

Community-Based Participatory Research as a Tool for Improved Understanding and Practice of Newcomer Integration

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Abstract

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is used as a community-engaged research practice because of its inclusion of community perspectives. The participatory approach enhances validity of community-engaged research, facilitates effective work with communities, and acknowledges accurate understanding of community characteristics. We sought to understand CBPR within the field of immigrant integration. For this study, we conducted three focus groups with immigration researchers and practitioners at two international conferences held in the United States in 2016. These venues were selected for their inclusion of both practitioners and researchers interested in or actively working on immigrant integration policies and practices. They also provided a sample inclusive of researchers from academic, public, nonprofit, and private institutions and practitioners from nonprofit and public sectors. The findings yielded information on challenges, opportunities, and best practices for university-community partnerships to utilize CBPR in improving immigrant integration.

Keywords: immigration, immigrant integration, welcoming city, community-based participatory research (CBPR)



Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is often used as a community-engaged research practice because of its inclusion of community perspectives (Archer-Kuhn & Grant, 2014). This approach is in part a response to the sentiment that any gaps between research and practice may result in irrelevant theory and invalid practice (Anderson, Herriot, & Hodgkinson, 2001; Schiele & Krummaker, 2011). Schiele and Krummaker (2011) argue that because practitioners and researchers have distinct worldviews, researchers often produce information that practitioners cannot use. CBPR attempts to bridge this gap by requiring members of the two groups to work together to identify needs and develop applied solutions to addressing those needs.

Perhaps the most important aspect of CBPR is that it endeavors to avoid the pitfalls of “parachute” research. Parachute research

occurs when researchers who are not members or residents of the communities they are studying enter a community for a short period and make incomplete determinations about their work or findings because they do not have full knowledge of the lived experiences of those who reside in those communities long-term. Because they are not invested, literally or figuratively, in the daily lives of those communities, the long-term implications of such research for the people and communities involved may compromise the potential for others, including local researchers, to provide useful or even compelling research. Consequently, communities may experience increasing difficulty in studying areas of great importance because segments of society no longer trust any type of investigation or investigator (Castleden, Sloan Morgan, & Lamb, 2012). Smith, Schuch, and de Hernandez (2016) define CBPR as

the scientific inquiry conducted in communities in which community members, persons affected by condition or issues under study, and other key stakeholders in the community's health can be full participants in each phase of the work: conception—design—conduct—analysis—interpretation—communication of results. (p. 129)

Similarly, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2009) describes CBPR as

a potent approach to conducting research with—rather than on—communities. CBPR builds capacity at the same time that it collaboratively studies locally relevant issues and concerns. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change.

The purpose of this article is to examine, through the lens of CBPR, how various community stakeholders, intentionally or unintentionally, are utilizing this technique to inform the study of immigrant integration practices. To uncover the utility of CBPR in studying immigrant integration, and therefore impacting the practice of immigrant integration, we examine the perspectives of immigration practitioners (those who work with and on behalf of immigrants) and researchers (those who study directly and indirectly immigrant populations and immigrant-receiving communities) who have been involved in this work throughout the United States. Specifically, our focus in this case is on the research and practice perspectives of those involved, directly or indirectly, with Welcoming America and its Welcoming Cities member network. Welcoming America, a leader in the welcoming movement, is a global nonprofit organization based in Decatur, Georgia, in metropolitan Atlanta, that organizes a network of local community-based organizations, city and county municipal governments, and state organizations (Housel, Saxen, & Wahrlab, 2018; Huang & Liu, 2018; Kim, Levin, & Botchwey, 2018; McDaniel, 2018; McDaniel, Rodriguez, & Kim, 2017; McDaniel, Rodriguez, & Wang, 2019; Rodriguez, McDaniel, & Ahebee, 2018). Welcoming America has spearheaded the welcoming movement to help government, business, and nonprofit leaders and agen-

cies promote, plan, and implement immigrant integration. The aim of Welcoming America is to make communities more inclusive across the nation and the world. Welcoming America has made the cornerstone of their organization the Welcoming Cities and Counties Initiative, commonly referred to as “Welcoming Cities.” Currently, Welcoming Cities includes around 100 affiliates as part of the initiative, and each is using this framework to implement its own strategies to improve job creation, economic growth, and social cohesion in local communities.

Through a CBPR university–community partnership with Welcoming America, we identify challenges and opportunities to the study and practice of immigrant integration and the role of CBPR in mitigating the former and advancing the latter. To do this, we gathered original data via three Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved focus groups at two convenings of immigrant practitioners, researchers, and policymakers, hosted in 2016 by Welcoming America and its regional affiliate, the Welcoming Economies Global Network. The article proceeds as follows: We describe the literature pertaining to CBPR; examples of its implementation in multiple disciplines; and the challenges, limitations, and opportunities noted in the literature. We then describe the methodology used in this study and the long-term CBPR partnership among the authors (university-based faculty), Welcoming America, and Welcoming Cities affiliates. Next, we describe the findings from the focus group discussions and then offer a broader discussion. The article concludes by extracting insights and providing recommendations for practitioners and researchers, and ultimately for policymakers.

