Crossing Methodological Borders: Decolonizing Community-Based Participatory Research

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Abstract

To advance socially just research, scholars—including those who utilize qualitative methodologies—must confront the colonizing reputation that frames such work in Indigenous communities. This article explores the potential for Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to guide the re-envisioning of mainstream conceptions of scholarly control in order to cross epistemological borders between theory and practice. A project that endeavored to engage Native participants throughout the research process provides context for the discussion of ongoing challenges and emerging possibilities. This work holds implications for participatory research design and implementation in cross-cultural contexts, especially as connected to shifting decolonizing theory to practice.

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> Perhaps we should suspect the real motives of the academic community. They have the Indian field well defined and under control. . . Reduction of people to ciphers for purposes of observation seems to be inconsequential to the anthropologist when compared with immediate benefits he can derive, the production of further prestige, and the chance to appear as the high priest of American society, orienting and manipulating to his heart's desire.
>
> (Deloria, 1969/1988, pp. 94-95)

In 1969, Vine Deloria, Jr., one of the most influential Native[1] scholars and educators of all time, noted the tendency of research, including qualitative work, to undermine the experiences and perspectives of Native communities in order to advance the Eurocentric conceptualizations of inquiry, recognition, and success claimed by the "academic community." Unfortunately, Deloria's words largely ring true today, despite a call from members of Native communities to decolonize research methodologies by focusing on respectful collaboration, dynamic storytelling, and reciprocity throughout the research process (Battiste, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Grande, 2008; Smith, 2005). Academia continues to privilege individual merit and hierarchical prestige, research methodologies that adhere to pre-conceived procedures and discursive norms, and work that culminates in publication and institutional recognition (Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley, & Yazzie-Mintz, 2012; Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000; Mihesuah, 1998).

The ongoing challenges associated with implementing decolonizing methodologies—or those methodologies that actively work to deconstruct colonizing practices while endeavoring to advance Indigenous self-determination (Wilson, 2004)—means critical scholars and educators often find themselves "making the path by walking it" (Ríos, McDaniel, & Stowell, 1996). In terms of decolonizing educational research, scholars must engage in the active deconstruction of assimilative, deculturalizing research approaches in Native communities, schools, and universities (Smith, 1999).

Participatory research, especially Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), holds the potential to honor multiple communities while advancing the tenets of decolonization within educational research. However, conflicting goals of the involved communities—including the physical and cultural communities where schools and universities are situated—often interfere with the successful transfer of theory to practice, even when methodologies such as CBPR are employed. These tensions compound in cross-cultural contexts such as communities that border Native American reservations, where the goals of academic and Indigenous communities further interact with belief systems present in distinct geographic and political settings (Deyhle, 1986; Perry, 2009).

As Deloria emphasized in the quote introducing this article, control of Native communities and knowledge, privileging prestige over reciprocity, and manipulation of experience provide both motivation and means for the continued use of colonizing research methodologies. The purpose of this article is to examine the potential for CBPR to disrupt the mainstream research paradigm and to shift decolonizing theory to practice in cross-cultural research contexts (e.g. reservation bordertown schools, projects where the facilitator-participant is a cultural outsider, etc.). A CBPR project that explored education in a reservation bordertown offers an illustration of this potential, as well as a context for discussion of the associated challenges.

Community-Based Participatory Research

By its very nature, qualitative inquiry offers a means of resistance to the traditional, dominant culture research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Participatory research, as an orientation within the broader scope of qualitative methodologies, extends this critical and decolonizing agenda. Schwandt (2007) explains that participatory research typically has three characteristics: (1) it requires collaboration between the researcher and "other participants," (2) it follows a "democratic impulse," and (3) its main goal is to generate social change through practical action (p. 221). Participatory work, therefore, aligns well with decolonizing methodologies advanced by Indigenous scholars given its intent to practice what it theorizes (Bishop, 2005; Smith, 2005).

Like other forms of participatory research, Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is more of an "epistemological orientation" (Jacobson & Rugeley, 2007, p. 24) than a set methodology. In general, three values guide the work of CBPR: Scholars should recognize and value the community as a partner in the process, research should be comprehensively collaborative, and results should benefit all partners through continuous action and clear applications (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). In terms of critical theoretical and practical connections, Jacobson and Rugeley (2007) emphasize that CBPR has the potential to address the "oppressive, exploitative legacy of research *done on* indigenous people" (p. 24). As Mayan (2010) notes, effective and ethical community-based work demands that researchers and participants "equitably design and implement" projects, and that research is not simply done *to* or *in* Native communities, but completed *with* them (p. 1467).

