Community Research and Epistemic Justice in Jamaica


By

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# ABSTRACT

In the broad field of community research (CR), epistemic justice is often considered to be an issue at the community level. That is, the more empowering methodologies are used, the more CR should contribute to epistemic justice. Through understanding the experience of a CR researcher, we are able to understand the barriers and opportunities for CR to contribute to global epistemic justice. Currently little research in the field focuses on the barriers or opportunities researchers encounter in the pursuit of an empowering praxis. Even less attention is paid to the barriers faced by researchers who are subject to global influences on their work. This thesis considers CR and the levels at which the question of epistemic justice must be addressed, by examining the barriers and opportunities faced by CR researchers in Jamaica. This study explores the barriers and opportunities for CR in Jamaica, a brief history of CR in Jamaica, as well as the extent to which CR is seen as empowering and decolonizing. Jamaican community researchers face local, institutional, and global barriers including: funding from international donors, local politics, community trust, physical access to communities, community norms, and academic barriers to publishing based on hegemonic standards. Opportunities for CR include: community gatekeepers, university support, some forms of funding, the drive and adaptability of researchers, as well as government support. CR is considered a way to move towards decolonizing research, and a way to empower communities. However researchers face barriers at the global levels that hinder the decolonizing and empowering potential of this work. This study has implications for supporting community researchers in Jamaica specifically but more broadly could be applied to supporting researchers in the Caribbean or other Global South contexts in which research is underfunded.


Keywords: epistemic justice, community research, decolonizing, Caribbean, community

development, empowerment

**Chapter I**

**Introduction**

Community research was introduced to the academy as a challenge to academic research methods that sought to distance the researcher from the people being studied. The use of community research methods is spoken of as a way to increase epistemic justice in the academy, through the more focused inclusion of community voices at more stages of the research process than just in the results. The use of more empowering or decolonizing methods contributes to epistemic justice at the level of conducting a study. However, there are other levels in the research process where epistemic justice is challenged. Individual researchers face a variety of influences from institutions they work for, communities they work with, and the larger academic field they work within. These influences must be navigated as researchers attempt to use community research methods, and attempt to publish work that has used these methods. The literature to this point on epistemic justice in community research has focused at the level of the research project, with a few articles also focusing on the influences researchers must navigate to attempt to do community research. However, these papers have not addressed larger global influences such as international development agendas, that also play a role in the research decisions of many community researchers, particularly those in the Global South. These global influences can affect the ability to publish certain types of studies, as well as the direction of research projects generally.

Researchers are at the center of these struggles for epistemic justice in the academy. They navigate the institutions they are embedded in, and make the decisions or facilitate decisions on the methods they use in their studies. It is also on the strength of their affliation, writing, reputation etc that papers are published in major journals. Thus, to examine the ways that

epistemic justice is attempted and/or challenged throughout the research process, we can center the researcher's experience of doing community research. This paper will consider where researchers see influences that serve as barriers to conducting community research, and where researchers see influences that serve as facilitators to conducting community research. This paper assumes that the ability to conduct and publish on community research is a step towards epistemic justice in the global academy.

Epistemic justice refers to the concept that some epistemologies are privileged over others in our globalized world (Fricker, 2007). Western academic work as well as Western epistemology has been privileged in the global knowledge system (Smith, 1999). Participatory community research has the potential to be an empowering and decolonizing departure from traditional Western academic research practice due to its focus on community issues, and its involvement of communities in the research. While researchers who do community research in the Global North face challenges in pursuing this work, there are likely to be even more challenges for those researchers in the Global South who do community research because of the additional layer of control of resources by international bodies.

This paper aims to explore a brief history of the development of some fields of community research in Jamaica, as well as the facilitators and barriers to doing community research in Jamaica. In exploring the facilitators and barriers, I discuss the ways that power structures at multiple levels-- global, national and local-- play a role in hindering or supporting this form of research in forms that promote epistemic justice. That is, I consider the ways that research is community directed, community engaged, and accepted as knowledge by the global academy. Finally, I propose that for the promotion of epistemic justice, barriers faced by

community researchers should be removed, and supports for community researchers should be

implemented and strengthened.

**Chapter II**

**Literature Review**

**The Importance of a Glonacal Framework**

For community research to have its intended effect in the academy, that is the promotion of epistemic justice in the academy, the research itself must be aligned with empowerment and decolonial aims, and the researchers who partake in this work must be able to disseminate the work through the normal academic means such as publishing and presenting at conferences. In terms of the level of the research design, the aims of both empowerment and decolonizing methods overlap, that is, for research to be decolonizing and empowering it should be community directed and community engaged. These are processes that can be actualized at the local level, however they will also likely be impacted by influence at other levels. Globalization tends to be an elusive term to define, but it is often considered to be international integration, whereby connections between countries are strengthened and barriers broken down (Sites, 2000). Globalization has allowed for the political influence of more wealthy (and formerly imperial) countries over less wealthy (and often formerly colonized) countries through the mechanism of global development (Rist, 1999). Many of the countries in the Caribbean are considered to be developing nations, and as such are subject to the development agendas of the present moment, for example the Millennium Development Goals. Thus many of the community development activities in the region are tied in some way to the global development agendas. For example, Zannotti, Stephenson and McGhehee (2016) conducted a case study of a university in Haiti that aims to do community based research. The authors find that the politics involved in finding and maintaining funding sources for this work causes a shift in the work done, from work directly benefitting the community in the way the community expresses; to a compromise between

community needs and the limitations put in place by funding agencies .The university becomes stuck in a loop of dependence and survival strategies in order to make enough funding to stay afloat.

Thus while previous literature has focused on the local and national barriers and supports faced by community researchers, it is important that in the Caribbean context, global barriers and supports are also taken into account.

Marginson and Rhoades (2002) show that most of the research on the growth of higher education globally has been focused at the level of the nation-state. Thus, they propose a 'glonacal' framework, wherein they state that agents (both institutions as agents and individuals as agents) face influences from forces in global, national and local contexts simultaneously (see Figure 1).

A GLONACAL AGENCY HEURISTIC
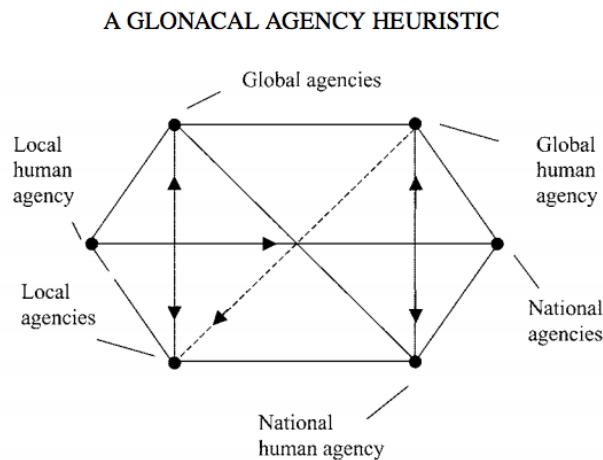
Figure 1: From Marginson and Rhoades (2002).

Thus, none of these forces are necessarily more important than the others but all are connected. Agents can have impact on these influences, and these influences can impact the agents. Considering community researchers in the Caribbean as agents, we can imagine that they

face barriers and supports to doing CR at the local, national and global levels simultaneously. All of these levels should also have some positive or negative influence on whether the CR practiced in the Caribbean is community directed, community engaged, and accepted as publishable knowledge by the global academy. That is, all these levels will have an impact on whether CR in the Caribbean is decolonizing and empowering. The researcher as an agent in the system has some agency to push against these influences, but generally to promote the growth of a decolonizing and empowering CR, the barriers at all levels should be addressed and the supports at all levels should be strengthened.

Thus the question of how we can promote epistemic justice through CR must be answered at multiple levels. Given this, the Caribbean is an interesting site for this research because it is subject to clear global influence (through the development agenda), and as shown above, community researchers in general in different global contexts have faced barriers at the local and national levels. To promote decolonial and empowering research, research should be free to be community directed and community engaged. To promote epistemic justice at the global level, researchers should have access to avenues of sharing their work at conferences, institutions and etc. That is, the work should be accepted as valid by global decision-making bodies and the global academy.