Community-Based Participatory Research as a Methodological Framework of Community-Engaged Scholarship

To make research more relevant to practice and theory building, practitioners and researchers have sought ways to reconcile their different worldviews by working together to identify needs and develop applied solutions to addressing those needs. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is one example of an established method through which this may be accomplished. Building on the definitions of CBPR

provided in the Introduction, in this section we describe CBPR's use and implementation in research settings to further contextualize our subsequent discussion regarding researcher and practitioner perspectives on such work.

Knowledge production has often been relegated to scientists and researchers, excluding practitioners in the field who can better inform research practices. This often results in a disconnect between the ideal and reality. Consequently, in the social sciences, traditional research is at times perceived as a means by which to test irrelevant phenomena, and the results turn out to be unusable for real-life practitioners (Golden-Biddle et al., 2003). This disconnect has led some researchers to warn of a gap between practice and research that may result in invalid practice and irrelevant theory (Anderson et al., 2001; Schiele & Krummacker, 2011). However, as Sandmann (2017) observes, recent research has evolved from past paradigms and has developed a "sophistication in research design and methods that enables deeper and more rigorous exploration of outstanding questions in community engagement," which "reflects the evolution of methodologies across the conduct of scholarly thought and practice" (p. 1). Furthermore, methodologies are facilitating the "co-creation of knowledge through democratic practices with and across their full range of participants: institutions, community members, faculty members, students, and administrators" (pp. 1–2). Sandmann (2017) further notes that CBPR is becoming a mainstay, although it is not always conducted with "authentic community engagement"—which speaks to the limitations of planning and implementing rigorous community-based and community-engaged research.

The utilization of CBPR is a natural fit for community–university partnerships because it relies on trusting and respectful relationships, which deepen levels of collaboration, based on mutual interests because of transparent and authentic communication and respect for diverse perspectives and organizational orientations (Archer-Kuhn & Grant, 2014). Programs built along these lines widen theoretical knowledge through positional knowledge obtained through experience—experience that is not always imparted through strict academic literature. Conversely, they also help to inform and improve practice knowledge by testing

academic theories. By valuing researchers and practitioners equally, these partnerships deepen researchers' sensitivity and increase their ability to reflect on the tasks and how their values and orientation inform their decision-making. This level of exchange and deepening understanding further informs coinquiry and allows partners to move beyond surface-level goals and build a path for continual partnerships (Banks et al., 2014).

CBPR's use as a methodology in community-engaged research has grown in recent years, emanating from many disciplines. This methodology has particularly been used in the fields of health care, public health, and understanding and addressing issues of health disparities and health equity. However, most CBPR research acknowledges the inherent necessity for multidisciplinary partnerships in cultivating a robust CBPR team (Arrieta, Hanks, & Bryan, 2008). Using their CBPR work on health disparities among vulnerable populations in Charlotte, North Carolina, Tapp and Dulin (2010) explain CBPR as an emerging model of research to enhance research practices by involving key stakeholders, including community members. They, and other colleagues, further describe their CBPR work on improving health outcomes in a Hispanic population, relating that a CBPR framework was crucial in identifying health conditions that negatively affect the Charlotte Hispanic community. This framework has led to developing a community-based intervention that improves overall community health, along with disseminating findings to all stakeholders involved (Dulin, Tapp, Smith, Hernandez, & Furuseth, 2011). Their work has developed "innovative and replicable strategies to improve community health in disadvantaged communities such as newly arrived Hispanic immigrants" (Dulin, Tapp, Smith, Hernandez, Coffman, et al., 2012), as well as a broader understanding of the social determinants of health outcomes for such populations (Schuch et al., 2014). Another example is work by Arrieta et al. (2017), who describe their experiences at a university in the U.S. South in forming a CBPR team to address and alleviate health disparities. CBPR has also been implemented in community–university collaborative work on translational research education programs (Williamson et al., 2016), in attempts to identify new approaches to primary ovarian insufficiency (Cooper et

al., 2011), in efforts to improve emergency preparedness and disaster resilience among high-risk populations (Gagnon, O’Sullivan, Lane, & Paré, 2016), and in efforts to address systemic engagement by universities to work with communities in finding systemic approaches to community change (McNall, Barnes-Najor, Brown, Doberneck, & Fitzgerald, 2015). CBPR has also been used in archaeology (Atalay, 2012). Further work has described the pedagogy of including students in community-engaged work such as on a CBPR team (Carbone & Ware, 2017).

Challenges that come with the use of CBPR as a methodology include the lack of tangible and intangible resources, like funding or access to needed groups. Similarly, there is a lack of knowledge of “how to best access evidence, critically evaluate it, and best translate it for the use of [end users]” (Bellamy et al., 2008, p. 57). Others have stated that due to lack of knowledge, skills, abilities, or simply training and supervision, some actions may be too difficult, complicated, or technical for all parties to engage in (Bellamy et al., 2008).