Despite its potential, the practice of CBPR often falls short of its theoretical goals for several reasons. First, it takes extensive time for scholars to establish the prerequisite level of trust with communities and participants, particularly in cross-cultural spaces. As a result, traditionally trained scholars may revert to the use of more familiar mainstream methods instead of implementing participatory methods with fidelity. Additionally, participant involvement throughout the research process can be viewed as a threat to confidentiality and institutional control, which potentially discourages Institutional Review Board and collegial support for CBPR work. Together, these forces frequently encourage abridged or superficial versions of CBPR.

Finally, practices that cultivate comprehensive and authentic participation, such as community initiation of projects and the collaborative analysis of data, continue to create significant challenges that restrict the achievement of the goals identified by decolonizing and participatory research theorists (Beeman-Cadwallader et al., 2012; Cashman et al., 2008; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Such collaboration is absolutely essential for the decolonization of research, especially in cross-cultural contexts, as Kovach (2009) notes: "It is possible that non-Indigenous researchers may only participate in Indigenous methodologies where there are structures that allow for equal partnership" (p. 38).

Background of the Example CBPR Project

To provide context for a closer look at the potential for and challenges associated with shifting decolonizing methodologies from theory to practice, I have drawn upon lessons learned during an introductory CBPR project, which centered upon the experiential narratives of Native people who attended school in a community bordering a reservation in the Northern Plains region of the United States.

Prior to the project's initiation, I (a non-Native scholar and educator) spent several years working as a teacher in communities on and bordering the reservation. During this time, I participated in community-based workshops, where I met several of the elders and tribal leaders who later contributed to the project's design. I also enrolled in reservation-based graduate courses, where I met Native educators who provided, and continue to provide, mentorship regarding teaching, learning, and scholarship. To inform change in bordertown schools, several of these mentors encouraged me to continue my graduate study full time, which culminated in the project described in this article.

Before submitting a project proposal to my Institutional Review Board (IRB), members of my dissertation committee asked me to meet with Native and non-Native scholars who had facilitated research on the reservation. These conversations guided the specific cultural protocol that informed the initiation of the project. As a first step, I prepared an introductory letter for tribal council members and other community leaders. Given my status as a cultural outsider in a learning role, a mentor who holds a ceremonial position determined it would be most appropriate for him to introduce me to tribal leaders and to provide tobacco offerings on my behalf. As we dialogued about the project, the community leaders identified areas of interest to the tribes involved.

In addition to framing the project's primary research question (What can the stories of Native students who attended school in the reservation bordertown teach educators and scholars?), community members identified participants (individuals who had attended a bordertown school and attained success in higher education), selected methods that aligned with cultural ways of knowing (narrative inquiry and collaborative analysis), mentored me in culturally responsive research protocol (e.g. providing time and space for uninterrupted story-sharing, presenting gifts to participants, etc.), and guided me through ceremonies at both the start and conclusion of the formal project.

The data collection for the project centered upon a series of five in-depth interviews, which included unstructured opportunities for participants to share their stories, approve representations of those stories, and engage in discussions focused on identification and application of themes. To provide a practical context for the data analysis, the Native participants reviewed the stories, including those of the non-Native teacher-participant, generated lessons for non-Native teachers and scholars, and applied those lessons to examples of the teacher-participant's teaching and research practice. The project's findings encourage non-Native educators and scholars to:

- confront the differences between epistemologies,
- connect to the Native community in appropriate and meaningful ways,
- honor the history and potential of Native peoples, and,
- provide options and opportunities for Native peoples.

While all four of these "lessons" emerged, this article focuses only on one of the lessons ("confront the differences between epistemologies") as a means to contextualize the conversation regarding participatory qualitative work. As Kovach (2009) notes, these epistemological differences are inseparable from methodological decisions.

