

# Community-Based Participatory Research and Fat Studies: Tensions and Alignments

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Volume 24, Number 1, 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1110317ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33524/cjar.v24i1.629>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Association of Action Research in Education

ISSN

1925-7147 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Haney, C.-A. & Walsh, C. (2023). Community-Based Participatory Research and Fat Studies: Tensions and Alignments. *The Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 24(1), 81–94. <https://doi.org/10.33524/cjar.v24i1.629>

Article abstract

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an overarching methodology taken up across various disciplines. Rather than a specific approach, CBPR encompasses varied action-based methodologies. While many disciplines use CBPR methodologies in their work, Fat Studies has yet to broadly create research that uses CBPR methodologies. Fat Studies counters many dominant fields that examine and pathologize the body. Rather than viewing Fat as a site of moral panic and concern, Fat Studies values the subjectivity, fluidity, and embodied experience of what it means to be Fat. As CBPR methodologies share a commitment towards critical, emancipatory, and social action research, the potential intersection with Fat Studies is noteworthy, however limited literature at this intersection exists. In this article, we highlight the alignments and tensions between CBPR and Fat Studies while offering future directions for scholars at this intersection.

## COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND FAT STUDIES: TENSIONS AND ALIGNMENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an overarching methodology taken up across various disciplines. Rather than a specific approach, CBPR encompasses varied action-based methodologies. While many disciplines use CBPR methodologies in their work, Fat Studies has yet to broadly create research that uses CBPR methodologies. Fat Studies counters many dominant fields that examine and pathologize the body. Rather than viewing Fat as a site of moral panic and concern, Fat Studies values the subjectivity, fluidity, and embodied experience of what it means to be Fat. As CBPR methodologies share a commitment towards critical, emancipatory, and social action research, the potential intersection with Fat Studies is noteworthy, however limited literature at this intersection exists. In this article, we highlight the alignments and tensions between CBPR and Fat Studies while offering future directions for scholars at this intersection.*

**KEY WORDS:** Community-based participatory research; Fat activism; Participatory research

### INTRODUCTION

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a broad methodology used across the social sciences, and it sits within a critical and participatory paradigm (Healy, 2001). CBPR is an overarching term that refers to a variety of methodologies including Participatory Action Research (PAR), action research, feminist participatory action research, collaborative inquiry and more (Minkler, 2004). CBPR maintains that research should be participatory, cooperative, empowering, and social justice focused (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). CBPR does not convey a particular set of methods, but rather is premised on research as social action that has meaning for communities.

CBPR is innovative in that it holds the importance of experiential, practical, critical, and participatory elements within the research process. It has been used across various fields of studies and disciplines. For example, CBPR methodologies are often used when working alongside marginalized communities, such as those who are unhoused, disabled people, health service users, older adults, and more. However, one area of study that has limited uptake of CBPR methodologies is the field of Fat Studies. Fat Studies differs from other fields that examine the body, such as obesity studies, medicine, and public health. Cooper (2010) explains that Fat Studies shifts away from dominant obesity discourses and the medicalization of fatness, which is common in many medical fields. Fat Studies rejects biomedical measurements of the body, such as the Body-Mass Index, and rather conceptualizes Fat as an embodied shared experience of those who live in Fat bodies (Cooper, 2010). As common and encouraged within the field of Fat Studies, in this paper we use the word “Fat” as a neutral descriptor, similar to how “thin” is used to describe slim bodies. While some may locate Fat as a pathological and value-laden term, we align with Fat studies and Fat activists that have reclaimed the word Fat.

As researchers at the intersection of Fat Studies and CBPR, we are interested in examining how CBPR methodologies could be used within Fat studies to create a participatory environment in which the expertise of Fat bodies is valued. In doing so, we intend to articulate the points of alignment and tensions between the field of study and overall methodology. We are interested in highlighting the promising alignment to encourage future scholars at the intersection of Fat Studies and CBPR to uptake this work. This inquiry also sheds light on an important knowledge-deficit. While Fat Studies values and celebrates the embodied experience of Fat, there is little direction that speaks to participatory ways of engagement and collaboration in research. Similarly, while CBPR methodologies prioritize liberation, there is a dearth of scholarship that explores Fat liberation. There is a potential connection of Fat Studies research using CBPR methodologies that may highlight the importance of valuing Fat peoples’ knowledge, while creating distinctive participative ways of engaging in research. Also, CBPR methodologies are used across various populations that experience marginalization, however this has not been extended to working with Fat communities.

