

## The “Will to Participate”: Governmentality, Power, and Community-Based Participatory Research

Julia Elizabeth Janes  
York University

### Abstract

Although critiques of participatory development attend to knowledge/power, Anglo-American literature on community-based participatory research (CBPR) is largely silent on the politics of these collaborations. As the “will to participate” is increasingly normalized for communities and CBPR is naturalized as socially just research, it is crucial that we inquire into the uneven terrain of the collaborative encounter. The CBPR literature makes claims to emancipatory, empowering, and egalitarian relations that articulate a largely unproblematic, harmonious encounter. Yet these claims remain under-scrutinized. Furthermore, little is known of how participatory practices operate as a technique to access and appropriate community knowledge, while leaving power asymmetries intact. This paper deploys a Foucauldian governmentality framework to explore how CBPR’s relations of power collude with the macro rationalities of the neo-liberalism, inclusive liberalism, and the moral imperialisms of the knowledge economy to produce participatory subjects and spaces “outside” of socio-political histories and presents. Critical reflections on two CBPR projects are woven into a theoretical reading that explores the limits of participatory approaches and its uneven power relations as ethical problems.

*Keywords:* Foucauldian governmentality, community-based participatory research, power, politics of knowledge production, social work

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In North America, as elsewhere, knowledge production has historically been monopolized by academic institutions. However, increasingly, academic knowledge workers are seeking to partner with community-based professionals and citizens to pursue participatory research projects. Participatory approaches are utilized by social workers, as well as by researchers across the social and health sciences, and are increasingly mandated by national and international funding bodies. These collaborations are discursively and materially diverse, taking a number of forms including:<sup>1</sup> community-based participatory research (CBPR), action research, participatory or empowerment evaluation, participatory action research, participatory

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<sup>1</sup> Although these approaches are semantically and operationally distinct, this paper will use CBPR to signify knowledge-production activities occurring in an Anglo-American research context and PD to signify knowledge production activities occurring in the Global South.

rural assessment, inclusion research, community-engaged scholarship, participatory development (PD), and other variations that claim to substantively include people most effected by an issue in the research enterprise.

The literature suggests that participatory approaches hold the potential to democratize knowledge production by engaging communities and individual citizens in research and development activities (Cornwall, 2008; Flicker, 2008). However, few authors have appraised these emancipatory claims beyond conceding that power and decision making remain weighted toward academic and development partners (Castleden, Sloan Morgan, & Lamb, 2012; Stoecker, 1999, 2009; Travers et al., 2013).

While acknowledging the promise of these research alliances, it is imperative that we explore the full range of effects, including the ways in which participation operates as a technology of access and appropriation in the neo-liberal knowledge economy. Although all knowledge production is implicated in relations of power, CBPR makes particular claims to socially just, ethical research and to participatory practices that ameliorate power. If these claims remain uninterrogated, the “goodness” of CBPR is naturalized and the everyday practices of CBPR under-documented and under-theorized.

This paper seeks to contribute to our understandings of the complex negotiations of power in collaborative knowledge work by inquiring into CBPR’s material and discursive practices using a Foucauldian governmentality framework. Governmentality is understood as a set of techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour that is not located in any single body—such as the state—but rather is diffuse and enacted by multiple authorities with multiple aims for the “conduct of citizens” (Rose, O’Malley, & Valverde, 2006, p. 85). Foucault (1997) argued that the conduct of citizens requires specific knowledges of individuals and populations, which are frequently rationalized as a project of improvement. Governmentality apprehends knowledge production as a site of governance, and therefore, is an effective analytic tool for inquiry into relations of power in CBPR with its claims to improving community capacity and challenging knowledge hierarchies.