Confronting Epistemological Differences in CBPR

The lesson that encourages scholars and educators to "confront the differences between epistemologies" offers particular insight into the challenges facing and potential for participatory work in cross-cultural contexts—situations where two cultures interact—such as reservation bordertowns and research efforts that include participants from more than one cultural background. The four Native participants, and many other tribal members who contributed to the project, emphasized tensions between Native and mainstream “ways of knowing” that arise in bordertown schools and communities. They also explained that these tensions persist into higher education settings and scholarly contexts, thereby limiting the potential for decolonization in cross-cultural scholarship. To examine this lesson, it is important to become aware of the differences themselves, to recognize the power imbalances created and reinforced by mainstream academia, and to evaluate the potential of CBPR to transform that mainstream power structure.

Within the example CBPR project, several key areas of epistemological tension emerged (see Table 1). According to the tribal members who contributed to the project, experiences are best shared in person, which allows the speaker and listener to develop a relationship that cultivates interactivity, clarification, and mutual respect. Stories are often told using complex and circular structures to purposefully illustrate connections between experiences. All participants (speakers and listeners) are expected to collaboratively determine the meaning(s) of the stories, and it is understood that the interpretations are fluid and dependent upon the people involved, the broader context, and other factors. This lesson is echoed across the literature: In cross-cultural contexts, in particular, problem solving depends not upon the ability of the dominant culture scholar to illuminate solutions, but upon the potential for all partners in the research process—including the “researcher”—to communicate with and learn from each other (Davidson-Hunt & O’Flaherty, 2007). Finally, the Native participants in this example CBPR project emphasized that cultural protocol regarding the appropriate sharing of experiences must be respected—the listener may or may not be able to share the storyteller's experience with another audience or through another format.

In many ways, the Indigenous epistemologies described by the tribal members in the example CBPR project are very different from those valued by mainstream society and academia. Mainstream scholarship focuses on the perceived expertise, as developed through formal education and induction, of scholars who are overwhelmingly White. In order to be considered credible in professional circles, research must be "reliable" and "valid" or "trustworthy" according to norms pre-determined by members of the mainstream academic culture. In recent years, a "reermergent scientism" has further reinforced an expectation for the mainstream scholar to distance and objectify study participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 8), especially within educational settings. Even within qualitative work, the position of the researcher has reproduced colonizing perspectives (Battiste, 2008; Bishop, 2005; Hermes, 1998; Perdue, 1997; Smith, 1999).

In terms of the representation of project findings, mainstream academia continues to privilege formal written text, especially given the integral model of the "publish or perish" paradigm. Efforts to share results and stories with the broadest possible audience are praised, even when cultural protocol limits the sharing of such information. The Native participants in the example project emphasized a tendency for scholars to share information solely for their own prestige, as opposed to seeking a broader paradigm shift within academia and/or providing a direct service to the Native community.

Re-Envisioning the Epistemological Power Structure in CBPR

Determining epistemological differences between cultural groups involved in a participatory research project is, in and of itself, not enough to ignite a transformation in scholarly practice. Participants (including scholar-participants) must recognize that epistemological differences are not valued equitably within the broader social sphere. For example, the historical assumption of Native inferiority by mainstream White society is reinforced today by frequently positioning the lead scholar (who is most often White) as an expert capable of studying the Native "subjects" effectively and independently.

Northway (2010) argues that critical CBPR must therefore ignite a shift in power, deviate substantially from "traditional forms of research" (p. 174), and provide meaningful, justice-oriented action within the various communities. In educational research contexts, in particular, Beeman-Cadwallader et al. (2012) emphasize that decolonization demands a relinquishing of "control" throughout the research process (p. 13). To address the epistemological power structure upheld by mainstream academia and guide transformative action in work with Native communities, Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) encourage scholars to consider the "four R's" of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility when planning and implementing research projects (See Table 2).

Respect. Doyle and Timonen (2010) argue that ethical participatory researchers should consider how to *respectfully* include participants throughout the process given external responsibilities faced by many participants in community-based work. In the example CBPR project, participants noted that time constraints dictated by university or governmental entities, such as grant funding agencies, can be viewed as disrespectful in Native communities. To more effectively promote culturally responsive research practices, methodological structures should recognize that community members do not have unlimited time and energy to spend contributing to a project. For CBPR, this is especially important to understand, given the extensive time commitment often necessary to assure the project is truly participatory. In the example project, the Native participants invested many hours in order to participate in interviews, review transcripts, process and synthesize pages of stories into themes and lessons, dialogue about the application of lessons, and review the representation of stories and understandings. In several cases, participants explained that they had been too busy with school, family, or work commitments to devote the time they wanted to the project. However, the participants often spent more time than expected because they became personally invested.

