.e., the academy and the community), and two major dynamic approaches to knowledge production along



a continuum: (1) downstream: epistemicide, and (2) upstream: ruptures and praxis of epistemic justice. Practices that fostered production of dominant forms of knowledge included reproduction of normative whiteness, othering, and disembodiment, as well as leveraging PAR/CBPR as a form of research to maintain racial hierarchy and inequitable access and allocation of resources and opportunities. Conversely, practices that sought to address interlocking systems of power and oppression at the root included ongoing praxis of critical reflection and action, development of counterspaces and counternarratives, engagement of uncomfortable and vulnerable dialectic forms of learning, and commitment to humanize and redefine relationships.

Findings of this study present relevant contributions to existing scholarship as well as implications for research, teaching, practice, and policy. First, consistent with existing research, findings confirmed the importance of integrating an ongoing critical praxis of embodiment, critical reflection and critical action (Freire, 2012) to increase awareness of social locations of power and oppression. In particular, scholars suggest approaching the work through a heart-centered lens, namely the integration of critical awareness and acknowledgement of the various ways affect, feelings, and biases can become entangled in the research process and create opportunities for growth opportunities if contested and resolved ethically (Case, 2017; Langhout, 2015). Without researchers commitment to engage in ethical reflective practices that prioritize heart-centered work and make visible researchers' embodied subjectivities in PAR/CBPR, researchers fail to interrogate how they are complicit in reproducing hegemonic structures reinforcing the status quo and discard alternative ethical possibilities to

dismantle systems of oppression in knowledge production (Dutta, 2018; Fernández, 2018). Additionally, upstream approaches of the river are aligned with scholarship integrating critical race, feminist, and queer epistemologies to understand the cognitive disembodied mechanisms by which scientific authority is constructed and the ways the voices of non-experts are silenced and excluded (Antony, 2002).

Second, situational analysis revealed implicated elements, actors, and discourses that attempt to reinforce, challenge, and redefine knowledge production in PAR/CBPR. The river of epistemic possibilities model affirms PAR/CBPR necessitates a commitment from all actors to wrestle with emerging contradictions, inconsistencies, multiple subjectivities, and challenges (Guishard, 2009). In particular, the way academic structures such as financial policies, tenure-track promotion standards, and ethic review boards are in conflict with PAR/CBPR principles of equitable power-sharing and orientation to redress power differentials. Research has challenged institutional apparatuses that regulate ethical conduct such as the IRB by characterizing these mechanisms focused on ethical procedures and not on ethics of involvement which alternative frameworks such as Decolonial PAR integrates through their key ethical components of reflexivity, expertise, dignity, action, and relationality (Tuck & Guishard, 2012). While PAR/CBPR has facilitated the documentation of socially unjust narratives from dispossessed and oppressed individuals, scholars suggest these mechanisms operate from the academic industrial complex logics that maintain systemic irresolution of structural inequities, and therefore, it is fundamental to shift the gaze and prioritize examining uncontested discourses that contribute to these dehumanizing arrangements such as anti-Black racism

through intentional embodied social listening to disrupt damage-centered pathologizing research approaches (Krueger-Henney, 2016).

Lastly, findings suggest integrating an epistemic justice lens to social work research, teaching, and policy requires individual and structural transformations. The river of epistemic possibilities does not intend to be taken as monolithic “best practices” but rather vigilant epistemological stances that are indispensable to unearth contradictions and dismantle hegemonic white settler colonial logics of knowledge production through embodied listening, struggle, and determination. Increasing scholarly literature is seeking to renew, redesign, and transform Schools of Social Work to strengthen its course curricular, pedagogy, research, and internal structures in alignment with anti-oppressive and community-centered approaches to social justice (McBeath & Austin, 2021). Moreover, growing discourse is unsettling practices that perpetuate epistemic injustice within PAR/CBPR including centering academic knowledge, failing to build partnerships with social movements, and dismissing critical reflexive and dialectic praxis to strengthen ethical practices has been explored (Daryani et al., 2021).

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations of this study that also suggests future directions for further inquiry. While qualitative methods are not intended to be generalizable (Maxwell, 2013), this study used non-probability sampling strategies to recruit interview participants from various geographical and sociopolitical contexts with various social locations and experiences in PAR/CBPR collaborations that minimizes the applicability of findings and implications to specific contexts. For instance, findings explored

overarching themes across participants with different roles, degrees, and length of collaborative engagement. Additionally, participants shared different levels of critical awareness regarding their social positionality of privilege, power, and oppression in relation to PAR/CBPR. Moreover, participants were embedded in academic, state, and community-based institutions with access to various levels of support, resources, funding, and values. These nuances were not captured fully and future studies conducting comparative analysis could further examine more in-depth institutional contexts (e.g., institutional funding, resources, availability supports and staff capacity), multiple actors (e.g. research assistants, doctoral students, administrative staff), and demographic differences (e.g. length of collaboration, race, class, gender) among participants involved in participatory knowledge production processes.

Although findings of this study may not be transferred to participants from different social, political, and geographical contexts, this study uses thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to increase external validity and transferability of findings regarding processes where multiple actors wrestle with the tensions and power dynamics within community and academic partnerships. Moreover, cross-sectional data collected in the individual interviews provides an understanding influenced heavily on the retrospective perceptions of participants. Limited longitudinal and triangulation of additional data collected from participants' distinct PAR/CBPR collaborations may limit expansive and robust analysis over an extended period of time. Thus, further studies should consider conducting case studies that examine multiple data sources and perceptions of various stakeholders engaged together in the same PAR/CBPR

collaboration over an extensive period of time. This study suggests that future research should explore key factors within partnerships that lead to not only addressing these power differences, but also identify sustainable mechanisms of implementation, monitoring, and accountability through longitudinal and mixed-methodology studies. Despite these limitations, this study contributed to the extant literature by presenting a dialogical discourse from various perspectives, including those in the margins, regarding how individuals understand and wrestle with power dynamics within the collaboration.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to understand how researchers and community stakeholders conceptualize, embody, and contest systems of power and oppression in PAR/CBPR collaborations. Findings affirmed the ways PAR/CBPR is deeply entrenched and entangled with neoliberal settler colonial logics maintained in academic institutions. Scholars have challenged to silence this discourse by calling for PAR/CBPR to adopt a decolonial lens renewing PAR/CBPR as public science where researchers have an ethical and relational accountability to cultivate relationships, honor people's dignity, and be reciprocal with community partners throughout their social interactions and actions within collaborative and generative processes (Guishard et al., 2018; Tuck & Guishard, 2012). Rather than adhering to ontological and epistemological approaches shaped by white supremacy and settler colonial ideologies that dictate what types of research should be pursued, on whom, with whom, and to what end, findings of this study suggest scholars and community partners to build radical solidarity across social justice movements to refuse distanced, decontextualized, and disembodied inquiry (Ampudia,

2016; Kapoor, 2009, 2020; Langdon & Larweh, 2015). Finally, to do this effectively, consistent with existing scholarship, findings underscore the urgency and need for researchers to engage explicitly in longitudinal inquiry of their own assumptions and ensure this praxis is part of PAR/CBPR so that the inquiry is contextualized through vulnerable and transparent dialogues and processes of critical consciousness (Guishard, 2009).

## **Chapter 4: Researchers & Community Stakeholders' Perceptions on Social Justice and the Role of CBPR**

### **Abstract**

**Background:** The NASW Code of Ethics states social justice is one of the core essential values of the social work profession. However, the extent to which this value is achieved authentically and meaningfully remains contested. While scholars have extensively examined multiple theories of justice, limited research has explored the ways multiple positioned actors including community members and stakeholders engaged in participatory action research or community-based participatory research (PAR/CBPR) collaborations define and understand social justice.

**Methods:** This paper presents findings from an exploratory qualitative study using virtual in-depth semi-structured individual interviews and thematic analysis to examine social work scholars (n=11) and community partners' (n=9) perceptions and understandings of social justice and the ways PAR/CBPR promote or hinder individual and collective efforts to achieve this fundamental value of the profession.

**Findings:** Findings revealed major themes informing the multiple understanding(s) of social justice and the ways PAR/CBPR epistemologies can hinder and promote the pursuit of justice: (1) expanded multifocal understandings of social justice, (2) grounded participatory action inquiry in critical social movements, and (3) preservation of extractive and oppressive approaches to knowledge production.

**Conclusion and Implications:** Consistent with existing literature, findings suggest social justice definitions included distributive, capability, recognition, and human rights-based approaches. Particular emphasis was articulated in systemic change and self-determination approaches. Moreover, while PAR/CBPR creates affirming and resilient counterspaces in knowledge production processes in partnership with social movements, PAR/CBPR remains entangled within extractive institutions that perpetuate dominant oppressive narratives of knowledge production and limit its potential to actualize social justice. It is imperative for scholars and stakeholders to engage in dialogical processes to disentangle these complex contradictions and increase awareness of social locations of power, privilege, and marginalization. Additionally, it is critical to engage in systematic changes to higher education institutions, in particular research, training, and policy to renew its commitment to social justice and re-envisioning alternative paradigms aligned with PAR/CBPR principles.



## Introduction

Social work's commitment to promoting social justice has been described as a "fierce urgency" that has yet to be critically defined and applied in practice, training, and policy, particularly during times of racial and political unrest and injustice (Nicotera, 2019). Despite multiple theories and practices of justice have been identified in addition to the profession's legacy of activism and mobilization for social reform (Reisch, 2019; Reisch & Andrews, 2014), the continuity and implementation of these changes have been dampened by the constraints of neoliberal market values of consumerism, professionalism, and managerialism (Lawler, 2000). Social work remains a site of continuous political struggle in which practitioners and scholars are embedded in institutions that limit individuals to naming, confronting, and transforming oppressive structures embedded in the profession (Abramovitz, 1998; Ferguson & Lavalette, 2004; Gibson, 2014).

Scholars are increasingly acknowledging the need for the profession to "reawaken" and uphold a radical orientation by problematizing social justice, expanding its boundaries to recognize the continuity of histories of colonialism, racism, and engaging in communities' resistance efforts (Bhuyan et al., 2017; Kamali & Jönsson, 2019; Nathane & Smith, 2018). Among some of the strategies adopted in social work education and research to confront these issues include co-developing and sustaining brave spaces to better prepare prospective social workers to confront oppression and privilege (Goode et al., 2021; Simon et al., 2021) as well as integrating critical frameworks such as Critical Race Theory (Einbinder, 2020) and liberation health (Kant,

2015). Moreover, while ideologies of coloniality persist and shapes what is considered valid research, who is an expert, and what should be researched, autoethnography has emerged as a way to increase social worker's reflexivity to illuminate how the power of coloniality and neoliberalism operate and to deconstruct individual subjectivities (Hernandez-Carranza et al., 2021). Additionally, scholars have presented emerging dialogical frameworks that integrate social justice in social work pedagogy such as the circle of insight which draws from indigenous healing and restorative justice approaches to connect critical self-examination to constructive social action (Nicotera, 2019).

Scholars have called practitioners to reexamine the "social" in social work and revive the profession's mission of achieving social justice by breaking the division between micro and macro, using a strengths-based approach, and incorporating advocacy work as part of the profession (Kam, 2014). This is intertwined with how prospective social work scholars are trained on enacting social justice at all levels. Closer examination of how social justice is operationalized in doctoral programs suggest developing an explicit definition of social justice and documenting the ways it materializes in coursework and program facets remains an ongoing process of tension (Porfilio et al., 2019). Research suggests licensed social worker's perceived training on social justice promotes feelings of psychological empowerment and readiness to confront social injustice at the workplace (Bessaha et al., 2017).

### **Theories of Social Justice for Social Work**

Theories of social justice have extensively been defined and explored in the literature across the fields of philosophy, sociology, politics, legal studies, and social

work. These distinctive conceptualizations often reflect many conflicting dimensions, ontological, epistemological, and ideological perspectives (Gavrielides, 2019; Reisch, 2002). In the global north, Western philosophies have influenced conceptualizations of social justice stressing heavily on the ontological aspects, in particular, the effects of inequality. For instance, prominent scholar John Rawls (2020) defines social justice as fairness and argues principled reconciliation of social values, liberties, and social goods through a distributive lens in which primary goods should be equally distributed and that inequalities can only be seen as just should these lead to greatest benefit for the least advantaged individuals (Rawls, 2020). Additionally, scholars built upon this framework to stress that understanding and interrogating the ways different individuals and groups fare in comparison with others within a specific context is essential in defining social justice (Miller, 1999). In particular, emphasis has been placed on the way social and economic class divisions and productivity structures in postindustrial societies reinforced social injustice based on commodification, dehumanization, discrimination, and exploitation (Marx, 2010, 2018).

These evolving definitions of social justice were expanded to emphasize the types of capabilities that are necessary to achieve equality of opportunities (Nussbaum, 2007; Sen, 1999, 2009). Moreover, theorists suggest social justice to be defined within a recognition lens to underscore the mutual relationship between human agency and social structures by arguing that marginalized groups must be recognized for their social value and that barriers for this recognition should be transformed (Fraser, 1995, 2001; Thompson, 2006; Young, 1990). While there is extensive research examining individual

capabilities and liberties through these frameworks, growing research has explored theories of social justice recognizing individual vulnerability, autonomy, independence, and responsibility (Brown, 2017; Fineman, 2018). Vulnerability theory suggests not only to recognize the harm inflicted by unresponsive systems, but also the ways in which the relationship between individuals and systems is synergetic and interdependent which calls for further examination of how social structures need to be accountable for individual injuries (Fineman, 2018; Zakour & Gillespie, 2013). Furthermore, evolving theories of social justice have suggested conceptualizations that emphasize the sources or roots of structural oppression and dominance such as coloniality across material, cultural, epistemic, and political domains (Adam, 2020; Fanon, 1989; Lugones, 2010).

### **Participatory Action Research & the Pursuit of Justice**

Scholars have theorized about social justice and adopted epistemological paradigms to promote the pursuit of social justice. Participatory Action Research or Community-Based Participatory Research (PAR/CBPR) is an orientation to inquiry that involves research participants as active co-researchers working collaboratively and equitably with researchers to systematically investigate and transform community issues and conditions (Torre & Ayala, 2009; Wallerstein et al., 2018). Social justice has been a central concern of PAR/CBPR paradigm by questioning dominant ideologies in knowledge production, democratizing knowledge, and intertwining multiple knowledges to demand action and change (Grimwood, 2015). While academic and community research partnerships are growing in the last decade, research highlights the importance of identifying and sustaining equity and justice oriented partnerships that not only

integrate a critical analysis but also an evident application of frameworks throughout partnership practices and decision-making processes (Vetter et al., 2022). Rather than just ensuring democratic participation is achieved between all actors engaged in PAR/CBPR, scholars have also questioned and challenged the ways PAR/CBPR can disrupt unjust social arrangements and inequitable configurations of power through the advancement of social justice promoting efforts (Cook et al., 2019; Guy et al., 2020; Sousa, 2022). As social work scholars wrestle to interrogate the profession's ethical commitments to the pursuit of justice by dismantling root causes of injustice, transformative models including PAR/CBPR frameworks are increasingly being adopted and further examination of how this epistemological approach can promote and hinder justice promoting efforts is fundamental (Bussey et al., 2021).

### **Current Study**

To explore the multiple understandings of social justice and the ways PAR/CBPR epistemological approaches contribute to the achievement of justice, this study solicited input from social work faculty and community stakeholders with prior or existing experience in PAR/CBPR collaborations. More specifically, this article's main research inquiry is two-fold: (1) From the perspectives of social work scholars and community stakeholders engaged in PAR/CBPR, what is their understanding of social justice?, and (2) From the perspectives of social work scholars and community stakeholders, what role has the PAR/CBPR collaboration played in promoting or hindering community-driven efforts to achieve social justice?

## **Methods**

### **Study Design**

This article seeks to explore the perceptions of social work scholars and community stakeholders regarding definitions of social justice and the ways PAR/CBPR promotes or hinder the efforts of the pursuit of justice. This study is informed by social constructivist philosophy of science which seeks to understand social phenomena through the co-construction of multiple knowledge(s) and realities of several individuals situated in particular contexts (Cannella et al., 2015; Kamal, 2019). This paper uses qualitative research methods, namely, approaches that integrate a systematic examination of meaning-making processes from individuals' lived experiences and perceptions with specific social contexts (Creswell, 2018). This type of research design was identified as appropriate given its exploratory nature to examine the main study's inquiry. Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were employed to explore and gain a better understanding of interviewee's definitions of social justice and perceptions on how PAR/CBPR has advanced or hindered the achievement of justice.

### **Participant Selection**

Participants included social work faculty and community residents or stakeholders with prior or existing experience participating in PAR/CBPR partnerships. Participants from study 2 were recruited to participate in this study. Non-probability sampling strategies such as convenience and purposive sampling (Turner, 2020) were employed to recruit the same scholars (n=13) and community stakeholders (n=10). Upon the completion of interviews for paper 2, an initial recruitment email was distributed to invite

identified scholars and community partners to participate in one 60min individual in-depth semi-structured interview via Zoom. Only three individuals who participated in paper 2 did not express interest in participating in this additional study due to multiple competing priorities that limited their participation and time. Participant characteristics are described in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1***Sociodemographic Characteristics of Interview Participants*

Sample Characteristics	Faculty		Community		Faculty and Community	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>						
...Female	9	82	3	33	12	60
...Male	2	18	5	56	7	35
... GNC			1	11	1	5
<b>Racial Identity</b>						
...Black/African American	4	36	6	67	10	50
...Asian, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander	2	18			2	10
...Latinx	1	9	2	22	3	15
...White	4	36	1	11	5	25
<b>Annual Income</b>						
...Less than \$25,000			2	22	2	10
...\$25,000-\$50,000						
...\$50,000-\$75,000	1	9	1	11	2	10
...\$75,000-\$100,000	4	36	3	33	7	35
...\$100,000-\$125,000	5	45	1	11	6	30
...\$125,000-\$150,000			1	11	1	5
...\$150,000-\$175,000						
...\$175,000-\$200,000	1	9			1	5
...Chose not to disclose			1	10	1	5
<b>Highest level of education</b>						
...Some High School						
...High School/GED			1	11	1	5
...Some College			2	22	2	10
...Some Technical Training						
...Associate Degree						
...Bachelor's Degree						

...Master's Degree			6	67	6	30
...Doctorate Degree	11	100			11	55
Languages						
...English	11	100	9	100	20	100
...Spanish	2	18	2	22	4	20
...Other	2	18			2	10
Disability						
...None	10	91	7	78	17	85
...Learning disability			1	11	1	5
...Visually impaired			1	11	1	5
...Other	1	9			1	5
Religion						
...Catholic	2	18	2	22	4	17
...Christian	1	9	4	44	5	25
...Taoism			1	11	1	5
...Agnostic	7	64	2	22	9	35
...Other	1	9			1	5
Number of PAR/CBPR collaborations involved						
...1-3	4	36	3	33	7	35
...4-7	3	27	3	33	6	30
...8-10	2	18	1	11	3	15
...11-19	2	18			2	10
...20+			2	22	2	10
Min length of PAR/CBPR collaboration						
...1-6 weeks			2	22	2	10
...3-6 months	6	54	3	33	9	45
...1-2 years	4	36	4	44	8	40
...3-5 years						
...Undisclosed	1	9			1	5
Max length of PAR/CBPR collaboration						
...0.5 year	3	27			3	15
...1-3 years	4	36	5	56	9	45
...4-7 years	2	18	2	22	4	17
...8-11 years			1	11	1	5
...12-15 years			1	11	1	5
...20+ years	1	9			1	5
...Undisclosed	1	9			1	5

*Note.* Faculty (n=11) were on average 49 years old (SD=11.58), and community stakeholders (n=9) were on average 44 years old (SD=18).