As Rose, O’Malley, and Valverde (2006) suggested, governmentality is not so much a theory of power but rather an analytic tool that inquires into the “how” of practices of governance. This attention to practices of governance rather than grand theories of power is a useful framework for exploring the micro practices of CBPR, as well as how these practices articulate to the macro rationalities of neo-liberalism and inclusive liberalism. Furthermore, governmentality can account not only for the repressive aspects of practices of inclusion—typically framed as who is excluded from CBPR—but also to how participatory techniques are productive of particular subject positions and spaces that re-inscribe the privilege of academe. Although scholars have drawn on governmentality theory to interrogate participatory techniques in international development (e.g., Ferguson & Gupta, 2002; Kapoor, 2005; Roy, 2009), governmentality only very recently has been taken up by scholars of CBPR (Golob & Giles, 2013; Guta, Flicker, & Roche, 2013) who explore the micro practices of power in collaborative knowledge work. However, CBPR scholars

have paid less attention to how participatory practices articulate to macro projects of rule and how community and academic actors resist knowledge hierarchies through acts of counter-conduct.

Foucault (2004, p. 268) used the term *counter-conduct* to describe the “struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others” and suggested that these acts of resistance can be understood as “the art of not being governed quite so much” (Foucault, 2003, p. 265). As Rose, O’Malley, and Valverde (2006) emphasized, governmentality can account for resistance, but the framework rejects the proposal that acts of counter-conduct are organized as a cohesive project. These authors maintained that Foucault understood counter-conduct as a practice of freedom that is not in opposition to, but mutually constitutive of governance and ethics. Death (2010, p. 236) noted that counter-conducts “have the potential to reinforce and bolster, as well as and at the same time as, undermining and challenging dominant forms of global governance.” Therefore, a governmentality framework is useful for tracing the ways in which CBPR simultaneously resists and reproduces knowledge hierarchies.

Specifically, this paper offers a governmentality reading of the ways in which CBPR articulates to the macro rationalities of the knowledge economy and micro practices of power. This critique of the discursive claims and material practices of CBPR is not aimed at identifying “bad” participatory praxis or recuperating “good” research praxis, but rather at exploring the limits of collaborative knowledge production and its asymmetrical power relations as ethical problems. This paper begins by situating CBPR within the instrumentalities of the knowledge economy, particularly gaining access to “hard to engage” communities, appropriating local knowledges and labour, and inculcating local knowers into academe. Although the PD literature is typically disconnected from Anglo-American CBPR, the PD scholarship is used to trace the moral imperialisms that rationalize these practices and naturalize participatory approaches as inherently socially just research praxis. The productions of participatory subjects and spaces are interrogated for the ways in which CBPR constitutes local knowledge and knowledge workers as both targets and techniques of knowledge production. And because these operations are never total, practices of counter-conduct that work within and against knowledge hierarchies are proposed.

### **Implicated Research(er)**

Ethical knowledge work requires a move toward implicated practice, which acknowledges that there are no “innocent” research practices and that all knowledge workers are complicit in relations of power. Mohanty (2003) proposed that complicity begins with an interrogation of “what is unseen, under-theorized and left out of knowledge production” (p. 230). The politics and ethics of collaborative knowledge production are just such an elision in the CBPR literature where, despite claims to inclusive research practices, academic authors dominate, while other knowledge constituencies, if included, are (re)presented by knowledge elites. Indeed, this paper reproduces this trend by critiquing the epistemic privilege of academe in CBPR, while paradoxically centring my academic voice in this paper. This paradox is a significant

limitation of this paper that emerged from my desire to create a space between my collaborative research practice and my thesis work, which is focused on theoretical readings of the social relations of participative inquiry. The paradox is also an effect of the institutional context of a PhD, which provides little material support to community knowledge work(ers). Therefore, this paper focuses on my critical reflections and theoretical proposals and resists speaking for my community colleagues.

