

Striving toward Community-Engaged and Participatory Methods: Considerations for Researchers in Academic Settings

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December 2022

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

- This article aimed to describe how power relations within academia influence the process of conducting community-engaged and participatory research.
- This article highlights the need for researchers to intentionally consider how levels of power shape their work and to dialogue together about individual and collective strategies to push back, therefore increasing our capacity to conduct research in ways that reflect our values as social workers.

HOW WAS THIS RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

- The authors employed Collins' four domains of power framework (structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal) to critically reflect on their experiences conducting community-engaged and participatory research within the context of the single academic institution within which each of the authors works.
- The authors organized their reflections in each domain across four critical stages of the research process adapted from Collins: (1) researcher-participant relations; (2) study formulation, from generating research questions to securing funding; (3) conducting research, from data collection to analysis; and (4) dissemination of research findings. The authors then critically reflected on how each domain of power has shaped their experiences in conducting community-engaged and participatory research at each stage.

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

- The authors highlight the need for community-engaged researchers to speak out against higher-education structures that concentrate power among certain groups, while systematically excluding others.
- Researchers speaking up through education, advocacy, and staff training is critical for altering academic procedures that hinder community-engaged and participatory research.
- The process of dialoguing together as researchers striving toward community-engaged and participatory methods can advance a shared understanding and sense of mission about the challenges and importance of doing this work.
- Engage in personal reflection and then integrate conscious conversations about power differentials into the research process.

The use of knowledge production paradigms and approaches that recognize power imbalances is critical.

ACTION STEPS

Efforts to increase the community-engaged and participatory nature of research require researchers to recognize and reflect on ways in which the structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal domains of power shape their work.

A more favorable structure for community-engaged and participatory research could also emerge through explicitly recognizing and valuing public impact scholarship.



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Full Article

doi.org/10.1093/swr/svac029

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