RESEARCH ARTICLE (PEER-REVIEWED)

Community Members as Facilitators: Reclaiming Community-Based Research as Inherently of the People

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Abstract

This article aims to rethink the positionality of community in community-based research collaboration and advocate the need for community members to facilitate CBR processes to counter power imbalances in community-university engagement. I reflect on my lived experience as a community-based facilitator through a feminist post-structural lens focused on the interplay between concepts such as subjectivity, margin-centre and performativity. I argue that, despite the community-engaged scholarship egalitarian ideal, university-community engagement still echoes the old researcher-researched binary in which academics remain the hegemonic pole. In addition, as a medium of power/knowledge, the university fabricates the community and its marginality. Thus, a margin-centre relationship is established, in which community groups must claim their marginality to receive a share of the centre (the university), such as research skills and information. In these margin-centre dynamics, university and community can be understood as identities and subject positions to be taken up by individuals. In essence, these positions are expressions of regulatory power that normalises subjectivities, a condition in which individuals exist as subjects in the social space. Insights from the work of Judith Butler lead to the understanding that, in order to conceive community members as CBR facilitators, normalised and stabilised binary identities (university-community) should be unsettled. This entails individuals who are subjected as 'the community' to escape subjection by moving towards recognition of a subjectivity that is not prescribed or is still marginalised within the discourse. In escaping subjection, community groups may exercise power in order to establish new power relations in which CBR becomes more community-led, yet still collaborative.

Keywords

Margin-Centre; Subjectivity; Performativity; Community-University Partnership; Facilitation; Community-Led Development

Introduction

This article aims to explore the idea of university-community partnerships by rethinking the community's positionality in community-based research (CBR) beyond a place of marginality. I am motivated by the understanding that CBR is historically a social movement and an approach that belongs primarily to the people. However, it has evolved into a collaborative academic endeavour where scholars invite community members to participate as equal partners throughout the investigative process. In this latter configuration, academic researchers are more likely to perform the role of facilitator, which is a pivotal role in CBR (Hall et al. 2016; Narayanasamy 2009). Facilitators are leaders (Hogan 2002) and managers of change (Groot & Maarleveld 2000). Their role involves building trust, listening to and engaging people in processes of reflection and action while managing different perspectives on the issue partners wish to resolve (Hall et al. 2016; White 1999). Consequently, in the community-university relationship, community members are at the margins, excluded from roles such as that of the facilitator. Despite the equality ideal, the community's position seems not only to be a necessary prerequisite of engaged scholarship, but also dictates the limits, perhaps the impossibility, of imagining community members beyond a place of marginality. In this sense, I ask the question: How do community and university power relations produce the community in CBR? In addition, how could an alternative understanding of these relations be used towards more emancipatory ends? In particular, I examine the role of community members as facilitators in driving an understanding of CBR as inherently of the people.

My research questions are inspired by the notion that discourse, an 'ensemble of rules' (Foucault 1980, p. 132), emerges within power relations, constructing both reality and the subjects within it (Hekman 2010). As such, it establishes a regimen by which people live their lives. In essence, people become subjects through discourse and consequently are able to exist in the social space. In other words, a person comes into existence by taking up subject positions prescribed in the discourse. Thus, discourse defines the very contours of one's subjectivity or how one is allowed or not allowed to exist in that social space (Heckman 2010).

This article draws on the CBR literature and my lived experience as starting points for theorising and opening dialogue with those interested in CBR theory and the flaws and tensions of community-university partnerships. In the first section, I present my lived experience and how it helped me problematise community positionality in CBR. I then offer a feminist post-structural analysis, exploring concepts such as margin–centre politics, performativity and subjection. In concluding, I suggest that community members and facilitators exist as subjects by claiming marginality and escaping subjection in order to experience with the community higher levels of autonomy in pursuing their own research and liberation agenda. In essence, this article invites scholars to rescue and strengthen the radical community development CBR roots, whereby action-oriented research initiatives belong primarily to the people rather than being a collaborative academic endeavour. It is also an indication that one should question the very notion of the community in order to create new and more ethical power relations between the university and community groups.