Israel, Schulz, Parker, and Becker’s (1998) in-depth review of research that had employed CBPR identified three major types of challenges CBPR faces: developing the partnerships it requires; methodological issues; and broader social, political, economic, institutional, and cultural issues. Table 1 lists the major challenges and recommendations that Israel, Schulz, Parker, and Becker (1998) identified for each of these three areas.

Based on the findings of Israel, Schulz, Parker, and Becker (1998) and other research, D’Alonzo (2010) has laid out 11 strategies for building community partnerships utilizing CBPR. Her aim is that by unpacking each of these strategies, community well-being will be strengthened because practitioners and academics can work together in more efficient, strategic, and mutually reinforcing ways. We offer a partial list of these strategies: involve the community in identifying the research questions; recognize considerations related to the community setting; recognize the likelihood of conflicts between researchers, practitioners, and target communities; and prepare for commitment and training issues among practitioners.

We argue that these specific strategies are especially applicable for CBPR projects that seek to promote immigrant integra-

tion. Immigrant integration is “a process wherein immigrants and the communities in which they settle—both the individuals and institutions—mutually adapt to one another” (Jiménez, 2011, p. 4). Because CBPR promotes social and economic justice by engaging current and former disenfranchised communities and institutions into the research process (Kennedy & Monsen, 2016), it holds an inherent appeal for those who see research as having a social mission to improve the world (Price, Kready, Mogul, Cohen-Filipic, & Davey, 2012). Many projects in the area of immigrant integration apply facets of CBPR, sometimes without using the term, as a way to level the power dynamics between the researcher and practitioners and the people and communities they serve. Such a participatory approach enhances the validity of CBPR, since it facilitates the work with and on behalf of communities across differences (Viswanathan et al., 2004).

CBPR is also a strategy to cultivate long-term research partnerships among researchers and practitioners within local communities, rather than relying on parachute research conducted by researchers who are not members or residents of the communities they are studying—which alludes to the challenge of cultivating trust among communities and researchers. In many cases, such research may be the only practical method for better understanding particular problems and devising solutions to overcome such problems—such as immigrant and refugee integration in the United States.

The issues and challenges of parachute research are found throughout the social sciences. Several examples are discussed below. As Castleden et al. (2012) observe regarding the study of indigenous populations,

social scientists (including geographers) and health researchers have built careers studying various aspects of Indigenous peoples’ lives. While it is reasonable to assert that positive, relevant, and useful research outcomes do occur in Indigenous research, and geographers have certainly contributed to some of the “good stories” about researchers that circulate in Indigenous communities, those stories are certainly outweighed by the “bad stories.” (p. 161)

Table 1. Challenges and Opportunities for Cultivating Community-Based Research

Developing Community Research Partnerships	
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and respect • Distribution of power and control • Differences in perspectives, priorities, assumptions • Funding • Different emphases on task and process • Time frame for study • Who represents community and what is “community” 	<p>Opportunities/Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly developed operating norms • Identification of common goals and objectives • Democratic leadership • Presence of community organizer • Involvement of support staff/team • Researcher role, skills, and competencies • Prior history of positive working relationships • Identification of key community members
Methodological Issues	
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific quality of research • Proving intervention success • Ability to fully specify all aspects of research up front • Achieving balance between research and action • Time demands • Interpreting/integrating data from multiple sources 	<p>Opportunities/Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodological flexibility and different criteria for judging quality • Involvement of community members in research activities • Conduct community assessment/diagnosis • Development of jointly agreed-upon research principles • Conduct educational forums and training opportunities • Involve partners in the publishing process • Create interdisciplinary research teams
Broader Social, Political, Economic, Institutional, and Cultural Issues	
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing institutional demands • Risks associated with achieving tenure and promotion in academia • Expectations/demands of funders • Political/social dynamics within the community • Deterrents to institutional, community, social change 	<p>Opportunities/Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad-based support: top down and bottom up • Provision of financial and other incentives • Actions promoting policy changes
<p><i>Note.</i> Adapted from “Review of Community-based Research: Assessing Partnership Approaches to Improve Public Health” by B. A. Israel, A. J. Schulz, E. A. Parker, and A. B. Becker, 1998, <i>Annual Review of Public Health</i>, 19, 173–202.</p>	

They also observe that parachute researchers may collect data at a time they choose, convenient for them, and subsequently exit with minimal communication before, during, or after their study.

