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CJSAE Book Review

LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH: LINKING PEDAGOGY TO PRACTICE

Catherine Etmanski, Budd L. Hall, and Teresa Dawson (Eds.). University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2014, 416 pages.

Learning and Teaching Community-Based Research attempts to, according to the book's subtitle, link pedagogy to practice. While the book certainly accomplishes that task, it moves far beyond the pragmatic into the realm of inspiration and aspiration. Through thoughtful and thought-provoking case studies of community-based research (CBR) activities at the University of Victoria, the authors and editors construct much more than a how-to manual for CBR, and instead call for the reader to re-envision the ways universities operate in our communities.

CBR activities are often misunderstood, misrepresented, and misconstrued. Further, inconsistent and unclear language fails to provide the necessary clarity or structure to help create a cohesive community of CBR practitioners. The authors provide a list of 28 examples of terminology and traditions associated with CBR, including action research, community service learning, knowledge mobilization, participatory research, and scholarship of engagement. Thankfully, many authors in this volume provide frameworks for conceptualizing what CBR is and is not. Overall, two key facets of CBR work emerge: "It is action oriented, and it is participatory" (p. 6). However, the authors recognize the difficulty in framing one's work under the umbrella of CBR when institutional structures and processes are resistant to new knowledges and practices within the institution. Many who practise CBR approaches label their own work as *engaged scholarship*, drawing on the traditions of Ernest Boyer (1987, 1990), instead of CBR because they are uncomfortable with their work being labelled "partisan" or "activist," dangerous labels within institutions that foster conformity and uniformity. The authors in this volume, however, stress the importance and indeed necessity of "privileging more emancipatory approaches to CBR as well as non-dominant epistemological standpoints" (p. 4) to respond to the inequity and injustice in our communities. Indeed, in Chapter 9, authors Jeff Corntassel and Adam Gaudry call for insurgent education practices to disrupt and discomfort the institutions through which CBR occurs, including the authors' own institution, the University of Victoria.

According to the editors, the University of Victoria has a "long history in CBR through a legacy of scholars working in Indigenous studies, health promotion, history, geography, policy studies, environmental studies, water quality studies, technology adaptation for people with disabilities, community law, adult education, and community development"(p. 11). This diversity of disciplinary fields, approaches, and practices is reflected in the many

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case studies in the book. From feminist arts-based approaches, to community mapping, to reclaiming Indigenous knowledges and practices, to online collaboration for HIV health training, the stories of CBR projects provide a stimulating overview of the potential for CBR to contribute to a more reciprocal, democratic relationship between communities and universities. As Jessica Ball notes in Chapter 2, "Communities once were viewed as data plantations (Ladson-Billings, 2000) with knowledge to be harvested and consumed by universities" (p. 28). Instead, CBR practitioners look for ways to disrupt hierarchical relationships and contribute to a more collaborative approach to scholarship.

Though this volume focuses on the work of scholars connected to the University of Victoria, a key strength of the book is the degree to which teachers, students, researchers, community members, and university administrators in other locales can see themselves and their work reflected and critiqued through the stories told by the contributors. What becomes clear through the text is that CBR work is valuable, valued, and necessary, and, as Jon Corbett and Maeve Lydon illustrate in Chapter 6, it can help "[make] universities more socially relevant in the eyes of their constituent communities, as well as more broadly within society" (p. 134). However, the authors also demonstrate that a CBR approach is not without challenges. Such an approach necessitates the re-envisioning of the neo-liberal ideology that dominates campuses across the country. As Budd Hall, Catherine Etmanski, and Teresa Dawson write in the conclusion, "We cannot escape the influence of a neo-liberal ideology that values standardization over diversity and creativity; competition, hierarchy, and individualism over collaboration; and efficiency over generosity" (p. 312). But to implement the type of radical, insurgent education advocated for in this volume, the hierarchical trifecta of university life—research, teaching, and service—will have to be completely rewritten.

Many of the authors in this book speak to the ways in which institutional structures and paradigms will have to shift to encompass the new ways of knowledge production and mobilization inherent in CBR. In the current university landscape, tenure and promotion guidelines are based on assessment of scholars' commitment to and practice of research, teaching, and service. Eileen Antone and Teresa Dawson (Chapter 15) discuss the ways in which CBR epistemologies can be disserviced by current assessment models. The authors note that "tenure guidelines usually ask for documentation of teaching, research, and service to community in separate sections. Yet, teaching, learning, and research are often inseparable in community contexts and cannot be documented separately" (p. 299). To engage meaningfully with CBR practitioners within the academy, universities will need to reshape their assessment practices and the ways in which they understand research, teaching, and service.

The work of CBR practitioners has moved from the margins of academia to a more respected place within the institution. Indeed, *Learning and Teaching Community-Based Research* provides evidence for "the growing space for critical and transformative approaches to the co-construction of knowledge in collaboration with the academy. But . . . universities [are] privileged spaces for colonial, dominant, hierarchical forms of knowledge" (p. 308). To truly become spaces of collaboration with community will necessitate a re-envisioning of the place of the academy within communities and the responsibility that universities have to the places in which they operate. The discussions and examples contained within *Learning and Teaching Community-Based Research* highlight the importance of and potential for a truly community-based university. By linking pedagogy, practice, and place, universities

can become more than isolated ivory towers and instead become centres for community-engaged research, teaching, and service. This book provides the necessary framework and guidance for scholars, researchers, teachers, practitioners, community members, and administrators as we move toward a more community-engaged university.

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