We first provide a brief history and underpinnings of CBPR, beginning with discussions about the participatory paradigm, then transitioning to CBPR and contemporary foundations of the methodology. We then briefly summarize Fat Studies scholarship and the limited way it has used CBPR so far. In addressing the future directions for scholars who are interested in conducting Fat Studies research using CBPR methodologies, it is our hope that outlining the potential areas of alignment and addressing potential tensions will invite researchers to consider CBPR methods and adopt them in future Fat Studies scholarship.

### **BRIEF HISTORY OF CBPR**

CBPR sits within a participatory paradigm of research (Heron & Reason, 1997). A participatory paradigm is distinct in its ontology, epistemology, and methodology. In a participatory paradigm, ontology relates to being as in process and to experiential ways of interacting, and reality sits in the nexus between the subjective and objective (Heron &

Reason, 1997). Along similar lines, a participatory paradigm or worldview can invite an extended epistemology. Extended epistemology, originally rooted in Collaborative Inquiry, articulates four interdependent ways of knowing: experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical (Heron & Reason, 1997). Heron and Reason highlight a unique aspect of the participatory paradigm: the encounter between co-researchers—who are usually community members who have a larger power sharing role in the research process—and the research is fundamentally experiential. Experiential knowing is about being in process of perceiving and meeting what is there, both through the subjectivity that shapes you and objectively meeting those involved in the process (Heron & Reason, 2008). A participatory paradigm centers Freire's (1970) praxis of critical consciousness (Lather, 1986), which is a process of critical self-inquiry to develop the confidence and ability to find answers and change one's world (Lykes & Mallona, 2008). In participatory research, research cycling is a common process grounded in extended epistemology. Research cycling involves integrating the practical, critical, reflective, and participatory principles within a participatory paradigm that includes cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). The research cycling process in participatory research leads towards critical subjectivity for those involved. In terms of methodology, inquiries draw on an extended epistemology in ways that critical subjectivity is improved for collaboration (Heron & Reason, 1997). Further, those involved in the research process come together to apply their methods in their real world, which leads to new experiential encounters, different ways to represent patterns, and new understandings of the original phenomenon (Heron & Reason, 2008). Another important consideration within a participatory paradigm is to recognize the connection between the micro, macro, and community, as micro level changes must be situated within macro level social inequalities with goals of transformation (Fals Borda, 1979).

CBPR gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s to amplify local knowledge and potentially transform knowledge into social action movements that challenged elites, while working collaboratively to create social change (Lykes & Mallona, 2008). Early scholars and practitioners of CBPR include Paulo Freire (1970), Orlando Fals Borda (1979), and Mohammad Anisur Rahman (1991), who facilitated and embraced the liberatory and transformative nature of the methodology to create radical changes for more just communities (Lykes & Mallona, 2008). Much of this work is guided by Freirean pedagogy (Freire, 1970), that outlines important underpinnings in CBPR. One of the key underpinnings of Freirean pedagogy that guides CBPR is the focus of social transformation through the research process (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). In particular, the process of social transformation in CBPR derives from developing social action with co-researchers through dialogue, learning, and critical consciousness raising (Freire, 1970). In this process CBPR is emancipatory in nature and contributes to spaces where those involved through critical consciousness raising generate knowledge to create action against oppression and marginalization that impact their lives. CBPR methodologies also involve a cycle of reflection and action grounded in critical theory to explore the relationship between individual experience and larger social structures (Kemp & Scanlon, 2003). It is through the process of critical conscious raising that those involved in the research process develop critical

understanding of how to use their knowledge and lived experience to address and change oppressive structures that impact their lives through social action.

### BRIEF HISTORY OF FAT STUDIES

Prior to the inception of the formal field of Fat Studies, Fat activists were extensively writing about the need for Fat liberation (Pausé & Taylor, 2021). Working towards Fat liberation centers on the dismantling of structures and systems that have been built by our worlds to exclude and harm Fat people. Beginning in the 1970s, many Fat activists and scholars were writing about Fat experiences, Fat liberation, Fat stigma, with the goal of disrupting many of the common beliefs held to be true within obesity discourse (Pausé & Taylor, 2021). For example, Fat activists and scholars create stories and art in various forms that imagines, speculates, and dreams about how to change our social worlds to value Fat liberation, embodiment, and knowing. Over the past two decades Fat Studies has grown into a robust field of study, with scholarship that explores the experiences of Fat people across a range of topics. The first collection of Fat Studies scholarship, *The Fat Studies Reader* (Rothblum & Solovay, 2009), highlights and traces important early moments in Fat activism and studies that have shaped the field, primarily in the context of the United States. The recent *Routledge International Handbook of Fat Studies* (Pausé & Taylor, 2021), another example of work, contains 29 chapters authored by both Fat activists and Fat studies scholars. Finally, *Fat Studies in Canada: (Re)Mapping the Field* (Taylor et al., 2023) intentionally highlights Canadian Fat activist creative and written works alongside Fat Studies scholarship. As a field, Fat Studies does important work to engage in collaboration with Fat activists, rather than siloing academic scholarship outside of community work.