I Found Myself Being 'The Community'

My work as a community development practitioner with river communities in the Brazilian Amazon challenged my understanding of community. In my first visit to a river community, I anticipated Ferdinand Tönnies' (2001) concept of *Gemeinschaft*. Thus, I imagined a pre-capitalist group of people living along a river sharing with me a tacitly constructed worldview and practice. This European definition tricked

my eyes, preventing me from seeing that the traditional Amazonian population is non-capitalist (Costa 2005; Lira & Chaves 2016) and adheres to a peasant economic rationality (Costa 1995). Furthermore, as I began to work with them, the strong influence of the Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs) in shaping the concept of the community became apparent. BECs are Christian religious groups that define as community members those who are committed to and/or involved in the BECs' social task forces and activities. So, being part of the community did not necessarily connote a shared geographic location.

Living with and joining the people in their everyday activities, such as forest management and fishing, and front-door conversations at the end of the day, made me question my epistemic assumptions about them and made me willing to learn from them. This is particularly relevant because I was born in the Amazonian region and started to embrace the culture only in my adulthood. In addition, as I shared elsewhere (see: Sousa, in press), while working with river communities, I was also trying to understand and apply concepts such as people paradigm (Chambers 1997), partnership (Freire 1997) and asset-based community development (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993; McKnight & Block 2010). These concepts moved me from a service-driven approach towards my commitment to community-led development, whereby CBR, within this framework, entails community building, knowledge production, learning and action (Ledwith 2020; Stoecker 1999). In this process, the community and outside experts collaborate, while the people are equipped with community organising and research skills in order afterwards to facilitate the process without the presence of outsiders. At this stage, the community owns the project (Attygale 2020); the people are able to self-mobilise and act collectively (Kumar 2002; Negri et al. 1992; Pretty et al. 1995).

Later, I was motivated to apply for a two-week CBR training in a North American university. My intention was to deepen my understanding of community-led models focused on research and change. I also had in mind to resume my academic studies based on action-oriented and collaborative scholarship. The training was designed for, but not limited to, equipping community practitioners from the Global South with participatory research skills. In essence, full-time southern practitioners were more likely to receive financial support, with preference given to marginalised southern groups. Although the Global South is commonly used to refer to populations that primarily reside in developing countries predominantly situated in the Southern Hemisphere of our planet, this terminology also refers to oppressed groups and people living in poverty anywhere (Greenwood & Levin 2011). The latter definition encompasses 'those, everywhere, whose livelihoods have been made precarious by geohistorical processes of colonialism and globalizing capitalism' (Sheppard, Leitner & Maringanti 2013, p. 898). In essence, these characteristics of the Global South are also present in the Global North.

The application process and the two weeks of the intensive CBR workshop opened my eyes not only to the necessity for, and tensions in, university-community CBR partnerships, but also to a new reality about myself: I am also seen as 'the community'. My application form revealed to me that I belong to the Global South. I fit the description! I followed the instructions and checked the box, justifying my position. I am of the community as much as the river people are. Although my experience can be easily understood through an intersectional lens in which the intersection of identities uncovers different levels of oppression, I never thought of myself as a Southern person. That application form made me think about my identity, cultural background and the way I existed in the world, as a practitioner working with river communities and being reconciled with my own Amazonian roots, as well as someone characterised by others as the community.

I was not able to problematise my experience at that time; I did not have the vocabulary. The understanding and words came later and are still coming. I had feelings and perceptions about different ways to exist as the community, particularly through my experience of entering the gates of the university to participate in CBR training. This experience made me pose the question: How do power relations between community and university produce notions of community in CBR? In addition, taking into consideration community-led development as a larger context for my work, I asked: How can community members be conceived as CBR facilitators? What are the implications for CBR from such a shift in roles?

Community-Based Research: Reclaiming and Strengthening the Global South Roots

CBR is a research paradigm that challenges the assumptions of objectivity and neutrality of orthodox social research by inviting the community into the research endeavour as equal partners (Hall 1992; Reason 1994). Hence, CBR practitioners attempt to dismantle the binary subject–object by proposing a subject-to-subject relationship between community groups and researchers. Consequently, it democratises knowledge by recognising different voices and ways of knowing. Furthermore, it creates an alternative knowledge system and validation in order to counter hegemonic practices that result in oppression and marginalisation (Reason 1994).

