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## HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH: CREATING A GLOBAL VISION

Ronaldo Munck, Lorraine McIlrath, Budd Hall, and Rajesh Tandon (Eds.). Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, 264 pages.

Taking the reader on a journey across time and place, *Higher Education and Community-Based Research* explores the realities and lived experiences of situating research in community spaces. Before reading this book, I was aware of the pressing need for post-secondary institutions to build strong and sustainable relationships with communities. However, I quickly realized I have been woefully ignorant about how complicated an undertaking this can be. After all, community-based research (CBR) does not exist in a vacuum. It informs, and is informed by, the people, interactions, and structures that make up community.

Organized into three well-flowing sections, the book shares various understandings of CBR and provides illustrations from diverse settings. The editors commence with an overview of the topic and quite aptly introduce the three Cs of CBR: complex, contextual, and contingent. CBR is not formulaic, and a complex interplay between policy, research, and practice is further nuanced by socio-economic, political, and economic factors. Ultimately, CBR relies on human agency and is contingent on committed advocates who can move efforts forward on both higher education and community fronts.

The initial overview section serves as a backdrop for a subsequent section that provides more detailed examples of CBR from around the world. Thus, the journey for the reader commences with glimpses of various experiences in the overview section, then progresses deeply into diverse CBR locales.

An engaging exploration of the genealogical roots of CBR in the South and in the North demonstrates the influence of local movements in the development of unique CBR initiatives; more detailed explorations follow in three later chapters. First come reflections on policy and practice in Australia, where, according to Michael Cuthill, CBR is virtually non-existent. This chapter details, quite succinctly, real-life issues with CBR and offers recommendations, including what would be required of faculty to make CBR successful. In a subsequent chapter based in South Africa, Ahmed Bawa shows how CBR is visible through community engagement. The chapter commences with a historical account of how community engagement has developed and then turns to research on food processing and preservation in South Africa, which serves as a locally relevant example. This directs the reader's attention to non-Western illustrations in the CBR landscape, an important undertaking in itself. From South Africa, the reader voyages to Latin America, where the origins of participatory and action-oriented research provide fertile ground for CBR. Through the examples provided, the reader is reminded that CBR is relational and requires

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engagement rather than detachment. In particular, the example of a waste management and recycling project in Brazil provides a wonderful illustration of mobilizing academic and local knowledge to support positive social change across various sectors.

What about experiences in the North? The reader is invited to tour Europe and encounter science shops as a way in which universities conduct research in different disciplines in civil society. Science shops are non-profit entities that work to extend scientific research into the community. Although community partners aren't necessarily involved in conducting research per se, science shops are mutually beneficial, allowing both the community and university students to benefit from learning opportunities. In another chapter, authors provide an excellent account of CBR policy and practice in the UK and the challenges faced in higher education to establish policy that is supportive of CBR. The description of forces that universities and other institutions face is particularly perceptive and situates CBR within the broader paradigm of research. Finally, the reader is transported to Ireland, where policy and practice are further explored through vignettes of different experiences with CBR. Although distinct, the examples demonstrate shared goals and challenges associated with CBR.

The above chapters provide details on diverse manifestations of CBR that are nevertheless tied by a shared preoccupation with participation in this type of research. This takes the reader back to the overview section of the book, in which a chapter on the uncertainty of participation suggests reconceiving it from a linear model to a complex, systems-based one. Vanessa Liston truly sets the way for the reader to explore more fully in later chapters the shared concern that practitioners and researchers have with participation in CBR.

Interspersed brilliantly throughout the journey is an uncovering of the etymology of words that comprise the term *community-based research*. The suggestive messages encouraged me to question my own understandings and assumptions of what knowledge, community, and research are. For example, in one chapter I am asked to ponder the goal of gaining knowledge. Is it to transfer or to transform? In another, I am invited to ponder what knowledge is and whose it is. At times authors play with ideas of indigenous knowledge, and at other times I am reminded that knowledge is embedded in cultural traditions and practices. Having explored the past and present, the book finally tinkers with the future and suggests a thoughtful re-framing of CBR to community-oriented research. I found the basis for, and implications of, this suggestion to be most insightful.

Having read, appreciated, and learned a great deal about CBR from Munck, McIlrath, Hall, Tandon, and various contributing authors, I wonder about two areas. First, related to organization and structure of the book, I would have found the chapter on cultural change and CBR, which comes later in the text, to be more helpful early on as an orientation of sorts. Second, a wonderful historical account of past Muslim societies paid much-needed attention to the rich and diverse traditions of learning from our collective past. Unfortunately, the author attributed the founding of Al-Azhar University in Cairo to the Abbasid dynasty, when in fact the Fatimid rulers who established Cairo were also responsible for the founding of this great university. This only serves to remind me of the void in education of the contribution of Muslim civilizations, among others, and the necessity to learn from their heritage of pluralistic relations with community.

Having taught graduate courses on various dimensions of community in the adult learning specialization of a master's in education program, and being deeply engaged with community development efforts myself, I found *Higher Education and Community-Based*

*Research* to be a sophisticated exploration of CBR across time and place. I am left with little doubt that CBR is complex, contextual, and contingent, and I am eager to learn more indeed!

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