As a way to tell stories of Fat people, Fat Studies scholarship and activism take up various modalities including blogs, plays, photos, essays, poetry, films, and more (Pausé & Taylor, 2021). Fat studies is also an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary field that is in close relationship to other fields such as Mad Studies, Aging Studies, Disability Studies, d/Deaf Studies, Queer Studies, and Feminist and Gender Studies (Rinaldi et al., 2018) and shares with these fields the critical aim for liberation. At the site of Fat Studies is Fat liberation, setting it apart from other critical disciplines that explore the body such as Critical Obesity Studies or Weight Science (Pausé & Taylor, 2021). Fat liberation at the root seeks to create a just world where Fat bodies can exist and have access to resources without the threat of change.

As well, it is crucial to locate the importance of Fat activism and Fat Studies within settler colonial states in both Canada and abroad. For example, in the United States, Harrison (2021) argues ideas of health works to frame a legitimate body as white, thin, and opposite of a Black body. In Canada, Indigenous scholar Robison (2019) argues current health promotion activities frame Indigenous communities as excessive and immoral, marking Indigenous bodies as unhealthy and requiring the need for ongoing state intervention. Furthermore, the investment from dominant research examines interventions to prevent obesity in Indigenous communities. This is done by attempting to colonize food and body values towards White and colonized ideas of health (Robinson, 2019). The promotion and assumptions of obesity and aligned illness—such as diabetes within Indigenous

communities—sets up the requirement from ongoing intervention and surveillance aimed at reducing body size. The result of investment of much research, practice, and policy continues to colonize Indigenous bodies and communities, with a pressure to assimilate into whiteness under the guise of health.

### **ALIGNMENTS OF CBPR AND FAT STUDIES**

Fat Studies scholars use a variety of methodologies in their work to explore various critical topics concerning the body and society's unjust treatment of Fat bodies. While innovative arts-based research is commonly used in Fat Studies research (Haney & Sitter, 2021), other novel methodologies outside of traditional qualitative research are less commonly employed. As a notable exception, Boner (2014) employed PAR methodology to understand the subjective experience of weight stigma on personal narratives of women. In her study, Boner (2014) articulated several underpinnings of PAR that align with Fat Studies, such as the importance of Fat epistemology, voice, advocacy, combatting historical marginalization, and importance of empowerment. In this way, Boner (2014) proposes emerging spaces to both conceptualize and actualize the alignment between CBPR and Fat Studies research. Building on these initial connections between CBPR and Fat Studies, our goal is to provide additional theorization and explanation to set up scholars interested in this intersection.

In this paper, we highlight four key areas to further the analyses at the intersection of CBPR and Fat Studies. In particular we identify their shared roots of critical theory (Benjamin-Thomas et al., 2018; Cooper, 2010; Kemmis et al., 2015), mutual focus on emancipation and social action (Haney & Sitter, 2021; Krieger et al., 2015; Pausé & Taylor, 2021; Wang & Burris, 1994) aim to address marginalization and oppression (Cameron & Russell, 2021; Friere, 1970; Friedman, 2012; MacDonald, 2012; Minkler, 2004), and common valuation of lived experience (MacDonald, 2012; Manokaran et al., 2021; McTaggart, 1991; Pausé, 2020; Pausé, & Taylor, 2021). Despite the various areas of alignments, there are tensions within some CBPR methodologies in relation to Fat Studies which we will address in the following section.

### **Roots in Critical Theory**

As noted, both CBPR and Fat Studies have roots in critical theory. In mapping the field of Fat Studies, Cooper (2010) locates the field as critical, particularly because of disrupting dominant obesity discourse, and expanding the understanding of fatness beyond pathology. Cooper (2010) argues that Fat Studies shares similar philosophies to other critical studies about the body/mind such as Mad Studies and Critical Disability Theory (CDT). As an example, CDT problematizes roles of advocacy, such as Social Role Valorization, which critiques the ways in which disabled people are encouraged to conform to ableist worldviews to achieve societal acceptance (Scotch & Schrinier, 2006). This critical theorization is common in Fat Studies, whereby scholars and activists argue that Fat people do not need to conform to thin ideals and worldviews to be treated with dignity and respect (Taylor, 2021). There are parallels to the ways in which bodies and time are both understood across various critical theories as well. For example, there are similarities between crip time (Samuels, 2017) and Fat time (Tidgwell et al., 2018), and the ways in which a critical view of the bodymind values existence outside of capitalist colonial time. Furthermore, Fat Studies

critiques social norms, histories, institutions, and structures that harm fat people, which aligns with much work in critical theory (Cooper, 2015).