### **The CBPR Projects: Homeless2home: A Community Exchange; and Bridging Aging and Women Abuse**

The theoretical analysis offered in this paper looks backward and is instantiated through reflections from the last two of five CBPR projects, which I facilitated before commencing my doctoral work: Homeless2home: A Community Exchange (H2h) and Bridging Aging and Women Abuse (BAWA). Because this paper is centrally concerned with the theoretical and ethical dimensions of CBPR, examples from these two projects are intended to be illustrative and not representative of the research results. This knowledge work unfolded between 2008 and 2010 in the in-between space of an institute and non-profit network associated with the University of Toronto. I use the terms *knowledge work* and *knowledge workers* in an effort to mitigate the oppositional identities and idioms associated with campus and community, as well as to trouble academe's purview over knowledge production. H2h brought together youth and middle aged and older adults, who had been or were homeless, to design and deliver a knowledge-exchange forum focused on ending episodic homelessness,<sup>2</sup> then analyze and disseminate the findings. BAWA engaged two working groups of older women who had experienced abuse in later life to analyze the data from 17 interviews and 3 focus groups and then use their findings to develop a cloaked resource<sup>3</sup> for women experiencing abuse and a best practices tool for their allied care professionals.<sup>4</sup> Common to both projects is that the research questions emerged from community colleagues who had worked together on a participatory dissemination project several years earlier. Members of this initial group worked on H2h and BAWA along with new members, but always with the inclusion of individuals most impacted by the issues as co-researchers with secondary contributions by service providers. This strategy created a space for critical appraisal of programs and policies, but sacrificed the sustainability of collaborations with community-based agencies.

Although at times I was an “insider/outsider” to the issues under inquiry, I do not claim to share the terrible intimacy with homelessness, abuse, and the psychiatric

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<sup>2</sup> This project was funded by Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Information about this unique resource and others, as well as project reports for H2h and the BAWA projects, are available at [www.nicenet.ca](http://www.nicenet.ca)

<sup>4</sup> This project was funded by Status of Women Canada.

system that my community colleagues experience and situate myself as a white, middle-aged, differently abled female with a toe-hold on the middle class. The risks my community-based colleagues took in sharing their expertise were significantly greater than mine and no amount of honoraria, good food, and other less tangible supports can begin to honour their contributions nor disrupt the power asymmetries that persisted in our work together, despite my best and worst efforts. And so, after being called out on my worst efforts (an encounter with a community colleague who told me that I was “just like everyone else—pimping the poor,”) I stepped back from CBPR practice to think carefully and critically about the social relations of collaborative knowledge work.

### **Macro Collusions: Neo-liberal Knowledge Economies, Inclusive Liberalism, and the Moral Imperialisms of Participatory “Development”**

#### **Neo-liberal Knowledge Economies: Community as a Target and Technique of Governance**

The production of knowledge occurs in the context of a “new” economic order frequently referred to as the *knowledge economy*. The term *knowledge economy* arose in the late 1990s to describe transforming world markets in which knowledge was increasingly identified as the driver of global neo-liberal capitalism (World Bank, 1998). The struggle over, the access to, as well as the production and accumulation of knowledge occurs in a network of complex power relations that are under-scrutinized in the CBPR literature. However, governmentality scholars, like Rose (2000, p. 334), have attended to ways in which relations of power operate in practices to include the “excluded” and engage marginalized peoples as an instrument of governance. The instrumentalities of governance in CBPR are multiple, but two particular techniques are central: gaining access to “hard to engage” or over-researched communities who are often the target of CBPR, and appropriating their local knowledges and labour as a technique to “solve” persistent problems. Therefore, participating communities are constituted as responsible for the problem and for finding a solution. This dual responsibility— communities as sites of social problems and intervention, and communities as instrumental participants in finding solutions through CBPR—constructs communities as both a target and technique of governance.

As a technique of knowledge production, local knowers must first be inculcated into academe through various participatory processes. Although CBPR discursively constitutes an “empowered” local knowledge worker, this knowledge worker must be improved before assisting in the research enterprise. This process is discursively constructed as “capacity building” in the CBPR literature and is largely targeted to community members who are constructed as “lacking” capacity. In both case study projects, as well as other research that I collaborate on, training community colleagues in research skills is a central activity of the initial phase of collaboration. These training sessions attempt to convey research skills in a few short sessions; skills that most of the academically trained colleagues, including myself, have taken

years to learn. Although there is much talk about how these skills contribute to future employment possibilities, there is less consideration of exactly how these highly specialized skills might be transferable to the broader labour market or how these skills are unevenly remunerated during the project.