**Decolonizing Research and Epistemic Justice**

Fricker (2007) argues that epistemic injustice is often overlooked in discourse about justice. Fricker positions her argument within a system of social power. She states that power exists relationally, but also structurally. Social power is dependent on "shared social-imaginative conceptions of the social identities of those implicated in the particular operation of power." While Foucault argues that power is activated in particular social interactions between agents,

Fricker counters that power exists whether or not an agent is acting. For example if a woman is silenced by a man's statement, that is an active silencing and the man actively uses the relative power afforded him by a social understanding that a man's word is more valuable than a woman's. However, even if the man does not speak, a woman may feel silenced by that same dynamic without the man having to act on it. Thus, power in Fricker's view is constantly at play. Those who are powerful are determined by their position in socially accepted hierarchies, and the position of the powerful depends on who the other actors in an event are, but also can be seen structurally. Thus Fricker bridges structural and agentic power in her analysis. In this work, I use this definition of power- whereby there is a consistent structural understanding of who the powerful are in our global academic system. However, on an agentic level, Third World researchers may have power over Third World communities while still being less powerful than First World researchers. The respondents in this study occupy both of these places of power. Thus, they have exposure to at least two levels where epistemic injustice may act. At the interface of researcher and community, epistemic injustice can occur when the researcher does not afford community members testimonial or hermanuetic justice. At the interface of Third World and First World researcher, the same can happen, this time with First World researchers/ publications/institutions as those in power.

Fricker posits two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice refers to someone's knowledge being dismissed because they are not found to be qualified as someone who can produce knowledge. Community members of a rural community in a country in the Global South for example, could fall into this category if judged from the traditional Western view of research. Hermeneutic injustice results when one's experience is so obscured from the popular narrative that one does not have the framework in

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which to analyze it. Collins (1990) similarly asserts that black women (and it could be extended to multiple groups of marginalized persons), particularly black women who are not formally educated, have been disregarded as incapable of holding and producing knowledge. Both researchers from the Global South and their research participants likely suffer from both testimonial and hermeneutic injustice in the global knowledge system.

Smith (1999) in Decolonizing Methodologies explores the many ways that Western norms are centered in traditional social science research. She proposes that to decolonize research, rather than attempting to separate Western from indigenous research, (as they are in many ways inextricable at this point) one should adopt methodologies that directly avoid centering Western norms in the whole research process from creating research questions to data collection and analysis. Decolonial knowledge then, is information gathered and interpreted while critically shaping the research process in a way that Western biases are minimized. Decolonizing research thus serves the goals of epistemic justice, because it involves the process of privileging marginalized epistemologies. Smith (1999) suggests that positivist norms should be challenged, examples of which are: researcher objectivity; research questions focused solely on individual traits; and questions and results that center Western societies as the point of comparison. Some of the norms of community research, specifically community-engaged research, that directly challenge these positivist tendencies are: employing reflexivity and engaging communities; examining multiple levels of issues; and centering investigations in context.

Within the field of community psychology many scholars have posited the importance of decolonizing the field, and understanding the power dynamics inherent in knowledge production. Not all community research is necessarily decolonial. Cruz and Sonn (2011) argue for a

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decolonizing standpoint in community psychology, such that CP considers dynamics of power and oppression in its discussions of culture. Case studies of specific projects also illustrate the ways in which community research can be more or less critical. Lazarus, Bulbilia, Taliep, Naidoo (2014) describe the possibilities of using community based participatory research as a critical way to approach community psychology. Nthomang (2004) describes a community development project which continually failed partially as a result of continual colonial practices.

Dutta (2016) proposes that the field of community psychology should be decentered from the United States, that is both types of inquiry pursued should be decolonized, and those in relative power in the field should recognize the ways in which certain knowledges are regarded as generalizable, while others are considered contextual. Dutta (2016) writes that the field should move away from 'othering' communities under study, as well as move away from psychology as a confined field, towards a multi disciplinary practice. Sonn, Arcidiacono, Dutta, Kiguwa, Kloos and Maldonado Torres (2017) propose a liberatory agenda for community psychology, focusing on a decolonial turn for the field.

Thus, conducting CR can be an entry point for researchers to decolonize their research practice. Though not all research done in CR practice is necessarily decolonial, the framework for the more engaged forms of CR provides an opening for a more decolonial practice. The growth of CR in a region could be an important driver towards making decolonial knowledge more prevalent, and thus promoting epistemic justice.

**Community Empowerment**

Empowerment theory links individual capabilities to support systems and social change (Rappaport 1981, 1984). Empowerment involves multiple levels of power: building individual strengths; building an individual's power through involvement in organizations; and building

organizations' power through coalitions of organizations (Speer & Hughey, 1995). CR and its related fields has the potential to empower communities through: giving community members voice on the issues that affect them; having a social justice focus; and biasing towards action. Hanitio and Perkins (2017) also find that empowerment in the form of nonviolent activism is associated with development of the fields of both community psychology and community development. Though some forms of CR are arguably more empowering than others, the values of this form of research creates an opening for work that is not extractive, but rather empowering for community members on multiple levels.

**Community Research in the Caribbean**

Lewis and Simmons (2010) call for the development of a local problem focused research culture in the Caribbean. They posit that Caribbean research institutions have continued the trend that universities in the region were originally instituted for, the transmission of knowledge from the mainland to the colony. The authors argue that though the few university systems in the region have research mandates, the culture is much more that of teaching than of creating original research. While the authors state that they do not go as far as to reject positivism, they posit that the development of a social issue focused research culture in the Caribbean could reduce dependency on the imperial state, and move towards more inclusion of Caribbean theory in international discussions. Ellis (1990) also writes that through using participatory research methodology a researcher might produce a uniquely Caribbean epistemology while simultaneously serving the needs of the community. Though there are likely challenges to doing CR in this region, as in any other region, there are also unique likely support systems that might facilitate CR in the region. For example, Ellis (1990) writes on the regional networks that

allowed her the access and funding to produce a participatory research project across three Caribbean countries.

Based on these calls for the growth of community research in the area, this paper explores the current state of CR in one Caribbean country as well as the factors that researchers express were important in the growth of CR there. Literature on the growth of CR in other regions lends some background to the historical factors that might be important for the growth of these fields.

**Community Research from a Historical Perspective**

There is no one history of the development of community research in the current literature; however there has been work on the histories of its related social science fields, and related practices such as action research and participatory research. A few examples will be discussed here.

Montero (1996) writes on the development of community psychology in Latin America and the United States. The field developed in around the same time period in two vastly different social and political contexts. However, both involved an epistemological crisis whereby positivism was found lacking as a response to complex social problems. Thus the development of a more practical field was spurred by this lack of space for these investigations in the positivist framework. In Latin America, this crisis was complemented by a social and political atmosphere of activism. To remain socially relevant, research needed to be directly relevant to Latin American issues and to reframe participants as creators rather than objects of study. In the United States, community psychology drew from Lewin's (1946) ideas on action research in shaping its priorities as a problem-solving, action-driven discipline. Reich, Riemer, Prilletensky,

and Montero (2007) provide a more comprehensive picture of the growth of international community psychology in particular.

Osei-Hwedie (1993) writes on the indigenization of social work in Africa, as it changed from the field that was imported from the West into that which is focused on definitively African issues (particularly regarding culturally relevant development) and definitively African solutions to those problems. Social work, Osei-Hwedie posits, must take on the role of decolonizing its services in order to best serve the African people.

Hall (1992) focuses on the development of participatory research, rather than on a particular field. Hall posits that participatory research creates a situation whereby collective empowerment goes hand in hand with decolonial knowledge production. While traditional research supports and spreads the Western positivist paradigm, Hall argues that participatory research subverts these practices by moving the study of people's daily lives and struggles from the "margins of epistemology to the center." (p. 16)

In these few examples of studies on the development of fields related to and tangential to CR, two themes are prevalent. First, community research should serve as a site for the creation of a new type of knowledge, a decolonial knowledge. Second, community research should be empowering for the communities being studied.

**Barriers to Community Research from the Researcher Perspective**

Despite the great potential of CR to both provide a gateway for the spread of decolonizing research methods and empower marginalized communities, researchers attempting to take part in CR face a wide range of barriers to doing this work.  There seem to be only a few studies asking community researchers directly about their experiences doing community research. Those studies reveal that there are personal, institutional and national government level

barriers to doing CR that is community directed, community engaged, and accepted as publishable.