Regarding an example of “parachute” research from medical research, Heymann, Liu, and Lillywhite (2016) note that

these practices have been pejoratively labeled “parachute” research: fully equipped research teams from other countries arrive at the site where research is needed, conduct their research independently of others, and then leave. Parachute researchers reduce the effectiveness of emergency responses by neglecting to share their data with the public health teams from the affected country in which they’re working, while also missing an opportunity to enhance the capacity of host-country scientists, which could help prevent future outbreaks. (p. 1504)

Bastida, Tseng, McKeever, and Jack (2010) provide another example of parachute research and lack of trust by “researched communities,” noting that

it is well established that minority participation in clinical trials, epidemiologic research, and intervention studies have lagged behind that of the majority population. This lack of participation is partly explained by the level of suspicion and mistrust found among minority communities regarding their participation in clinical, medical, or behavioral research. Whether the mistrust is based on actual empirical data, such as the Tuskegee Experiment, or the impressions resulting from “parachute” research when community members feel that their participation only serves the purpose of advancing the researcher’s career, these concerns need to be recognized and addressed within the health promotion and education profession. (p. 16)

With the above context in mind, we now turn to a description of our methodology and data, which is followed by a presentation and discussion of findings

regarding the challenges and opportunities for research about newcomer integration and perspectives on potential best practices from researchers and practitioners regarding the utilization of CBPR in such work.

Methodology and Data

This study itself has employed a CBPR framework. The authors have a long-term relationship with Welcoming America and many Welcoming Cities affiliates across the United States going back to 2013, which has resulted in scholarly output from multiple projects (McDaniel, 2018; McDaniel, Rodriguez, & Kim, 2017; McDaniel, Rodriguez, & Wang, 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2018) as well as pieces for broader public dissemination (Kerr, McDaniel, & Guinan, 2014; McDaniel, 2014, 2016; McDaniel, Rodriguez, & Kim, 2018; Rodriguez, 2016). Through conversations over time with individuals involved with Welcoming America and other organizations promoting strategies for immigrant and refugee integration, and through active participation in Welcoming America events and convenings, the questions regarding ways in which to better plan and implement researcher-practitioner partnerships in local places emerged. Thus, the concept for this study of researcher and practitioner perspectives on the study of newcomer integration developed. It has been driven from the outset by questions emerging from the community of researchers and practitioners about how to more efficiently and strategically study the topic of immigrant and refugee integration, and subsequently more effectively inform its practice. Through partnerships with Welcoming America and the Welcoming Economies Global Network (WE Global Network), we were able to plan and hold a series of focus groups at these organizations’ annual convenings. These convenings were attended by a variety of practitioners and researchers from across the United States and from other countries.

Specifically for this study, we conducted three IRB-approved focus groups at two different international conferences that included immigration researchers and practitioners. Two focus groups were held in April 2016 at Welcoming America’s Welcoming Interactive convening in Atlanta, Georgia. In these, 18 participants gathered, nine participants in each focus group. The third focus group gathered 25 participants at the Welcoming Economies (WE) Global

Network annual convening in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in October 2016. The composition of each focus group was approximately evenly split between self-identified researchers and practitioners. No person was a participant in more than one focus group.

We chose these venues because they targeted and included both practitioners and researchers interested in or actively working on immigrant integration policies and practices. These conferences are also centered on the welcoming movement and how receiving communities can become more welcoming to newcomers. As a result, they provided us with a sample that was inclusive of researchers from academic, public, nonprofit, and private institutions, as well as practitioners from the nonprofit, public, and private sectors. Participants in the conferences and the focus groups have varying levels of practice and research orientation: micro level (individual), mezzo level (communities and/or organizations), and macro level (policymaking). The scope of the organizations that employ participants encompasses local, state, national, and international reach. Some serve primarily economic migrants, and others serve refugees. All had worked on research designed to identify ways to facilitate the integration of immigrants in a society, including both traditional immigrant-receiving destinations like Chicago, New York City, and San Francisco, as well as nontraditional, emerging immigrant-receiving destinations like Atlanta, Charlotte, and Nashville.

The questions we posed in the focus groups were geared toward research about immigrant integration. First, we inquired about participants' target area for practice and research within the welcoming movement. Next, we asked what practitioner or academic outlets they used to gather information about "welcoming." Then we sought their perspectives on challenges and opportunities for the study of newcomer integration. Based on the responses to these questions, we present overall recommendations for ways CBPR may be an effective model for local university-community partnerships to identify effective strategies to remedy the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that focus group participants identified. Indeed, we illustrate that many of the themes emanating from the focus group discussions align with challenges and opportunities for

conducting community-based participatory research the literature has previously identified (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen, et al., 2008).

Perspectives on Challenges of Immigrant Integration Research

We present and discuss the findings in this section through the lens of the multiple *challenges* that emerged as themes across the three focus groups. Participants identified several challenges: conducting research about local integration initiatives; finding a focus for a research topic; collaboration; and dissemination of findings. Understanding the challenges participants identified in their researcher and practitioner involvement with immigrant integration helps to inform *opportunities* for more efficient researcher-practitioner collaboration.