### **Inclusive Liberalism: Engaging Tertiary Knowledgeable Workers and Reclaiming the Relevance of Academe**

Practices of community capacity building align with what Rose (2000) described as *active citizenship*, where the neo-liberal logic of enterprise is sutured to inclusive technologies of engagement. This suture is evident in CBPR's claims to producing actionable outcomes, while enacting egalitarian, emancipatory social relations among research collaborators. Furthermore, engaging tertiary local knowledge workers is far less costly than employing graduate students and other professional researchers. Olssen and Peters (2005) proposed that the knowledge economy demands the active participation of ever-increasing constituencies to ensure an expanding labour force. This demand for an expanded and cost-efficient knowledge workforce makes community co-researchers highly attractive and also articulates to the deprofessionalization of academe. In the neo-liberal knowledge economy, academic researchers, too, are re-constituted in marketized terms.

The neo-liberalizing of the university has led to what Bauman (1992) referred to as a *status crisis* among knowledge producers. According to Bauman (1992), academics can respond to this crisis by embracing the historical, social, political, and moral dimensions of knowledge production or risk obsolescence. This crisis makes CBPR a significant strategy for recuperating the relevance of academe, as is evident in the ubiquitous use of "community engagement" in university white papers, here in Canada (York University, 2010), in the United Kingdom (University College London Council, 2011), and in Australia (University of Sydney, 2010). CBPR paradoxically recuperates academe through engaging communities, but then seeks to inculcate community participants into academe through practices such as capacity building. Larner and Le Heron (2005) have identified these techniques of inclusion as the third period of neo-liberalism: the *partnering age*; while Roelvink and Craig (2005) referred to this instrumental collaboration as the hallmark of inclusive liberalism.

Inclusive liberalism, while sutured to managerialism and the instrumentalities of the market, also opens up rationalities to acquire funding and support for community-engaged knowledge production. Larner and Le Heron (2005) argued that rationalities of relationality (e.g., community engagement) introduce a tension between hegemonic and oppositional discourse, which creates a fault line for alternate subjectivities to emerge. Attempts were made to introduce alternate subjectivities during the BAWA project in which women who had experienced abuse used the project data to develop and deliver workshops. In an inversion of the typical subject positions associated with research participants and/or service users, the women were identified as trainers and service providers as learners. This reversal culminated in a best practices tool kit

authored by these women for use by service providers across the women-abuse and homeless-support sectors. Consequently, inclusive knowledge work, while extending the reach of academe further into communities, also generates space for alternative knowers to disrupt relations of power.

**Governmentality of Participation in International “Development”:  
The Production of Local Knowledge and Projects of Improvement**

Few CBPR scholars have deployed a governmentality framework to inquire into how participatory approaches articulate to neo-/inclusive liberalism. However, the PD literature has taken up a governmentality lens to critique participation, but the analysis remains largely disconnected from CBPR scholarship in an Anglo-American context. For example, PD scholars Triantafillou and Nielsen (2001) used Robert Chambers’s seminal work *Putting the Last First* to trace how local knowledge is produced as a target of government. Although widely critiqued by development scholars, Chambers’s participatory Rapid Rural Assessment (RRA) mapped a strategy for communities to self-problematize, plan, and take action. Although these problems and associated expertise exist a priori in the community, they are not constituted as “local” until reconstituted by RRA facilitators as a target of intervention. The production of local knowledge as a target of intervention was the underlying rationale of the H2h project, where creating a formal space for local knowledge exchange by those who experienced homelessness was determined to be beneficial to the community. However, this project rationale neglected to acknowledge that informal networks of knowledge sharing exist outside of the facilitated spaces of CBPR and may not be in need of improvement.

Triantafillou and Nielsen (2001) maintained that most critiques of PD have focused on the repressive use of participation to obscure the power of dominant donors and mask the instrumentalities that underlie the benevolent project. These critiques tend to totalize the power of donors and the powerlessness of beneficiaries, while ignoring the production of new subjects and spaces to govern, new techniques of governance and resistance. The production of new, but still subordinate, participatory subjects in need of improvement suggests the moral imperative of CBPR. Cruikshank (1999) proposed that the reform movement of the 19th century created the conditions by which the poor were acted upon by middle-class Christian reformers, so that they in turn worked to improve themselves and their communities in ways congruent with state objectives. Cruikshank contended that only those that failed to participate in their own or their community’s improvement were rendered outside of society. Likewise, what is threatening to CBPR, and academe in general, is that communities, particularly the over-researched, vulnerable communities that are the target of CBPR, will resist this “will to participate.”