Respectful entry into the cross-cultural research context further increases time commitment demands: It can take years to develop trusting relationships. Prior to initiation of the example project, I worked with Native teachers, elders, parents, and students on a variety of efforts intended to advance culturally responsive education locally and regionally. These collaborations helped me interrogate my own experiences, training, and beliefs about teaching and research in cross-cultural contexts. One of the most important lessons I learned was that the community believed that research could more effectively decolonize scholarship if Native participants are involved throughout all phases of the research process, especially during the data analysis phase, even though the time demands for such involvement would be extensive.

Critics of CBPR note that researchers often involve community participants only during the groundwork and data collection phases of a project. Often, researchers trained in academia independently analyze project data, even in CBPR situations. In a few cases, researchers might train participants to use analysis procedures recognized and valued by institutions and the publishing industry. As several participants in the project noted, Native communities may view these formally trained participants with a new and deserved level of suspicion: Like Native students who attend predominantly White institutions, Native participants who are trained to use mainstream research practices may be expected to ignore cultural identity in their work.

The urge to make assumptions regarding methodological choices arose on several occasions. Even though elements of this project reiterated many of the Indigenous ways of knowing identified by scholars in the field, I tried not to view such approaches as methodologically prescriptive in order to implement elements of critical CBPR with integrity. For example, although I knew that many Indigenous scholars note the importance of story-sharing, I sought direction from Native community members prior to identifying that approach as appropriate for this project.

Since I automatically conceptualized “story” in ways that privileged Western epistemologies (e.g. I felt compelled to apply simplistic Eurocentric narrative constructs, such as “character” and “setting,” to the stories of the Native participants), preservation of the respect tenet proved especially challenging as tied to the analysis phase. As Hendry (2007) notes, the analysis “in which most researchers engage is deeply embedded in a Cartesian framework” (p. 491), as opposed to a systems or relational framework. For non-Native scholars working with Indigenous communities, respect hinges upon a willingness to consider stories and experiences in complex, interactive ways.

For this project, I endeavored to turn initial control of analysis over to the community participants entirely. They reviewed the transcripts of their stories, selected key passages, and shaped themes and lessons for educators and scholars. This phase of the project produced substantial anxiety for me and for the other participants. All four Native participants initially voiced reluctance (“I don’t know that I can do this. I don’t know how."). Once we all began to trust the process, however, the act of dialoguing about the analysis allowed us to gain comfort and confidence.

Relevance. Considering the historical role of "control" within research methodology, the example CBPR project highlights several possibilities in terms of enhancing relevance. Specifically, the research process should be flexible enough to pay attention to participant and community interests, questions, and needs as they arise (Beeman-Cadwallader et al., 2012; Kovach, 2009). In the example project, community members shaped the project's research question, methods, and selection of participants.

Initially, I was personally interested in a project that would focus on developing community-centered curriculum and instructional strategies to complement existing content in the bordertown school. However, early conversations with tribal members made it clear that the community's interest centered upon *re-envisioning* teaching, learning, and scholarship in institutions (the university and the K-12 schools) and places (the bordertown, the reservation, and the spaces in between), as opposed to simply adding new content and strategies to the existing teacher toolkit. The purpose became tied to articulation and application of lessons for non-Native teachers and scholars, in order to promote a genuine—as opposed to superficial—honoring of Native experiences that had previously been ignored by cultural outsiders like myself.

Tribal leaders emphasized the cultural relevance of storytelling, so they encouraged me to utilize research methods that valued the oral tradition, Native ways of storytelling, and tribal approaches to understanding story. As a result, I committed to utilizing an iterative and dialogical approach that would allow the participants to expand and clarify their stories through subsequent unstructured or semi-structured interviews.

Even in my formal, written representation of the findings, I worked to identify and explore differences between approaches to Western narrative and Native storytelling.