Israel, Schultz, Parker and Becker (2001) write specifically about the barriers faced by researchers who do community-based participatory research (CBPR). Israel et al. (2001) suggest that there are a number of policies that could be put in place to promote CBPR. These include: funding guidelines that are more conducive to the realities of CBPR projects such as funding for community organization relationship building; funding for project infrastructure; and funding for comprehensive approaches to problems. In addition, the authors suggest training for researchers to carry out CBPR, including: professional training particularly recruiting from marginalized communities that are frequently studied using CBPR methods; and training in research methods for community members. The authors suggest institutional changes in academia, such as including community impact as part of the tenure and promotion process; high level journals becoming open to publishing CBPR work; and making it practice to recognize community members in scholarly work.

Bakker (2009) writes about her and her colleagues' experience in attempting to do community engaged research at her university in South Africa. Bakker describes that both students and faculty at the university felt that the university in which they worked undervalued their participatory methods and sought to get rid of them as soon as an opportunity presented itself. Bakker was in a community of colleagues who shared her passion for community-engaged work, and yet the university system was restrictive to the continuation of that work.

There are numerous other challenges expressed in the literature. Castleden, Morgan and Neimanis (2010) found that institutional norms about authorship can be unfair to community members who have been involved in the research process, causing tensions. Minkler (2004) and

Kerstetter (2012) express the personal challenges with positionality that researchers often face when attempting to determine community desired outcomes and process. Power imbalances exist within the research process, and so they must be acknowledged, as projects can end up disempowering community members especially when the end goals of the researcher and of the communities are not given equal value (Sullivan, 2001; Lazarus et al, 2012; Muhammed at al, 2015). Funding sources can restrict the research purpose and methods that are able to be used, which can sometimes lead to limiting community participation (Kraemer et al, 2015; Bakker, 2009). Finally, challenges in communication between the research team and the community can lead to mistrust and feelings of being used (Kraemer et al, 2015; Castleden et al, 2012; Carasco et al, 2001). These studies have focused on the barriers to researchers at the local and national levels. However, countries in the Global South are usually subject to global influence as well as local and national influence.

To explore the barriers and supports relevant to community research in the Caribbean, I will use the case of Jamaica, using interviews with Jamaican researchers to explore the history of community research in Jamaica, as well as facilitators and barriers to their work.

**Chapter III**

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This work will specifically explore:

1.      Generally, what factors influenced the development of some applied social science fields (community psychology, community development, public health, and applied geography) in Jamaica?

2.      What are the barriers and facilitators to community research in Jamaica?

3.      What are the factors that influence the extent to which the local community research done in the Caribbean is decolonizing and empowering?

Based on the policies suggested by Israel (2001) and the challenges taken from the literature particularly as it relates to the Caribbean researchers, I hypothesize that the following factors will have some part to play in supporting or hindering general community based research in the Caribbean. The researcher's ability to partake in community research may be impacted by influences at the local, national and global levels. I hypothesize that community research will be supported when researchers can:

   •      Choose to lead community-based research

   •      Obtain funding

   •      Connect with networks of researchers

   •      Find willing community partners

   •      Gain support from their affiliated institution

   •      Be preferred to a foreign researcher for a local project

   •      Accurately report on results without fear of recourse from the government

- Theorize and publish on this form of research both locally and in international publications.

Based on Smith's (1999) Decolonizing Methodologies and Fricker's (2007) concept of epistemic injustice, I hypothesize that the extent to which community research in the Caribbean is decolonizing and empowering, and thus contributes to epistemic justice will be impacted by the researcher's ability to:

- Choose topics/communities based on locally observed need (rather than for example only the topics that international funding agencies find salient such as HIV prevention, etc.)

- Organize research process to allow for participation (favorable IRB climate for community projects, resources to implement participatory projects, ability to choose critical methods, etc.)

- Interpret research with the community, in a way that is self-defined, conducive to critical (decolonial) thought, and to local definitions of positive outcomes

- Theorize and publish on this research both locally and in international publications.

**Chapter IV**

**Methods**

**Global Development of Applied Community Studies Project**

The present study is part of an ongoing research project with Professor Doug Perkins called The Global Development of Applied Community Studies (GDACS). Community research (CR) in the GDACS study is broadly defined as research that focuses at the community level of analysis. GDACS aims to determine the factors that predict the development of the field of professionalized community research globally. By determining the factors that predict the development of applied social science fields, the authors hope to produce a history of the fields as well as to suggest paths towards the introduction of community research in academia globally to encourage the education of local professional social problem solvers, and break down barriers between academia and the community. GDCR examines the history and current state of the following applied social science fields which have a community focus: community psychology, community sociology, social work, community development, interdisciplinary community studies/CRA, applied/development anthropology, development economics, public health, urban/regional planning/geography, public administration/policy studies, popular education/literacy development and liberation theology.

This project examines fewer fields as reflected by the participants that were recruited, but involves in depth semi-structured interviews to create a case study of community research in Jamaica.

**Researcher Positionality Statement**

I am a PhD student at an elite private university in the US. I am a light skinned, middle-class black woman who grew up in Kingston, Jamaica. When I was eighteen I left the country for

my tertiary education. I am interested in the promotion of Caribbean epistemologies and so chose to pursue this research both to document community research in Jamaica and to provide some structured critique of the systems that might prevent Caribbean epistemologies from entering the global knowledge system and systems that may threaten the preservation of Caribbean epistemologies. My positionality might give me an inside perspective on this work as I am a researcher who hopes to return to the Caribbean, however my position in a US academic setting as well as my elite education in the US higher education system makes me an outsider in many ways to the realities of research in the Caribbean.

**Research Setting**

This paper considers the experience of conducting community research in Jamaica and so I will provide a brief background of the context. The Jamaica Information Service provides a general history of the island (JIS, 2018). Jamaica (originally called Xaymaca) was originally home to the Taino people. In 1494, the Spain colonized Jamaica, with the Spaniards committing mass genocide against the Tainos. Though Tainos still live in Jamaica today, the population was severely decreased by this event. After the Spanish colonization came the British colonization in 1655. As part of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, English colonizers brought thousands of people from West Africa and enslaved them to work on plantations, sending some of the profit back to England. Formerly enslaved Black people who had escaped formed a community called the Maroons, who continued to fight the English until a treaty was passed declaring Maroons as free and owners of land. Slavery was formally abolished in 1838. Colonization by the English continued until 1962.

Rao and Ibanez (2003) provide a history of community driven development from the early 1900s onwards. In summary, Norman Manley and his cousin Alexander Bustamante (who

was a longtime unionist) formed the first Jamaican political party, the People's National Party(PNP) with the explicit purpose of ending British colonial rule. Bustamante separated from the PNP in 1943 and founded the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). When Jamaica became independent in 1962, Bustamante was the first Prime Minister. The Jamaican Constitution was established on August 6th, 1962. In 1972, Michael Manley (PNP) became Jamaica's second Prime Minister, ushering in an era of socialism aligning with other political activity in Latin America at the time. This was largely seen as a time of turmoil for the Jamaican public, with mass migration away from the island and an increase in political violence. In 1980, the JLP came into power and advocated for more free market policies, which exposed the island to more influence from the United States. Rao and Ibanez (2003) note that the cooperative movement in Jamaica, started by Norman Manley, was a highly influential social program and the precursor to the Jamaica Welfare program. Currently, government controlled community development initiatives such as the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, and the Social Development Commission stand alongside CBOs, NGOs, and development agencies as contributors to community development in the country.

Johnson (2009) in a speech to the Library of Congress provided a history of Jamaican education. British schooling in Jamaica started during the period of slavery as churches instituted schools for formerly enslaved people who had won their freedom. Christian churches have had a role in the growth of primary, secondary and tertiary education since the beginning of formalized schooling. These schools were modeled on British schooling systems. In 1834 Christian denominations became legally allowed to operate schools. In 1879, the Jamaica Schools Commission was established, bringing the first educational policy on Jamaican schools. In 1835, the Mico Trust opened the first training college for Jamaican teachers. After the abolition of

slavery in 1838, primary schooling expanded rapidly. After abolition, Britain enacted the Negro Education Act which granted 20,000 pounds to primary education in Jamaica. These schools were to be operated by the Christian denominations. In 1841, when the Negro Education Act ended, the churches were left financially on their own to support schools in the island. In 1879, the colonial government began to invest in Jamaican schools, taking control of primary education and starting to assist secondary schools.