Challenges of Conducting Research About Local Integration Initiatives

One of the primary steps of research is to determine the population to study. In this particular case, it is immigrants and native inhabitants of constructed communities. *Constructed communities* are those where external forces, rather than personal choices, bring people together (Reimers, 2013). Participants in all three focus groups described difficulty recruiting participants for their research studies. One researcher participant remarked, "Just finding respondents was a huge challenge for us. We're fairly well networked with local providers but I was really amazed that it was so hard [to recruit newcomers]" (WE Global Network). Some researcher participants said they had found that communities they wished to study had received a multitude of requests for research (Welcoming Interactive). From the other side, a member of a nonprofit said,

We get five requests [to participate in research] a week or something, and some of them are so labor-intensive on our side that we simply cannot execute them. We're working on a system for prioritizing these requests, but . . . [we always wonder] what's the purpose of the data, how is it ultimately going to benefit [our] client base? (Welcoming Interactive)

Similarly, another practitioner who worked at a nonprofit noted,

Ultimately, at the end of the day, we're judged by whether or not we met our mission, and for us it's serving Latino families. . . . Will we ever see the data? Is it ever going to make Juan or Isabella's life any better at all? If you can't answer that question, we often have to walk away because we have grants that we have to adhere to. (Welcoming Interactive)

This leaves little time for research. One practitioner, working at a community-based nonprofit in Philadelphia, said she found that over the course of 9 years she was "flooded with requests" to participate in research and that she was quite choosy herself about the projects to which she would give her time. Although this participant identified her desire to know that a scholar would be "thoughtful" about a project, another practitioner said that relationships were key. She said that her organization has had less trouble recruiting participants in Philadelphia, where it had operated for a decade, than in other cities. She observed that people

want there to be integrity to the process and you want people to trust that what they say is going to be taken seriously and they're not going to ever hear from you again because God knows that happens a lot. (WE Global Network)

One researcher affiliated with a research university said that she seeks to address the concerns of people she would like to study by (1) offering to volunteer in their offices and (2) giving frequent updates about research:

I do mostly interviews with city officials both elected and appointed but also community advocates working on nonprofits, funders, consulate folks and I do get some of that, like who are you, what do you want from us because oftentimes they feel like we take stuff from them and we're not giving back so I think we as researchers need to be more ethical. I offer and say things like I'm happy to come back and

volunteer. I'm hardly ever taken up on it but . . . it gives me an extra opportunity to look around the organization. I think whatever we can do to make sure we share that research back, I always check in with folks, give them updates along the way, maintain a website so they see what's happening, maybe that also is making people a little bit more willing to share their expertise with us. (WE Global Network)

Another problem participants identified with respect to recruitment is that some of the communities being researched are very small, which makes it difficult to promise anonymity. One researcher said that no matter how much attention she paid to the "ethical nitty-gritty," there are only a few service providers in any given city, which makes it difficult to protect their identities:

Another thing is anonymity like comparing two cities that have only a few service providers and you interview them and then you're reproducing the results, I've gone through all of the ethical nitty-gritty but it's still obvious who it is from the report and unless I aggregate my cities . . . I think it's just a key challenge. (WE Global Network)

A third issue lies in the nature of some collaborative research. Researchers who had explored research questions that would require them to receive feedback from both service providers and their clients reported that this carried its own challenges. Clients might be scared to talk to strangers, and service providers cite their busyness. Indeed, some researchers reported that it is very hard to try and get all the different entities involved in the community to get together and collaborate. It could therefore be challenging to find respondents to participate in the study on both ends of the spectrum: the ones living in the community who might be scared to talk to strangers and the staff members who might refer you to others as they are "too busy."

Other problems had little to do with the researcher or practitioner participants themselves. These included gaining IRB approval for those who were members of academic institutions even before embarking on a new research project in the community. One researcher said,

Another challenge and it's more of just a hurdle but it is a significant one is IRB approval, you know, at academic institutions and I think it's more of a matter of being aware of the amount of time that it can take. (WE Global Network)

Relatedly, some researchers emphasized the complicated ethical issues their research raised, as some sought to research very vulnerable populations like refugees and undocumented immigrants. Finally, a number of researchers and practitioners cited the challenge of funding, which one participant pointed out can be particularly difficult when interpreters constitute a significant cost.

Challenges of Finding a Focus for a Research Topic

Finding a focus for a research topic may be a challenge when researchers and practitioners work in isolated silos. However, community partners can play a role in shaping a researcher's area of focus. Practitioners suggested that researchers should go to a nonprofit and ask, "What do you want to know?" and then build a bridge between the nonprofit and research world. As one practitioner observed,

as a practitioner I have so many research ideas I couldn't execute and I had so many researchers contacting me who were doing what I considered to be boring questions or at least well-trod territory and so it was so frustrating that I had no mechanism for proposing research ideas. . . . I had individual relationships with certain professors who would occasionally be interested in potential topics but other than individual thoughtful professors who had a real curiosity about the work I didn't know of any mechanism and maybe one existed that I was unfamiliar with as a practitioner and somebody who's never worked in an academic setting. There was no mechanism for saying, this is a really important under-studied area and somebody ought to look at it . . . I couldn't find any research and so the only reason I did it myself was because I couldn't find any research and I couldn't find anybody who was willing to conduct

it. If there were a mechanism for practitioners to propose research questions that would be awesome. (WE Global Network)

Another practitioner said:

Now, we are in the Boston area so we have the luxury of having a university on every corner, but I think [the] nonprofit [industry has] a big role to play in helping shape the research agenda. . . . We went to the immigrant serving organizations and we said, "What is it that you would really like to know?" . . . And then we were also talking to the individuals at the various universities . . . and said, "Is this something that you would be interested in doing?" . . . it can be a bridge built between non-profits and the research world. There are a lot of researchers who are particularly interested in current issues . . . I would encourage people to think about that and for the academic folks to reach out to the non-profits in your area or your medium, you know, the areas that you are interested in and have a dialogue between the two of you. (WE Global Network)

This practitioner proposed that dialogues between researchers and practitioners could be very valuable.