Since the original project guided my dissertation work, I encountered pressure to condense or streamline participant narratives, a decision which potentially conflicted with the storytelling traditions relevant to the community. After discussing options with the Native participants, we selected to frame each of the four lessons with the longer narrative of one of the Native participants. Shorter passages from the stories of the other participants contributed to the conversation, but the main focus of the lesson centered upon the experiences of one person. We also decided to include all passages that the participants identified as contributory, in their complete form, in an appendix. While we were unable to identify a representation of this work that did not, to a large extent, disrupt the original spoken story, our decision to incorporate the narratives in their entirety allowed us to discuss additional possibilities for similar work in the future. For example, publishing the narratives in their own collection and using digital media to share the spoken accounts offer potential for scholars seeking to confront some of the colonizing practices associated with writing, condensing, and disseminating Native experiences.

The analysis phase of the project further demonstrated the importance of re-envisioning “relevance” within CBPR work. In several cases, the Native participants downplayed stories I might have emphasized if I had been independently responsible for the analysis (“That story actually wasn’t that important”), while they privileged others I would have likely overlooked or misunderstood. As the Native participants and other tribal community members emphasized, Native peoples must guide the process of interpretation and meaning-making in order to advance decolonizing methodologies.

One of the most interesting developments of the example project hinged upon the tendency for mainstream researchers to manipulate the experience of Native peoples, which potentially inhibits project relevance for the community. Throughout the example project, we explored the use of organizational strategies and Standard English in terms of both analysis and representation. Power played a key role in terms of the ways participants told and chose to represent their stories, and interrogation of forms of power proved especially relevant. For example, one participant made it clear that his use of specific non-Standard grammatical constructions was intentional as a form of resistance to mainstream academic culture and a sign of political and cultural solidarity with Native people who speak "Indian English." His decision intentionally disrupted the discourse of power and aligned with experiences of other Native peoples across educational settings (see, for example, Sterzuk, 2011). In many research contexts, scholars independently make decisions to preserve or modify spoken stories as they are moved to a written form that is relevant in mainstream academia but that loses relevance at the community level.

Reciprocity. Historically, researchers have developed a reputation for studying Indigenous communities exclusively for their own gain or the gain of their associated institution (Smith, 2005). To make matters more complicated, altruistic ideas associated with "giving voice" or "empowering" communities, while initially a goal of critical research, potentially suggest the researcher is able to give something that the researched would not be able to achieve on their own (Bishop, 2005, p. 123). Within work focused on decolonization in research, specifically, a similar concern arises when, as Jones and Jenkins (2008) argue, non-Native scholars seek to collaborate without realizing such desires may be rooted in efforts to gain access to community cultural knowledge or to secure recognition from publishers, funding sources, etc.

The community members who contributed to the design and implementation of the example project reinforced the call for reciprocity made by critical and Indigenous scholars. Before, during, and after the example project, tribal leaders and the Native participants shared ideas regarding ways to disseminate the findings. The leaders emphasized that the findings should be shared with community members, including school boards, tribal councils, educators, parents, and administrators, in meaningful ways that promote change. They also expressed interest in using the findings to inform curriculum design and to guide cultural mentorship programs in bordertown schools. Additionally, the Native participants encouraged me to communicate with local media and present findings to teacher educators, Native leaders, and policymakers.

While various community members encouraged me to use writing as a means to disseminate findings ("that's what people expect"), they also suggested I meet face to face with administrators and teachers, use audiovisual resources such as digital storytelling, and co-present with Native participants at conferences. Since the project's formal conclusion, I have shared results with administrators and teachers, collaborated on curriculum analysis, shared participant digital stories with community members and preservice teachers, and co-presented at conferences with two of the Native participants.

One unexpected outcome of the example CBPR project was the impact of the work on a personal level. Several of the Native participants mentioned the therapeutic power of sharing their experiences. Archibald (2008) and Iseke-Barnes (2009) explain this power of stories even further, arguing that Indigenous stories have energy that can heal entire communities and guide the process of decolonizing understandings, especially when used in connection with community-based research approaches.