### **Data Collection Approach**

All study protocols were reviewed and approved by the Boston University Institutional Review Board. Upon IRB approval, non-probability sampling strategies such as convenience and purposive sampling (Turner, 2020) were used to identify social work scholars (n=11) and community stakeholders (n=9) to participate in the remote individual interviews. These strategies were identified as appropriate given the target's population specific characteristics and experiences of being part of PAR/CBPR collaborations. Participants who were previously recruited through snowball and stratified purposeful sampling strategies (Farrugia, 2019) to be interviewed for paper 2 dissertation received an email invitation to participate in a 60-min individual in-depth semi-structured interview via Zoom. Additionally, emails were sent to professional organizations, groups, scholarly and community listservs to recruit participants. Moreover, I also drew from my personal and professional networks including my advisor's colleagues and community partners in PAR/CBPR collaborations.

### **Procedures and Ethics**

Due to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020, individual interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom to follow safety protocols. This approach provided the necessary accommodations for faculty and community stakeholders to be able to participate meaningfully while balancing competing priorities and challenges that emerged from exacerbated social, health, economic, and educational inequities (Leitch et al., 2021; Morris et al., 2020). Participants received an email invitation (see Appendix M) describing the study's scope, inclusion criteria, expectations, risks, benefits, and

compensation. Once participants confirmed their interest in the study, participants received a calendar invitation with the Zoom link in addition to a copy of the consent form and brief demographic questionnaire to review in advance prior to the interview scheduled date. Individual interviews ranged between 45-60 minutes and each participant received a \$50 electronic Target gift card for their participation. Prior to the start of each interview, I introduced myself and a brief summary of the project. I reviewed the verbal consent script (see Appendix N) highlighting participant's expectations, potential risks, benefits, compensation, and the right to skip questions, withdraw, and decline from the study. Additionally, I explained the ways the information shared in the interviews was going to be deidentified during data analysis and dissemination and how all the data was going to be stored and monitored safely. Participants were provided a space and time to clarify and ask any questions regarding the study and expectations before moving forward. Prior to the implementation of the interview protocol, I took the time to ensure interviewees' questions were addressed and verbal consent to participate and video-record the interview was obtained.

The interview protocol focused on two major areas: (1) exploring participants' understandings of social justice, and (2) examining participants' perceptions on the role of PAR/CBPR in promoting or hindering the pursuit of social justice efforts (See Interview protocol in Appendix O). Open-ended questions were asked to participants to define social justice and share their perspectives on how PAR/CBPR can potentially promote or hinder the pursuit of justice. Participants were probed to expand and provide specific examples. Interviews lasted for 45-60 minutes. At the end of the interviews,

participants had the opportunity to share additional comments and suggestions. In the event the participant did not complete the demographic survey, participants received a follow up email attaching the link to the survey in addition to the information to retrieve the electronic gift card. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Zoom education plan features. Transcriptions were proofread and revised. All data collected was deidentified during the data analysis and dissemination phases of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to explore individual perceptions of social justice and the role of PAR/CBPR collaborations, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Clarke & Braun, 2017) was employed by two analysts to systematically identify, organize, and understand the patterns of meaning from the interview data. First, the research assistant and I familiarized ourselves with the data by conducting multiple readings of the individual interview transcripts. Second, relevant observations of descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual annotations were made to develop initial codes. Third, the codebook (see Appendix P) was further developed, revised, and applied across all the interview data. For example, potential parent codes developed included *role of PAR/CBPR in social justice*, followed by the subcodes *hindering social justice efforts*, *building capacity with trainings*, and *advancing policy-driven changes*. Codes highlighted researchers as well as community stakeholders' multiple perceptions on social justice and the role of PAR/CBPR collaborations in advancing these efforts. Once the data were fully coded by the research assistant and me, we met to discuss and reconcile any coding differences until reaching 100% consensus. Next, emerging themes were developed studying more

deeply the relation between clustered codes in alignment with the theoretical frameworks informing this dissertation study (i.e. Ecological systems theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT), intersectionality, and decolonial theory). Finally, themes were checked for quality by conducting a final review of the data. While the two groups of interviewees presented converging and diverging themes, this analysis did not conduct a constant comparative analysis and instead, it explored emerging themes and discourses across these actors' perspectives on social justice and the ways PAR/CBPR promoted or hindered that pursuit of justice. Rather than emphasizing specific perspectives to specific individual groups, the study sought to explore broadly emerging themes and discourses regarding social justice and the role of PAR/CBPR recognizing distinct nuances and heterogeneity of community stakeholders, researchers, partnerships, and universities.

### **Trustworthiness and Validity**

Multiple strategies were used to promote trustworthiness of the study and ensure findings are credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable (Stahl & King, 2020). First, integration of thick descriptions, rich variation of multiple participants' perspectives, and iterative assessments for thematic saturation were employed, in particular when reaching redundancy where all possible codes were exhausted and no new codes were identified after reviewing all interview transcripts (Saunders et al., 2018). Second, theoretical and investigator triangulation, namely, the use of multiple theoretical frameworks to understand findings using social constructivism and engagement of myself and the research assistant to conduct comparative analysis of individual findings (Golafshani, 2003). Third, in collaboration with the research assistant

we employed memo writing, peer debriefing, reflexive auditing, namely, the act of documenting key decisions made in the data analysis consistent with the interview protocol and study's inquiry, throughout the data analysis phase to promote dependability of the study (Rolfe, 2006). Finally, credibility was addressed by having multiple coders (n=2) throughout the data analysis phase participate in consensus building discussions to compare individual results and reconcile discrepancies until full consensus was reached (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

### **Findings**

Social work faculty and community partners described converging and diverging definitions of social justice as well as potential roles of PAR/CBPR in the pursuit of justice. Filled with cognitive, emotional, and bodily ideas, these perspectives were driven by a common overarching theme: the pursuit of social justice necessitates internal, external, and structural ruptures through critical decolonial paradigms that promote epistemic justice and self-determination. The following section presents three major themes informing the conceptualizations of social justice and the ways PAR/CBPR can facilitate the pursuit of justice through: (1) expanded multifocal understandings of social justice, (2) grounded participatory action inquiry in critical social movements, and also obstruct this pursuit through (3) preservation of extractive and oppressive approaches to knowledge production. Specific examples and illustrative quotes in which PAR/CBPR has promoted or hindered the pursuit of social justice are provided. In particular, instances failing to contest dominant paradigms of knowledge production may contribute to the reproduction of interlocking systems of power and oppression regardless of the

implementation of PAR/CBPR and the desire to achieve its emancipatory aims.

### **Expanded Multifocal Understandings of Social Justice**

Rather than suggesting one sole definition of social justice, social work faculty and community stakeholders described multiple perspectives in understanding this concept. Some of these definitions aligned with existing extensive theories of justice.

This was evident in Erin's explanation:

I tend to think of social justice as equitable outcomes like a distributed idea, fair and open and transparent processes, more like a procedural idea. And I also think about it in terms of representation... people making decisions reflect the demographics of the people who are impacted. (Erin)

Similarly, community stakeholders underscored the centrality of social justice in shaping all aspects of society and the ways the implementation of social justice could take numerous ways based on diverse individual perceptions of this concept. Elaine, community advocate states:

Social justice is pretty wide spread, meaning that there's just so many components to it. I think of social justice and I think of access. I think of education. I think of housing. I think of just so many components... But I also think that social justice is, for me, doing the right thing. And I hesitate when I say it, because everybody doesn't know what the right thing is or the right thing is different through the lens of different people. And as much as we want to try to put a definition on it, I just think the execution of it or delivery of it looks different. Like we can define it, but how you carry it out, is going to look different.

Drawing from these various focal points that emerged from both faculty and community stakeholders, the following section describes in detail three major understandings of social justice that emerged: (1) unwavering commitment, (2) structural transformation, and (3) self-determination. While faculty drew primarily from existing theoretical understandings of social justice, community partners emphasized embodied perceptions of social justice shaped by lived experiences, material conditions, and individuals' social

realities.

***“A commitment... to move towards greater equity”: Being Accountable Agents of Justice***

Social justice was described as a dynamic process and set of outcomes that necessitate the dedication, responsibility, attention, and commitment of multiple position actors. This commitment was intertwined with centering equity by changing inequitable conditions and structures so dispossessed and oppressed communities could not only survive but also thrive. Chris defined social justice as “... a commitment to at the very least, an interest in doing work that is changing systems and social conditions to move towards greater equity.” Equity was further described in connection with removal of hierarchies and expansion of equal access. Justin stated: “Social justice is equal access, equal opportunities... removal of hierarchies... privilege. Social justice is equity. That's for me what social justice is on all levels.” This definition was shared by community partners who emphasized the importance of understanding and translating equity pertaining to individual outcomes and opportunities. Marc, facilitator of youth and community engagement states:

Social justice is a world that works for everyone. Like literally if there are policies that lead to outcomes, where we start to create a huge disparity, any type of disparities in those outcomes, where one group is excelling and other groups or another group is being oppressed or clearly not striving and thriving. Then that to me needs work. That's not social justice. Social justice is saying ‘okay everybody has an opportunity to strive and thrive and that becomes the norm for everybody’... It's a world that works for everybody.

In addition to situating social justice in relation to multiple understandings centered equitable outcomes, social justice was also defined as processes that promote the wellbeing of individuals. This was evident in Ana’s words:

For me it all depends on context so I've had conversations with students about like what does social justice mean? or like what's the working definition of social justice? and for me it depends. Who is the community? What is your context? What are your goals collective goals? For me it's an open ended pursuit of equity, belonging. And like wellness and thriving. So it's both the process of addressing the inequality, addressing the oppression, but it's also seeking out ways to be fully in ourselves and enjoying life. It's the stuff we don't get to do when we're trying to just focus on like putting out fires. And so, for me, social justice is both the kind of "end goal" of whatever that context is and then that process of like how we get there.

In general, social work faculty and community stakeholders underscored multiple meanings of social justice and how achieving these concepts necessitates a commitment to equitable process and outcomes for individuals to survive and thrive.

***“How does this work contribute to fundamental structural change?”: Structural Transformation***

Interviewees noted that to sustain equitable processes and outcomes in the short and long term, meaningful and substantial changes, particularly at the structural and systemic level were required. This was evident in Chris’s reflections that grappled with the danger of these efforts settling for performative aims rather than transforming environments for people to thrive:

Rather than doing work that positions people in a tokenistic way, or performative way that makes it look like “empowerment”, but it's actually just maintaining the current system. You know, we think that we can do a lot of work that helps people assimilate to and manage unjust social environments and systems and certainly that may be helpful in the immediate circumstance. Survival is important. But so is like fundamental structural change and that's what I try to hold in my mind, as I continue doing this work and, hopefully, like over time getting better at doing it is asking that question of how does this work contribute to fundamental structural change? Rather than just make people feel good and feel empowered within a really oppressive and harmful social arrangement or relationship.

This sentiment was particularly emphasized by community stakeholders that explicitly named systems of power and oppression across marginalized and oppressed social



identities. Michelle, a community organizer focusing on issues of immigration and environmental justice explained:

La justicia social a mí me parece el área de tratar de cambiar las estructuras de opresión, puede ser racial, económica, ambiental. Pero me parece - la justicia social - el trabajo para que las personas puedan tener una vida mejor sin importar clase, raza, dónde viven, de dónde son, idioma.

Social justice to me is about trying to change the structures of oppression, which can be racial, economic, and environmental. But I think that - social justice - the work so people can have a better life regardless of class, race, language, where they live, where they're from.

Community stakeholders also pointed out the contradictions within the social work profession in the pursuit of social justice, particularly in its limitations to address structural issues at the root and reimagine alternative ways of being and thriving.

Mayinde identifies themselves as a spiritual healer, artist, and young adult organizer. As a facilitator in various YPAR projects in partnership with social work faculty, Mayinde describes:

I think that social work is very interesting and unique... I think that it's really hard... There's limitations and delays to the change that can be made from within the system... I feel like social work really helps people survive. But if we're doing liberation work, we're trying to help people thrive... it's not just about breathing and eating, it's about dreaming, and living, and embodying whatever spiritual purpose one finds themselves to have and having the accessibility and the freedoms to live within that. Outside of agendas being pushed... social work it's almost like Western medicine... It's really symptom relieving. It's not root work. It's not digging things up at the root, because it's still planted within... I feel like sometimes social work could be a victim of its own system, truthfully. Because there are people who are really committed to helping people, and who have good hearts. But at the end of the day, it's still plugged into a wall that's holding a system of oppression... cute intentions, but that wall is still being held up that you're plugged into.

Ultimately, interviewees amplified the interconnectedness of social justice and structural transformation so individuals regardless of oppressed and marginalized social identities can survive and thrive. While efforts to promote justice can be performative, interviewees

noted the importance of engaging in meaningful and sustainable systemic transformations, in particular, grappling with contradictions within the social work profession.

***“Make your voice heard and not standing down... Just keep fighting”: Self-determination***

In addition to the multiple understandings of social justice emphasizing unwavering commitments to enact structural transformations, interviewees also defined social justice as key processes promoting self-determination, namely fostering individuals’ ability to be agents of their own decisions and lives. Interviewees highlighted the importance of challenging damage-centered approaches to describe dispossessed and oppressed communities. In particular, community stakeholders underscored social justice as *survivance* (Vizenor, 1994), specifically the presence of will and efforts to transcend survival, resist domination and oppressive structures, and create spaces for renewal.

Mayinde stated:

I think that social justice is like holding and facilitating of allowing people to be free enough to return to who they are, and who they are in oneness with the collective, who they are oneness with themselves. And to allow them to feel and to live, and not just survive, to heal as a foundation. Because our reality is that we were brought up in the systems, so the foundation of it has to be healing from that before we can even understand. Because let's say like tomorrow all the systems of oppression got dismantled. Let's just say idealistically that they just all went away tomorrow. We will still have all the trauma on our backs that we need to heal from before we can even know how to live in that utopian kind of life.

Contrary to social justice definitions that emphasize consequences and roots of structural oppression, Mayinde shared an understanding of social justice that invites the reimagination of alternative configurations of power and dominance that center individual and collective self-determination and healing. This sentiment was

complemented by the ongoing praxis of resisting in the face of injustice and oppression influenced by current social movements. JP explained:

I'd say kind of like my understanding of social justice is really just advocating, on behalf of yourself members of your community, those who have been impacted negatively by these different systems that are at play whether that's you know, the policing system, the judicial system. Just making your voice heard and again not standing down, regardless of what kind of issues come up, what barriers arise. Just keep fighting. I think that's really how I view social justice. That's definitely how it's been perceived by many given like you know the recent protests on the rallies. Just putting yourself out there and making your voice heard doing whatever it takes to get to your final goal.

In summary, faculty and community stakeholders described multiple understandings of social justice that call for an ethical commitment to challenge hierarchical systems of domination by enacting structural transformations.

### **Grounded Participatory Action Inquiry in Critical Social Movements**

Faculty and community stakeholders interrogated and shared candid reflections on how PAR/CBPR could contribute and hinder the advancement of social justice efforts. Interviewees unanimously recognized the potential alignment of PAR/CBPR with social justice orientations, particularly in the ways PAR/CBPR could re-vision research's role in promoting reciprocal, inclusive, and actionable partnerships. The following section expands on three major themes regarding how PAR/CBPR facilitates social justice: 1) re-envisioning reciprocity, expertise, and objectivity in research, 2) implementation of meaningful action with social movements, and 3) co-creation of *counterspaces*.

***“That’s justice... challenge paradigms, ideologies, institutions, structures that prohibit their ability to live a full life”: PAR/CBPR re-envisions research***

One of the most salient ways PAR/CBPR was characterized as facilitating social justice consisted in the potential of redressing and transforming inequitable arrangements

of power in knowledge production. UJ stated: “when I think about CBPR is both, a spotlight to identify these areas of oppression, justice, equity, as well as a tool to redress that or come up with ideas, programs, or strategies to redress them”. Within these inequitable domains in research, reciprocity, expertise, and objective were highlighted. In particular, researchers’ objectivity and what is deemed as valid expertise were highlighted as areas of interrogation and change through this epistemological paradigm. Henrietta shares their perspective on objectivity in relation to social work and

#### PAR/CBPR:

We are not objective, we are not objective in social work. We have social work values that connect to social justice... and if we're thinking about our work around empowerment and all the social work values in our code of ethics, we're not objective. Maybe we're objective on sort of okay I'm going to maintain the neutral stance when I'm having a conversation with people, but I don't know. In my experiences when I respond authentically to folks whether it's around, you know I will get comments. I will respond because it's in my own nature in my own culture in my world to say amen to that, and then we end up having a whole another conversation around God, but what that does is that starts to connect me as more than a researcher who's actually genuinely interested in this person and then this community and we actually get the work done so, I would argue that we're not objective, and we shouldn't be.

Moreover, redefining the centrality of centering community throughout all processes was highlighted as a key practice in PAR/CBPR. Kasey explains:

Tailoring it so that is more reflective of the community... We've got to be aware, we think is great, but we just have to really make sure that it's connecting with the people, otherwise people will kind of tell you what they think you want to hear or they won't engage at all so what's the whole point of those CBPR and you don't have the community in it.