A researcher from the 2016 Welcoming Interactive, an anthropologist affiliated with a research university, described "collaborative methodologies" in which researchers determine their research question through "consultation or collaboration" with either nonprofits that serve immigrants or city governments. On the other hand, she pointed out that she has a distinct agenda from either of these types of partners, and that this has made it difficult to reach accord. Her research team had spent 3 years trying to identify a set of research questions:

A lot of the people that we spoke to in the beginning expressed this same kind of doubt that you did about working with researchers because their experience has been researchers who come in and extract information and then go home. The only solution to that problem is to have a different re-

search model, which is that the research question cannot be decided before the researcher arrives. . . . There's all this great research in anthropology about collaborative methodologies. It's hard to do, but the idea's really simple, that the research question cannot be decided before the work starts. The question has to be the result of some kind of consultation or collaboration. In our case, it's really hard to do that because non-profits and cities have different agendas and university researchers have different agendas, so we've just been spending three years trying to identify a series of questions that we can all work on. (Welcoming Interactive)

A practitioner explained the challenges of working with researchers from the point of view of a nonprofit:

There are some barriers in between researchers and nonprofits. The cultures don't mesh super well. . . . On top of all of the variables that are already aforementioned around confidentiality and that type of thing, I feel like there needs to be some kind of macro conversation or a safe space where practitioners and researchers can talk around. . . . (Welcoming Interactive)

Another practitioner who had participated in a partnership between the institution that employs her, a local nonprofit, and the city government said that the three partners were like “different planets”:

We spend a lot of time trying to figure out if we're talking about the same thing, and . . . I would say three years into this research partnership, and we've had a number of conflicts, and so we're starting to realize that those conflicts are due to the fact that we have these different institutional organizational cultures. (Welcoming Interactive)

Challenges With Collaboration

Who constitutes or convenes a group of people within a community was another issue that researchers and practitioners identified in relation to their own work. As previously noted, Reimers (2013) de-

finer constructed communities as those “in which people are brought together by external forces rather than by personal choice.” Bloemraad and de Graauw (2017) pointed out that constructed communities pose particular difficulties for researchers. First, there is the challenge of refugee resettlement, which faces obstacles in integrating people suffering possible traumas. The refugee infrastructure is also characterized as a loose patchwork of initiatives intended for integration, making collaboration among the various agencies more difficult. A practitioner from the nonprofit sector also articulated that when serving the Latino community, it was difficult to obtain collaborative grants because staff members have to be hired to be involved in CBPR, and, in particular, for interpreting purposes.

Another issue in working with immigrants, as Bloemraad and de Graauw (2017) show, is the difficulty of working with certain groups of immigrants such as undocumented immigrants to avoid drawing the attention of federal, state, and local institutions. In communities where significant numbers of immigrants lack documentation, research that does not address their needs may be inadequate to guide policies and programs that would benefit them. Also, establishing the necessary collaborator networks between the communities, research institutions, universities, nonprofits, and government institutions is always difficult, which compromises the effectiveness of CBPR. Furthermore, one participant identified the challenge of federalism and scale as a barrier to interfacing with others due to various levels or scales in which they must operate. For example, some cities are welcoming to immigrant populations, but may be located within states that are not. The varying agendas toward immigrants at the community, state, and national level make it difficult for various stakeholders to collaborate. On the other hand, a practitioner who works at a Latino-serving nonprofit said that her organization was ill-equipped to perform research and that they would like to see more collaboration:

I wish that there were some way there could be collaborative grants given, and maybe there are, between nonprofits and researchers, because you almost have to hire another staff member at the nonprofit level to speak the language of research and to be that liaison

between the trench workers and what is being sought. We need data to better serve our clients, you need data to help us better serve our clients as well as to build the knowledge base of everyone, but it seems like we're not meeting in the middle. I'm just curious what could drive forward some constructive [collaboration]. . . . Because a lot of times we just get passive aggression when we ask "Why are you doing this?" . . . we just get pissed off twice a week because our time is used up and we really don't see an argument made as to how does this ultimately benefit [our] clients. (Welcoming Interactive)