The act of sharing my stories as a non-Native teacher also affected me personally and professionally. For example, I told the Native participants about one of my efforts to teach tribal history and story through the use of creation stories. At the time, I believed I was advancing decolonizing practices—I was privileging Native stories as a means to teach history, instead of relying on textbook theories regarding the origins of Indigenous cultures in this hemisphere. However, after sharing the experience with the Native participants, I learned that my use of the creation stories did not align with cultural protocol (for some specific tribes, creation stories can only be told in certain contexts). Instead of promoting decolonization, I was using Native content in a way that reinforced mainstream epistemologies while conflicting with Native ways of knowing.

Responsibility. The creation story example was simultaneously painful and illuminating. Within the context of stories, in particular, this example reiterates the importance of understanding responsible ways to share cultural knowledge, especially in contexts where members of various communities come together, like my predominantly white bordertown classroom. Even when it is not our intent, scholars potentially manipulate participant experiences, especially when differences exist in terms of epistemologies, data collection protocol, analytical approaches, and representations. The essence of responsibility rests upon a thorough and ongoing collaboration with community members to assure the scholar responsibly gathers data (e.g. interviews follow cultural protocol), analyzes the data (e.g. accurately identifies culturally important findings), and shares the results (e.g. does not share cultural knowledge inappropriately).

Furthermore, I learned that cultural mentors are essential throughout cross-cultural work—whether that work is related to teaching, research, or service.

Throughout the decade I have known them, my cultural mentors have become comfortable with illuminating my mistakes, encouraging me to move forward in terms of certain projects, and contributing to my own professional development. Despite these efforts, the nature of power and control within the various project relationships continued to prove problematic throughout the project. Decolonizing scholars emphasize that research relationships continue to reproduce, either overtly or in subtle ways, a power differential that positions the researcher above participant.

In the case of the example project, long-standing relationships made aspects of the process easier, but a perceived power differential continued to influence other phases. Two of the participants, who had been my students, found it uncomfortable to critique my teaching. All four participants initiated the critical conversations with an emphasis on the practices they supported, before delving into things I could have done differently as a teacher or scholar. While self-regulation of responses may be viewed as a challenge to scholars in pursuit of "validity," Kovach (2009) emphasizes, "participants accustomed to the oral tradition of sharing through story will self-regulate their response to ensure that the question is being respected" (p. 124). As listeners, responsible scholars cultivate the trust and space participants need to fully consider and respect the question.

Responsible (or irresponsible) listening directly influences narrative analysis. As Hendry (2007) notes, "analysis often becomes a mode for saying what we want to say and not really listening to what is being said" (p. 493). In addition to responsible listening as related to data collection and analysis, it is important for scholars to share results in useful and responsible ways. In the case of the example project, such sharing has been challenging. Since the project's initiation, many teachers and administrators in the bordertown school have retired, moved, or changed careers. Several influential leaders in the Native communities have passed away. New educational policy has further shifted attention from locally relevant and culturally responsive teaching to standardized curriculum and instructional practices. In addition to a changing audience with shifting interests, an expectation to condense the information into "administrative summaries" has further affected the potential to share the stories responsibly.

Although I provided multiple, varied opportunities for the Native participants to review the representations of their stories and to contribute to the decision-making regarding the products, there is no way around the reality that the resulting stories do not belong entirely to the Native storytellers. As Iseke and Moore (2011) note, "editing is part of the telling; it is about telling a particular version of the story" (p. 28). As a cultural outsider, I was, and continue to be, concerned about my influence on the reshaping of story, especially when seeking to promote decolonization in research.

Re-Envisioning CBPR Research Challenges

While CBPR work is not new, constructive dialogue about the associated challenges remains somewhat limited, especially when such work takes place in cross-cultural contexts. Like many cross-cultural contexts, reservation bordertowns offer a richness of experience and a multiplicity of perspectives. They also can be either perceived or real spaces of tension. In terms of research, the various tensions can inhibit the potential for decolonization, especially if decision-making rests exclusively in the hands of mainstream scholars. Even within the field of CBPR, crossing the border between theory and practice is much more complex than it initially seems, as demonstrated by the example project. As a result, we participants view this project as an introductory step within an extensive and ongoing collaborative effort. We had to become comfortable with the dynamic nature of the process, learn to question our own understandings and assumptions, and actively embrace the challenges as opportunities.