Despite the commitment to community engagement and social change, the different ways that CBR is defined in the literature reveal contextualised nuances that suggest a variation of emphasis and consequently different degrees of participation and community autonomy in university-community engagement. For instance, in the US-based literature, CBR can be placed under the emerging rubric of community-engaged scholarship (Giles 2019a). According to Giles (2019b), community-engaged scholarship is the current preferred terminology to represent the scholarship dimension of the bigger movement of community engagement in higher education. The movement includes engaged research and other forms of engagement that rely on the partnership between the university and the public and private sectors in order to integrate and enhance research, teaching and service. Despite the implicit notion of mutual benefit and reciprocity (McIlrath et al. 2021; Sandmann, Furco & Adams 2019), American approaches appear to emphasise scholarship and university student learning, which benefit the institution far more than community groups (Giles 2019b; Ross & Stoecker 2017; Stoecker 2016). This might explain the lack of community voice that McIlrath et al. (2021) identified while exploring possibilities for adapting the Carnegie Community Engagement Framework – a US-based tool for institutionalised community engagement assessment – to an Irish context.

In contrast, Etmanski, Dawson and Hall (2014), writing from a Canadian context, defined CBR as the preferred umbrella term when referring to a range of research approaches that are action-oriented and participatory. While intending to promote CBR as a catch-all term, they highlighted that their understanding of CBR was influenced by the Participatory Research (PR) tradition (Etmanski et al. 2014). The PR tradition is rooted in the work of practitioners and critical theorists of the Global South, such as Freire (1997), Fals-Borda, and Rahman (1991) and Tandon (1988), who rely strongly on the liberatory power of people's knowledge and leadership to create a more just society. It was not a university-driven endeavour, but the 'people's own independent inquiry' (Rahman 1991, p. 17) in such a way that they not only own and control their knowledge but also its means of production (Tandon 1988). Thus, research is performed by the people and for the people (Gaventa 1993), while researchers are invited to join in the process according to the community's needs (Rahman 1991).

Under the Southern tradition, CBR is defined as research performed by community groups, whether autonomously or in collaboration with the university, in order to bring change according to the interests of the community (Hall et al. 2016). As a collaborative enterprise, the communities involved exercise meaningful control over the research process and subsequent actions (Etmanski, Dawson & Hall 2014). For instance, in the Canadian ÉQUIsanTÉ project, health-related 'blended participatory and merging of knowledge research' (Carrel et al. 2017, p. 119) with people in poverty in Quebec, community members actively participated as co-researchers. They were involved in data analysis and, as part of the collaborative project, were able to construct collective knowledge independent of academic researchers and health professionals (Carrel et al. 2017). In so doing, expert knowledge was confronted by knowledge grounded in

people's lived experience. Community members can also participate in supervisory committees which have decision-making power over research methods, knowledge dissemination and so on (Otis 2015).

Despite attempts at conceiving community groups as partners, the endeavour of breaking from orthodox social research is not an easy task. Researchers' *habitus* – 'schemes of perception, thoughts and action' (Bourdieu 1989, p. 13) are internalisations of social structures that are reinforced through social interactions in the academic social space. Hence, any attempt to challenge the academic status quo does not readily imply a revolutionary change in how academia operates. Foucault (1980, p. 132) asserted that people live by regimes of truth or discourse; 'an ensemble of rules' that emerges within power relations. In this sense, the university is not only an institution that can create regimes of truth that shape the broader society (McGushin 2014), but it can also define the contours of the subjectivity of those who enter its gates. Then, academics are both subjected to power and able to exercise power based on positions assigned to them in the discourse (Feder 2014; Foucault 1972). Subjection has to do with the embodiment of what it means to be an academic, what it means to produce knowledge, and what it means to work with the community in the process of knowledge production. This theoretical articulation indicates that it is critical for academics to be mindful not only of their own positionality in their community engagement, but also of the need for theorising how, as the hegemonic pole of university-community relations, they also create and subject the community.

Ross and Stoecker's (2017) study of the under-acknowledged emotional aspect of community engagement is an example of how academic disciplinary discourse works on researchers. Ross and Stoecker interviewed residents of a neighbourhood in New Orleans who survived Hurricane Katrina. According to the authors, the neighbourhood received different kinds of interventions, including traditional research initiatives and CBR. To their surprise, residents made no distinction between community-based and traditional researchers. In addition, some of the residents expressed that they felt used by the researchers and noticed that academics were 'less caring and providing fewer immediate benefits' (Ross & Stoecker 2017, p. 11) than student volunteers. Ross and Stoecker (2017, p. 17) elucidated that 'the problem may be rooted in academics' tendency to treat research as research, rather than as integrated with action'. By treating research as research, CBR academics echo the position of the traditional social scientist, a contained and isolated investigator, one who is not influenced by the group being studied (Burawoy 1998). Ross and Stoecker (2017, p. 13) also stated that 'many academics in New Orleans believed they were using the best practices of community-based research'. These findings raise concerns around the extent to which radical subversion is possible in academia and show the need for community protagonists in CBR projects. In other words, it demonstrates the necessity to rescue the southern critical tradition of CBR by reimagining the community members as facilitators, and hence able to mobilise their people and produce knowledge that is action-oriented and grounded in people's lived experience.