In terms of tertiary education beyond teachers colleges, there are three universities offering courses in social sciences. In 1948, the colonial government of Jamaica opened the University College of the West Indies, which was then connected to the University of London. UCWI started as a medical school but as it grew, came to offer other degrees. In 1962, the University of the West Indies received its own charter and separated from the University of London (Johnson, 2009). The Jamaica Institute of Technology (now the University of Technology or UTech) was founded in 1958. UTech began granting degrees in 1986, and was afforded university status in 1995 (University of Technology, 2018). The Northern Caribbean University (NCU) was started in 1907 and is affiliated with the Seventh Day Adventist church. NCU achieved university status in 1999 and is the oldest private tertiary institution in Jamaica (Northern Caribbean University, 2018).

Jamaica is listed in the 'high human development' category of the United Nations Development Program Human Development Index rankings as of 2014 (United Nations Development Program, 2014). The HDI aims to measure the availability of life choices rather than simply economic development. Taking economic measures into account, Jamaica has a gross national income of USD$7,415 per capita.

Jamaica was chosen for this study as it serves as the site for the largest campus of the main research university in the region, the University of the West Indies (UWI). I anticipated that the presence of this university would allow access to university researchers; researchers employed to other institutions, and independent researchers, rather than purely researchers outside of academia. Jamaica was also chosen because of my connections to the island and to a member of the research community there. While the study was originally planned to include other Caribbean researchers, recruitment was difficult. One Puerto Rican researcher was also interviewed but the study was narrowed to Jamaican participants rather than generalizing on the Puerto Rican experience from one interview.

**Participants**

The participants of this study were local Jamaican researchers, defined here as researchers who live and work in the region where the communities they study are located. Thus, a Jamaican researcher might live and work in Jamaica but study a Trinidadian population and still be considered a local Jamaican researcher in the scope of this study. However, a Jamaican-born researcher studying populations in Jamaica but based in the United States would not be considered a local Jamaican researcher. Locality was an important requirement for recruiting participants in order to reflect the particular experience of doing community research in Jamaica.

The participants included eight university-trained community researchers from Jamaica. The sample also included one professional from Jamaica who practices community research but was trained at his current job. He provides a view from the government institution in charge of community development in Jamaica and so his input serves to supplement the others who practice as researchers across a variety of projects.

Of the nine interviewees: three have degrees in Psychology, one in Education (but currently works in Community Development), one in Public Health, two in Geography, one in Theology (currently working in Community Development), and one in Accounting (the participant working for the government agency). All either currently partake in community research and/or have been trained in the methods of community research formally even if their work is now more removed from either academia or the field. Four are full time members of the academy, while four are independent researchers for various projects. There were not enough respondents per field to split all results, and the results were consistent across fields and so this paper will generally discuss the practice of community research as defined by these researchers in this context. Five have been in their field for 15 or more years, while four have been in the field for 15 or less years. The newest person to their field has been in the field for four years, while the person who has been in the field in the longest was over 30 years. Two participants identified as men and seven as women.

The fields represented (as defined by participants) are: disaster risk reduction (applied geography); public health; psychology; applied geography; community development; and applied social research broadly. Partial descriptions of each of the participants are below, this paper uses pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. As the research field in Jamaica is relatively small, as another measure to protect the identity of the participants I have only included their academic training and general field of work.

Dr. Leslie is an independent researcher who holds a PhD from a Jamaican university. While she identifies as a psychologist, she currently works in the field of applied social research.

Mr. Powers is an independent researcher who holds a Masters degree from a Jamaican university. He currently works in the field of community development.

Dr. Williams is an independent researcher who holds a PhD from a university in Asia (I have not specified the country to protect the participant's privacy). She currently works in the field of disaster risk reduction.

Dr. Smith is an independent researcher who holds a PhD from a Jamaican university. She currently works in the field of applied geography.

Dr. Mariam is an academic researcher who holds a PhD from a Jamaican university. She currently works in the field of community development.

Dr. Michael is an academic researcher who holds an MBBS, Masters Degree in a medical specialty and an MPH from a Jamaican university. She currently works in the field of public health.

Dr. Travers is an academic researcher who holds a PhD from a university in the United States. She currently works in the field of psychology.

Dr. Gray is an academic researcher who holds a PhD from a university in the United States. She currently works in the field of psychology.

Mr. Beck is a government official who at the time of the interviews worked for the Social Development Commission. He worked in the field of community development and served as a representative of the SDC in a specific urban community in Jamaica.

**Sampling**

Snowball sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to recruit participants. I knew of one participant who did community research, and I reached out to him to recruit him as well as to ask for recommendations of other researchers to reach out to. In addition, I searched LinkedIn and university websites, reaching out to persons who it seemed had been involved in community research. Two other participants were recruited that way. The other participants were

recruited based on snowball sampling after the first three. I confirmed that all participants considered themselves community researchers by asking participants whether they identify as community researchers. At the end of each interview I asked whether they knew anyone else who was a community researcher.

**Data Collection**

Participants each took part in one 60 to 90-minute semi-structured interview. The interview protocol is detailed in the appendix. Interviews were conducted either face to face or over Skype or Google Hangout. Interviews were audio recorded. Participants were consented before the interview. The IRB for this protocol was approved by the Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board.

**Analysis and Member Checking**

All of the interviews were transcribed from the audio files and uploaded to Saturate. I first read all the transcripts. An initial codebook was developed based on the questions in the interview protocol (structural), and the hypotheses (evaluative). The transcripts were then read twice over to determine other codes that arose, such as the versus codes which capture tensions that were frequently mentioned by the participants, and process codes. During the process of coding, in-vivo and values codes were added as they arose (Saldaña, 2015). After the first round of coding, I completed a second round to capture new codes that had been generated from the first round. The complete codebook is contained in the Appendix. The most prominent themes across all participants were reported in the results.

All the participants but one were emailed the written results and given three weeks to respond with feedback. Participants were given the choice to give feedback over a phone call or written feedback. Two participants responded to the request for feedback. One participant elected to give

feedback over a phone call, and the other provided written feedback. An additional theme was

added based on the feedback received. Other small changes were also made to the results.

## Chapter V

## Results

**What is Community Research?**

Researchers were asked to define community research. As a summary, researchers saw community research as research that was community engaged, social justice focused, and focused on social issues at the community level. Community research is about responding to issues faced by a community and collaborating with participants rather than conducting research 'on' participants.

**History of Community Research in Jamaica**

Researchers were asked about the development of their field in Jamaica, and about the ways that the field changed since it began. This history is brief and incomplete as it is only based on a few perspectives in each field.

**Community Development.** Dr. Mariam expressed that the university has always been involved in community research. According to Dr. Mariam, the university and the surrounding community had a relationship for years, originally starting around crime and violence reduction. The university also has centers specifically for community engagement.

**Disaster risk reduction/ Geography.** According to Dr. Williams, Hurricane Gilbert in particular marked a major turning point for disaster risk reduction in Jamaica. After Gilbert in the 1980s, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management was formed. The devastation from Gilbert left rural areas without water for about two weeks, and so interest in the field started coming after that. The United Nation's approach to risk reduction was also instrumental in shifting the focus of disaster risk preparedness from a top down to a bottom up focus. The university has been teaching disaster risk preparedness since the late nineties. According to Dr.

Smith, development agencies and the Jamaican government also played a part in making the field more community focused as geography began to move towards disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. Development agencies provided criteria for projects that included community engagement.

**Public Health.** According to Dr. Michael, public health was around as a field since the colonial days. Even when the university was a part of the College of London, people were being trained in public health. Once the university became established, the department became integral in creating community health aid workers and became 'big players' in the university. The Medical school was formed during colonial times. The British were concerned with the status of healthcare in the island because many of the British doctors left after the abolition of slavery, and there was a time of general social unrest. There weren't enough doctors, and the Moyne commission recommended that a university be founded in the region for healthcare, which led to the founding of the university.