Development scholars Henkel and Stirrat (2001) outlined the will to participate in terms of Foucauldian subjection. The subject position of “participant” conjoined with a marker of marginality (e.g., “poor,” racialized), they maintained, constitutes the parameters within which the participant can improve. Hailey (2001) deployed a

similar Foucauldian interrogation to reveal how Western governments and their development agents used participatory technologies to regulate local activism. Analogously, CBPR can act as a means of diffusing community activism through production of responsible participatory subjects who act within the parameters of a project. The tension between activism and research activities became apparent in discussions, during H2h, of whether to include activists from a local group that engaged in civil disobedience. Although many of my community colleagues distanced themselves from these activities, I tried to persuade them of the important gains made using this style of activism. I failed to convince my colleagues, and the activist group was excluded from our research activities. Later, I reflected that my argument for the inclusion of this coalition rested on my privilege to ally with activists without the risk of material loss, such as benefits that enhance disability assistance, that were at stake for many of my community colleagues.

### **Micro Productions: The Making of Participatory Subjects and Spaces**

#### **Community Subjects: Subordinate Yet Subversive**

The will to participate is dependent on the normalization of the subject position of “community participant/partner”. Macías (2012) contended that the production of subjects is a practice of ethics. However, this production of subordinate subjects, and the attendant ethical questions, are obscured by what Cruikshank (1999) suggested is an over-reliance on theorizing practices of exclusion to the neglect of theorizing inclusion. What is distinctive about technologies of inclusion, like CBPR, is that the production of subjects is co-constituted by the subjugated groups themselves, who are active in the making of their own marginal positions. A governmentality analysis makes clear that engaging communities in producing themselves as marginal subjects, without troubling the conditions that assign them to the margins, dually constitutes these communities as targets and techniques of governance. However, the constitution of subordinate subjects is never total and is alternatively subverted and strategically deployed by community participants. For example, the subject position of “person with lived experience” popular in Canadian CBPR projects, including the two projects referenced in this paper, is critiqued as absurd yet is, nevertheless, used to make a claim for participation.

The multiplicity of positions constituted as “community participant” (e.g., respondent, advisor, [co][peer] researcher) is one mechanism by which CBPR makes diverse claims regarding participation without revealing material practices. These participatory subject positions construct the nonacademic as a disembodied, subordinate “other.” The production of an ambiguous participatory subject obscures the diversity of activities that are associated with the position, which can range from interview informant, advisory committee member, data collector (interviewer), to co-researcher engaged in the full breadth of research activities. The ambiguity of the participatory subject also acts as a catalyst to questions of her legitimacy, so pervasive in the CBPR literature. For example, MacLean, Warr, and Pyett’s (2009) review of the CBPR literature in Australia identified the conflict over who was



qualified to represent the community as a key concern of the academic partners. In an instance of counter-conduct, community knowledge workers on H2h both reproduced and resisted questions of whose knowledge counts by asking academics if they felt representative of their community of scholars.

Another troubling phenomenon associated with the disembodiment of community participants, noted by Minkler and Wallerstein (2008), is the widespread use of service providers as community researchers. Service providers representing service users professionalizes and de-politicizes community participation. In our work with communities experiencing homelessness or insecure housing, many community members had contested relationships with service professionals. From this perspective, the representation of those who prefer to think of themselves as “inappropriately served” rather than “hard to serve,” by those who serve has significant ethical dimensions that go unnoted in the CBPR literature.

Spivak (2005) suggested that if the operations of subjectification are revealed, then they may be strategically deployed and subverted. For example, I struggled to protect the identities of community participants in the BAWA project, where identifying colleagues with lived expertise of abuse was unethical. My failure to prevent the identification of collaborators who had lived expertise from those who did not was institutionally arranged by CBPR’s production of a subject position that requires the sharing of experiential knowledge, and in doing so continually reinscribes the subjectivity of “abused woman.” Subverting subject positions, if not always possible, can still open up space to politically leverage subjectivities. For example, during H2h we began using the term *lived expertise* rather than *lived experience*. Lived expertise does not escape the absurd adjective and subordinate marker of “lived,” but it does retain political purchase in CBPR while challenging the experience–expert divide. Simons, Masschelein, and Quaghebeur (2005) proposed a step further: that of resisting the comfort of any subject position by refusing to secure another subjectivity (e.g., “engaged scholar” or “inclusion researcher”), which re-secures the goodness of the participatory project. Again, it is important to note that strategically manipulating or indeed refusing a subject position is a privilege that is often unavailable to the local knower whose subject position and social identity are a requirement of participation.