Practitioners and researchers also suggested that once established, collaborations themselves could be challenging. Researchers and practitioners have different backgrounds and perspectives. They navigate and manage different assumptions, timelines, and expectations. One researcher noted, "I wanted to raise a different kind of challenge, [specifically] managing expectations from . . . the people we're trying to help with the work [which is difficult because] mostly they're not researchers" (WE Global Network). Another researcher added that practitioners were always surprised at how slowly academic research works. She might be in the midst of an interview and the participant will imagine findings will be available in a month when in reality the processes of additional interviews, analyses, peer review, and publication will take years. This meant that practitioners may have a shorter time horizon for the work than researchers, which could put them at odds in getting needed work completed. Moreover, when the findings are made available, so much time may have elapsed that they have lost relevance or utility, as one researcher describes:

I always find it interesting when I talk with folks and they're interested in finding out what your results are. They have to understand that we academics move pretty slow, like, "Oh, can I see the publication next month?" "No, it doesn't quite work that way." And I have to explain I'd be happy to do it but I have 200 interviews that I need to get transcribed and coded and written up and there's peer review. Maybe

two years down the line or a year down the line, right, so sometimes the immediacy of the topic and . . . the fact that we are beholden to all these kinds of procedures to go about our work ethically, to get peer reviewed, I find that a bit of an obstacle. (WE Global Network)

Another researcher said that she had difficulty obtaining good information because people who participate in her research did not want to share information that might not support "welcoming" policies on the part of agents of the state. As she said, this limits information that could improve programs that might enhance welcoming:

It's really politically incorrect to be against welcoming, and so it limits the space to be critical and to do it better. I've discovered that with folks . . . they don't want to undercut the momentum. That's tricky. I found that tricky in terms of research, really getting people to be critical without undermining the progress. That's something to come to terms with I think . . . yeah, we want to be welcoming, but when we start getting into how it actually works, it's really messy, so as a researcher it's really hard to start sorting through all of that. With that I'll find this tension of not wanting to . . . I'm not trying to say it's bad, right, or say it's a horrible idea, but how do I really reflect on what could undermine this energy? To me that's a huge thing I've been struggling with. (Welcoming Interactive)

Another researcher agreed, saying,

I think that people really fall down this sort of economic rationale for it, which is a slippery slope . . . because we can't be critical [of programs that support integration], we can't think about doing it better, because [it will be difficult to get funding in the future]. They want to say how it's generating revenue [for the city or state] . . . and it's very uneven. I'm sure that immigrant groups are doing it, but this immigrant group is like 10 people in an apartment and they're not generating any revenue really. I don't

know. I'm just saying that most of it as research is tricky. Getting these metrics is going to be really, really hard. (Welcoming Interactive)

Challenges With Dissemination of Findings

Researchers and practitioners suggested that an important challenge for community-based research is producing research products that contribute to scholarship as well as to a general audience's knowledge in a timely manner so that findings can benefit the community. One practitioner who had worked with the American Immigrant Policy Portal highlighted the challenge of research dissemination. As he explained, many articles regarding immigrant integration are behind a paywall, preventing their usefulness to many communities. Another practitioner highlighted the same issue: "Ninety percent of what I wanted to access I had no institutional access to and it was an incredible, frustrating situation to be in when you know there is research out there that could help you do the work better" (Welcoming Interactive). One researcher said that her research team had identified this problem and was creating briefs and PowerPoint presentations for a general audience and making them available on her website:

We publish our results in various ways and one of the ways that we've found to be pretty effective is to do briefs that are written for a general audience. . . . We also have a website that we post everything to, our updates, our PowerPoints and people who engage in the research with us really appreciate that we are providing the results as we go along so that they can see the process of the research activity because they like to be involved. (WE Global Network)

However, there is no evidence that this is the norm, and practitioners may not know where to find the information researchers have obtained.

Another researcher identified a barrier to making findings available to practitioners and communities, which is that her career path requires peer-reviewed publications, a limitation that may block or limit her from publishing the same findings in another forum:

For academics, when you're untenured like myself, when you want to get tenured you've got to publish in peer review journals and you're not as much encouraged to do this wide dissemination policy relevant work, right, so that's something that I always struggle with because our peer reviewed work is not readily available to folks who are not academics. So what can we do to give them access without violating whatever contract we signed with our publisher? (WE Global Network)

Other challenges involved with the dissemination of information, as highlighted by Smith et al. (2016), is building trust among the immigrant communities, as well as finding the right set of community events at which to disseminate such information. However, some agencies have mitigated this issue by finding ways to engage with immigrant communities and various partners, as Smith et al. (2016) describe in their own research in Charlotte. Further, according to a participant in the second focus group, it is difficult to disseminate the information to research partners because it is not just for the nonprofit or university partnership. Rather, they must also include the city as a partner, which forms a three-way partnership. As one participant said:

We have a research partnership which is not just university and non-profit, but there's also a city, there was a city partner, so it's like a three-way partnership, which I think we all underestimated because they really are different cultures and different planets. We spend a lot of time trying to figure out if we're talking about the same thing, and . . . I would say three years into this research partnership, we've had a number of conflicts, and so we're starting to realize that those conflicts are due to the fact that we have these different institutional organizational cultures. (Welcoming Interactive)

These institutional partners have differences in culture, and thus, when working as partners, they spend much time trying to figure out if they are on the same page and talking about the same thing.