**Psychology**. According to both Dr. Travers and Dr. Leslie, psychology in general is relatively young in Jamaica. The formation of the applied psychology program at UWI was a step towards expanding the definition of psychology away from exclusively the individual towards the more collective oriented social psychology. Now, the program matches its students with various organizations that they are able to problem solve with. When thinking about community psychology in Jamaica, the first name that came to mind for two participants was Freddie Hickling, a psychiatrist. His point of view is very community oriented, and he greatly contributed to the field, putting out a book a few years ago and being instrumental in the development of a more community oriented psychology. He was interested in looking at what community mental health would look like if one mobilized people who lived in the communities.

Currently even in the department people do not think of psychology as community oriented so much as they think of it as clinical. Before psychology was an academic field, Dr. Leslie also notes that much of Caribbean sociology and psychology was'concealed' in Caribbean literature. That is, Caribbean writers have mused on the psychology and sociology of the region in their novels before the transition of the university department to focus on Caribbean psychologies. Dr. Travers also named Dr. Edward Tony Allen, Maureen Irons-Morgan and Elsa Leo-Rhynie. Dr. Leo-Rhynie as key figures who pioneered community research. When Jamaica gained independence, UWI served as an institution as a player in highlighting the need to represent the concerns of communities that were disenfranchised. Dr. Gray also noted that conferences such as the Caribbean Regional Conference of Psychology.

Dr. Travers also noted social forces outside of the university that probably had an impact on the community orientation.The university was one of the major players during the time of independence, that were "mobilized around  the need  to represent the concerns of these different communities that were disenfranchised, or was below the radar of the haves in the society." (Dr. Travers). Student protests reflected the greater national political climate, as Jamaicans wrestled with the notion of socialism, "what that meant and changes in different political administrations as well and awareness around that, that all of those things were factors that influenced work with communities and work in communities and work for communities and even how people thought of what communities were."

**History of the Social Development Commission.** Mr. Beck detailed the history of the Social Development Commission as follows:

"Well my limited knowledge, the organization spans more than 75 years. It was conceptualized from the national hero, former leader of the People's National Party

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Norman Washington Manley who came up with the idea that community is just as important as central government. So in bringing the community together to advocate for certain things that were beneficial to was prior to independence and that is where it started and then it blossomed into what it is now where we actually have seven main programs that were working in right now. We have the Strengthening the Participatory Governance framework which speaks to how groups are organized, not just coming to a meeting but documenting the meeting properly ensuring that somebody who requires some documentation from the group can actually get it. The leadership, how it's made up, we look at capacity building, strengthening the person because we as the officers don't want to be carrying the bulk of the work, it's really the community, they have to show the interest. So that really speaks to the whole development outside of the community, so you're taking somebody from just being a participant in a community to being someone who can lead, somebody who can advocate for things, somebody who can take it from just a local level to a national level. Then we have our research, Community Research and Database which we were discussing earlier in terms of going out there, doing the profiles, collaborating with STATIN and other agencies who do data, sifting the data ensuring that we tabulate it and put it properly. The asset mapping is a tool that we used to ensure that we actually know where each asset is located, produce a map and stuff like that."

According to Dr. Leslie, the Social Development Commission also suffers from insufficient resources and often the success of the agency on the ground depends on the personality of the person in charge of the constituency.

**Facilitators and Barriers to Community Research**

Researchers were asked "What are barriers and facilitators to community research in the Caribbean?" The results are below.

**Funding mostly from international donor agencies as a barrier.** All of the participants mentioned funding as a major barrier to performing community research. Dr. Leslie, a independent researcher who practices applied social psychology, described how community research questions are often determined by or at least shaped around the priorities of the funding agencies. Rather than being locally determined, many times the issues that are funded are those connected to global initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals. Dr. Leslie notes that this is counter to her idea of community research, because it can be more externally controlled rather than community based. Dr. Smith, a geographer, also echoed this sentiment, stating that sustainable development and climate change were the rage at the time of the interview, but that might change in a few years which would also change what researchers study in a few years. Dr. Travers, an academic in psychology, aligned with some of Dr. Leslie and Dr. Smith's concerns about funding from multilateral agencies. She stated that often it can be difficult to get funding at all, and when one is able to get funding it is usually because it is an issue closely tied to whatever is on trend, whether that is HIV research or research on violence.

In addition, Dr. Leslie noted that even when one has a topic that is funded by a development agency, these organizations will often bring in their own consultants to manage the project. These consultants are often paid at much higher rates than the local researchers, though, as Dr. Leslie noted, the local researchers often have to get the foreign consultants up to speed on the social context and the local researchers are the ones with the connection to the community. Essentially, local consultants do more work for far less pay than the foreign consultants. Mr.

Beck, the government community development worker, described how often NGOS also bypass local systems in order to do their own projects. However this sometimes influences projects negatively because a lack of engagement with either the formal local government systems or the informal governance systems (area leaders, etc.) can negatively impact the sustainability of the project.

In academic circles, funding from the university is also constrained based on a general lack of resources, according to Dr. Mariam, Dr. Travers and Dr. Gray, who all work at a university. While some academics have some internal funds they are able to draw upon, and others have centers that are committed to community research, most of the former or current academics interviewed relied mostly on outside funding. At the university, the role is mostly focused on teaching rather than research for this reason as well. For community research to involve community engagement, it takes more money than to run a survey, and so it can be difficult to make the choice to do community research when funding is so limited.

In addition, with some funders, Dr. Smith noted that there have been times when researchers have been asked not to report on findings that would be detrimental to the funders, or to modify their findings so that it matches the results the funder expected. This restrains the validity of the research and can also make it difficult for researchers to explore questions that are controversial. Funding can also determine methodology, as Dr. Travers stated, community research is restricted by what funders consider to be "good research."

**Local politics as a barrier.** Politics could pose a barrier to community research both when dealing with donor agencies as well as when dealing with formal and informal governance structures.

Mr. Powers believed that politicians in Jamaica do not always fully grasp the importance of community research, especially since often the results of the research might imply that there are issues that will take years to resolve.

"If you do something that looks like development [whether or not it is suited for the specific community] then that could get you re-elected. The politicians are concerned about re-election, not necessarily with the people." (Mr. Powers).

Dr. Michael, who formerly worked in public health in a government agency, mirrored this sentiment, stating that policy makers have not yet been convinced of the value of research in making policy decisions.

"The decision makers need to understand the value of it. There are a lot of countries in the Caribbean that politicians get up and take decisions and it's not based on any evidence and so you don't see change in the condition." (Dr. Michael).

For example, a politician might place a health center in their constituency regardless of whether that is the most advantageous location for it from a public health perspective. Further, Dr. Michael stated that even in doing regional research, she has observed budgets being made where there is no consultation with people in the field, "They simply use the numbers from the year before and throw them back in, or bump it up by 10%, nothing driving the change."

Government also tends to be more concerned with situations of crisis especially because of the lack of resources. Dr. Travers noted "When you have programs, interventions, policies that seem to not be necessitating a reaction immediately it can get tabled, or it can get pushed aside...the limited human resources we have are then diverted to deal with the crisis."

In Jamaica, political lines are often drawn geographically, thus some areas 'belong' to one political party while others 'belong' to the other party. Dr. Williams, a geographer, stated

"because of these garrisons and political divides, persons need the help but they'll tell you if you're affiliated with one of those political institutions we don't need it." Many of the researchers also noted the importance of making contact with the informal area leaders in order to gain access in a community. Often, if an area leader has not consented, community members are reluctant to participate in research because of fear or respect for the leader.

Politics also comes into play when members of the communities that are being helped by some forms of community research are partaking in illegal activities. Dr. Williams stated in some cases,

"Even though the government is supporting us, it's hands off support…[they say] 'we want to help you but we're not encouraging squatters'…but then how are you helping? These are the very people that need the help."

Finally, from the perspective of the community development officer at the Social Development Commission (the government agency tasked with community development) sometimes community research is hindered by a greater concern on national issues than community level issues.

**Time needed to gain community trust as a barrier.** Gaining the trust of the community involves both interacting with the informal governance structure as well as showing the community the benefits of the research for them. Gaining community trust was another frequently stated barrier to doing good community research. As described above, Jamaica's political situation makes trust difficult to gain without consultation with informal area leaders. Another barrier to community trust is the view of NGOs by certain often-researched communities. Dr. Smith, a geographer, stated:

"sometimes people are not willing to entertain us because they are skeptical of NGOS, you know, NGOs have bad reputations at times, they get millions of dollars and the money just disappears, you're not seeing the tangible results on the ground."