While comprehensive collaboration was an integral part of the example project on a theoretical level, it was not fully realized on a practical level given various logistical influences. I felt pressure to avoid adding work to the plates of the already over-extended community participants. However, I also had to resist using my own anxiety about demands of participants as an excuse for reducing participant involvement. As an elder cautioned, to limit participation based solely on my assumption that the participants did not have the time would just be another form of colonization.

My stance as a cultural outsider made “colonizing methodologies” somewhat unavoidable, since I started from an epistemological orientation defined largely by my experience as a mainstream teacher, student, and scholar. There is a risk that, despite efforts to collaborate with integrity, I failed to address the entrenched thinking that may influence the interpretations. Furthermore, while tribal leaders asked me to work with participants who had successfully navigated “mainstream” schools and universities, they noted that such participants might privilege mainstream epistemologies as a result of that experience. As McCaslin and Breton (2008) suggest, sometimes we—Native participants and non-Native allies—do not recognize when we are “wearing the colonizer’s coat” (p. 513). In this case, being aware of that potential was only effective if we were able to identify and interrogate the influences of colonization on our own understandings.

In fact, the very act of focusing on epistemological differences holds the potential to "centre the colonial relationship" (Kovach, 2009, p. 80), instead of striving to dismantle it. Throughout the project, I struggled with the discomfort associated with an emphasis on difference, which historically has encouraged hierarchical and dichotomizing categorization within Western research contexts. Despite this discomfort, I endeavored to focus on ideas that the community members and Indigenous participants considered most important, including an attention to epistemological differences.

Closing: Crossing Methodological Borders

To cross the borders between theory and practice in cross-cultural contexts, scholars must "look back" (Kovach, 2009, p. 76) on our own experiences, epistemologies, and methodologies, especially given the disequilibrium we will face when we step outside of ourselves. Lewis (2011) emphasizes this connection between narrative, reflection, and transformation:

> By acting from that place of not knowing and through the subsequent storying and reflection, we make small discoveries and beyond those discoveries, in the shadows, we find there is something else, something more. (p. 509)

As critical scholars, we must be willing to embrace the methodologies of the communities with which we work, particularly if we are cultural outsiders. An "Indigenist paradigm," which, according to Wilson (2007), "can be used by anyone who chooses to follow its tenets" (p. 193), allows cultural outsiders a path that leads from the place of "not knowing" to "something else, something more" (Lewis, 2011, p. 509).

To support such paradigms, scholars can look to guidelines developed from projects (See Table 3), "Indigenous research frameworks" (Kovach, 2009, p. 39), and/or "projective techniques" (Porr, Mayan, Graffigna, Wall, & Vieira, 2011, p. 31) that engage participants in collaborative analysis of data. Of course, it is important to view such resources as guides, rather than prescriptive tools, given the dynamic and collaborative aims of participatory research. Hendry (2007) argues that to bolster the reputation of qualitative work "we need to be faithful to our relationships and not impose more methods" (p. 493). As Susan, one of the participants in the example project asked, "Can you just imagine if everyone worked *together* how successful we could be?"

As Ríos, McDaniel, and Stowell (1996) note, critically oriented work that strives to advance social justice is especially challenging for new faculty, given the culture of mainstream institutions. To cultivate such efforts, it is important to create support systems, connect faculty who have developed reputations in critical research with emerging scholars, and dialogue about our challenges. Given the time commitment needed to conduct CBPR effectively and ethically in tribal communities, changes related to tenure and promotion expectations are also needed (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006).

As this article's introductory quote from Deloria emphasizes, research in Native communities has primarily focused on benefitting the researcher, even in situations where collaboration with Native participants is claimed, since collaboration can take many shapes, from tokenistic involvement to fully integrated partnership. Futhermore, Jones and Jenkins (2008) argue that the non-Native scholar's desire to collaborate "might be an unwitting imperialist demand" (p. 471) since it entails entry into the community of the "cultural Other" (Montecinos, 1995, p. 291). To promote collaborative integrity in cross-cultural contexts, Jones and Jenkins (2008) suggest scholars "work the colonizer-indigene hyphen" through reflexivity, dialogical critique, and a blatant recognition of the inherent power relationships within the project (p. 473). An awareness of the goal(s) is critical, since “the academy expects that its members will contribute to the scholarly community through rigorous intellectualism” while Native communities “expect that their members will contribute through vigorous activism” (Kaomea, 2004, p. 28). In particular, cross-cultural contexts call for attention to the physical, epistemological, and methodological spaces of tension that drive decision-making throughout the research process.