Discussion

Community-Based Participatory Research for Local Immigration Researcher-Practitioner (University-Community) Partnerships

Much of the work facilitating newcomer integration occurs at a local level in communities, municipalities, and metropolitan areas. Within this context, although some cities share similarities, there are also many differences from one city to the next. Because cities exist within a unique context of multiscalar economic, social, cultural, political, and spatial factors transcending micro, mezzo, and macro levels, different histories and experiences of receiving diverse types of foreign-born populations, and different experiences and time frames of implementing integration strategies (or lack thereof), such as becoming Welcoming Cities affiliates, it is not yet appropriate or feasible to comprehensively evaluate the entire Welcoming Cities network as a whole. At present, research and evaluation of Welcoming Cities and the welcoming movement must primarily be done on a case-by-case basis through mixed-methods research, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Although some aspects of a Welcoming City and its impact can be looked at quantitatively, other aspects of being a Welcoming City can be gleaned only through in-depth qualitative research. In particular, interviews with key stakeholders directly and indirectly involved with a Welcoming City initiative are important at different stages of implementation. Focus groups with community members are also important to gauge program impact and reach from the perspective of different sectors of a community.

From what we have observed regarding researcher and practitioner perspectives on the study of newcomer integration, a CBPR approach is a promising route for research, monitoring, and evaluation of a Welcoming City's development; implementation of policies, programs, and practice; and its impact. Ultimately, CBPR involves a partnership approach to research that equitably involves community members, organizational representatives, and researchers in all steps of the research process, and in which all partners contribute expertise and share decision making and ownership in the process. The aim of CBPR is to increase knowledge and understand-

ing of a given phenomenon and integrate the knowledge gained with interventions and policy and social change to improve community. In many CBPR projects, the community participates fully in all aspects of the research process, with many CBPR projects starting within the community itself. "Community" is often self-defined but can include geographic community, community of individuals with a common issue or problem to solve, or a community of individuals with a common interest or goal to achieve.

CBPR encourages collaboration of formally trained research partners from different disciplines who provide expertise that is seen as useful to the investigation by the community and who are fully committed to a partnership of equals, producing outcomes usable to the community. Equitable partnerships require sharing power, resources, credit, results, and knowledge, as well as a reciprocal appreciation of each partner's knowledge and skills at each stage of the project, including problem definition, research design, conducting research, interpreting the results, and determining how the results should be used for action. This approach to applied research differs greatly in many ways from the traditional academic "ivory tower" approach. One of the principal differences is that instead of creating knowledge for knowledge's sake, CBPR is an iterative process, incorporating research, reflection, and action in a cyclical process. Although CBPR has most widely been used in community health research, the principles of CBPR may be applied to many aspects of work related to building stronger, more inclusive communities, including in the realm of immigrant and refugee integration and receptivity.

Conclusion

Benefits and Lessons Learned From Conducting CBPR in the Immigrant Integration Field

Using CBPR for immigrant integration efforts would lead to increased comprehension of local immigration dynamics. As Smith et al. (2016) demonstrate through their work with a partnership between trained researchers and nonprofits in Charlotte, such studies enabled the understanding of how Latino immigrants navigate their daily lives without Social Security numbers, resources and support services the community uses,

and the spaces and services they consider trusted and safe. CBPR also brings cultural and language sensitivity to service delivery. For instance, the organization Smith et al. (2016) studied informed the community advisory board members and partners about the results of the study, allowing for effective dissemination of the information, as well as facilitation of the interventions among community groups to be culturally appropriate. For example, all researchers used Spanish to address members of the Latino community who participated in the study. Incorporating various integration programs and research in CBPR, such as the NUEVO Dia Dialogue Programs, allows the community to engage in dialogue and better identify what aspects of the community need to be addressed to serve Latinos efficiently.

CBPR ultimately helps to create linkages for dominant and immigrant-serving institutions, but also for the multiple partners included, such as the community, the state, academic institutions, and nonprofit organizations. According to Smith et al. (2016), these aspects of immigrant integration help

enhance job success of new immigrants. In addition, CBPR findings are vital for providing support to the immigrant workforce, particularly in public speaking, collaboration, writing, and leadership. Further, CBPR projects facilitate better understanding of communities, thereby allowing for the promotion of immigrant civic engagement and creating a foundation to promote cross-cultural interactions and inclusivity. Such interactions and inclusivity are the hallmark of community-based decision making and collective progress. Finally, of particular importance for researchers such as faculty at universities, CBPR can be a useful methodology when performed appropriately to link areas of research, teaching, and service. Avenues for future research include identifying and evaluating examples of effective CBPR university-community models for facilitating researcher-practitioner collaboration on local immigrant integration and receptivity and the challenges, opportunities, and best practices encountered and implemented.



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