Dr. Smith also spoke about a community research projects investigating the experiences of fishermen in a coastal village to improve sustainability of their fishing practices:

"Some of them are very keen to be interviewed…and some of them are like nope, especially…because the last time they [the NGO] dredged the harbor it was so bad, the dredger was just dumping soil anywhere and it was really bad so that left a very bitter taste in a lot of their mouths."

Dr. Mariam spoke about the hesitancy faced sometimes because of the perception of researchers. "When we went in for the first time as this project they [the community] were skeptical because they were saying some other persons from the university coming to research again." She described how the community was still welcoming, even though they fully expected that the researchers would just come in and do their study and then leave without making any changes within the community. When this project actually returned to implement changes based on the research, the community was pleasantly surprised.

Finally, there is somewhat of a cultural barrier to sharing information with strangers to the community. Dr. Leslie said:

"People are still suspicious so you need to go in with the social development commission if you are not known in the community. You have to have some credentials because research is asking questions and some people ask 'Why do you want to know? What are you doing with this? Who you going to tell? How is it going to help me?'"

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**Physical access as a barrier.** Related to funding, politics, and to gaining community trust, researchers also mentioned physical access to communities as a barrier. Some noted that some rural communities are difficult to physically get to, Dr. Michael, public health, mentioned "I've done work where just to get in there you have to come out of a vehicle and walk and that's costly, it takes time." While Dr. Williams noted that sometimes if a location is very rural, you would not even know where to find your participants if you did not have a gatekeeper leading the way.

**Publishing, hiring and other academic barriers related to being judged by standards of the Global North.** Many of the researchers reported a desire to publish more than they do, however there are hegemonic barriers both in regards to questions about the legitimacy of their research practice, and the legitimacy of their institutions, from colleagues in the Global North. Dr. Travers spoke about how she has often been questioned on her research methods for not aligning with the 'gold standards' of research that is performed in wealthier places, for example these standards do not take into account the compromises that must be made during the research process when you are strapped for resources. As an example, Dr. Travers discusses what it would mean to use random sampling in an under-resourced research context,

"Interviewers do not have the money to go and do data collection…part of how they actually have to get these questionnaires completed is something for which they're not getting paid…If you're doing some kind of random selection where the households are randomly selected that it means [the data collection team] has to be going back repeatedly to try and collect data from that randomly selected household and even if they get that randomly selected household they may have to be doing repeated refusal conversions. So what does that mean for the indigenizing of proper data collection, proper sampling, whether its proportionate or

disproportionate sampling because oftentimes if you do things they are perceived as compromising the proper protocol and then you're regarded by the broader scientific community as not really being savvy, as not being well trained, as not being clear about what it is you don't know…instead of listening, the international community just shutting up and listening to what are the experiences we are having on the ground here."

In terms of leading local projects, local researchers are also passed over for international researchers who have more depth in one specific area. As Dr. Leslie states: " [They look for] international profiles of consultants. The Caribbean people whether organizations or individuals will always be less competitive. We simply don't have that range of [methodological] expertise and experience that international folks do…once it is a big project they tend to go to the externals. To me that is a risk because if you don't understand the culture…you don't understand our Jamaican people. When [community members] see a foreigner come in to do research they will find out very easily what it is you want to know. They will give you exactly that because it is going to be of benefit to them. If they see they can get a project." She describes how in the early days of participation, she observed communities figuring out that foreign researchers wanted to see the whole community participating and so the community participated in order to show the researchers that they would, so that they could get a project. Getting a project meant money coming into the community, and change being made. The downfall of foreign researchers is that they are not attuned to the difference in reaction between catering to the research team and a genuine involvement in the project.

**Community norms as barrier.** Dr. Michael noted that often research that is counter to community norms can be difficult to partake in. She discussed a study on LGBTQ persons in which participants could not be easily approached because of fear of being stigmatized by the

community. While LGBTQ people are also community members, the larger community norms were homophobic, and so played a role in hindering that project.

**Community gatekeepers as facilitators.** Researchers noted that gatekeepers are crucial to working with communities, both in terms of gaining trust as well as in terms of physically getting in touch with community members. Dr. Smith stated "In some rural places you definitely need [someone] to take you there, you're not going to find your way, you're not going to find the farmers unless someone carries you to them."

Dr. Michael stated:

"[Researchers] tend to use people from the communities or people who have regularly visited the communities not only for your study but even for other studies…you have a cadre of persons who are seasoned interviewers used by different state agencies…we tend to pull on these persons because they know when the situation is tense because of violence in a community, they know the community so well and they know when to pull out, when to go back in, who to talk to as the area leader before you ask a question and so on."

**University support as a facilitator.** Those researchers who are members of the academy or former members of the academy also noted that the universities are facilitators of community research. The University of the West Indies for example has the community township project where the university does action research with the communities directly around it, as well as multiple programs (such as Applied Psychology) that send students for internships with community organizations. Students that graduate also go into the field of community research broadly. In general, academics listed numerous academic mentors they had who were committed to community involvement in research, and committed to the purpose of research for social

change and social justice. While the university is limited financially, the spirit for community research exists there.

**Funding mostly from international donor agencies as a facilitator.** While funding influences the topics and implementation of community research, it also serves as a support for community research in some ways. As described earlier in the development of community research in Jamaica, when development agencies started to focus on more community engagement that encouraged the university to offer courses on measurement and evaluation. Dr. Leslie stated that now many of the multilateral agencies require some kind of community feedback measure, which thus mandates researchers into involving some community engagement as these multilaterals are the main source of funding.

**The personal drive and adaptability of community researchers as a facilitator.** Despite the barriers faced in conducting community research, researchers express that their personal drive keeps them on this path despite there being easier ways to make a living. All of the researchers stated that they were driven by the desire to make a difference in other's lives. Dr. Williams said " For you to help to change the culture [ of a community] so that they're no longer dependent...just to see those little tangible changes is enough for me to want to continue and to sit through the task of writing proposals." Others have an even closer connection, Dr. Mariam stated

> " I'm a product of one of these inner city communities from way back when and I know what the face of these communities are, I'm directly related to the social ills of these communities and I believe that I could make a meaningful contribution...a lot of us [early social researchers] were from those communities so I would also like to help to change the perception...there are really bright persons, persons who may not be 'academically

bright' but there are talents...my first job was near inner city communities and I used

myself to say look this is what I am today, I am from somewhere like you, you can be

like me or I don't even want you to be like me, I want you to be better than me."

In public health, Dr. Michael also expressed feeling connected to the work because of

family history.

"My family is from a very poor background...I've had relatives die of asthma simply

because they had no money to buy the pump. So I am driven by the work I do that I must

make my contribution be as best as possible such that hopefully my descendants and my

other relatives don't suffer like that."

Some stated that they were also driven by the desire to leave a legacy and to make their

mark on the international literature while helping people at home. Others stated that they felt a

duty to country, to improve Jamaica. Dr. Gray expressed that the work itself drives her because it

is a way to make change:

"Community psychology is what makes sense to me, because I realized just from my own

observation that really to make change you can't be 'I need to change you, then I need to

change you', it has to be looking at systems...it drives me because I believe that's the

only way that makes sense."

Researchers also mentioned specific adaptations to the research process that they saw

necessary to facilitate research in this context. Strategies mentioned included: paying community

members out of their pockets or providing food for community members; employing

interviewers from a pool of people who have familiarity with certain communities; formulating

research questions in such a way that they align with the goals of donor agencies; establishing

community gatekeeper connections through consulting with other researchers or working with a

community for a long period; establishing long term community organization partners; and on occasion working for free to make ends meet. Community researchers also noted that the interdisciplinary teams they sometimes work on are facilitators to this work, as often a complex social issue requires more than one specialist.