Flaws like those revealed by Ross and Stoecker (2017) make sceptical scholars point out that CBR does not deliver what it proposes. For example, Janes (2016) asserts that CBR is a co-opted approach which expropriates community knowledge while maintaining power asymmetries. Furthermore, in the context of participatory development, CBR is seen as tyrannical (Cooke & Kothari 2001), manipulative (Mosse 2001), exclusionary and colonial. In essence, as Kapoor (2005) denounced, it reveals the complicity and desires of the Western world. These flaws are not a surprise when one takes into consideration the power of institutionalised Western colonising beliefs and practices that shape the imaginary of university researchers (Berger & Luckmann 1966), including researchers in the Global South (Gamage 2016). Hence, it becomes critical to theorise power relations in community-university engagement, particularly how the community is produced in these relations.

Definitions rooted in the Southern tradition, such as those employed by Etmanski, Dawson and Hall (2014) and Hall et al. (2016), evoke a return to the idea of community-led initiatives that may counter co-optation in community-university collaboration. Furthermore, it shows the need to explore ways to

imagine community members as CBR facilitators. By this, I mean participatory interventions by community members that promote collective learning and action (Groot & Maarleveld 2000) and involve community organising and skills mobilisation (Narayanasamy 2009) to create 'knowledge in action' (Ledwith 2020, p. 136). Community members would then be more likely to take up the role of facilitators in participatory research. This understanding is found in community-engaged scholarly works mainly published in the 1990s by such authors as Fals Borda (1992), Gaventa (1993), Hall (1993), Negri et al. (1998), Park (1993) and Rahman (1991).

The Southern tradition also evokes the idea that 'the distinction between the researcher and the participant is irrelevant' (Tandon 1988, p. 12). Tandon's statement relies on the assumption that the researcher and participants are taking up the same roles; they research and participate together, even though the emphasis is on community leadership. However, this community-led emphasis seems to have faded away over the years as the literature on CBR shifts the focus to collaboration, which is more likely to be a university driven endeavour designed to include community groups (e.g. Hacker 2013; Hall et al. 2016; Strand et al. 2003). Although collaboration is a key aspect of CBR, scholars and practitioners should not forget the participatory ideal, whereby communities are able to mobilise and carry out their own agenda without outsiders being the initiators or facilitators (Kapoor 2002; Negri et al. 1998).

Indeed, community-led initiatives should be encouraged and receive more attention from academia. This article is therefore an attempt to provoke a discussion about the possibility of building university-community partnerships where the community leads in such a way that community members can also facilitate CBR processes and not be only a source of consultation or hired interviewers for specific research projects. I argue below that a post-structural perspective provides an interesting starting point for this endeavour, particularly Spivak's margin–centre politics and Butler's performativity.

Margin–Centre Politics and the Fabrication of the Community

A response to the question of how the community is produced through university-community partnerships can be elaborated through Spivak's (2009) notion of margin-centre politics. The concept of margin-centre is in part an elaboration of the Foucauldian concept of disciplinary discursivity and is employed in the context of the university. Spivak (2009) defined the university as the teaching machine. Jackson and Mazzei (2012, p. 37) clarified that, for Spivak, the higher education institution is a 'vehicle of power/knowledge that seeks to locate and define what counts as authentic inhabitants of the margin'. Indeed, Spivak (2009) pointed out that when the margin enters the centre, that is, the higher education institution, the centre works towards defining this intruder, leading to power struggles.