That said, recognizing differences and valuing partnership does not mean researchers should give equal attention to both Indigenous and mainstream methods. In both theory and practice, decolonization demands a genuine and comprehensive “centring” of Native knowledge and epistemologies (Kovach, 2009, p. 55) throughout the research process (Beeman-Cadwallader et al., 2012). To cross the borders from theory to practice, Indigenous leaders and critical theorists encourage scholars to re-envision their work in terms of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001), to elevate Indigenous collaboration throughout the process (Kovach, 2009; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006), and to trust in the stories with humility and faith (Hendry, 2007). These efforts require scholars to question their own epistemological orientations and experiences, especially as they are influenced by the “real motives of the academic community” (Deloria, 1969/1988, p. 94), in order to transform their understandings of researcher control and participation.

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Table 1

Epistemological differences.

Indigenous/Community Epistemologies	Mainstream Academic Epistemologies
Native peoples have unique histories and potential as demonstrated through oral histories, ceremonies, visual art, etc.	Native communities are deficient according to mainstream measures such as large scale studies, written accounts, and tests
Experiences are best shared in a dynamic, interactive, and face-to-face context	Experiences are best shared in professional contexts through written form
Stories are complex, lengthy, and circular in order to connect to multiple experiences and to promote deeper understanding	Stories are clear, concise, and chronological in order to promote basic understanding by linear thinkers
Meaning-making is collaborative and all participants can contribute	Credentialed experts are best prepared to make meaning of experiences/stories
Subjectivity, emotion, personal and collective experience, and multiple perspectives are valued	Reliability, validity, and trustworthiness depend upon researcher objectivity and/or participant-to-participant consistency
Stories are powerful and, in some cases, cannot be told in certain contexts	To promote education, stories should be shared with the broadest possible audience

Note. These findings were determined by members of the specific community involved in the example CBPR study; they are not generalizable to all Native communities.

Table 2

The Four R's and Lessons Related to the Example CBPR Project.

Respect	Relevance	Reciprocity	Responsibility
Time commitment must be manageable for participants	Community interests must direct the project's design and implementation	Share results with teachers, school leaders, community members, and teacher educators	Project design must center upon tribal protocol
Relationships between Native and non-Native participants need to be long-lasting and trusting	Oral histories, storytelling, and dialogue should guide the project	Project process should promote learning, healing, and personal change for all participants	Non-Native scholar-participants must share "control" of the project with Native participants
Native participants should engage in all phases of project	Meaning-making should be guided by Native community members	Findings should lead to practical change in schools and communities	Stories must be shared in appropriate ways

Note. Again, members of the specific community involved in the example CBPR study determined these lessons; they are not generalizable to all Native communities.

Table 3

Advancing Decolonization through Participatory Research: Additional Suggestions.

Respect
• Collaborate in meaningful and genuine ways throughout all phases of a research project • Dialogue, ask, and answer questions throughout the process
Relevance
• Keep the community-defined purpose of the work central in decision-making, especially in terms of analysis and representation • Be flexible and willing to adapt to changing community needs/interests
Reciprocity
• Be mindful of the motivations of various participants (including yourself) • Stay connected with participants after the project's end; monitor progress • Engage in projects that build upon each other to demonstrate long-term commitment to the community
Responsibility
• Recognize and reflect upon anxieties and challenges that arise • Work with others to define your role as a scholar and as a participant; return to that definition when you face challenges • Discuss the real and perceived power differences • Ask, "What can I do to help in the process?"

Footnotes

[1] Although it is preferable to refer to Indigenous peoples by their specific tribal group, it is not always practical or ethical to do so. In some cases, small group size may compromise confidentiality, even if names have been changed. In other cases, a term that emphasizes commonalities between groups can promote solidarity. In this article, "Native" and "Indigenous" are used interchangeably to emphasize the important role of discourse in scholarship connected to Native communities, to promote unity between groups for the purpose of advancing critical Indigenous work, and to protect the identities of individual participants and specific tribal communities.