**Government support as a facilitator.** The government agency charged with community development in Jamaica is the Social Development Commission (SDC). The SDC collects community profiles of every geographic community in Jamaica (designated by the SDC) and updates the profiles periodically. These profiles are placed in a database along with asset maps of communities and other data. The SDC also has representatives for each community, called community development officers, who are tasked with getting to know community members and issues particular to that community. Ideally the SDC is supposed to serve as the intermediary between any organization hoping to do community development and the community. Many of the researchers interviewed mentioned the SDC as an important intermediary in their work, an agency that they reach out to before beginning a project in order to understand the power structure and important issues and strengths of the community before entering. The SDC representative interviewed for this study, Mr. Beck, noted that often external teams doing projects such as NGOs can lose out when they bypass the SDC "I've seen it firsthand with a few projects, some of them still ongoing and the level of impact they would have gained if they had done it a different way, it would be far greater [impact] than what they are seeing now." While the SDC is a valuable resource, its operation is also hindered by limited funding. NGOs can be hesitant to approach SDC first because they will have to contribute financially in order to collaborate with the SDC. However, Mr. Beck stated that he doesn't believe the SDC asks for

too much, and that ultimately if the program is for the good of the community he supports personally even if there is not a formal collaboration,

> "At the end of the day it's the community I work for...I'll give you whatever resources we have, if you need a profile and if I can pay for the profile for you I'll pay for it, no big deal."

The SDC also partners with universities to expose students to hands on research and community development work, and so supports some of the applied social science programs in that way as well. Thus, the SDC as an agency as well as individual community development officers who know the community and are invested in the community can be facilitators to community research.

**Decoloniality or Coloniality of Research**

Participants were asked whether they consider their research to be decolonial, indigenous or something else. Researchers had a range of responses to the question of decoloniality or indigeneity. Some expressed that they could not see how the work could be anything but decolonial or indigenous working in the context in which they work. Dr. Travers stated:

> "I don't know if you can be living and working trying to do social science work in the Caribbean, in Jamaica for example and not be indigenous… [If you are not], you will be slapped very quickly in your face, figuratively, by the realities."

Others noted that colonial and neo-colonial influence still exists in the hierarchy of the university systems, as well as in those researchers who were educated in the Global North and then return. In addition, as often researchers in the Caribbean are compared to others internationally, they are held to the dominant hegemonic views of what is considered legitimate research, and a legitimate productivity rate.

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Researchers also mentioned that their work is decolonial because it involves returning power to the people, and stepping into a self defined process of improvement, as well as a self defined legitimacy of research. Speaking on judgment from the Global North, Dr. Travers stated:

"We need to be figuring out what it is that works for us, and then figuring out how to gain the appropriate self-valuation, because how do you say that something is legitimate, how do you say that it is valid when the very outlets, the very spaces in which legitimacy and validation is offered are ones to which you are denied or to which you are generally excluded?"

**Community Empowerment**

Researchers were asked about empowerment indirectly with the question "How do you feel the communities you work with benefit from your work?"

Most of the researchers stated that participatory research tends to spark community members to recognize their own agency in addressing social problems. In addition, the meetings associated with participatory research can expose issues that previously had no space to be spoken about. Mr. Powers described how an intervention sparked such pride that participants came together as a community to find ways to fund the intervention after the withdrawal of the agency. Participants also come to understand themselves as experts and organizers. Dr. Williams told a story of a project where there were some community members who did not see the point in meeting about the issue, who eventually became so invested in the process that they started to educate other community members about the importance of recycling.

Researchers also conceptualize the benefits of community research to be about liberation, not just about working with people or on people, but about giving people access to means to self-

determination. Mr. Powers stated "We must make it participant focused…they must be willing to say to the researcher 'Teach us what you are learning." Dr. Travers stated:

"If its research that is done to [a community], I don't consider that community research at all, although people might say it is, some people might say there can be a version of community research that is more academic, ivory tower academic in its perspective, but the tradition that I feel more aligned with is the one that is really community based participatory action research, with at least a sensitivity that there are strengths in each community."

**Chapter VI**

**Discussion**

The overarching hypothesis of this paper is that community researchers face significant local, national and global barriers, but also supports when deciding to conduct community research, and that these barriers and supports impact the extent to which the community research can be decolonizing and empowering. Barriers such as whether decision-making bodies and the global academy view the research as valid knowledge also affect the extent to which these local practices contribute to global epistemic justice. Thus, the existence and continuation of community research in a place depends on the research environment that the researcher is in. Given the history and present state of community research in Jamaica described above, the discussion of the two hypotheses is below.

**Hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis 1 states: the researcher's ability to take part in community research depends on: university support, funding, networks of researchers, willing community partners, being preferred to a foreign researcher for local projects, and being able to accurately report on results without fear of recourse from the government.

Based on the results detailed above, many of these factors arose as important facilitators of community research. Many of the barriers listed would also impact the abilities on this list. From the history, we can see that community research in Jamaica came about through a combination of social, organizational and individual actions that because institutionalized. Community research gained prominence with university support, with the focus shift for development agencies and with individuals who valued the connection of research and

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community. For the continued growth of community research, the barriers will need to be addressed and the facilitators strengthened.

**Hypothesis 2**

Hypothesis 2 states: the extent to which community based research in the Caribbean is decolonial, empowering or can contribute to the decolonizing of greater academia will be impacted by the researcher's ability to: choose topics based on locally observed need, have participatory research, interpret research with the community, theorize and publish on this research locally and internationally.

The researchers identified their work as being decolonial in a range of different ways. Those results speak to the potentials for the work as a site of indigenous methodology. I thought it was particularly striking when Dr. Travers stated that international colleagues needed to listen to the realities that community researchers on the ground in Jamaica are facing. Community research as a field has challenged traditional positivistic research, and it should continue to push the boundaries of understanding contextual research practices. Thus, the call to listen more to researchers in the Global South is part of decolonizing the field.

In terms of whether the work done in Jamaica is decolonial, it seems difficult to separate colonial influences from the post-colonial reality. Colonization impacted the community research field and neo-colonization continues to, but even with these outside influences, Jamaican researchers are creating new ways to do action research that is very context dependent. To the question of whether this type of research reinscribes the traditional hierarchy, it seems there is much more work to be done because in significant ways there are restrictions on the amount of power sharing that can occur. From international pressures to maintain hegemonic processes to receive funding, international pressures to choose only certain types of research questions to

consider, to local pressures to cut down on the time it takes to do research because your job is

mostly dependent on teaching, Jamaican community researchers have to still make significant

tradeoffs in the way that community research is conducted.

**Glonacal Analysis**

Situating the results in a glonacal framework (Marginson and Rhoades, 2003), the

barriers fit into categories as follows:

- o Global Barriers

    -Funding is mostly from international donors, who have their own agendas

    -Publishing, hiring and academic barriers related to being judged by the standards

    of the Global North

- o Institutional Barriers

    -Low resources at the university so researchers are stretched thin

- o Local Barriers

    -Local politics

    -Time needed to gain community trust

    -Physical access to some communities

    - Community norms (at times)

The facilitators were as follows:

- o Global Facilitators

    -Funding mostly from international donors, who sometimes require community

    engaged practices

- o Institutional Facilitators

    -University support (for those in the university)

     -Support from a government agency (Social Development Commission)

  o Local Facilitators

     -Community gatekeepers

     -Personal drive and adaptability of researchers

 Marginson and Rhoades (2003) state that systems include various agents who act on each other, and that actions are normally in both directions. While the analyses did not yield any themes that I would categorize as national barriers or facilitators, there were facilitators and barriers at the global, institutional and local (community) levels. Considering the researcher and the institutions they work in as agents, there are ways in which individual researchers and individual institutions may create spaces for community research. However, there are significant influences from international donors on the research practice, and from the global academy on the acceptance of community research as knowledge. The ability to do CR in a way that is decolonizing and empowering is impacted at multiple levels, and these influences impact whether research is community directed and community engaged. International donors may determine research questions, even as communities are involved in the research on the ground. In order for CR to reach its potential, researchers must be supported at multiple levels, and barriers to this work should be broken down at multiple levels.

**Suggestions for Practice**

 For institutions involved in development:  Consider changing hiring practices based on the constraints involved with being a community researcher in the Global South. Community researchers in Jamaica are more likely to be a 'jack of all trades' than a person with ten years experience on one topic, but they have a deep understanding of the context.

For community researchers in other under-resourced areas: This study highlights some of the realities of researchers in an under-resourced context and how they are able to adapt to continue their work. It is a call to say that these adaptations are legitimate or can be legitimized when we continue to acknowledge that community research in the Global South is fundamentally innovative.