In addition to engaging meaningfully with community stakeholders in research processes, PAR/CBPR was described as a form of accessing social justice by promoting community self-determination, skill development, and ownership. Justin states:

CBPR is being used to access social justice. I think that is an opportunity when done with the right intentions, it can lead to capacity building and empowerment for community members... If you give them the skill set and the tools they probably could. But you have to trust them to do it. In, so I think that social justice can be accessed through CBPR by you know again showing them how and it's not so much doing it for them and making sure they're in the room at the table when you're doing all the work, but saying 'hey, this is how you use these methods to solve these types of problems. And I will give you all the tools, I know how, and then I will partner with you because it's a partnership in making this happen, and so I will ride shotgun while you do this work and support.' In Social work one on one, the change belongs to the client. Anything that's gained or lost hinges on the decisions that they make. So if community members want to change their community, they have to be the ones to institute it. And it has to be the change that they want. I can't go into a community and say, 'these are the changes you need.' It won't work because I don't live there. So they have to be able to pursue the changes that they want, regardless of what I think they should do. Because what is quality of life? what is good or bad depends on the person. So they have the right to pursue the changes that they see fit. And that's justice. Because it teaches them how to challenge paradigms and ideologies and institutions and structures that prohibit their ability to live a full life, whatever they see that as being.

In summary, PAR/CBPR emerged as a paradigm to reassess, reexamine, and re-envision positivist research approaches to knowledge production paradigms that uphold mutual reciprocity, recognize embodied subjectivities of researchers and stakeholders, and uplift community stakeholders' autonomy and self-determination through capacity building.

***“The whole point of this so that we can take meaningful action...”: PAR/CBPR and social movements***

While interviewees highlighted the emancipatory and transformative role of PAR/CBPR in reframing research to achieve social justice, community stakeholders underscored the importance of translating research into meaningful action. Marc shares his reflections on PAR/CBPR:

Community based participatory research. And I will say in my head every time I hear that, I'm always like and ACTION. Because that's the part that we need. The whole point of doing this, so that we can take meaningful action that will pull in more voices and get us one tick closer to social justice. But the thing is that we create the space and provide the support for community people to kind of bring in resources... A lot of the action that

needs to happen needs to happen at the systemic level, at the policy level right like when I think of when I think of changing things.

This sentiment was amplified to shift the focus of research in documenting and measuring to engaging in action. Anne states: “Nothing else needs to be measured. We have the analysis already. You either have a critical reason analysis or you don't. So all you're measuring should be on process improvement, it shouldn't be for more research.” In particular, community stakeholders highlighted changes that can improve the material conditions and outcomes of dispossessed and oppressed communities. One way to actualize this included partnering with grassroots community organizers and movement leaders to support specific demands for equity and justice. Anne describes an example in which scholars partnered with transit justice organizers to document relevant data and advocate for the preservation of public transit routes and passes so community residents could continue to access healthcare services at the local community health center.

So the only thing that CBPR can offer to my way of thinking is coming on to work with a direct action organizer around a specific demand... We helped win back the youth pass. We helped with the youth pass organizing. They were going to remove the ride expansion, so the whole center stepped in to help interview and do measuring to collect data for that particular action from the direct action organizers that are part of this community and the environment... And we won. We got two wins out of that. Like actual, tangible. You can actually get your ride if you're a disabled elder.

In summary, community stakeholders anchored and renewed the call for PAR/CBPR to implement action initiatives in partnership with community organizers to advance specific tangible and concrete demands of social justice and improve the material conditions of community residents to live and thrive.

*“This intersection space is hearing what each party has to say and getting some insights... that is exactly the space because it creates an understanding”: PAR/CBPR fostering counterspaces*

Counterspaces have been defined as adaptive coping responses of resilience and resistance that historically oppressed people contest intersecting forms of oppression (Case & Hunter, 2012). Through counternarratives that uplift, reaffirm, and reimagine personal and collective identities, relationships, and strength in the margins, counterspaces represent radical sites of resistance (Case & Hunter, 2012). This was evident in interviewees’ perspectives on the ways PAR/CBPR served as spaces to reconcile differences and reaffirm individual oppressed identities and experiences. When Lucas was asked to describe how PAR/CBPR could promote social justice efforts, Lucas replied: “And what I've always said about partnerships in the community. With these different entities, is that unless there is shared power and shared decision making, it's not a partnership, it's something else.” Within this domain, building equitable and trusting relationships emerged as essential in co-creating counterspaces. Lucas explained more in detail the importance of engaging in intersectional spaces that fostered dialogue and integrated theory and practice to increase mutual understanding:

I think this intersection space is kind of hearing what each party has to say and getting some insights into that is exactly the space because it creates an understanding... you open yourself to really have that real dialogue. You can get to, ‘You know something? I never thought of it that way. But upon hearing what you're saying and understanding what you're saying, if I was in your shoes, I would have acted the same way. Because now I understand why you reacted’... this kind of exposition around how people kind of view participatory action research, not just from the abstract, or from the theoretical, but in the real world, every day, I have to interact with you. Which it’s the only way it works. Because the thing with theory and actually real life experiences is that you're forced to

actually interact with the person, the good and the bad. Well theory is all you know you can do all these wonderful things and then this will happen. Well not really because there's a bunch of other things in between that haven't been addressed or reconciled.

Similarly, interviewees described PAR/CBPR's principle of centering community as a facilitating component of embodying a relationality of ethics and accountability to enhance university's community engagement practices. Mary explained:

I know several people that will probably be asking for more radical changes at the university level and we just got to be open to that. If we're asking the questions, we've got to be open to acting. I can only be constantly trying to model how to do this and constantly asking the community about how are we doing? How are we doing? How can we be better? Our partners that I will trust with residents that we've engaged. All of that, how do we do this better?

Lastly, interviewees underscored the existing tensions of PAR/CBPR. On one hand, PAR/CBPR was described as reaffirming spaces for dispossessed individuals to participate in relevant opportunities to build skills and be embraced fully. On the other hand, PAR/CBPR fell short in fostering autonomous spaces for dispossessed individuals to lead at every step of the way. This was evident in the reflections of Eastie. Eastie references the ladder of participation (Hart, 1992), a framework that depicts participation levels across eight hierarchical levels represented by each ladder rung. She describes the ways the summer youth PAR project that focused on education and public health campaigns against COVID-19 did not necessarily reach the highest level of participation yet facilitated spaces for youth to be seen:

I mean I do I think there's great validity in the presentation of this data. We know that there's value in the work. There's value and then there's process... I know that I'm never at the top of the rungs...but I know I'm not in the bottom either... But this summer, even though we brought the project to the young people, they didn't initiate it... But the value piece that I think is really important, in this, so this was a lot about process. The value



portion has to do with, we know that this can transform young people like we know that it can. And I had a young person come up to me after summer program, he called me aside and wanted me to go outside to talk to him and he's like: 'I just need to talk to you' and I'm like 'okay' and he goes on to tell me about, he's like 'thank you for this program'. And he started to cry which was different for this young person, because the system that he comes from it's a very restrictive educational experience and so he is not allowed to be himself. And this program, even though I'm never at the top, this program is pushing young people to be expressive, to do real things in community. And so I'm like 'alright, so I know the process isn't 100% and this tells me that the process can sometimes be negative or detrimental, but I know there's value in this work.

In summary, PAR/CBPR fostered the development of counterspaces which generated identity affirming processes for mutual understanding and resilience among multiple positioned actors in the PAR/CBPR collaborations.

### **Preservation of Extractive and Oppressive Approaches to Knowledge Production**

While PAR/CBPR was associated with numerous positive outcomes in relation to the advancement of social justice, PAR/CBPR was also described as a factor that hindered these efforts. In particular, two major themes emerged: 1) funding and tenure structures reinforcing extractive knowledge production and 2) limited shared understanding on social positions and theories of change.

***“Academia is set up as a system that rewards extractivist reductionist production of data”: Funding and tenure structures reinforcing extractive knowledge production***

Scholars and community stakeholders unanimously identified academic funding and research as extractive structures of knowledge production and major factors that contributed to maintaining hierarchical structures of power and oppression. This was evident in JP's words: “The powers that be support the powers that be... Who's gonna come up on top? the person who makes the most money. Despite the research. We are

funded research through NIH. And they make all the money.” Similarly, Monica described in detail:

Academia is not set up for this. Academia is set up as a system that rewards extractivist, reductionist production of data manipulated to say many things and producing results that support the social science system. There is a clear set up. There’s this is very large parts of money, they fund or universities, they keep places going and, frankly, having them is valued. That’s why I took that multimillion dollar grant. Everybody looks at me and says: ‘oh you’re so nice that you’re helping your friends survive’, and I’m like I got a multimillion dollar grant which put me on the map of having brought a huge amount of money into the university over five years. I brought up \$5 million dollars. I owe the people and the colleagues whose money was meant to assist my entire career. And they can’t get anything less.

Within this set up, warnings and suggestions to further distinguish the pursuit of social justice and enhancing knowledge emerged. Monica elaborated:

In that extractive system, there is a role for phenomenological and participatory research, because it always advances knowledge, but then do not don’t lie to yourself and say you’re promoting social justice... I just have a doctoral student who finished a paper on the experience of Salvador and mothers reunited with their kids in the restrictive administration. She contributed valuable knowledge, but that was all she was demanding of herself, of what we were demanding of her. She makes that knowledge available to the community, she uplifts the voices of mothers who may be unseen and unheard, but that’s it. She doesn’t have a great delusion. She needed to graduate. And she was well positioned to learn this and she’s improved knowledge. Maybe we can say that improving knowledge helps a great deal in the promotion of social justice, but that’s very different than thinking: ‘oh I’m a freedom fighter because I do research.’ we’re promoting knowledge and in promoting knowledge and improving the three hundred sixty degree lens on the subjects that are being studied by bringing the communities in, we are contributing to knowledge in our field.

Moreover, these mechanisms constrained PAR/CBPR’s emancipatory goals by shifting investment of time and resources to prioritize faculty’s ability to meet tenure-track promotion guidelines rather than meeting community stakeholders’ visions of change.

Henrietta highlighted: “You are facilitating an assessment... but you are not the expert of these folks’ lives. And that is the crux of CBPR... of doing social justice work... there is a conflict between this sort of... tenure track, publish or perish.” Chris elaborated on further

examples:

I want to design or co design with community, my work to be more impactful within the community arena, but I also have to make sure that whatever I'm doing is going to absolutely result in publications in top tier journals that are going to get accepted and that are going to increase my scholarly impact in the ways that it's measured and so it's weird for me and that, like my department would absolutely be supportive of, you know, like make sure your work is also like resulting in this tangible community change like make sure there are community members who are co-leading or independently leading some initiatives that your work is supporting. And I want to do that, but I also know that I'm not sure that will result in some of the productivity measures that I need to meet like at a higher level, and so, like what do I do? Because I could then just say: 'well to hell with that I'm just going to do work that's going to impact the community. My university is not going to like it and it's too bad'. But, like me, taking care of myself and maintaining job security, access to my health care and being able to pay for my housing, that's tied to social justice, too. Because my wellbeing is important and my ability to maintain my involvement in the academy, to be an agent of change is an active social justice as well, and so I always feel like I'm wrestling with that.

This sentiment of having tenure-track promotion standards limiting faculty's capacity and commitment to promote PAR/CBPR principles was shared by faculty across the fields of research and teaching. Sonia described:

And PAR is inherently redefining knowledge by saying: it's a shared idea, it's a collective idea. So it doesn't actually just belong to the researcher, so this creates a conflict. Big time. Does it count as your idea if you do it in a collective as part of CBPR? And if not, is there a way to also cite all of the people or give them credit or pay them for their emotional energy? I mean, that feels like the biggest fundamental flaw. I teach a class at our institution but I'm not a tenured person there. And so I can sort of teach that class, but I don't think we're going to have a tenured person, whoever that we hire whoever does this work because, you know, how do they get tenure?

While faculty recognized the value in transforming hierarchical forms of power and include individuals with lived experiences and knowledge in leadership positions, faculty felt constrained by rigid academic structures. Sonia further expanded:

Well, I think that the more we listen to other voices and decentralized power the better it is for everybody. But it's going to be a huge shift. I think some universities are much more amenable to this. I think these traditional R1 institutions are very unfortunately very challenged in really taking this in. There's a lot of senior faculty who have never done

work remotely like this, who are sitting on administrative boards making decisions, and until some of that power shifts and some of those people are no longer there and newer people who believe in this are there, it's not going to change.

Furthermore, interviewees highlighted conflicting feelings given that similar approaches to PAR/CBPR were historically used to reinforce colonization, erasure, and appropriation of ancestral wisdom and knowledge. Mana explained:

But at the same time as we talk about CBPR. I keep thinking 'yeah, that's what was used to colonized indigenous people was for the sake of we want to know and then shoot it back to this is what we found out, and this is what you need to change.'... I think the reason why it's conflicting, for me, is because it's a lot of work to dismantle that. And I think we've started. But I'm not really sure how far we can go without really changing where we live and work and worship and all that. The systems, yes, we are the ones that make up the system, but the system just becomes overwhelming and it's really difficult to dismantle. But I think that there's a lot of work that have been done in here in the US as well, globally, that have really looked at that.

While grappling and transforming entire structures left faculty feeling overwhelmed, faculty also described the importance of confronting pervasive dominant views of scarcity:

I guess fear. That's a major issue. And it could be fear, on a personal or systemic level. Like fearing not getting tenure and promotion. Which means you have no job, which means you can't feed your family - just the nuances of that one act of fear - fear of not having enough. I think having a perspective that of an abundance perspective is very lacking. When in fact, if you have that perspective I don't think you're going to be fearful of never having enough or being enough... I have fear of dismantling a system and then having to recreate a system that actually might look the same. So we took all that time to dismantle and then we recreated the same system.

In summary, funding and tenure-track promotion standards served as mechanisms to limit faculty's extent to actualize PAR/CBPR principles, in particular to enact structural changes to alter traditional modes of knowledge production and power configurations in leadership and decision-making.

***“YPAR facilitation can be oppressive”:* limited shared understanding on social locations and processes**

In addition to academic structures as hindering factors limiting PAR/CBPR’s potential to advance social justice, interviewees also discussed about the ways limited shared understanding on social locations and processes hampered efforts to promote justice. In particular, community stakeholders discussed how PAR/CBPR can promote social justice as long as researchers have an awareness of their social locations and motivations to engage community members in research. Lucas describes:

This whole idea of social justice, when we talk about social justice, you can't really have a concept of social justice unless there is an inherent social injustice, so you're trying to correct something that is unjust, you know and how you perceive that injustice has a way in how you then interact with the people who are impacted by the event, injustice and how you see yourself in the role in that. And if you're not honest with yourself, then you become that precipitating factor. So I think participatory action research can be important tool to really address some of the consequences of social justice. But all, to the extent that the organization. And in this case the researcher, is really cognizant of his or her real motivations for doing what he or she does.

Lucas further expanded through an example in which he distills this lack of awareness in connection with reinforcing systems of power and oppression in knowledge production.

People kind of come in participatory action research because they believe the community needs to be saved and then... when you bring that kind of savior complex into a situation like that, then you've already set yourself up as the power elite. you're the one with the answers. And the people who you're working with are purely incidental to you asserting yourself or your need to save them. So if that's really your focus then you cannot help but perpetuate the status quo and past dysfunctions and inequities and disparities and all that kind of stuff.

In addition to recreating configurations of power that positioned researchers as higher knowing beings above community members that were othered, interviewees also highlighted pervasive consequences impacting social relationships, trust building, and outcomes. Lucas stated:

If you kind of come in without understanding the key of that dynamic and not be willing to commit to it, then you actually end up perpetuating the status quo, people sense that immediately. And if you sense that immediately, then it impacts the ability to really trust... and then, of course, that inevitably will impact the outcome of that relationship... oftentimes people will write stuff and is kind of theoretical, but then it becomes this whole abstraction and this whole idea of power imbalance and oppression it sure as hell is that abstraction is real.

Lastly, interviewees discussed the dangers of PAR/CBPR reproducing oppression if the attention is solely given to the project goals while neglecting the processes. Ana elaborated:

But then that process of like how we get there, and for a facilitator and, especially, like a YPAR facilitator. That process, sometimes for me matters more than like the goal, obviously, the goal is very important, but if we're only focused on the goal and not being mindful of the process... the process in itself can be oppressive. And so YPAR facilitation can be oppressive if I'm not paying attention to the process in the day-to-day moment, collective decision making process, the facilitation of activities.

## **Discussion**

This study sought to explore the perceptions of social work faculty and community stakeholders on social justice and the ways PAR/CBPR can promote or hinder the advancement of social justice. Through multiple converging perspectives in defining social justice, interviewees unanimously emphasized the importance of integrating an alternative paradigm of knowledge production that confronts white settler colonial Eurocentric configurations of power. In particular, community stakeholders particularly stressed the importance of understanding social justice in the context of structural transformations through dialectic processes between multiple stakeholders and institutions. Moreover, PAR/CBPR facilitated the advancement of social justice by supporting local grassroots organizing campaigns and creating counterspaces and counternarratives. However, PAR/CBPR was also described as deeply entrenched and

entangled in funding and tenure-track promotion mechanisms that maintained top-down configurations of power that hindered the actualization of social justice. Additionally, limited attention to PAR/CBPR processes as well as poor researchers' awareness on social locations and embodied subjectivities limited PAR/CBPR's emancipatory principles and goals.

Consistent with previous research, this study found that there are multiple understandings of social justice and PAR/CBPR can play a role to promote or hinder these efforts. This study contributes to existing literature by illustrating perspectives of social justice from various stakeholders in PAR/CBPR through a dialectic approach and highlight the importance of considering the implications of having various understandings and the ways which these are valued, made visible, and prioritized differently in academic and community-based settings. In addition to aligning with redistributive and recognition interpretations of social justice (Fraser, 2001; Rawls, 2020; Young, 1990), interviewees shared understandings of justice emphasizing systemic change and self-determination (Liang et al., 2017; Rudnick et al., 2014). These conceptualizations suggest frameworks to recognize the agency and autonomy of dispossessed and oppressed individuals as well as the entrenchment of interlocking systems of oppression and power that needs to be uprooted to actualize tangible changes to support the wellbeing of individuals and communities (Young, 1979).