### **Academic Subjects: Good Yet Guilty**

The production of disembodied participatory subjects extends to the CBPR academic who remains monolithic, except in her feminization and “goodness.” She is discursively constructed as a “good” researcher against the exploitative “parachute in and parachute out” researcher who appropriates local knowledges for personal gain (Dick, 2009; Healy, 2001; Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Stoecker, 2009). However, the production of the good academic requires a discourse that can account for the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of CBPR; what Rossiter (2005) described as the collision of utopian principles with the messy realities of practice. This disjuncture is discursively mediated by the subject position of the

“guilty” or apologetic CBPR academic. However, as Kapoor (2005) cautions, apologist discourses aim to recuperate the goodness of speaker without the need for substantive action. Mosher (2010) noted that subordinate knowledge workers express guilt, too, for not being “participatory enough” due to the ongoing demands of their lives. This guilt signals another paradox of participation: that community knowledge workers must be close enough to the issue to be concerned, but not too close as to be consumed by the issue of interest.

This tension was evident in the two CBPR projects referenced in this paper where community knowledge workers living precarious lives and allied facilitators with too little time experienced ongoing guilt. This guilt was exacerbated by the tension between individual advocacy and research-based advocacy, which poses unique challenges when collaborative knowledge work is facilitated by social workers largely trained to respond to individual need. The most common circuit of guilt was that of too little or too much participation in project activities, a tension that emerged forcefully in the writing of the H2h community action guide. Community knowledge workers struggled with narrativizing the findings from their sessions—sometimes literacy was a factor, many times disinterest. This led to various strategies, all of which compelled me to write and participate more. Another colleague responded to my guilt for “writing too much” by challenging the construction of authorship to include storytelling and ghost writing. These more inclusive understandings of knowledge making highlight how guilty subjects are constituted through blunt measurements of the quantity rather than the quality of participation. In response, I embraced uneven collaborative practices that took seriously the diversity of knowledges, interests, and life circumstances of participatory subjects rather than the tyranny of the “full” model of participation with everyone participating in everything. As Salmon, Browne, and Pederson (2010) noted, rarely does the CBPR literature attend to the ethical dimensions of inviting communities and individuals busy struggling to survive to partner in collaborative knowledge work.

### **Participatory Spaces: Egalitarian Imaginaries and the Regulation of Difference**

The inattention to the ethical problems of engaging under-resourced and under-compensated groups in research activities signals that these collaborations are dislocated from the material conditions in which they unfold. The CBPR literature is replete with claims to egalitarian arrangements (Israel et al., 1998) that articulate a largely unproblematic, harmonious space. These imagined spaces require the regulation of difference, politics, history, and power. Huxley (2008) maintained that spatial regulation is a central technique of governmentality that transcends geography and is in the Foucauldian sense a territory, which must be controlled. Although more likely to subordinate community collaborators, the spatial imaginaries of CBPR also regulate academic actors. Bastida, Tseng, McKeever, and Jack (2010) reported that their academic team was instructed to “never contradict community participants” (p. 18), which suggests an inversion of expertism to experimentalism—leaving both uninterrogated. Inversions, rather than subversions,

of oppositional binaries reproduce rather than transform relations of power and subordination. And silencing scrutiny of any site of knowledge acts, as Mazzei (2010, p. 5) argued, “as a means of control and protection of privilege.” The fallacy of silence as an empty space was evident in my frequent efforts to resist challenging community participants in order *not* to exert power. However, not only did my silence exercise my power to choose when to engage, it reflected an unspoken paternalism: that my co-researchers should be protected from my “too powerful” interventions. While the CBPR and social work literatures emphasize power “sharing” and consensus building (e.g., Hardina, 2013; Israel et al., 1998), the everyday realities of working with community colleagues who have histories and presents of trauma requires an open engagement of difference not deference.