CBPR similarly shares its origins in critical theory, situated within both participatory and critical theory paradigms (Kemmis et al., 2015). Critical theory values are often embedded in a variety of approaches such as PAR (Benjamin-Thomas et al., 2018), for example highlighting inequitable historical and contemporary structures that harm marginalized communities. Consistent with its critical theory underpinnings, CBPR addresses structural and systemic powers that shape injustices for individuals and communities (Benjamin-Thomas et al., 2018). For example, CBPR encourages researchers to attend to the action oriented social and political transformations of the areas within their work (Kemmis et al., 2015). Furthermore, there is an invitation in CBPR to create changes against situations that create unjust circumstances (Kemmis et al., 2015). For example, Guhathakurta (2008) combined interactive theatre, guided by Freire's (1970) pedagogy of the oppressed with PAR in Bangladesh to create social action for marginalized communities. Guhathakurta (2008) argued that interactive theatre and PAR align to identify problems by those impacted and subsequently develop critical consciousness to transform social conditions.

Similarly rooted in critical theory, Fat Studies and CBPR share a critical perspective of systems and structures that cause harm, with a goal of creating more just societies and communities. For example, a common structural critique within Fat Studies is towards healthcare institutions, for the ways in which they create and uphold Fat stigma, which consistently results in lack of care, access, and treatment for Fat service users. Fat Studies goals of Fat liberation (Cooper, 2010) could be advanced by those who take up CBPR methodologies to address the injustices created at the individual, community, and societal levels. This also serves as an invitation for scholars interested at this intersection of work to create research that disrupts common social assumptions about fatness with the ultimate goal of social transformation, particularly for those invested in Fat liberation. Further, there is an invitation for CBPR scholars to consider the potential alignment and value of a critical approach when engaging in community-based Fat research.

### **Emancipation and Liberation**

Fat Studies and CBPR are premised on a shared philosophy that values emancipation and liberation. CBPR is rooted in emancipatory practices (Krieger et al., 2015). For example, photovoice, a common method within CBPR, facilitates participants towards emancipatory praxis by providing opportunity to capture their lived experience through photos (Wang & Burris, 1994). Further, the use of visuals in CBPR creates space for participants to document and communicate their realities, with goals of emancipation and liberation concerning a wide variety of social issues. For example, the visuals produced using CBPR methodologies may be shared in public contexts such as galleries, installations, and more, which can counter various stigmatized attitudes about marginalized populations. It is the hope that emancipatory methods within CBPR will shift both perceptions and behaviours regarding various structural issues that will better serve individuals and larger society.

Fat Studies similarly has emancipatory and liberatory goals; it is concerned with transforming the lives of Fat people. Cameron and Russell (2021) further explicate that Fat pedagogy is emancipatory in nature with the aim of creating a more just society for Fat bodies. Pausé and Taylor (2021) argue the roots of Fat activism are based in Fat liberation that concerns the site of the individual body with an aim to shift attention to the larger structural and political forces that harm the fat body (Haney & Sitter, 2021). Although, narrower in scope, the emancipatory and liberatory goals of Fat Studies are aligned with the broader goals of CBPR for transforming societies to create more just experiences (Kemmis et al., 2015). In terms of methodology, there is potential alignment with Fat Studies and CBPR to create important knowledge through means such as visuals and other art-forms that prioritize storytelling from a Fat liberation perspective. Furthermore, CBPR may offer potential ways for Fat people to examine their various identities outside of fatness to further an intersectional analysis of identities and experiences.

### **Marginalization and Oppression**

The focus on the marginalization of oppressed groups is a fundamental tenant of CBPR. This focus can be traced back to Paulo Freire (1970), who was concerned with empowering marginalized members of society regarding various social issues. Specifically, PAR often draws attention to those who are oppressed and marginalized, with goals of transforming individual experiences through structural change (MacDonald, 2012). Similarly, Minkler (2004) locates PAR as a methodology that works well for research with oppressed groups, due to the experiential and power sharing nature of the methodology. For example, in PAR co-researchers direct the nature of social action that is needed for transforming the particular inequities they face.