Findings of this study expand existing scholarly evidence in enhancing conceptualizations of PAR/CBPR by recognizing that generating participatory scholarship should not be separate from challenging neoliberal and colonial academic

norms and enacting activist action-oriented processes and outputs that are not just ‘about’ social change but are ‘useful’ for community organizers and activists in social movements (Dawson & Sinwell, 2012; Glassman & Erdem, 2014; Jordan & Kapoor, 2016b; Kapoor, 2009). Moreover, weaving perspectives from multiple positioned actors in academia and community stakeholders expand the centrality of an iterative praxis of reflection, conversation, and action that recognizes community grassroots movements as dynamic sites for the production of theory, knowledge, and activism towards collective change (Barker & Cox, 2002; Touraine, 1980). Among discussed practices, counterspaces and counternarratives emerged as forms of challenging dominant narratives and processes perpetuating hegemonic power configurations in knowledge production. While the concept of counterspaces and counternarratives was developed within Critical Race Theory (CRT), these have expanded to anti-racist and anti-oppressive discourses in academia exploring how the inclusion of narratives in the margins can be affirming and transformative spaces (Hargrave, 2015; Keels, 2019; Phelps-Ward, 2020; Seiki et al., 2018).

### **Implications for Policy, Research, and Practice**

In analyzing themes emerging from interviews with social work faculty and community stakeholders, numerous implications of this study and specific recommendations emerged. The following section outlines six key themes: 1) Articulate a new paradigm that weaves together knowledge production, action, and transformation, 2) Renew the profession’s commitment to structural transformation, 3) Engage in uncomfortable conversations about power, 4) Attend to the process, and 5) Attend to



embodied subjectivities and positionality, and 6) Engage in unsettling critical race pedagogy.

***“There really is nowhere to go from there within the current paradigm... Work with a direct action organizer around a specific demand.”: Articulate a New Paradigm that Weaves Together Knowledge Production, Action, and Transformation***

Interviewees noted that the current paradigm to generate and translate knowledge is insufficient. While PAR/CBPR has expanded participatory and inclusive forms of research design, analysis, and implementation, translating research into action initiatives that influence relevant policies to improve the health and wellbeing of communities remains a continuous arena of struggle. This is consistent with the extant literature that suggests a paradigm shift that emphasizes community-initiated and action-oriented approaches to translate knowledge that promotes culturally responsive community-level changes at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of the ecological system (Cook, 2008; Kennedy et al., 2019; Romm, 2015). Part of these changes include both short-term and long-term structural policy reforms to address social injustices through social movement building and fostering political participation and civic engagement (Devia et al., 2017). Additionally, interviewees stressed new paradigms aligned with epistemological pluralism, namely, openness to multiple ways of learning and understandings of social realities which undergoes multiple negotiations between researchers and stakeholders (Miller et al., 2008). These alternative paradigms emphasize integrating multiple knowledge systems towards a theory of action that informs sustainable and participatory policymaking (Athayde et al., 2017; Zeller-berkman et al., 2020).

*“It really is how many publications do you have and how much funding did you get this year. And that's where the conversation stops... how can you turn this into change for the local community?... It's obvious there's no interest in changing these systems, but we call ourselves schools of social work”*: *Renew Profession's Commitment to Structural Transformation*

One of the major challenges interviewees identified in their PAR/CBPR collaborative efforts to achieve social justice was the profession's prioritization of neoliberalism, managerialism, and consumerism. The pursuit of justice will not be actualized until all actors in the profession including practitioners, scholars, and service-users confront these contradictions (Butler-Warke et al., 2020; Harris, 2014). In particular, high research productivity, marketization, as well as tenure and promotion standards that pressure scholars to publish in order to support career advancement within academia versus informing structural changes (Cnaan & Ghose, 2018; Rogowski, 2011; Teater, 2017). While researchers make specific choices to advance professionally and obtain tenure appointments influenced by academic standards of building track-record publications that intend to inform change in practice, training, and policy (Barner et al., 2015; Niles et al., 2020), scholars argue this takes place at the expense of exerting oppression which is aligned with mechanisms and the overall agenda in academia which fails to enact substantial institutional changes and instead, maintains neoliberalism, colonialism, and racism through the establishment of Whiteman Eurocentric values and educational curricula, privatization of education, public goods, land, and resources (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017; Stein, 2019, 2020). Moreover, research suggests

higher education serves also as an apparatus that enacts parallelly plantation politics, slave codes of White domination and urges scholars to deconstruct, dismantle racist higher education institutions by deconstructing and reconstructing anti-racist institutions through systemic actions and long-term community organizing (Polk et al., 2021; Squire et al., 2018; Welton et al., 2018). Rather than using social work to ameliorate consequences generated by capitalist and neoliberal systems, scholars suggest social workers can transcend borders and implement innovative and culturally responsive approaches including indigenous worldviews and concepts (e.g. *buen vivir*, *ubuntu*) that honor interdependence, sovereignty, collective care, accountability, and morality, which align with the profession's commitment to social justice (Baskin, 2018; Gerlach, 2019; Mafile'o & Vakalahi, 2018; Mayaka & Truell, 2021; Stanton, 2014). While employing PAR/CBPR epistemologies are not favored in tenure and promotion standards, scholars suggest engaging in PAR/CBPR as this approach unsettles power imbalances and makes visible the responsibility of higher institutions to commit to social change (Raynor, 2019).

***“Talking about power and money it’s an uncomfortable conversation but it’s something that needs to be leaned into”: Engage in Uncomfortable Conversations About Power***

The commitment to make power dynamics and tensions explicit among researchers and community stakeholders within PAR/CBPR collaborations through transparent conversations was salient. This theme aligns with studies discussing the importance of interrogating and negotiating power imbalances as well as converging and

diverging interests of both groups that manifest across social relationships and represent broader sociopolitical domains (Keahey, 2021; Kwan & Walsh, 2018; Mayan & Daum, 2016; Mohammed et al., 2012; Oaks et al., 2019). Despite increasing articles examining common challenges pertaining to power dynamics related to funding, positionality, and knowledge, further research has yet to explore more in detail specific examples and strategies to confront these issues. Among some of the practices highlighted in the literature, institutional ethnography (IE) which is a critical theory and qualitative methodology focusing on examining individuals' experiences in the context of institutional forces, has been identified in the scholarly literature as a decolonizing method of inquiry that honors lived experiences of stakeholders and reveals institutional colonial practices (Morton Ninomiya et al., 2020).

***“If you don’t pay attention to the process, it can be oppressive”:* Attend to the Process**

Research suggests that one of the unique components of PAR/CBPR is the equal emphasis placed in both, processes and outcomes (Wallerstein et al., 2018c).

Interviewees indicated attending to the partnership processes as valuable and also described potential risks of perpetuating oppressive patterns if neglecting them. Scholarly literature examining specifically PAR/CBPR in partnership with vulnerable communities at the intersection of disability, adultism, immigration, and structural violence illuminate this terrain by sharing guidelines to maximize autonomy and meaningful participation including the development of clearly defined goals, processes for communication and power-sharing, fair compensation of partners, accessible consent process, and multiple forms of participation (Bettencourt, 2020; Bradbury-Jones et al., 2018; Campbell-Page &

Shaw-Ridley, 2013; McDonald et al., 2021; Nicolaidis et al., 2019; Schwartz et al., 2020). Moreover, in order to suspend “damage-centered” research which has focused primarily in documenting the pain of oppressed communities, scholars urge researchers and stakeholders to enact a moratorium and redefine research and theories of change with communities (Tuck, 2009).

***“Know your position, know what you bring to the table... What does that sort of look like? and, frankly, you can know your position, but it isn't about you, the researcher”:***

***Attend to Embodied Subjectivities and Positionality***

Drawing from critical feminist liberatory frameworks and Borderlands scholarship, PAR/CBPR epistemology has been characterized by concepts of *entremundos*, namely a continuous struggle of borders, conflicts, and contradictions between worlds, social systems, and social relationships (Torre & Ayala, 2009). Consistent with scholarly literature, interviewees noted the centrality of actors in PAR/CBPR, particularly researchers, in engaging in ethical reflexive practices, critical inquiry, and action to grapple with their identities and social positions of power and transform them rather than ignore or simply benefit from them (Fernández, 2018; Muhammad et al., 2015; Ozano & Khatri, 2018; Torre, 2009). While individual critically reflexive exercises such as journaling and memo writing can increase researchers' awareness of embodied subjectivities present in PAR/CBPR relationships, these practices need to be engaged simultaneously with “dialogic relationality” through which all actors redress pervasive effects of power relationships, design solutions, and achieve transformative change (Lykes & Távara, 2020).

*“... We're told to think about power but... we don't actually teach students how to do that... Examining power and privilege, we can do that on a surface level while still surrendering to or accommodating the systems that exist”:* *Engage in Unsettling Critical Race Pedagogy*

Building critical consciousness around power emerged as a steppingstone to engage in dialogical processes in PAR/CBPR to advance social justice yet interviewees indicated the limited meaningful examination of it in training. Research suggests students face multiple barriers such as implicit bias and defense mechanisms to engage effectively in discussions on intersectionality, privilege, and oppression (Miller et al., 2004). One dialogical strategy scholars have incorporated in their pedagogy to engage students meaningfully in critical reflection, dialogue, and action regarding power, privilege, and oppression is creating brave spaces to engage in constructive conversations with respect, civility, and awareness of social positionalities of privilege (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Simon et al., 2021). Additionally, scholars suggest integrating unsettling reflexivity, autoethnography, as well as decolonial, critical race, and intersectionality frameworks in social work pedagogy to increase students' critical consciousness and readiness to effect structural and transformative changes redressing coloniality, white supremacy, and racism (Aguilar-Hernández, 2020; Almeida et al., 2019; Atehortúa, 2020; Lac & Fine, 2018; Neto, 2018; Tang Yan, Orlandimeje, et al., 2021).

### **Limitations**

Despite the strengths of this study, there are also limitations. First, the number of social work faculty and community stakeholders interviewed in the study was a small

sample of actors engaged in existing or prior PAR/CBPR collaborations. While qualitative studies provide in-depth explanations and meanings rather than generalization of findings, scholars suggest interpretive qualitative frameworks including transferability and generalizability (i.e. internal and external) as helpful tools (Maxwell, 2021). Thus, findings may be internally generalizable for specific individuals who shared similar settings and group characteristics. Additionally, study findings have limited transferability and the applicability of findings may not extend to participants with different social locations and contexts from the ones interviewed. For instance, while social work faculty participated in this study, graduate research assistants and doctoral students playing key roles in PAR/CBPR partnerships may have different experiences and perceptions of social justice and the role of PAR/CBPR given their differences in roles, expectations, and positions within the social hierarchy of academic institutions. Similarly, although community stakeholders participated in the interviews, further nuances across social identities of power and marginalization (i.e. race, gender, class, ability, immigration, language) in addition to community-based and professional fields could be further explored.

Despite these limitations, this study uses thick description to achieve external validity and transferability rather than just focusing on generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One of the central assumptions informing this study, supported by previous research, consists in the actualization of social justice as part of the social work profession's commitment through practice and research, including PAR/CBPR epistemologies that seek to break down hierarchies dividing researchers and community

stakeholders to bridge the gap between the worlds of the academy and grassroots community members. Future studies should use mixed-mythology, data triangulation, and comparative analyses to explore additional factors that inform the perception of social justice and the ways it translates to practice. For instance, prior personal and professional experiences shaping the ways social justice is conceptualized, case vignettes illustrating examples of enacting different types of social justice, and how these vary across disciplines, research methodologies, and main areas of interest.

### **Conclusion**

*“As we talk about CBPR, I keep thinking, that's what was used to colonize indigenous people. It was for the sake of ‘we want to know’ and then shoot it back to - this is what we found out, and this is what you need to change.” (Mana)*

Theories of social justice are extensively documented in the literature and yet perspectives outside of academic spaces including community residents, community-based organization leaders, practitioners, advocates, community organizers who are situated in the frontlines of the pursuit of social justice have yet to be explored more in-depth. This paper illustrates the perspectives of multiple positioned actors (i.e. social work faculty and community stakeholders) engaged in PAR/CBPR collaborations to reflect, redefine, and interrogate the meanings of social justice and how PAR/CBPR can promote or hinder the pursuit of justice. Findings of this study indicate multifocal understandings of social justice which emphasize processes that center systematic changes and acknowledge self-determination and survivance of dispossessed and oppressed individuals. Additionally, PAR/CBPR has the potential to challenge dominant



paradigms of knowledge production by creating counterspaces and collaborating with social movements to translate research into action. Lastly, to actualize social justice efforts, it is essential to incorporate a praxis of vigilance that interrogates and challenges the ways PAR/CBPR continues to be embedded in extractive institutions that promote the appropriate and coopting of paradigms and epistemologies.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications**

The purpose of this dissertation was to better understand the perceptions and processes documented in scholarly literature and in practice through which researchers, specifically social work faculty, and community stakeholders engaged in PAR/CBPR address, navigate, and contest interlocking systems of power and oppression within their collaboration. To accomplish this goal, this dissertation study employed a three-pronged approach: (1) scoping review methodology (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) to examine discourses around power and oppression in PAR/CBPR relationships and processes, (2) thematic and grounded theory situational analysis (Clarke et al., 2018; Clarke & Braun, 2017) to understand the perceptions of power and oppression within PAR/CBPR among social work researchers (n=13) and community stakeholders (n=10), and (3) thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017) to explore definitions of social justice and the role of PAR/CBPR in promoting or hindering the pursuit of justice. Findings revealed few studies interrogating power dynamics in-depth with specific examples illustrating critical analysis of how power hierarchies and differences manifested and were negotiated by researchers within social relationships. Additionally, multiple positioned actors in PAR/CBPR described various understandings of social justice that underscore the centrality of PAR/CBPR's role in enacting action and systemic change. Researchers and community stakeholders highlighted how PAR/CBPR must recognize and challenge the ways knowledge production remains embedded within neoliberal and settler colonial ideologies reproduced in the academy. These narratives led to the development of an emerging theoretical conceptualization of epistemological possibilities through the use of

the metaphor of a river. In this model, two major themes emerged: (1) downstream approaches to knowledge production that maintain colonial forms of knowledge production through othering, disembodiment, and extraction, and (2) upstream approaches that are grounded in a continuous praxis of action, accountability, and embodiment through the co-creation of counterspaces, counternarratives, and dialogical vulnerable spaces that redefine dignity, social relationships, and struggles. Rather than reducing dissertation findings to specific concrete strategies or general takeaways to strengthen scientific inquiry, practice, and pedagogy, this conclusion illustrates emerging directions, visions, and approaches to knowledge production and collaboration that is just and answerable to the people. While findings of this dissertation point to several paths to enhance PAR/CBPR collaborations, training of prospective scholars, and policy analysis and development, this section highlights three major overarching areas of implications for scholars, students, and practitioners to consider: 1) cultivating counterspaces in academic and community collaborations, 2) embodying collective decolonial and ethical commitments, and 3) investigating absences, silences, and emergence of critical hope.

### **Cultivating Counterspaces in Academic and Community Collaborations**

Extensive literature discusses the benefits of academic and community collaborations (Brush et al., 2020; Coombe et al., 2020; Ortiz et al., 2020). Research suggests these partnerships increase community engagement, relationship building, application and translation of research to inform policy and practice (Eder et al., 2018; Hohl et al., 2022; Sandwick et al., 2018; Wallerstein et al., 2020). While extensive scholarship has explored the benefits, increasing research has examined the challenges

and the importance of how to collaborate in ways that are authentic, meaningful, and fair (Anyon et al., 2018; Bradbury et al., 2019; Fine, 2017). When employing PAR/CBPR, scholars make decisions to navigate and negotiate power dynamics while maintaining an ethical lens aligned with social justice values (Kwan & Walsh, 2018). Findings of this dissertation suggest scholars to examine more deeply these areas of conflict and struggle, and co-create spaces and strategies to adapt, subvert, and resist neoliberal and settler colonial knowledge production processes. In particular, findings highlight co-creating knowledge equitably requires researchers to question funding requirements and research ethics collaboratively and identify strategies in the short and long term to transform these social constructions to be more aligned with the pursuit of social justice.

Funding agencies are increasingly requiring researchers to integrate participatory approaches into research. For instance, some programs such as the Superfund Research Program (SRP) within the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Clinical and Translational Science Awards require grantees to have Community Engagement Core (CEC) groups to increase community participation and translation of research through dissemination of findings and implementation of interventions (Eder et al., 2018; Trottier et al., 2019). Moreover, NIH has funded a series of CBPR research and training grants since 1990s and has continued to provide technical assistance workshops and training activities on CBPR (Teufel-Shone et al., 2019). Drawing from NIH archival data within a ten-year span, research identified about 489 funded studies that included collaboration building and while principal investigators and community partners agreed on appropriateness of

funding levels, community partners reported different perceptions of participation in research design, data analyses, and dissemination of findings (Elwood et al., 2019). This scholarly evidence in addition to the findings of this dissertation reinforce the importance of creating counterspaces in research, training, and policy analysis, in which, all actors involved in PAR/CBPR processes interrogate emerging contradictions between PAR/CBPR principles and financial, academic institutions that shape the outcomes and commitments of the project. Consistent with scholarly literature, carefully co-created counterspaces facilitate opportunities to challenge conventional norms, break silences, and generate pathways to shift the gaze and visibilize models of inquiry that perpetuate mechanisms of dominance, inequity, and marginalization (Arango et al., 2016; Javdani et al., 2017; Phelps-Ward, 2020; Shirazi, 2019).

### **Embodying Collective Decolonial and Ethical Commitments**

Despite financial agencies that award researchers and community organizations working in partnership to achieve equity, major barriers persist, particularly in contesting power imbalances that prioritize dominant research funding culture that is incommensurable beyond the funding limits (Guishard, 2009; Plumb et al., 2004). While PAR/CBPR holds the potential to increase empowerment and meaningful participation of oppressed communities, these are constrained by structural inequities that influence PAR/CBPR to reinforce power hierarchies and shift the responsibility of unresponsive social institutions to oppressed communities (Jirmanus et al., 2021; Rolfe, 2018). Rather than framing meaningful participation alone as the silver bullet or quick fix to overcome social inequities shaped by multilevel factors such as sociopolitical processes,

privatization of services, and group conflict, scholars recommend interrogating the limits of participation, examining in-depth mistrust among community stakeholders, joining social actions of local grassroots organizers, and engaging in critical power analysis and redistribution to achieve transformative change (Abdulrahim et al., 2010; Jirmanus et al., 2021).