One possibility to subvert CBPR’s highly regulated spaces would be to engage rather than regulate difference. Engaging difference in collaborative research makes apparent the social spaces between differently located knowledge workers and the socio-political conditions that sustain them. Tracing the structural conditions and social locations that shaped our collaborations became a central activity of our initial meetings for the H2h and BAWA project. Visual schemas were developed and revisited as a means of addressing the convergence and divergence of systemic oppression and privilege in our work together. Although still operating within the flawed logic of social identities and spaces as fixed rather than fluid, the schemas positioned relations of power as inevitable, trackable, and contestable.

Another form of spatial regulation that dislocates CBPR from its socio-political fault lines is the reconstitution of structural “lacks” as individual/community “problems.” During the H2h forum, first-person narratives that connected structural deficits to individual disadvantage were reproduced by the local media as individualized, sensationalized accounts. The risk of reproducing dominant discourses of deficit has been noted by Browne, Smye, and Varcoe (2005), who cautioned that collaborative research, despite intentions to challenge structural disadvantage, can produce findings that are taken up as individual/community problems. Further, Salmon, Browne, and Pederson (2010) suggested that participatory research sustains structural disadvantage by limiting the space to advocate for long-term social change through materially resourcing short-term, project-based research activities rather than more sustainable programming.

### **The Will to Participate: Its Limits and Future Sites of Inquiry**

This governmentality reading of CBPR has argued that the will to participate articulates to both macro and micro relations of power and subordination. Participatory knowledge work was situated within the neo-liberal logic of the knowledge economy to reveal the instrumentalities of collaboration as a means of accessing, appropriating, and inculcating community knowledge and knowers. CBPR was also embedded in the broader context of inclusive liberalism to highlight how engagement operates as a technique of governance. The PD literature was deployed to reveal the paradox of academe producing local knowledge, as well as the

underlying moral imperialisms that attend the participatory project here and elsewhere. This paper also inquired into the micro productions of participatory subjectivities and spaces that disembody and dislocate CBPR outside of the socio-political and historical conditions. However, this disciplining of community knowledge work(ers) is never total; and, therefore, this paper presented instances of counter-conduct that aimed to disrupt relations of power such as: subverting the “authority” of particular subject positions and challenging egalitarian claims by tracking and engaging the social spaces in between differently located knowledge workers. While the paradoxes of participation may not be remediated by these acts of counter-conduct, they offer strategies toward ethical, reflexive negotiations of power within the collaborative encounter.

This paper aimed to extend the conversation on the limits of participatory knowledge work and situate CBPR’s asymmetrical power relations as ethical problems. Although all knowledge production articulates to a bio-political logic of rendering certain lives knowable, CBPR makes specific claims to ethical practice that warrant further scrutiny. Several sites of inquiry were signalled as future sites of inquiry, yet were not developed in this paper, including the feminization of CBPR. A governmentality analysis is less well suited to an investigation of the gendered logic of CBPR, which may be better explored through post-colonial feminist analysis that attends to dynamics of white female participatory researchers collaborating with racialized communities. Also, the severance of participatory research from participatory development remains under-theorized and might also be more thoroughly pursued with a post-colonial framework, which interrogates how this severance produces spatial binaries such as local–global and research–development that displace “problems” elsewhere.

Another aim of this paper was to document and critique the material practices of CBPR that are so frequently at odds with CBPR’s discursive claims to socially just research; a tension that creates an ethical imperative to interrogate the relations of power that sustain this gap. It is an imperative that I encourage social workers and social scientists to take up by troubling the limits of CBPR, while not foreclosing on its possibilities. Because despite the paradoxes of the will to participate, I remain critically hopeful that collaborative knowledge work can contribute toward “the art of not being governed quite so much” (Foucault, 2003, p. 265).

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Julia Elizabeth Janes, School of Social Work, York University, S878 Ross Building, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, M3J 1P3, Canada. Email: [julia.janes@nicenet.ca](mailto:julia.janes@nicenet.ca)