Spivak's margin–centre concept helped me to define two moments when the community is fabricated in different ways in relation to the university. In the first moment, the community is fabricated as an object of study, a category of analysis. As an object, the community is not invited into the university but is maintained at a distance, passive, ready to be controlled in order to be scrutinised. Bruhn (2011) explored different ways of defining community from 1840 to 2000 in both European and American traditions. Community conveys the idea of a prototype of how people exist in relation to one another. Community echoes the idea of tradition, the common good and values; it is a society in an earlier stage and opposes the individualistic lifestyle of an industrial and capitalist society. This understanding is rooted in the classic European sociology of Karl Marx, Ferdinand Tönnies, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber. For this tradition, community is transitionary, something inferior, old-fashioned and threatened by modernisation (Bertotti, Jamal & Harden 2011; Bruhn 2011). The North American tradition is also based on a historical–evolutionary understanding. Some of the references in Bruhn's (2011) list are Robert Park, C. Wright Mills, Herbert Gans, Barry Wellman and Amitai Etzioni. He suggested that, overall, the authors of this tradition are concerned with issues of dynamics within urban settings, such as lifestyles and cultural changes, social class structure,

community power, decision-making and networks, to cite a few. More recently, the discussion around community has been influenced by the debates between liberals and communitarians and attempts to find a middle ground where neither side is threatened by oppressive discourses (Bruhn 2011). Bruhn defined this position as 'loosely connected communities' (p. 44).

Community is also defined as a people group that is not part of mainstream society, commonly victims of structural injustice such as colonialism, poverty and racism. They are ethnic minority groups (Adelman 1993; Delemos 2006; Shiu-Thornton 2003) 'deprived and disenfranchised people' (Park 1993, p. 1), grassroots groups (Fals Borda 1996), and so on. Nevertheless, community can also be defined in organisational terms, which may also represent minority, oppressed and/or marginalised groups. For Strand et al. (2003), communities are defined as educational institutions, community-based organisations, public service agencies, groups formed based on identity and/or common interests. which do not depend on geographical location; they go from a local to a global scale.

These perspectives on community are strongly founded on empirical sociology that relies on the relationship subject–object to produce knowledge. For this, researchers typically limit their involvement with research participants, or ground themselves in theory that guides them through their reflective exercise (Burawoy 1998). Hence, academics' applied surveys, ethnographic methods (Bruhn 2011), documental, cross-section and longitudinal analysis (Putnam 1993) and other methods are used in order to approach the object. The application of institutionalised research methods, in association with the subject who performs them and the approval of peers, gives knowledge the status of legitimate, valid or superior. Consequently, any alternative knowledge that is rooted in a different epistemology is deemed inferior (Casas-Cortés, Osterwei & Powell 2008). This socio-historical academic discourse and the consequent disciplinary power that shapes academics' subjectivity must be taken into consideration, even while the same academics attempt to challenge this knowledge hierarchy for the sake of epistemic justice.

In the second moment, which aligns with Spivak's concept more precisely, the community is no longer distant, but is still at the margin. The community is a guest invited to enter the teaching machine as well as to walk alongside it as a partner. By entering the machine, the 'outside' picks up on a subject position provided by the centre in order to identify and control the margin. At the same time, the centre fosters a fetish of identity as if the margin were a pure essence (Spivak 2009). The community is an essentialisation of the oppressed, the marginalised (whether based on class, gender, ethnicity, race and so on) and the Global South that, under the CBR paradigm, becomes the object of emancipation (Park 1993). The community is me, a Latino and Amazonian entering the teaching machine. By conceiving that the contours of the margin are defined by the centre, Spivak (2009) questioned if the marginal, the subaltern or the people can really speak. On that, Spivak (1988, p. 27) stated, '[f]or the "true" subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself'. Yet, Spivak is not implying that the margin does not have a voice or agency; she is arguing that there is no absolute isolation of the oppressed from the effects of discourse and institutional practices (Ashcroft et al. 2013).

Spivak's idea is particularly important because, ideally, CBR scholars are concerned with equipping the community with research skills as a way for them to transform their own reality (Hall 1993; Park 1993). This equipping process involves deepening the relationship between academics and the community through university-based and non-formal education training (Strand et al. 2003; Tandon et al. 2016), as well as through the research process (Strand et al. 2003). In this sense, according to Spivak (2009), the outsider becomes an *outside-in*, whereby the margin is constituted within the centre. Nevertheless, these benefits, or share of the centre, which also include upward mobility, are available only to those who perform strategic essentialism, hence claiming their marginality (Spivak 2009). This can be illustrated through my experience filling out the application form to access CBR training in a North American university, which, along with my fieldwork, helped me to access a doctoral program. My marginality also gave me the opportunity to

design and teach undergraduate and graduate courses on diversity and inclusion. Thus, the subject-position that I claimed, a southern person, allowed me to enjoy both the margin and the centre.