Consistent with scholarly literature, findings of this dissertation underscore the insufficiency of meaningful participation by community members in scientific inquiry and proposes an alternative framework of knowledge production that challenges normalized practices of absolving privileged institutions and actors involved in research from their responsibilities and ethical commitments to embody transformative theories of change rooted in accountability, interdependency, self-determination, and relational ethics. In particular, decolonial love which emphasizes the return to the enactment of recovering the love for one's people and communal ways of being, knowing, and acting that is dehumanized under the gaze of colonialism (Atallah et al., 2022; Moreno, 2019). Although research seeks to eliminate disparities and achieve equity for dispossessed and oppressed communities, scholars have urged researchers to reckon with and suspend contradicting unethical forms of inquiry that focus primarily on documenting damage-centered evidence in over researched groups including indigenous and Black communities (Guishard, 2018; Koen et al., 2017; Sullivan et al., 2001; Tuck, 2009). Even when principles are woven in PAR/CBPR, scholarly evidence examines inconsistencies in the ways these principles are applied in practice. Findings of an in-depth analysis of systematic reviews discussing research partnerships indicate that although extensive key

principles, strategies, and outcomes are reported, few studies use consistent terms and detailed reporting to evaluate the partnership, and negative outcomes such as feelings of tokenism and disempowerment persist for special populations such as youth, individuals with disabilities, and racial/ethnic groups (Hoekstra et al., 2020). Findings of this dissertation are consistent with existing scholarship highlighting the importance of revisiting, re-examining, and redressing these contradictions.

Scholars have described the limitations of existing academic ethical regulatory frameworks and mechanisms, in particular for PAR/CBPR (Brown et al., 2010; Malone et al., 2006; Stoddard, 2010). For instance, scholars have been trained to rely on research ethics centered around academic Institutional Review Boards (IRB) but have failed to examine the ways IRBs reproduce individualized, color-evasive, and Eurocentric conceptualizations of settler coloniality in research by establishing reactive asymmetrical power relationships rather than proactive and holistic ways to disrupt these hierarchical configurations of power (Flicker et al., 2007; Porter, 1986; Tuck & Guishard, 2012). Consistent with research, dissertation findings suggest training for multiple positioned actors in PAR/CBPR to embody an ethical framework of decolonial PAR/CBPR that is reflexive and accountable for people, relationships, power issues, and unaddressed competing interests between communities and academic ethical mechanisms such as IRBs (Tuck & Guishard, 2012). Similarly, findings suggest epistemologies to be grounded in ethical commitments interdependent of care and relationships which scholars have broadly defined as “ethics are pedagogies of practice” (Denzin, 2008) and situated PAR/CBPR as a relational praxis and ethics of care that accounts for broader socio-

political context (Cahill, 2007).

### **Investigating Absences, Silences, and Emergence of Critical Hope**

Findings of this dissertation demonstrate how epistemic justice necessitates alternative paradigms that attends to the unexamined silent discourses and explores emerging possibilities of ongoing struggle in participatory knowledge production. Black American abolitionist organizer Mariame Kaba (2018) describes: “That speaks to me as a philosophy of living, that hope is a discipline and that we have to practice it every single day.” Kaba further adds: “I choose to think a different way and I choose to act in a different way” (Sonenstein & Wilson, 2018). To overcome despair in the face of structural violence, health inequity, and epistemic injustice rooted in settler colonial and carceral logics, it is essential for individuals and groups to not only address these concrete life problems collectively but also creatively with passion and imagination that lead to the emergence of alternative modes of work, politics, social relationships, and collaborations (Boggs et al., 2012; brown, 2017; Kaba & Nopper, 2021). These grassroots and academic frameworks of abolition, transformation, feminist decolonial inquiry, and emergence articulate a concept of critical hope that necessitates actors such as scholars to commit to active struggle, in which contradictory discourses, power dynamics, and possibilities for transformation are exposed, negotiated, and redefined (Anderson-Nathe et al., 2013; Cahill et al., 2010). Critical hope encourages individuals to be present and approach active struggles as transformative processes and projects that engage with both, critical analysis of power relations and emotional understandings and being in the world (Bell, 1995; Zembylas, 2014). To adopt epistemological and



ontological paradigms of inquiry that shift away from extraction, hegemony, patriarchy, and colonialism, scholars argue that it is fundamental to investigate systematically the logics of absence that reinforce monocultural and hegemonic conceptualizations of the body, knowledge, authorship, time, productivity, and efficiency (de Sousa Santos, 2016, 2018).

Findings of this dissertation study suggest scholars and community stakeholders should envision partnerships that shift away from focusing solely on research and redefine a theory of change that integrates community-based approaches to achieve collective transformation. Scholars are increasingly recognizing not only the critical importance of engaging in policymaking that addresses the social determinants of health, but also in partnering with community-based groups and organizations that leverage collective power and community organizing to advance campaigns that move the needle and achieve health equity (Pastor et al., 2018). Some key strategies documented in the literature to enhance PAR/CBPR include identifying dominant discourses shaping policy problems and solutions (Allan & Tolbert, 2019), and integrating human-centered design (HCD) approaches to improve PAR/CBPR outcomes by forming transdisciplinary teams, centering empathy, working with “extreme users”, and creating tangible products or services as a result of the collaboration (Chen et al., 2020). Moreover, disproportionate emphasis on individual behavior change as a result of ideologies that define social injustice based on individual responsibility have prevailed in research, in particular in health sciences (Burke et al., 2009). In response, counternarratives challenging this notion have argued for an emphasis in ‘upstream’ factors such as structural arrangements

that maintain social injustices that harm and hinder the health and wellbeing of dispossessed and oppressed communities (Dopp & Lantz, 2020; Gee et al., 2019). In the face of worldwide health crisis when institutional responses are insufficient, research suggests community mobilization including PAR/CBPR and policy changes sustaining social transformation and equity in both, short-term and long-term are essential (Ndumbe-Eyoh et al., 2021; Schulz et al., 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Historically, social work as a discipline has focused on implementing clinical and community-level services to assist, advocate, and empower those most vulnerable and impacted by structural inequities and social injustice without interrogating and challenging the ways the profession operates within intrinsically embedded institutions and contexts that are maintaining power differences and oppressive structures (Maree Stanley, 2020; Stark, 2018; Wahab et al., 2022). Yet conducting research to document the benefits of YPAR/CBPR without investigating the ways social work practitioners and researchers are implicated in contesting pervasive settler colonial and neoliberal ideologies in funding and research institutions risks coopting YPAR/CBPR as an extension of interlocking systems of power and oppression. When researchers fail to continuously engage in unsettling reflexive praxis (Calderon, 2016; Tang Yan, Orlandimeje, et al., 2021b) that confronts individual assumptions, embodied subjectivities, and positions of power afforded by financial and academic institutions implicated with the structural oppression and dehumanization of oppressed communities, researchers may fall short in building participatory action research collaborations capable

of producing knowledge that is ethical, humanizing, transformative, and answerable to people most impacted by social injustice. Increasing institutionalization of PAR/CBPR is rarely understood parallelly with epistemic justice and framed within theoretical frameworks and models that center voices in the margins and makes visible structural and ideological forces that obstruct the pursuit of justice. This dissertation excavates this continuous arena of struggle that has yet to be explored through embodied and decolonial frameworks. Findings of this dissertation highlight the urgency to attend to the relationships within participatory collaborations that wrestle with contradictions and conflicts and strive to identify iterative practices for communication, strategic movement, and shared decision-making. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leannee Betasamosake Simpson defines the work of resurgence and struggle as an iterative and generative practice of place-based constellation of coresistance, namely, a network that exists in the context of relationships and commitments that decenter Whiteness and generate pathways out of settler colonialism into Indigenous worlds rooted in connection, reciprocity, self-determination, and generative refusal (Simpson, 2017). Consistent with growing scholars enacting counterstorytelling, decolonial love, and refusal of white logics (Atallah et al., 2022), this dissertation research invites scholars, particularly in the social work field who are entrusted with the pursuit of social justice while simultaneously being deeply entrenched in maintaining settler colonial logics of power and oppression to redefine practices of relational ethics and participatory inquiry in the context of struggle and constellations of coresistance.

## Appendix A: Paper 2 Email Script

Dear [name of receiver],

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well.

My name is Catalina Tang Yan. I'm currently a doctoral candidate at Boston University School of Social Work and I'm writing to you to share more information about the research I'm conducting and extend you an invitation to participate.

I am interested in how people from various backgrounds work together in order to generate useful knowledge to create social change, social justice, and transformation. The purpose of this study is to understand, in context, the ways researchers and community stakeholders (e.g. residents, advocates, organizers) understand social justice and oppression in their personal lives and also in university and community collaborations. I am particularly interested in exploring how people who have engaged or are currently engaging in community and academic coalition work challenging systems of power and oppression.

I am recruiting 10 researchers and 10 community stakeholders who meet this criterion and are interested in participating in one remote (zoom/phone) individual interview that will be audio recorded for approximately 60-90 minutes. If you're interested in participating, you will be asked to share your views, reflections, feelings, and experiences related to the concept of oppression, power, and social justice in the context of community and academic collaborations. You will also be asked to complete a brief demographic form prior to the interview.

After the interview you will also be invited to participate in a 60-90min in person or electronic (zoom) group meeting with other participants to provide feedback on the summary of findings. All of your responses will be anonymous. This research has no benefits for you as a participant. If you identify as a community stakeholder, as a gesture of appreciation for your time participating in the interview, you will receive a \$25 gift card. Similarly, if you also choose to participate in the group meeting following the interview, you will receive a \$25 gift card.

The confidentiality of all participants will be respected throughout the process. This research has received approval from BU IRB. Research results will be shared upon completion of the research process, if requested.

If you would like to participate or if you know of others who might like to do so, please feel free to reach me at [catatang@bu.edu](mailto:catatang@bu.edu) (857-413-8775).

Thank you in advance for your interest, time, and support.

Sincerely,

Catalina Tang Yan  
Doctoral Candidate  
Boston University School of Social Work  
[catatang@bu.edu](mailto:catatang@bu.edu)

## **Appendix B: Paper 2 Interview Protocol**

- 1. Opening with Personal Story and Perspectives:**
  - a. Please tell me a little bit about yourself (probes: personally, educationally, professionally)
- 2. Self-description of intersecting agent and target identities of power and oppression**
  - a. How do you identify yourself? (probes: there are important identities that make who we are, what are some of those identities that are important to you in terms of race, class, gender, religion, etc.)
- 3. Examining experiences of knowledge-production in CBPR collaborations**
  - a. What comes to your mind when you think about community based participatory research collaboration?
  - b. Could you please share in detail about your experiences partnering with community stakeholders or university institutions in research and action?
  - c. What were some strengths, areas of struggle, and key takeaways from the CBPR collaboration?
- 4. Motivation to participate and initial expectations of collaboration**
  - a. What motivated you to join the collaboration with the university/community stakeholders?
  - b. What were some initial expectations that you had about the collaboration? (probes: what did you want to take away? what was agreed upon and how did it reflect or change throughout the collaboration?)
- 5. Understanding of interlocking systems of power and oppression in CBPR**
  - a. What comes to your mind when you think about the words oppression and power? (probes: what do you think or feel when you hear this word? what is your understanding of power and oppression?)
  - b. Can you describe a specific example or situation in which you have experienced oppression and power, how you felt, how did you respond, and what you thought about it? (probes: personally, professionally)
  - c. Can you describe a specific example or situation in which you feel oppression and power influenced or manifested in your research and action collaborations with university/community stakeholders, how you felt, how did you and the people in the collaboration respond, and what you thought about it?
- 6. Capturing perceptions on the ways these have been contested**
  - a. In your opinion, what kinds of impact or implications resulted from the ways interlocking systems of oppression manifested in the CBPR collaboration?
- 7. Recommendations**
  - a. If you had the opportunity to participate in the collaboration again, what would you do differently?
  - b. What recommendations do you have for university faculty and community stakeholders when participating in CBPR collaborations?
- 8. Additional comments or questions**
  - a. Do you have any additional comments, thoughts, feelings, or questions you believe are important and you'd like to share?

## **Appendix C: Paper 2 Informed Consent Script**

Hello,

My name is Catalina Tang Yan, I'm a doctoral student at the School of Social Work at Boston University, and I'm conducting research which focuses on examining power, oppression, and social justice in Community Based Participatory Research collaborations. I want to learn more about your understanding and experiences with systems of oppression and power in the context of community academic collaborations. I will use the information that we learn from you to help researchers and community stakeholders better understand the ways in which they can engage in authentic partnerships to create social change.

### **What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in the project, I will ask you to participate in one in-person or videoconference individual interview. The interview will last approximately sixty to ninety minutes. During the interview I will ask you about your reflections, feelings, and experiences in community academic partnerships. The interviews will be audio taped so that we can be accurate with the information that we collect from you. You may choose not to participate. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. You are not obligated to participate in this conversation. Additionally, upon the completion of the interview, I will share a summary of findings in an electronic and hard copy format with you via email or in person. I will invite you to provide individual feedback on the summary of findings via email and also in a group remotely (via zoom) with other interview participants remotely or in person. You are not obligated to participate in this conversation.

### **Can anything bad happen to me from being in this project?**

The main risk of allowing me to use and store information for this research is a potential loss of privacy. All of the information that I collect during interviews will be kept in a safe place, and only my advisor and I will be able to see it. I may use the information that I collect in papers that I write or during presentations at a conference, or in grant proposals, but I will never use your name. For the purposes of quality improvement and safety, the Boston University Institutional Review Board may review the study records.

### **Right to decline or withdraw**

If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions that I ask during the interview, you do not have to answer them. Also, if, at any time, you choose not to continue participating in this project, for any reason, they may stop. Should anything be mentioned regarding harm being caused to or by you, I will connect you with an adult staff at the community organization who will be able to assist you in connecting with the necessary resources.

### **Will I benefit from being in the project?**

There are no benefits for you for taking part in this research. There is no cost for you to participate in this project, but your participation may help us understand more about the experiences of researchers and community stakeholders in community and academic collaborations.

**Compensation**

If you agree to participate and identify as a community stakeholder in CBPR partnerships with no affiliation as a faculty or student at an academic university, you will receive a gift card of \$25 USD upon the completion of the interview.

**If I have questions, whom should I contact?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the project you can call Catalina Tang Yan at 857-413-8775 [catatang@bu.edu](mailto:catatang@bu.edu). You may also contact Linda Sprague Martinez, my advisor at 617-358-0782 [ismarti@bu.edu](mailto:ismarti@bu.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University IRB directly at 617-358-6115.

**Do you have any questions? Would you agree to participate in this study? Thank you!**

**Appendix D: Paper 2 Demographic Form**

1. Pseudonym \_\_\_\_\_
2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your gender identity? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your average annual income? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your racial identity? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your ethnic identity? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your highest level of education? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is your physical/mental status? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Language(s) spoken \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your religion/spiritual affiliation? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How long have you been in your current employment/position? \_\_\_\_\_
12. How many CBPR collaborations have you been part of? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What role(s) did you have in the CBPR collaborations you were involved with?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. How long did the CBPR collaborations last? \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix E: Paper 2 Thematic Analysis Codebook

### 1. Personal Lived Experiences

- 1.1. Awareness of identities
  - 1.1.1. Ability
  - 1.1.2. Class
  - 1.1.3. Education
  - 1.1.4. Gender/Sexual Orientation
  - 1.1.5. Language
  - 1.1.6. National Origin/Immigration Status
  - 1.1.7. Race/Ethnicity
  - 1.1.8. Religion
  - 1.1.9. Community Belonging
- 1.2. Descriptive mention of positionality
- 1.3. No in-depth explanation
- 1.4. No mention of agent and target identities

### 2. Understanding of CBPR collaboration

- 2.1. CBPR is trash
  - 2.1.1. Contradicting Principles
    - 2.1.1.1. Means to an end
    - 2.1.1.2. Not authentic
    - 2.1.1.3. No commitment from university
    - 2.1.1.4. No transparency or ownership of harm
    - 2.1.1.5. Too rigid
    - 2.1.1.6. Using jargon and language as facade and commitment but not real
  - 2.1.2. Problematic History and Concept
    - 2.1.2.1. Built upon racism and colonization
    - 2.1.2.2. CBPR is not a movement, organizers stay, researchers leave
    - 2.1.2.3. CBPR dresses it up and makes people feel good
    - 2.1.2.4. Coopted
    - 2.1.2.5. Institutionalization erases centrality of relationships
- 2.2. Motivation to join CBPR collaborations
  - 2.2.1. Interest in collaboration
    - 2.2.1.1. Collaborate and leverage resources to work together
    - 2.2.1.2. Opportunity to collaborate and work on issue identified by community
  - 2.2.2. Interest in community change
    - 2.2.2.1. Help community on a different level
    - 2.2.2.2. Desire and commitment to effect change in community
    - 2.2.2.3. Desire to create actionable results and impact in the community
  - 2.2.3. Personal Development and Financial Motivation
    - 2.2.3.1. Summer job
- 2.3. What it is/What I think It is
  - 2.3.1. Creating new configurations of power and participation
    - 2.3.1.1. Bringing people to positions of power and influence
    - 2.3.1.2. Right to Participation

- 2.3.1.3. Sharing power and resources strategically
- 2.3.2. Mutual and iterative slow processes
  - 2.3.2.1. Back and forth
  - 2.3.2.2. Co-emergence, co-learning, co-development, co-application of funds across differences
  - 2.3.2.3. Learning Curve
  - 2.3.2.4. Slow
- 2.3.3. Empowering and Relational Struggle
  - 2.3.3.1. Collective empowerment for folx to lead
- 2.4. What it should be
  - 2.4.1. Partnership
    - 2.4.1.1. Sustainability
      - 2.4.1.1.1. Long-term trusting relationships
      - 2.4.1.1.2. Not just a one and done (not transactional) instead is a partnership over time
    - 2.4.1.2. Bidirectional Relationships
      - 2.4.1.2.1. Blending scientific and experiential knowledge
      - 2.4.1.2.2. Conceptualize Community as protagonists
      - 2.4.1.2.3. Mutually beneficial and reciprocal collaborative partnership
      - 2.4.1.2.4. Partnership between allies with an established history of trust and relationship
      - 2.4.1.2.5. Researchers facilitate and provide technical support
  - 2.4.2. CBPR Principles
    - 2.4.2.1. Attends social and racial health inequities
      - 2.4.2.1.1. Intersectional - Addressing intersecting oppressions
    - 2.4.2.2. Builds on resources within community
      - 2.4.2.2.1. All experiences should be valued
    - 2.4.2.3. Community unit of identity
    - 2.4.2.4. Cyclical and iterative process
    - 2.4.2.5. Dissemination of findings
    - 2.4.2.6. Equitable Collaboration and Power-sharing
      - 2.4.2.6.1. Community having autonomy, resources, and telling researchers what they need
      - 2.4.2.6.2. Equitable decision-making and power-sharing in all stages
      - 2.4.2.6.3. Work is driven by lived experiences from people in the community
    - 2.4.2.7. Knowledge and Action integration for mutual benefit
      - 2.4.2.7.1. Orientation to action (policy implications, interventions, etc.)
      - 2.4.2.7.2. Researchers using tools to support communities
      - 2.4.2.7.3. Transformative tool for social change
    - 2.4.2.8. Long-term commitment
    - 2.4.2.9. Mutual trust
    - 2.4.2.10. Positive and ecological perspectives of health
    - 2.4.2.11. Promotes co-learning and empowering process
  - 2.4.3. Outcomes