For members of the academy in the Global North: Claims of legitimacy can shut out the voices of community researchers in those countries that could benefit greatly from this form of research. Centering the experiences and voices of those researchers in the Global South would be a more progressive move forward for the field. As with the beginning of community psychology, there is still innovation to be learned from the Global South.

**Implications for Theory**

It is the first study to explore the experiences of community researchers in the Caribbean. This study contributes to the literature on the global institutionalization of community research as a practice. In addition, it contributes to the literature on the experiences of community researchers and how institutions which interface with these researchers might better support them and thus support the field of community research. This study also considers the meaning of empowering and decolonial research in this context and so adds to our understanding of how this methodology is employed and viewed by researchers in the Caribbean. Finally, this study has implications for the field of community research in the Caribbean and serves as a step towards defining the field in the region.

## Chapter VII

## Strengths and Limitations

In terms of strengths, my knowledge of the Jamaican cultural context allowed me to build rapport with the participants. I believe this as well as my familiarity with patois also added to the analysis of the interviews. The method of interviewing allowed for depth of understanding of the multiple factors that influence community research in Jamaica in a way that other methods such as artifact analysis would not. Member checking was employed to ensure that my analysis was reflective of what the participants intended to convey.

I was unfortunately unable to interview all the major players in the institutionalization of community research in Jamaica. This study is primarily focused on the experiences of nine participants in Jamaica, and so cannot be over generalized, though I anticipate that there are significant similarities between the experiences of community researchers in other Global South countries as well as in the Global North, based on the literature.

In Decolonization is Not a Metaphor, Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us that promoting marginalized epistemologies is not the end goal of decolonization. The end goal of decolonization is the return of land to the indigenous persons it was taken from by colonizers. This work hopefully works to promote the epistemologies of people from the Global South, and attempts to highlight some of the material barriers to epistemic justice. However, it is only one part of decolonizing and there is still the question of whether research (in any form) can achieve this purpose, thus this study is more about promoting decolonizing methodologies to research in the tradition of Smith (1999) rather than the end goals of the decolonial project.

## Chapter VIII

## Conclusions and Future Research

Community research in Jamaica has the potential to be a decolonizing and empowering form of research, and thus contribute to epistemic justice within the academy. However there are levels at which epistemic justice is challenged in the process of conducting this research: both at the stage of conducting the research, and at the level of acceptance of the work into the global academy.

There is a drive in Jamaica towards community research, but researchers are still working beyond their means to ensure that this research is done. Researchers in the Caribbean have been involved in community research for a long time, and no longer want to be constrained by hegemonic standards of global fields that are unrealistic in the context. International development agencies have the power to constrain community researchers because they are often the only source of funding for community-based projects, thus sometimes limiting the relevance of the research to the context.

Future research that would be helpful would be to explore different funding mechanisms for community research so that the topics, methods, and who gets to work on projects are not so controlled by large international agencies, but rather are more community determined. Other future research could explore how hiring practices might bias the research that gets done in the region. In general, we must learn how best to approach solving each of the barriers or strengthening the facilitators to community research.

## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

**Consent (~ 5 minutes):**

PI: " Good morning/afternoon, thank you for scheduling this interview. Here is some information about the study and a place for you to indicate your consent to participate in the study. Please read the consent document in its entirety and then indicate your consent if you are interested in participating in the study."

If participant indicates consent:

PI: "I am conducting a study on the development and current state of community level social science research in the Caribbean. Anything you say will remain confidential. Your name and the name of the institution you work for will be deleted from all transcripts. I am primarily interested in learning about your experience as a community researcher, and so there are no particular answers that I am looking for. I will be recording audio during this interview but you may stop the interview and ask for the deletion of the audio file at any point if you feel the need to. Do you have any questions before we begin?"

After participants questions:

PI: "I will begin the recording now. Turn on recorder. This is participant number X"

**Questions**

**Demographics (~10 minutes)**

1. What field are you currently employed in?

2. What is your job title?

3. What is your highest degree and in what discipline or specialization?

4. At what university and what year did you receive your degree(s)?

5. How many years have you been working in this field? (Not just limited to this title)

6. Would you consider yourself a community researcher, why or why not?

7. How do you define community research?

**Development of Community Research (~30 minutes)**

1. As far as you know, how did your field develop to where it is now in Jamaica?

-Who were the major players, what were the institutions, what was the social

climate of the time, or any other factors that you know or believe contributed to the

creation of your field in Jamaica?

2. What were some important dates in the development of your field in Jamaica?

-When were the conferences first held?

-What were the first major books or articles in the field by someone from this

country?

-When were the first professional societies created?

-When and where were the first classes in this field taught?

3. How has the field changed since it first developed here?

- Would you consider your field decolonial or indigeneous?

-What role have scholars or professionals from this country played in changing the field

as practiced here?

4. Are there any important historical sources that might speak to the development of the field in

Jamaica?

**Current state of Community Research (~45 minutes)**

1. Tell me about some of your community research

-what questions are studied

-what parts of the process are community members involved in

-what methods are used

-what kind of background literature/theory is used

-is there collaboration across disciplines

2. How prevalent is community research here?

3. What are some ways that the following institutions encourage your community research, and what are some ways that they hinder your community research?

-the institution at which you are employed

-the local, regional, or national government

- large international non-profits or NGOs such as UNICEF, the World Bank etc

-local community organizations or community partners

4. How difficult or easy is it to obtain funding for community research projects? In what ways are funding agencies, institutions, etc. supportive of community research, and in what ways do they hinder community research?

5. What is your process for finding community partners, and how does this impact the success of your community research projects?

6. What personally drives you to do community research?

7. How do you feel the communities you work with benefit from your work?

8. How do you feel that your work contributes to Caribbean knowledge, and global knowledge?

9. Do you have any further thoughts on what factors encourage your community research or hinder your community research?

## Appendix B: Codebook

| Code | Description of Code |
|------|---------------------|
| Field | The participant's field of work |
| Title | The participant's current job title |
| Degree | The participant's highest held degree |
| DegreeDetails | University and graduation year of highest degree |
| FieldTime | Time the participant has worked in the field |
| CR_def | Participant's definition of community research |
| fielddev | Answer to: How did the field develop in your country? |
| fielddevdates | Answer to: What are some important dates in the development of the field? |
| fieldchange | Answer to: How has the field changed? |
| histsources | Answer to: What are some important historical sources about the development of the field? |
| CR_example | Answer to: Could you give me some examples of your CR work? |
| CR_prevalence | Answer to: How prevalent would you say CR is in your country? |
| institutional:__ _____ | Answer to: In what ways are institutions supportive of or hinder CR?, insert institution type |
| funding | Answer to: In what ways are funding sources supportive of or hinder CR? |
| CR_partners | Answer to: How do you find community partners? |
| personaldrive | Answer to: What personally drives you to do CR? |
| commbenefit | Answer to: What benefits does the community derive from your work? |
| Caribbeanknow ledge | Answer to: How do you feel your research adds to Caribbean knowledge? |
| globalknowledg e | Answer to: How do you feel your research adds to global knowledge? |
| facilitator:____ _____ | Facilitators to CR, insert specific facilitator after colon |
| barrier:_____ _____ | Barriers to CR, insert specific barrier after colon |
| decolonial:____ _____ | Answer to: Is your research decolonial AND any mentions of decoloniality, insert specific description after colon |
| colonial:_____ _____ | Mentions of things that make something colonial, insert specific description after colon |
| north_vs_south | Any comparison between the Global North and Global South, or developed and developing countries etc. |
| teach_vs_resea rch | Mentions of tensions between teaching and research |
| CR_vs_trad | Mentions of tensions between community research and traditional academic research |
| academy_vs_in dustry | Comparions between academy and industry, or tensions between academy and industry |
| resources_vs_c ontrol | Tensions between control of projects and obtaining resources |
| empowerment | Mentions of community empowerment |
| decoloniality | Mentions of decoloniality |
| invivo | Direct quotes that summarize important themes |
| values | Mentions of researcher values |
| interpreting | Mentions of methods they use to interpret data |

| collectingdata | Mentions of methods they use to collect data |
|---|---|
| generatingques tions | Mentions of methods they use to generate research questions |
| implementing | Mentions of methods they use to implement interventions or action |
| publishing | Mentions of anything to do with the publishing process |
| teaching | Mentions of anything to do with teaching |

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