Perhaps, community-engaged scholars would not recognise 'control' as part of their practice. Indeed, CBR practitioners, particularly those coming from the Southern tradition, are committed to emancipation, which is exactly the opposite of control. Nevertheless, academics should be aware of Taylor's (2014, p. 173) warning about how subjectivities are 'formed in and through relations of power'. She stated:

> There are not emancipatory institutions and norms that enable us, on the one hand, and oppressive or normalizing institutions and norms that constrain us, on the other; rather, we are simultaneously enabled and contained by the same institutions and norms.

Although Taylor's statement sounds somewhat pessimistic, she also encourages people to become aware of how they are enabled and constrained, as well as figure out strategies to resist subjection and explore different ways of being in the social space.

Community and Performativity

Understanding of centre-margin politics gains greater depth when one considers Judith Butler's concept of performativity. This is particularly useful for my analysis because I am not only interested in how the centre creates the margin or even how it defines the margin's subjectivity. Following Taylor's advice above, I am also concerned with how those in the margin escape subjection. In other words, I am interested in understanding how community members come to take up a different subject position as CBR facilitators and/or leaders, which is a function commonly attributed to academics. I am aware that my elaboration is based on a clearly defined university/community binary. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) contested this position by saying that an individual can occupy both an insider and an outsider position at the same time. However, identity and the power embedded in it still deserve consideration. In addition, the lived experience and struggle of those who occupy a 'neither…nor' position in the context of community-engaged scholarship is seldom explored in the literature.

Butler coined the concept of gender performativity by relying on Derrida and Foucault (Butler 1990; 2004). She is concerned with how to become a subject that is not aligned with discursive identities proposed by society. According to Jackson and Mazzei (2012, p. 67), Butler's goal is to 'unsettle the stabilizing gender categories that attempt to normalize and regulate people and accentuates a process of repetition that produces gendered subjectivity'. Butler (2004) agreed with Foucault that regulatory power operates on gender, which leads to the understanding that gender is a norm. As such, it 'governs the social intelligibility of action' (Butler 2004, p. 41), which allows for the identification of practices and the regulation of what is permitted to appear in the social space.

A subject, particularly a subject of gender, is one that is required for and induced as the subject by the social space. In essence, Butler is theorising on the relationship between identity and subject (Heckman 2010). She explains that a subject is and seeks to be attached to its identity. This attachment is caused by regulatory power and becomes a means of self-enhancement and self-preservation; it gives an individual the possibility of a livable life (Butler 2002). Therefore, as Walton (2012) clarified, the idea that gender is performative rests on the understanding that there is no essentialised gender identity; its apparent essence that evokes femininity and masculinity is fabricated by the normative discourse.

However, this normalisation has a limit. Butler (2002) explained that anyone who does not fit the norm is not recognisable. She stated that 'it is precisely that domain of ourselves which we live without recognizing, which we persist in through a sense of disavowal, that for which we have no vocabulary, but which we endure without quite knowing' (Butler 2002, p. 17). In this sense, Butler focused on one escaping subjection by moving towards recognition of identities that are still not prescribed in the dominant

discourse. Regarding this, Butler's work engages with Derrida in the sense that identity and meaning are vulnerable to subversion and re-contextualisation, given positive possibility and structure of language through extraction (Nealon 1996). In this sense, agency is founded in the tension between performativity and escaping subjection (Jackson & Mazzei 2012). For Butler (1990, p. 144), 'the question of agency is reformulated as a question of how signification and resignification work'. It allows variation of repetition, even though signification is limited by 'the orbit of the compulsion to repeat' (Butler 1990, p. 145). Yet, it makes alternative ways of social intelligibility possible and therefore new possibilities for gender identities.

Butler's theory of performativity allows one to understand gender identity in terms of performative acts, and this understanding can be extrapolated to other identity categories such as black, women, academics, the facilitator and the community. These are all identity categories recognised according to their performativity in the social space. This is particularly important because people commonly defined by historical marginalisation and collective identities, such as ethnicity, gender and race (Adelman 1993), are commonly given the subject position of the community in CBR discourse (for example, Delemos 2006; Hacker 2013; McKinnon 2018) and not the facilitators, the researcher, the centre (Hall et al. 2016).