- 2.4.3.1. Changes in the material conditions of community
- 2.4.3.2. Just allocation of funding and resources
- 3. **Assessment of strengths and challenges in CBPR collaborations**
  - 3.1. **Strengths**
    - 3.1.1. Partnership and Relationships
      - 3.1.1.1. Building trust through actions of equity
      - 3.1.1.2. Crediting
      - 3.1.1.3. Equitable involvement of community partners
    - 3.1.2. Collaborative Change and Power
      - 3.1.2.1. Providing opportunities for people to step in to their power
      - 3.1.2.2. Sharing resources and knowledge
      - 3.1.2.3. Supports community efforts to address local issues
      - 3.1.2.4. Researchers validate community's experiences
    - 3.1.3. Research
      - 3.1.3.1. Accessible findings
      - 3.1.3.2. Expanded areas of interest driven by community
      - 3.1.3.3. Enhancing community's work
  - 3.2. **Challenges**
    - 3.2.1. COVID-19
    - 3.2.2. Institutional
      - 3.2.2.1. Academic structures undermine sustainability of partnerships
      - 3.2.2.2. Not connected to academia's incentives of tenure promotion
      - 3.2.2.3. Practices of controlling
      - 3.2.2.4. Institutional Funding Restrictions and Pressures (Funding timelines, limited resources, time consuming)
    - 3.2.3. Funding
      - 3.2.3.1. Fair allocation and distribution of Funds
        - 3.2.3.1.1. Inequitable allocation of funds
      - 3.2.3.2. Fair and timely compensation to partners
        - 3.2.3.2.1. Delayed payments
        - 3.2.3.2.2. Inequitable pay
        - 3.2.3.2.3. Insufficient payment
    - 3.2.4. Knowledge Production
      - 3.2.4.1. Addressing Conflict
        - 3.2.4.1.1. Centering understanding instead of agreement and disagreement
        - 3.2.4.1.2. Creating distant relationships which limits channels of communication and opportunities to support one another
        - 3.2.4.1.3. Messiness Nature
        - 3.2.4.1.4. No transparency or ownership for harm enacted
        - 3.2.4.1.5. Power Imbalance and Conflict
      - 3.2.4.2. Approach
        - 3.2.4.2.1. Reproduction of oppression, racism, and power imbalance
        - 3.2.4.2.2. Responding to top-down leadership's expectations and goals
        - 3.2.4.2.3. Too rigid and burdensome for full involvement
        - 3.2.4.2.4. Tokenizing

- 3.2.4.2.5. Trust
- 3.2.4.3. Conflict of Priorities and Social Change
  - 3.2.4.3.1. Changes in communities and sustained engagement are evidence of authentic engagement
  - 3.2.4.3.2. No focus on community's interests
  - 3.2.4.3.3. Publications are fake markers of authentic engagement
- 3.2.4.4. Delegitimization and Abuse
  - 3.2.4.4.1. Coercion and abuse of power to devalue and dehumanize community's expertise
  - 3.2.4.4.2. Co Opting or appropriation of community's work
  - 3.2.4.4.3. Crediting and co-authoring
  - 3.2.4.4.4. Delegitimizing community's ideas
  - 3.2.4.4.5. Manipulation of community's vision to advance privileged group's interests and agenda
  - 3.2.4.4.6. Prioritization of capitalist production
  - 3.2.4.4.7. Prioritizing privileged group's agenda/research interests over relationships and reciprocity
- 3.2.4.5. Inclusion
  - 3.2.4.5.1. Dialectic process - inviting all stakeholders to a dialogue
  - 3.2.4.5.2. Inclusion of diverse stakeholders to participate at the table equitably
- 3.2.4.6. Sustained Engagement
  - 3.2.4.6.1. Lack of orientation to sustainability
  - 3.2.4.6.2. People leave
  - 3.2.4.6.3. Turnover of staff
- 3.2.4.7. Research
  - 3.2.4.7.1. IRB rules that undermine community participation
  - 3.2.4.7.2. IRB's lack of cultural competence
- 3.3. Contesting Power**
  - 3.3.1. Mention of Recognition of Power
  - 3.3.2. Mention of Individual Actions Taken to Contest Power
  - 3.3.3. Mention of Institutional Changes
  - 3.3.4. No Mention of Contesting Power
- 4. Understanding of Interlocking Systems of Power and Oppression**
  - 4.1. ALL - multilevel**
  - 4.2. CRT**
    - 4.2.1. Critique of Liberalism
    - 4.2.2. Counter Storytelling
    - 4.2.3. Interest Convergence
    - 4.2.4. Intersectionality
    - 4.2.5. Permanence of Racism
    - 4.2.6. Whiteness as Property
  - 4.3. Individual**
    - 4.3.1. Dehumanization (less than)
    - 4.3.2. Exerting power, authority, and control
    - 4.3.3. Internalization of oppression
    - 4.3.4. Refusal to have uncomfortable conversations

4.3.5. Feeling Tamed

**4.4. Interpersonal**

4.4.1. Avoidance

4.4.2. Beneficial Outcomes

4.4.3. Communities are hurting

4.4.4. Decision-making Power

4.4.5. Gatekeeping

4.4.6. Prioritizing self-driving agendas of power accrual (at the expense of the collective good)

4.4.7. Reproducing power imbalanced cycles

**4.5. Institutional & Interlocking Systems**

4.5.1. Dual Roles and Contradicting Priorities/Institutions

4.5.1.1. Contradicting markers of engagement (profit vs. relationships)

4.5.1.2. University as a site of trauma and pain to some and site of privilege to others

4.5.1.3. University's demands and pressure to focus on research and shift away from community

4.5.2. Ideologies & Policies

4.5.2.1. Neoliberal capitalist policies (prioritization of profit, wealth, and social status over people)

4.5.2.2. University's acts of structural violence, racism, colonialism, capitalism,

4.5.2.3. Structural racism

4.5.2.4. The world is fucked up for young people, broken people, working class people

4.5.3. Mechanisms of exclusion, structural violence, othering, and dehumanization

4.5.3.1. Cookie cutter (approach of who is included and afforded opportunities)

4.5.3.2. Gatekeeping

4.5.3.3. Pushing out and excluding voices in the margins

4.5.3.4. Demanding educational credentials to be treated as human (Credentialization)

4.5.3.5. Pervasive and self-perpetuating structural oppression

4.5.4. Examples of Institutions

4.5.4.1. Pharmaceutical companies

4.5.4.2. Social Work Profession

**4.6. Historical**

4.6.1. Examples - Civil Rights - Black Power - Urban Renewal - Medicare/Medicare - Gentrification - Colonialism - Colonization - Capitalism - Neoliberalism - Racism

**4.7. Interdependent Power (Perceptions on how people should respond)**

4.7.1. Acts of resistance and solidarity met with violence

4.7.2. Collective organizing and mobilization

4.7.3. Create spaces for ALL to engage in open dialogue

4.7.4. He was not going to control me - struggle and resistance

4.7.5. Give up-Leverage privilege and power

- 4.8. **Social Justice**
  - 4.8.1. Distributive
  - 4.8.2. Political
  - 4.8.3. Procedural
  - 4.8.4. Recognition
  - 4.8.5. Structural
- 5. **Reflections on Power and Oppression in CBPR Collaborations**
  - 5.1. **Power and Influence**
    - 5.1.1. Addressing Conflict
      - 5.1.1.1. Creating distant relationships with no channels of communication
      - 5.1.1.2. Recurring issues that are not resolved or addressed at the root
    - 5.1.2. Abuse of Power
      - 5.1.2.1. Imbalance power dynamics already established in research design
      - 5.1.2.2. Inequitable Decision-making processes
      - 5.1.2.3. Maintaining and exerting power over people
      - 5.1.2.4. Not willing to relinquish privilege for collective liberation
      - 5.1.2.5. Taking advantage of trust and take people's agency away
      - 5.1.2.6. Researchers maintain power and privilege
      - 5.1.2.7. Traumatizing and abusive
      - 5.1.2.8. Undermining people's agency
    - 5.1.3. Authentic Engagement and Relationships
      - 5.1.3.1. Adulthood
      - 5.1.3.2. Capacity of CBOs
      - 5.1.3.3. Community as incidental to the process
      - 5.1.3.4. Displacing local leadership
      - 5.1.3.5. Lack of transparency and trust
      - 5.1.3.6. Extraction
      - 5.1.3.7. Mechanisms of exclusion, othering, and dehumanization
      - 5.1.3.8. Structural racism
      - 5.1.3.9. Tokenizing
      - 5.1.3.10. Treating people less than because of status
    - 5.1.4. Conflicting Priorities Top Down Leadership and ranks of power and Systems
      - 5.1.4.1. Determination of priorities and project scope
      - 5.1.4.2. Navigating conflicting university priorities of tenure track promotion
      - 5.1.4.3. Policies reinforcing oppressive ways of being
      - 5.1.4.4. University support not real
    - 5.1.5. Conflicting Actions harming integrity
      - 5.1.5.1. Not walking the talk. Put your money where your mouth is
      - 5.1.5.2. Systems of dual identity and power
      - 5.1.5.3. Veto and Shut Down Community-led initiatives
    - 5.1.6. Manipulation and gatekeeping
      - 5.1.6.1. Exclusion of information
      - 5.1.6.2. Gatekeeping and manipulation of people, resources, opportunities, and funding

- 5.1.6.3. Using collaboration and relationships to meet non-community actors' agenda
- 5.1.7. No Support
  - 5.1.7.1. Not feeling supported - feeling controlled by interests of adults - board members - not able to talk to them or build relationship
- 5.1.8. Research
  - 5.1.8.1. IRB's lack of community input
  - 5.1.8.2. IRB's lack of culturally competent approaches
- 5.1.9. White Supremacy
  - 5.1.9.1. Neoliberal, capitalist, colonial ways of funding
  - 5.1.9.2. Professionalism as a facade of oppression
  - 5.1.9.3. Savior Complex
  - 5.1.9.4. Structural racism
  - 5.1.9.5. The shackles of the mind

## **5.2. Finances**

- 5.2.1. Conflict in funding agenda
- 5.2.2. Hierarchical and strict funding restrictions
- 5.2.3. Inequitable allocation and distribution of funds and resources
- 5.2.4. Lack of decision-making power on allocation of funds and resources
- 5.2.5. Withholding wages - payment delays

## **5.3. Commitment to Challenging systems of power and oppression (Exercising Interdependent Power)**

- 5.3.1. Acts of refusal
- 5.3.2. Call out oppression embedded in research
- 5.3.3. Challenging dominant narratives and approaches
- 5.3.4. Critical awareness of interlocking systems power and oppression
- 5.3.5. It's not really about the money, it's about addressing issues affecting the community.
- 5.3.6. Leveraging privilege and power to validate community's research
- 5.3.7. Organize and strategize to address issues at the root in the long-term
- 5.3.8. Speaking up
- 5.3.9. Taking risk to relinquish privilege and power
- 5.3.10. Unwavering long-term commitment

## **5.4. Exercising Interdependent power (what they did in the collaboration to fight back)**

- 5.4.1. Community organizing and mobilization to effect change
- 5.4.2. Creating spaces and opportunities for counternarratives and community to lead
- 5.4.3. Creating peer mentor model to disrupt hierarchical power
- 5.4.4. Creating and advocating for structural changes that disrupt oppression
- 5.4.5. Interrogation of full participation and inclusion of all stakeholders
- 5.4.6. Interrogation of lack of orientation to action
- 5.4.7. Recognize interdependence of university knowledge and community work
- 5.4.8. Resisted manipulation of relationships to meet specific agendas
- 5.4.9. Responding to top-down adult-driven expectations/goals
- 5.4.10. Showing up and fighting back over and over again

## 6. Recommendations for Faculty

### 6.1. Critical Action

- 6.1.1. Authentic Engagement
  - 6.1.1.1. Commitment to always do better - avoid complacency
  - 6.1.1.2. Create MOUs and Group Agreements
  - 6.1.1.3. Goal is not agreement, goal is understanding with everyone at the table.
    - 6.1.1.3.1. Co-create and understand shared language and understanding of issues
  - 6.1.1.4. Honor bidirectional relationships always
  - 6.1.1.5. Introduce new information
  - 6.1.1.6. Prioritize relationships over neoliberal and capitalist research pressures
  - 6.1.1.7. Value everyone's expertise at the table
  - 6.1.1.8. Walk the talk and put your money where your mouth is
    - 6.1.1.8.1. Lead with integrity - alignment of words with actions
- 6.1.2. CRT
  - 6.1.2.1. Critique of Liberalism
    - 6.1.2.1.1. Commit to move beyond avoidance, denial of recognition of privilege
  - 6.1.2.2. Counter Storytelling
    - 6.1.2.2.1. Counternarrative discussions that recognize historical racist underpinnings of research
  - 6.1.2.3. Intersectionality
  - 6.1.2.4. Interest Convergence
  - 6.1.2.5. Permanence of Racism
  - 6.1.2.6. Whiteness as Property
    - 6.1.2.6.1. Interrogation, redistribution, and disruption of dominant power relationships
    - 6.1.2.6.2. Leverage privilege in solidarity with community-driven actions
    - 6.1.2.6.3. Critical actions of solidarity leveraging privilege, status, and power at the service of communities
- 6.1.3. Funding
  - 6.1.3.1. Equitable allocation of funds and resources
  - 6.1.3.2. Increase funding and resources to CBPR projects
  - 6.1.3.3. Use funds to shift power and build community ownership
- 6.1.4. Partnership
  - 6.1.4.1. Apologize and consider acts of reparation
  - 6.1.4.2. Codify and assess enactment of principles
- 6.1.5. Radical Actions
  - 6.1.5.1. Changing practices and creating possibilities
    - 6.1.5.1.1. Advocate for systems change and mobilize profession to raise voices
    - 6.1.5.1.2. Center community desires in the work at the university
    - 6.1.5.1.3. Create mechanisms of engaging community in all stages of research



- 6.1.5.1.4. Create policies that remove barriers and more time is spent on work that matters
- 6.1.5.1.5. Create a process for community to drive research agenda
- 6.1.5.1.6. Cut out all the bad energy, dehumanizing aspects under “professionalism” facade that reinforces white supremacy
- 6.1.5.1.7. Let’s not recreate that
- 6.1.5.2. Creating new understandings
  - 6.1.5.2.1. Do not personalize the issue. Look at the system as a whole
  - 6.1.5.2.2. Get out of the way if this is not for you!
- 6.1.5.3. Creating long-term commitment
  - 6.1.5.3.1. Long-term commitment is necessary
  - 6.1.5.3.2. No silver bullet, no quick fixes
  - 6.1.5.3.3. Return to the community
- 6.1.5.4. Leading with integrity, ethics, and principles
  - 6.1.5.4.1. Lead with integrity, conviction, vulnerability, and interest convergence
  - 6.1.5.4.2. You have to be an activist true and true
  - 6.1.5.4.3. Treat people as humans
- 6.1.5.5. Training
  - 6.1.5.5.1. Training and Mentoring to faculty (sustainability frameworks)
  - 6.1.5.5.2. Trainings on sustainability frameworks
  - 6.1.5.5.3. Training on community engagement
  - 6.1.5.5.4. Training adults on addressing harm
- 6.2. Critical Reflection**
  - 6.2.1. Positionality - We’re not all that
    - 6.2.1.1. Critical awareness, self-examination on agent and target identities and complicity in reproducing oppression and injustice, biases, assumptions, expectations
    - 6.2.1.2. Recognize power imbalances and dynamics internalized and enacted
    - 6.2.1.3. Recognize potential harm and develop critical analysis on barriers
  - 6.2.2. Community
    - 6.2.2.1. Critical self-examination on diverging intersectional identities of communities
  - 6.2.3. Knowledge Production
    - 6.2.3.1. Accountability - are we reinforcing coercion?
    - 6.2.3.2. Education and reflection on research as a tool to justify perpetration of violence
    - 6.2.3.3. Interrogate motivation - are people purely means to an end?
    - 6.2.3.4. Interrogate power we hold - who are we affecting? Who should we be answerable to?
    - 6.2.3.5. Recognize harm enacted by research and fix it! Do not contribute to more damage
  - 6.2.4. Radical Analysis

- 6.2.4.1. Interrogate and explore possibilities of disrupting dominant power structures
- 6.2.4.2. Understand issues at the root (structural inequities vs. individual blaming)

### **6.3. Disruption and Dismantling**

- 6.3.1. Challenge tenure promotion publication requirements
- 6.3.2. Creating ethical- and principle-based leadership
  - 6.3.2.1. Put money where your mouth is and Walk the Talk
  - 6.3.2.2. Be willing to be uncomfortable
- 6.3.3. Creating new equitable ways for community to be in academia
  - 6.3.3.1. Commit beyond just “proving” scientific facts and uplift communities’ knowledge
  - 6.3.3.2. Create spaces for communities to belong in academia - dismantle gatekeeping tools (proof of documentation, payment, etc.)
  - 6.3.3.3. Dismantle structural systems of gatekeeping and let all types of community members access resources/get paid, etc.
  - 6.3.3.4. Dismantling oppressive institutional and interpersonal practices and roles
  - 6.3.3.5. Disrupt reproduction of dominant hierarchies of power (power over)
- 6.3.4. Creating new power configurations
  - 6.3.4.1. Leverage Privilege and Power
  - 6.3.4.2. Relinquish positions of power for collective liberation
  - 6.3.4.3. Redistribute and share personal individual and organizational power

### **6.4. Research Epistemological Approaches**

- 6.4.1. Relational ways of being
  - 6.4.1.1. Be aware how to treat people like humans.
  - 6.4.1.2. Listen to community
  - 6.4.1.3. Prioritize relationship building over funding and research
- 6.4.2. Shared principles
  - 6.4.2.1. Codify set of principles and assess whether principles are being applied and honored
  - 6.4.2.2. Interrogate and let go preconceived notions about research

## **7. Recommendations for community stakeholders**

### **7.1. Acts of Interdependent Power (recommendations for community to fight back)**

- 7.1.1. Acts of fighting back, accountability and resistance
  - 7.1.1.1. Speak, advocate, challenge, fight back, and visibilize acts of violence and oppression
  - 7.1.1.2. Hold institutions accountable to disrupting power imbalances (equitable distribution of funds)
- 7.1.2. Acts of refusal and self-determination
  - 7.1.2.1. Walk away - don’t do it - ENOUGH is ENOUGH - we’ll be our own researchers)
  - 7.1.2.2. Do research
- 7.1.3. Acts of relationality and possibilities

- 7.1.3.1. Develop trusting relationships with universities before projects to avoid abuse
- 7.1.3.2. Mentoring
- 7.1.3.3. Reimagining and introducing alternative approaches
- 7.1.3.4. Relational Power
- 7.1.4. Acts of vigilance
  - 7.1.4.1. Do no trust and take things by its face value
  - 7.1.4.2. Recognize interdependent power
  - 7.1.4.3. Stay vigilant, skeptical, and unsettled, tread lightly

**8. Social and Political Factors**

- 8.1. COVID-19
- 8.2. Racial Uprisings and BLM
- 8.3. U.S. Presidential Elections

**Appendix F: Paper 2 Narrative Memoing Sample**

**Memo 1: Title**

Date Written:

Date of Last Entry and/or Follow-Up Memo Number (s):

Keywords:

**Narrative Memoing**

**Memo 2: Title**

Date Written:

Date of Last Entry and/or Follow-Up Memo Number (s):

Keywords:

### Appendix G: Paper 2 Situational Mapping & Memoing Guiding Questions

Guiding Questions	Situational Maps	Relational Maps	Social World & Arenas Maps	Positional Maps
<b>Mapping</b>	<p>Who and what are in this situation?</p> <p>Who and what else may matter in this situation?</p> <p>What other elements may make a difference in this situation?</p> <p>What facilitates access? What hinders it? Are these represented on the map?</p> <p>What nonhuman things really matter in this situation of inquiry? To whom or what do they matter?</p> <p>What is taken for granted in the situation? What is so deeply naturalized that is almost invisible?</p>	<p>What are key relationships between these elements?</p> <p>What is the nature of the relationships between these elements?</p>	<p>What are the patterns of the collective commitment creating the social worlds operating here?</p> <p>Are there groups with shared interests and stakes, such as people in the same occupation or profession?</p> <p>Are there any specific organizations involved in the area?</p> <p>What are their perspectives, and what do they hope to achieve through their collective action?</p> <p>What are their stakes in that action?</p>	<p>What issues are argued about, debated?</p> <p>What is the core of the debate about which there are different positions?</p> <p>What is X about?</p> <p>Why do people keep talking about it?</p> <p>Why does it seem to matter so much?</p> <p>Who or what is Y arguing against in this quote from my data?</p>
<b>Memoing</b>	<p>What is taken for granted in this situation?</p> <p>What technologies are used and implicated?</p> <p>Are there other interesting nonhuman actants present?</p> <p>What are the major topics of discourse and debated?</p> <p>Do you need to collect further data about this? If so, what kinds of data?</p> <p>Are there any elements absent that you might have expected to be there? Why?</p>	<p>What relationships are of particular interest?</p> <p>What subset of relationships should be followed up or explored by gathering additional data?</p> <p>Which relationships should be pursued in detail in this research?</p>	<p>What social worlds are present and active?</p> <p>What social worlds are present and implicated or not present but implicated?</p> <p>What is the work of this world?</p> <p>What are the commitments to this world?</p> <p>How do its participants believe they should go about fulfilling them?</p> <p>How does this world describe itself - present itself - in its discourse(s)?</p> <p>How does it describe other worlds in the arena?</p>	<p>What is missing?</p> <p>What is interesting Why?</p> <p>Is it a more conventional issue of propriety or a deeply political one?</p> <p>What huge but unrecognized presence lurks?</p> <p>What do you think is the elephant in the room in your situation represents symbolically?</p> <p>What might people not have words for?</p> <p>How might you</p>

	<p>Are there any organizations or institutions missing that you would expect to be there?</p> <p>What are the hot issues/contested topics/current controversies in the arena's discourses?</p> <p>Are there any surprising silences in the discourses?</p>		<p>What actions have been taken by this social world in the past? What actions are anticipated for the future?</p> <p>How is the work of furthering this world's agenda organized?</p> <p>Are there particular sites where the action is organized? What are they like?</p> <p>What social worlds are present and active?</p> <p>What social worlds are present and implicated or not present but implicated?</p> <p>Are there any worlds absent that you might have expected to be there? Why?</p>	<p>pursue these sites of silence?</p> <p>What might feel intrusive to ask about?</p> <p>What might be dangerous to name?</p>
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### Appendix H: Messy Situational Map



Fig. H: Messy Situational Map

### Appendix I: Ordered Situational Map

<b>Table X. Ordered Situational Map Sample Community Stakeholders</b>	
<b>Individual Human Elements/Actors</b>	<b>Nonhuman Elements/Actors</b>
Researchers	Grants
Community partners, adult and youth participants/staff	Research data collection methods (instruments, surveys, etc.)
Elected officials (city councilors and mayor)	Academic Publications, research reports
Youth workers - service providers	Conference Presentations
School teachers	Timelines
Grassroots Advocacy coalition community members	Academic and funding pressures
Staff and leaders from hospitals, community health centers	Community Centers
Faith-based organizations, networks, and coalition members, leaders	Curriculum, resources, support.
Community partners - allies	Payment paperwork (ID, parent consent)
Political leaders from the federal, state, and local level - affiliated with government	Systems, standards, policies
Poor, working class, non-English speakers, immigrants (BIPOC)	Fair Housing Assessments, zoning policies, environmental justice campaigns
Private Corporations	University Institutional Review board (IRB)
<b>Collective Human Elements/Actors</b>	<b>Implications/Silent Actors/Actants</b>
Community Based Organization (CBO) staff	Youth of color staff, participants, community residents
Universities	White researchers about their white privilege and compliance with white supremacy
Political Institutions (federal and municipal policymaking institutions)	Universities that extract knowledge from communities by focusing on outcomes and not being transparent, communicative, or attentive to community stakeholders' concerns, priorities can lead to lack of trust and burning bridges of future collaborations.
Schools	Universities focusing on providing "support" but community stakeholders feel "minimized" given the ways community-generated ideas are reduced to academic boundaries and restrictions.
Neighborhoods	BIPOC youth and families that faith-based organizations serve who have inequitable access to resources, education, knowledge, etc.



Healthcare system	Institutions create harm and contribute to causing DEATH
Community Health Centers and Hospitals	Pharmaceutical companies' injecting nuclear drugs to BIPOC and not being held accountable. Criminal justice system normalizing these acts of violence and racially profiling BIPOC for substance use.
Pharmacies and Pharmaceutical companies	University staff and leaders making decisions that impact the lives fo BIPOC - gatekeeping medicine from the Black Panther Clinic, prioritizing social status, power, and profit over people's lives.
Faith-based organizations, networks, coalitions	Policymaking institutions are not held accountable to ensure it's community-driven and community needs are met
Political leaders from the federal, state, and local level - affiliated with government	University researchers not interrogating their privilege, the ways their degree and status can lead to coercion and power imbalances when working with community folx - not valuing their expertise
Private Corporations	Youth of color staff, participants, community residents experiencing challenges with completing payment paperwork and also having delayed payments
	Institutions can be systems of power and oppression - can provide opportunities but also oppress people and gatekeep resources - you don't belong here, your expertise and knowledge don't matter...
<b>Discursive Constructions of Individual and/or Collective Human Actors</b>	<b>Discursive Constructions of Nonhuman Actants</b>
Researchers: "to gain a better understanding" of a phenomenon is not sufficient, is not enough, and it is not aligned with community priorities.	Research as a superior form of knowledge production to gain credibility, legitimization, and access to opportunities, social capital
Subtle oppression: "power over/determining priorities/what for? nobody read report/withholding knowledge/resources/manipulation of mind/setting attention"	Timelines as important tools of efficiency to get things done
University offers a facade of "opportunities" through partnership, but it fails to share power and give people agency. The university fails to listen, and learn about community's vision/goals/priorities	In the face of disappointment, structural violence, lack of trust, dehumanization, silencing, and experiencing harm as a result of being part of these partnerships, the only way out is for community stakeholders to be autonomous, self-reliant, and become "their own researchers"
University does not care about the vision of the people and making things impactful - they don't ask CBO staff about their vision and how they can help them get there.	Acts of refusal and treading lightly.

Colonial timelines where relationships are not prioritized (although they serve as foundation of partnership)	Walk the talk - actions speak more than words
Be skeptical of university actors enacting oppression and offering opportunities that are not aligned with CBO's vision - inequitable allocation of funding	Power imbalance exists already in the way resources are allocated between universities and CBOs - this needs to be changed
Discourse of CBPR: sustained partnership that's actionable and addresses issues identified by community	Transformations will require the support of all allied organizations and members including universities
Discourse of relational power: exerting power over, establishing authority, control, even within POC folx of different education, class, and social status	Faith-based organizations play a role supporting communities to achieve health equity - connecting them to valuable resources and education - in this example, interviewee described the ways churches were sites of community violence and gangs, collaboration and partnership supported with meeting church needs including HIV AIDS, heart disease, chronic health conditions, risk factors, etc.
University offers a facade of "opportunities" through partnerships, but it fails to share power and give people agency. The university fails to listen, and support community's vision/goals/priorities	Chronic illness - hypertension, heart disease,
Everyone is impacted! No one is exempt from academic and funding structural pressures and tensions	Research as a superior form of knowledge production to gain credibility, legitimization, and access to opportunities, social capital
CBPR is a facade that "makes you feel good" but is NOT Authentic	People shouldn't get discouraged by these money issues - the important focus here is how to change conditions of community
Inequitable allocation of funding, problems have to do everything with money. Not getting paid after working for 2 months. Not getting paid ENOUGH for the work completed. Not being able to work because you have to present a bunch of paperwork	Desire to make changes but same issues keep happening in multiple CBPR projects
Researchers have to be prepared to negotiate these gatekeeping mechanisms to ensure EVERYONE can be part of CBPR projects in academia	
Community folx gotta speak up and advocate for themselves - people don't know about your struggle	
CBPR is TOO RIGID. Not all stakeholders can be involved in all stages of the research.	
Politics are problematic! Institutions like universities are sites of problems, trauma, debt,	

gatekeeping, etc. enact oppression that can affect people negatively like having wages withheld and gatekeeping opportunities for who gets the best medicine, whose credited for founding CBPR, whose voices are uplifted, etc.	
CBPR/YPAR "They're just - It's trash" I haven't seen one like pulling together. I'm trying to look for things and find something, but maybe it's creating something, but I don't know I'm seeing all these things and I'm trying to see if there was something"	
Universities enact structural violence by extracting community stakeholders' knowledge without enacting commitments to support community stakeholders' priorities. "So like all of these systems like working behind our backs, taking from us, and then partnering, and moving on. I'm just like, what are they doing!?! and it's just weird, and it feels awkward, 'cause I'm like, do you really care about me?... I guess you didn't really care about me, like you cared about me to an extent that you could like used me."	
Discourse: Interlocking systems arranges institutions and individuals to "love their titles and thrive off of other people's oppression. If they didn't have these systems, these people wouldn't have jobs"	
People in power and privilege failed to recognize how this status and power is maintained at the expense of the oppression and suffering of poor, working class, immigrant, non-English speaking BIPOC communities	
People in power and privilege telling lies to community grassroots advocacy groups	
<b>Political/Economic Elements</b>	<b>Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements</b>
CBOs need forms of legitimization and credibility to thrive (researchers proving evidence-based strategies for all youth, etc.)	Cultivating, building, and sustaining relationships is so key - foundation
Political Clinton Era - welfare policies of dehumanization and well strapping	Gaining a critical awareness of our dominant identities and how it is different from the populations of interest
history of white supremacy, anti-Blackness	Oppressed communities - not worthy, significant, or relevant?
Predatory recruitment of BIPOC folx into Clinical Trials	No mechanisms of accountability - people in power always get away

Research-driven centers trying to check-boxes with educational workshops in the community of topics that not necessarily align with community's interests and needs	CBPR as bidirectional - shared power and interest
Politics - maintaining relationships of power and status quo. Not willing to leverage power and privilege to change power dynamics and support oppressed communities' interests, needs, liberation	CHNA as a tool to learn about community's needs and interests
Neoliberal capitalist economy	Clarifying the WHAT, purpose - not write grants just to create a facade but what is the actual change and transformation at hand that will take place and working towards?
Structural Racism	Caring for Julio - the plant - cutting out all the dying parts to thrive - let go
	lobbyist' people with money, power and influence - there's only so much we can do
	Organizers stay in the movement while researchers leave.
<b>Temporal Elements</b>	<b>Spatial Elements</b>
Getting paid, getting paid enough for the work completed, and getting hired takes time!	People in power speak words creating a facade, a fake idea of their commitment with communities
Completing all the gatekeeping forms and documents takes time - all these politics are outrageous	Electric plants - private corporations expanding projects that disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities
Invisible aspects of dissatisfaction with partnerships with researchers	Invisible aspects of building transparent and collaborative relationships
Building relationships takes time	COVID-challenges on implementing workshops
CBPR requires prior work and commitment to build trusting and authentic relationships over time	
<b>Major Issues/Debates (Usually Contested)</b>	<b>Related Discourses (Historical, Narrative, and/or Visual)</b>
Universities enact subtle and invisible forms of oppression when partnering with CBOs. These include extracting information, hiding information and truths from people	Slavery (shackles and chains around the ankles and neck and wrist type of oppression)
Universities enacts harm towards communities and use communities as tools to reinforce power over/status quo	2.21 version of oppression. 'It's shackles around your mind, people putting the light, where they want to put the light"
Collaborations between university and community do not involve everyone in the community and do not provide any benefits, actionable impact (no knowledge gained, no	Reparations

tools developed together, no contribution to community's vision)	
Involving people most impacted will only get things better	White Supremacy Pillars in America's history and social fabric
Ivory tower is NOT all knowing, answers are already HERE	Neoliberal capitalist economy
Getting paid enough, getting paid on time, getting hired, completing hiring paperwork (ID, parental consent form, proof legal citizenship status)	Structural Racism
Young people working to meet top-down adult board members' expectations, timelines, and guidelines	Violence enacted by scientific research institutions historically in BIPOC communities
University institutions enacting violence - pushing community folk out of the system if trying to challenge and disrupt power dynamics and oppression - coopting and delegitimizing community's input to the foundation of CBPR and advancement of social change	Civil Rights Movement and Black Power in the 60s - Malcolm X - Rising Black Muslim, the Bourgeoisie Negroes from DC
Tools of gatekeeping, control, and dehumanizing (less than)	Urban Renewal - gentrification -
CBPR is TOO RIGID	1968 - Medicaid and Medicare created in 1965
Research institutions taking advantage of collaborations to advance their own agenda and undermine the agency of collaborators. Example, Cancer Research Center recruiting participants to clinical trials from faith-based alliance/network.	"nobody is going to control me"
Community stakeholders refusing to manipulate and prioritize research over the relationship: I can't do that.	Julio - plant that was dying and cut out all the dead parts - the plant blossomed - how are we caring for Julio and getting rid of all the bad stuff?
Community stakeholder speaking up and challenging: We always have to strive to do better. We can't become complacent in this space. Interrogating purpose of work and WHAT IT IS exactly that we're doing and focusing energy - trying to stay focused and transparent.	Clinton era policies of weal stripping
People in power not willing to put their money where their mouth is. Not willing to relinquish and give up power and status quo	
CBPR is not CBPR when university gets the most funds - why are we recreating imbalanced power dynamics? shouldn't we change this?	