Others may disagree, but Kerstetter (2012) explained that academic researchers can be community insiders or be positioned in the 'space between' an insider and an outsider. Kerstetter (2012) also emphasised that the researcher's identity in relation to the group they are working with is dynamic and not fixed. This affirmation is reasonable, but what Kerstetter did not mention is that, despite researchers being able to be identified with the collective identity of the community, this does not imply that the performative acts are the same. Performativity relates to the idea of becoming a subject through repetition, which is different from performance (Jackson & Mazzei 2012). It has to do with what it means to be an academic or a researcher repeating your acts in the social space every day and what it means to be the community. For instance, I remember that, during my CBR training, we were required to write a mini-CBR proposal. In one of our feedback sessions, our instructor told one of my classmates: 'This is too academic! Make it less academic!' That student, who was also from the Global South, was doing her Master's degree while taking the course. That experience reminded me of who I was in that context and who my classmate was. Indeed, we were not academic researchers; we were the community daring to do research. Did it mean that we could not be too academic? And what does it mean to be too academic? This was power working on us, shaping and disciplining us as the community. In this sense, community is performativity. Yes, we could do CBR, but not as academics, only as representatives of the community.

My proposition is that, in order to imagine community members (the community) as facilitators, one must pose the question: Who is this community member who 'being outside the norm is in some sense being defined still in relation to it' (Butler 2004, p. 42)? This understanding suggests that to inquire how community members become CBR facilitators is to inquire about their process of escaping subjection and the struggle of becoming a recognisable subject within the CBR discourse. In this struggle, it is important to be conscious (Freire 1997) of how discourse both constrains and enables the community (Taylor 2014). For example, after my classmate's experience, I made my community subjectivity visible by avoiding discussions that might sound too academic, only having them in the right place with the right people, including my interest in a PhD program. These strategies of resistance and compliance were attempts to escape subjection: to be while not being; embracing marginality to exist, but looking for ways to express other facets of my existence. At the same time, it was important to determine 'ways in which existing practices have the potential to loosen constraints' (Taylor 2014, p. 173).

A year later, I entered the teaching machine again, now as a graduate student. I still embrace my marginality to speak and invite scholars to rethink the CBR discourse and the community's positionality in it. My dissertation is in progress. I am exploring how community members become CBR facilitators. Taylor (2014) suggested that certain practices not only have the potential to lose constraint but also to create new

practices and new relations. The works of Otis (2017) and Carrel et al. (2017) provide examples of these new ways, whereby the community holds greater autonomy and leadership in the process of knowledge creation.

Final Considerations

CBR is a research approach that challenges the knowledge hierarchy and attempts to break from the traditional binary, researcher–researched, by inviting the community into a partnership to create collaborative knowledge for social change. This approach places discussions on power relations between researchers and community groups at the forefront of academic attention. Despite the subject-to-subject ideal, the university is still the partner that holds the greater power in research. In Spivak's (2009) terms, the university is the centre and a teaching machine that views the community as a subject of marginality, necessary for maintenance of the CBR enterprise. In this sense, as I exemplified through my lived experience, the community must partner with the centre to benefit from it through the acquisition of research skills and other resources. As a subject, the community entails performative acts (Butler 1999), which allow the margin to be recognised in community-university partnerships. In other words, the community is a discursive norm that defines the limits of more egalitarian engagements.

In this article, I argue that CBR needs to be understood fundamentally as a social movement of the people, imagining the community beyond a place of marginality and strengthening its emancipatory ends. In this shift from an academic endeavour to an inquiry by the people, the discourse may allow variations of repetition (Butler 1999), making possible community members' escape from subjection to emerge as CBR facilitators, who may partner or not with the university. This shift would mean reclaiming and strengthening CBR in the Global South and its emancipatory roots, whereby knowledge production would be community-led and produced in action (Ledwith 2020). On this path, there would be no difference in capability between researchers and the community (Tandon 1988).

This article is my attempt to invite scholars and community members to discuss the community's positionality on CBR. I acknowledge that it is mostly a theoretical reflection based on my lived experience and that further research is needed on how power relations produce the community in university-community partnerships, and how the community escapes subjection within these relations. I hope that dialogue and research in this direction may lead to practices that are able to loosen community subjection and contribute to new understanding of community-university partnership. I also look forward to contributing to more people-led CBR initiatives, in which they own the means of knowledge creation and are supported by it in shaping their own futures.

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