### Appendix J: Relational Maps

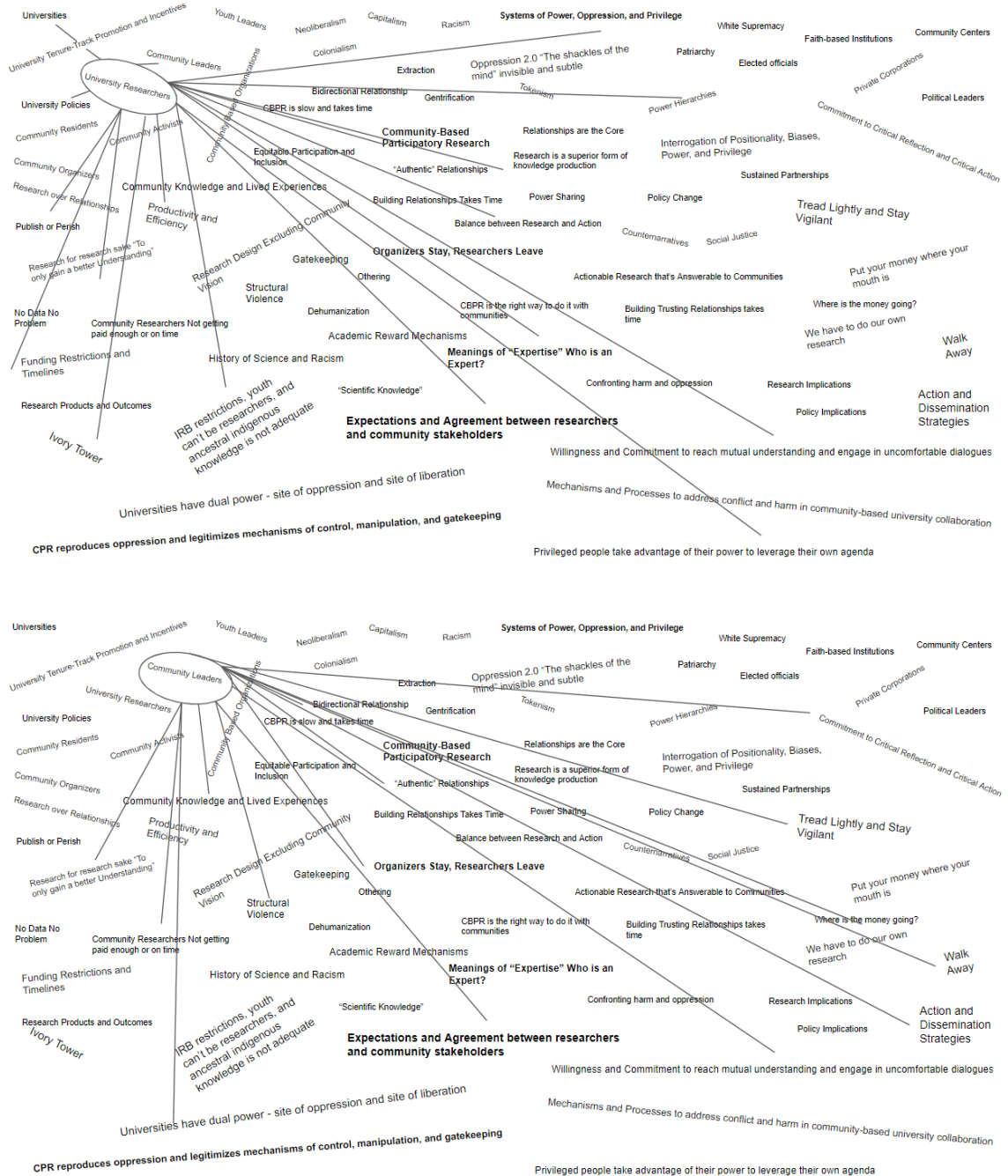
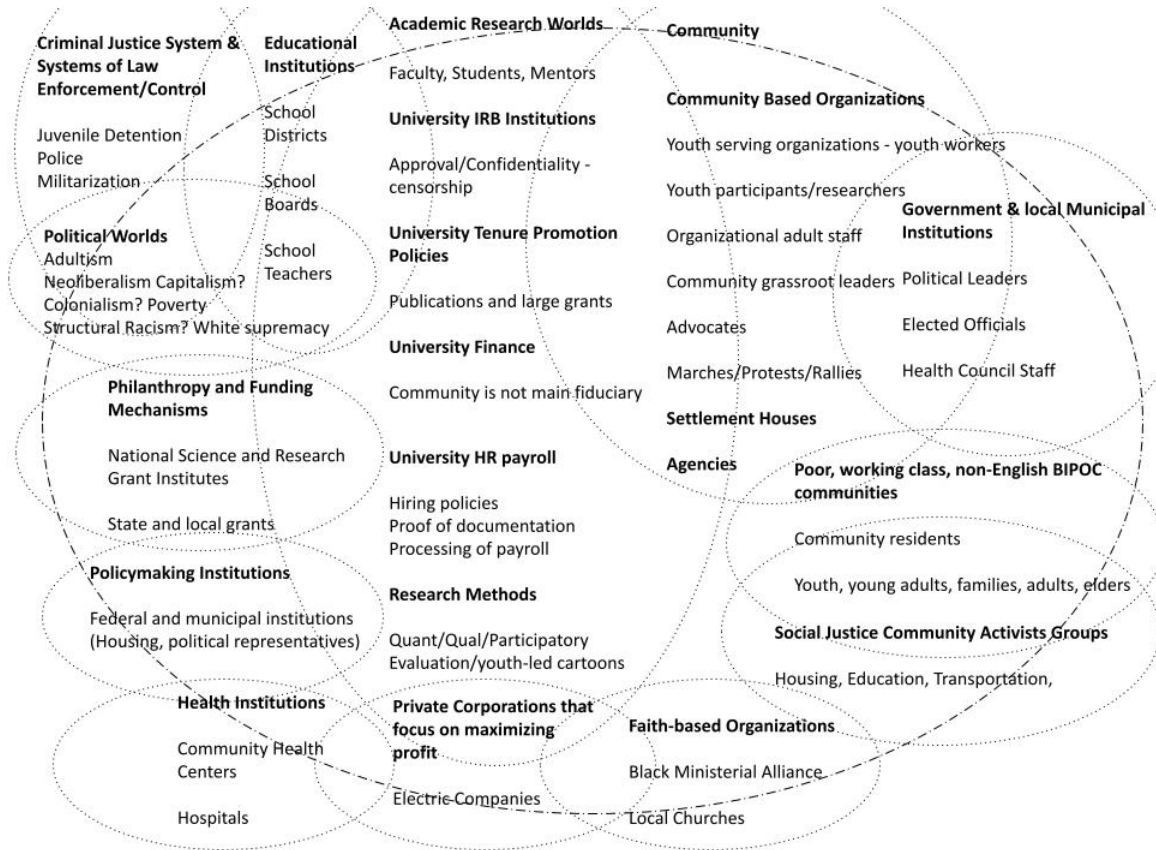


Fig. J: Messy Situational Maps

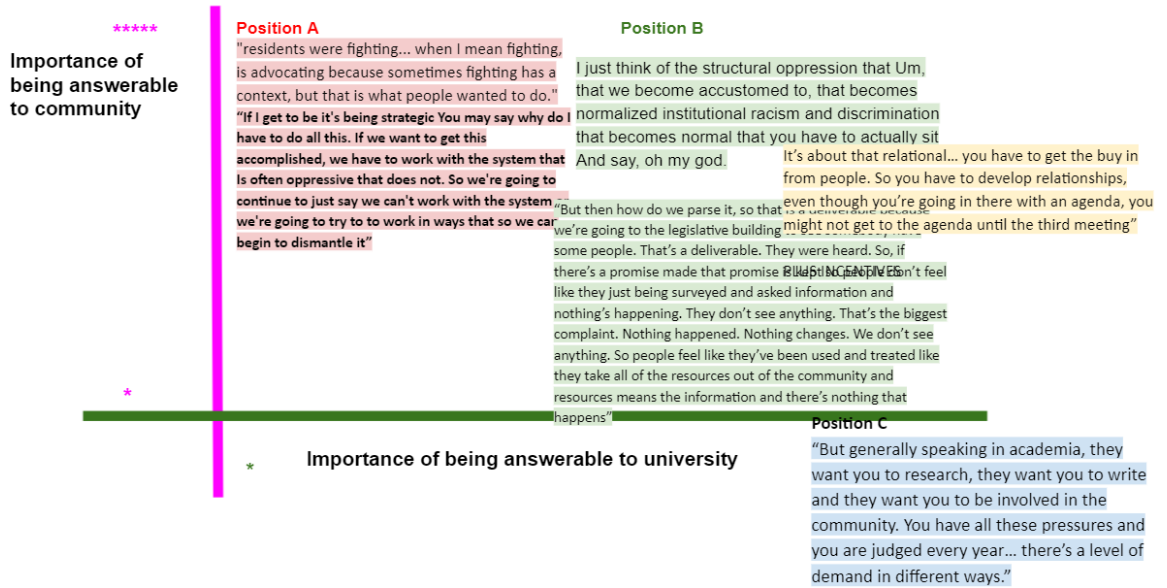
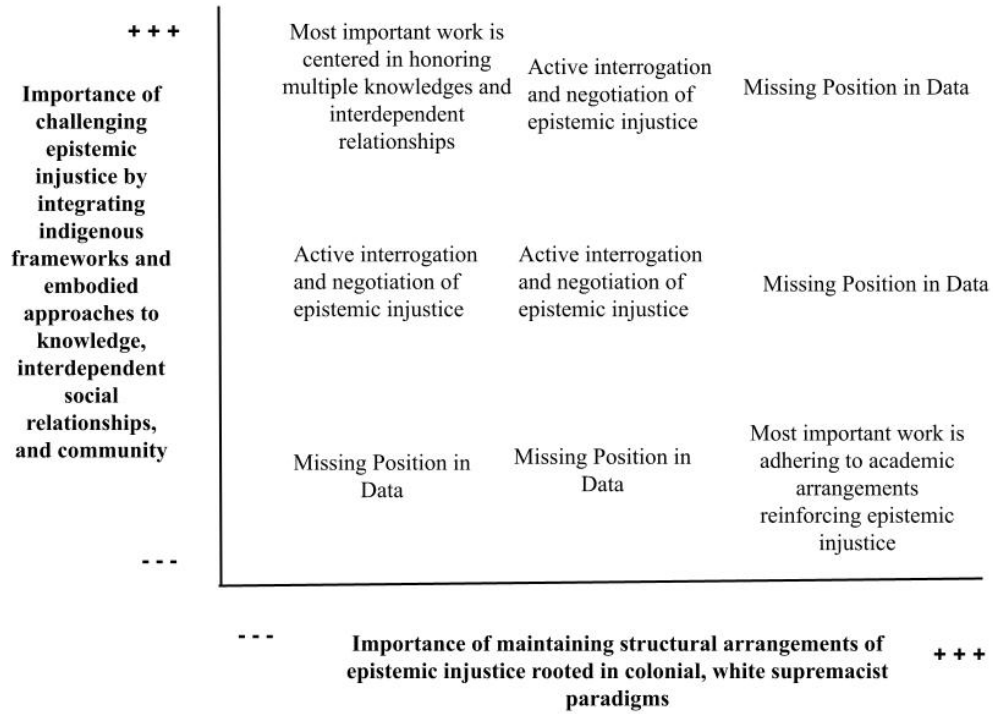
**Appendix K: Social Worlds/Arena Map**

**Social Worlds/Arenas Map**



**Figure K: Social Worlds/Arenas Map**

### Appendix L: Positional Maps





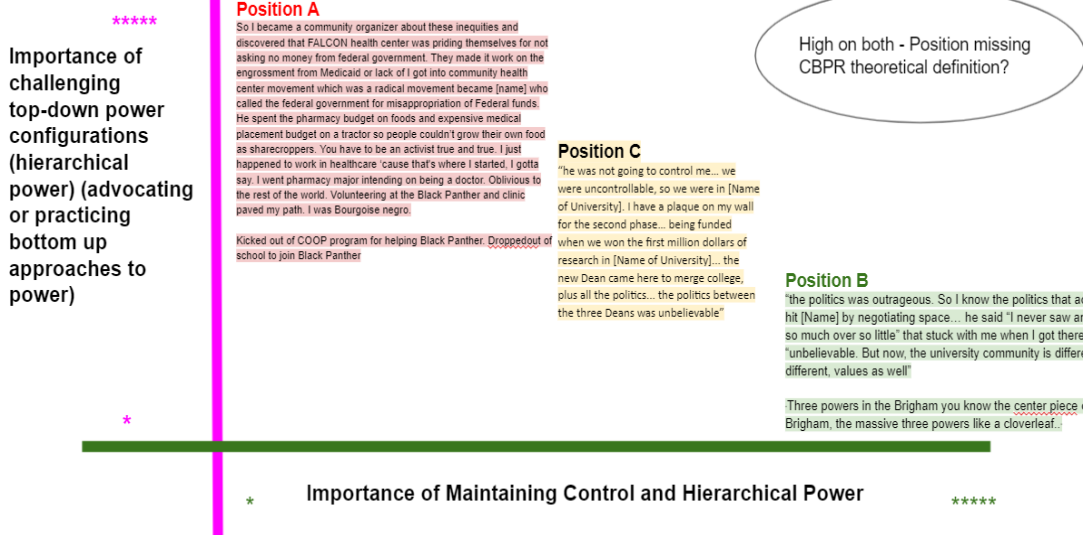


Figure L: Positional Maps

### **Appendix M: Paper 3 Email Recruitment Template**

Subject: Greetings and Invitation to Participate in Zoom Mtg (Respondent Validation of Dissertation Research)

Dear [name],

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well.

It was great talking with you last year via Zoom. Thank you again for taking the time to share with me your thoughts and experiences on contesting systems of power and oppression in your community-based participatory research collaborations. I greatly appreciate your support!

As a final step of my dissertation research, I'm scheduling individual zoom meetings (60min/each) with all university faculty and community stakeholders who participated in the interviews last year to share research findings and provide any additional feedback or comments.

If you're interested in participating, you will be asked to share your thoughts and reflections on the summary of the research results in the zoom meeting. These findings are related to the concept of oppression, power, and social justice in the context of community and academic collaborations. You will be asked to describe connections of the findings to social justice and also provide additional comments or feedback to ensure the findings capture your experiences. All of your responses will be de-identified and remain anonymous.

This research has no benefits for you as a participant. As a gesture of appreciation for your time participating in the interview, you will receive a \$50 e-gift card upon the completion of the zoom meeting.

The confidentiality of all participants will be respected throughout the process. This research has received approval from BU IRB. Research results will be shared upon completion of the research process.

[insert here dates and times]

Feel free to get in touch if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your interest, time, and support!

Sincerely,

**Catalina Tang Yan** 趙嘉蓮

She/Her/Hers

Doctoral Candidate | Boston University School of Social Work

[catatang@bu.edu](mailto:catatang@bu.edu)

## **Appendix N: Paper 3 Informed Consent Script**

Hello,

My name is Catalina Tang Yan, I'm a doctoral student at the School of Social Work at Boston University, and I'm conducting research which focuses on examining power, oppression, and social justice in Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) collaborations. I want to learn more about your understanding and experiences with systems of oppression and power in the context of community academic collaborations. I will use the information that we learn from you to help researchers and community stakeholders better understand the ways in which they can engage in authentic partnerships to create social change.

### **What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in the project, I will ask you to participate in one in-person or videoconference individual interview. The interview will last approximately sixty to ninety minutes. During the interview I will ask for your feedback on the findings of my second paper dissertation and your perceptions on social justice and the role of CBPR. The interviews will be audio taped so that we can be accurate with the information that we collect from you. You may choose not to participate. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. You are not obligated to participate in this conversation. Additionally, upon the completion of the interview, I will share a summary of findings in an electronic and hard copy format with you via email or in person. I will invite you to provide individual feedback on the summary of findings via email and also in a group remotely (via zoom) with other interview participants remotely or in person. You are not obligated to participate in this conversation.

### **Can anything bad happen to me from being in this project?**

The main risk of allowing me to use and store information for this research is a potential loss of privacy. All of the information that I collect during interviews will be kept in a safe place, and only my advisor and I will be able to see it. I may use the information that I collect in papers that I write or during presentations at a conference, or in grant proposals, but I will never use your name. For the purposes of quality improvement and safety, the Boston University Institutional Review Board may review the study records.

### **Right to decline or withdraw**

If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions that I ask during the interview, you do not have to answer them. Also, if, at any time, you choose not to continue participating in this project, for any reason, they may stop. Should anything be mentioned regarding harm being caused to or by you, I will connect you with an adult staff at the community organization who will be able to assist you in connecting with the necessary resources.

### **Will I benefit from being in the project?**

There are no benefits for you for taking part in this research. There is no cost for you to participate in this project, but your participation may help us understand more about the experiences of researchers and community stakeholders in community and academic collaborations.

### **Compensation**

If you agree to participate you will receive a gift card of \$50 USD upon the completion of the interview.

### **If I have questions, whom should I contact?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the project you can call Catalina Tang Yan at 857-413-8775 [catatang@bu.edu](mailto:catatang@bu.edu). You may also contact Linda Sprague Martinez, my advisor at 617-358-0782 [lsmarti@bu.edu](mailto:lsmarti@bu.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University IRB directly at 617-358-6115.

**Do you have any questions? Would you agree to participate in this study? Thank you!**

### **Appendix O: Paper 3 Interview Protocol**

- 1. Overview of study and verbal consent process**
  - a. Do you have any questions? Do I have your consent to participate in this study and to be audio/video recorded?
  
- 2. Overview of dissertation paper 2 findings**
  - a. Researcher presents a summary of findings of dissertation paper 2 using screen sharing feature via Zoom to illustrate emerging themes via presentation slideshow.
  
- 3. Soliciting feedback and questions**
  - a. What stood out to you? What are some key takeaways?
    - i. Probes: what are some specific themes that resonated with you?
  - b. Think about your personal narrative and reflections on Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and interlocking systems of power and oppression that you shared at the previous interview
    - i. Are they captured accurately? What is missing? What would you like to change, add, or highlight?
    - ii. What are some questions that you have?
  
- 4. Examining understandings of social justice**
  - a. What is your understanding(s) of social justice?
    - i. Probes: What does social justice mean to you? How would you define it?
  
- 5. Exploring the role of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in promoting or hindering Justice**
  - a. What is the role of CBPR in promoting or hindering social justice?
    - i. Probes: In what specific ways/examples CBPR can promote or hinder social justice?
  
- 6. Assessing how presentation of findings inform interviewee's practice**
  - a. How is this presentation of findings informing or changing the way you approach your community practice, research, teaching, advocacy, policymaking, activism, and organizing, if any?
    - i. Probes: How did the findings of this research validate, reaffirm, or challenge the ways you approach your work? What are some examples in which you may apply some of the information shared with you today?
  
- 7. Additional comments or questions**
  - a. Do you have any additional comments, thoughts, feelings, or questions you believe are important and you'd like to share?

## **Appendix P: Paper 3 Thematic Analysis Codebook**

- 1. Achieving Social Justice & CBPR**
  1. Barriers
    1. Commodification of relationships
    2. Research funding
    3. Tenure & productivity
    4. Academic structures
    5. Lack of meaningful discussion on power
    6. Mismatch of community and academia
    7. Lack of interest in changing systems
    8. Lack of training
    9. Too much talk no action
  2. Enactments of Resistance
    1. Awareness of power dynamics
    2. CBPR identifies oppression to redress inequity
    3. CBPR principles alignment
    4. Centering community
    5. Challenging and redefining
      1. Objectivity and expertise
      2. Reciprocity and relationships
      3. Time
    6. Challenging institutions
    7. Positionality and critical reflexivity
    8. Taking care of people
    9. Transparent and uncomfortable conversations
- 2. Hindering**
  1. Exclusion
  2. Power hierarchies
- 3. Promoting**
  1. Community participation
  2. Empowerment
- 4. Embodiment**
  1. Heart
  2. Intellectual
- 5. Respondent Validation**
  1. Areas of affirmation
  2. Areas of further inquiry
  3. Areas of revision
- 6. Social Justice Definitions**
  1. Commitment
  2. Context specific
  3. Do no harm
  4. Empowerment
  5. Equitable
    1. Distribution
    2. Outcomes
    3. Procedural
    4. Recognition
  6. Structural changes
  7. Survival and thriving

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**Curriculum Vitae**