In a similar way, Fat Studies has a primary focus on those who are oppressed and marginalized, which in this case is concerned exclusively with Fat bodies. As Friedman (2012) notes there are multiple ways in which Fat people experience oppression based on their size, such as access to healthcare, employment, postsecondary education, and the subsequent impact on their mental health. Notably what marks Fat oppression as different to other oppression is the continued goal of many institutions to make Fat bodies smaller (Friedman, 2012). In Fat Studies scholarship, there is an emphasis on valuing and knowing the oppression of Fat bodies, rather than citing fatness as a pathology and bodies marked and targeted for change. Where dominant biomedical perspectives that locate Fat as inherently negative, Fat Studies turns the often-pathological gaze to the ways in which our social worlds are built and maintained to create harm for Fat Bodies. In the broader Fat activist sphere, there is emphasis for all people, including allies to address and dismantle the structures that maintain Fat oppression (Cameron & Russell, 2021) to move towards Fat liberation.

### **Value Lived Experience**

CBPR methodologies and Fat Studies also share similar philosophies of valuing and prioritizing the lived experience of people who are experiencing marginalization and oppression. While many forms of qualitative research value lived experience (Lincoln, 1992), CBPR recognizes the need of participation and engagement for persons being studied to be



involved in all phases of the research process (McTaggart, 1991). In addition, there is a focus on democracy within CBPR methodologies, attempting to enable participation of all people through equitable processes within the research (MacDonald, 2012). Further, CBPR recognizes and values the complex lives of people as they exist within their social, political, and economic context.

While Fat Studies does not necessarily require a democratic process involved in the research design, there is an emphasis on the value of lived experience of Fat people as the experts of their own knowledge. Following this directive, Manokaran et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of Fat epistemology within Fat Studies research. In other words, there is a belief that Fat people are the best knowers of their fatness and should be seen as valued within research processes and must be involved in all aspects of the research (Manokaran et al., 2021). Consensus has not been achieved as to the role of the non-Fat researcher. However, when allies of the Fat community are involved or conduct research, Fat studies scholars recommend that they must collaborate with Fat communities (Pausé, 2019). While there may not be the same requirements, particularly the democratic process within Fat Studies research, the focus on Fat epistemology and contextual complexity of social lives aligns well within CBPR methodologies.

### **TENSIONS BETWEEN CBPR AND FAT STUDIES**

While there are notable synergies between CBPR and Fat Studies as described, there are important distinctions and potential concerns to caution Fat Studies scholars interested in applying CBPR methods in their research. Inspired by Kwan and Walsh (2018), we outline three key tensions for scholars when considering the use of CBPR methodologies within Fat Studies research. These considerations are essentialism, the position of the researcher, and the risk of stigmatization from CBPR methodologies within Fat Studies research. It is our hope highlighting these issues does not dissuade scholars, but rather provides an initial reflection point for how Fat Studies researchers could address these concerns when using CBPR methodologies.

#### **Essentialism**

In both Fat Studies and CBPR, there is the potential issue of essentializing the experiences of participants. Particularly, Kwan and Walsh (2018) highlight that marginalization may occur for participants involved in CBPR whose lived experiences do not reflect the wider group, which has the potential for harm. While it is important to build collective voices within CBPR studies, Kwan and Walsh (2018) advance that it is crucial to not silence the distinct experiences among participants. The potential harm of essentializing identities is of relevance to Fat Studies research. As Rinaldi et al. (2018) underscore, research within the realm of Fat Studies has the possibility of presenting a singular unified experience of Fat. It is troubling to portray a singular identity of Fat given both the spectrum of Fat (Ash, 2016) and the intersection of Fat with other identities (Rinaldi et al., 2018). The spectrum of Fat, which uses clothes sizes ranging from gendered sizes 14-36+ is one way to conceptualize who is Fat (Ash, 2016). Who is considered Fat can be topic of discussion and debate. Cooper (2010) states that Fat is a fluid, ambiguous experience with roots in identity politics that is challenging to define. As an example, Thouné (2021) writes about the ways in which they

struggle to determine fatness for themselves, yet they point to specific structural issues like plane seats, access to clothing, and more that highlight the ways in which the world discriminates against Fat. Further, given the spectrum of fatness, it is also important to honour nuance in experiences of fatness. For example, folks who are considered small Fat, who are smaller than a size 20 may experience privileges more common to thin people than to Fat people who are on the larger spectrum of Fat. Given this nuance, it is crucial to resist the conflation of identities and resist the portrayal of a unitary experience of Fat.

Furthermore, within the spectrum and diversity of Fat bodies, there is the concern that the most marginalized Fat bodies are at risk of being pushed further towards the margins in the desire to produce a collective voice and experience (Cooper & Murray, 2012; Parker et al., 2018). Using CBPR methodologies within Fat Studies may potentially present a singular and unitary experience of fatness that is not based in real experiences, rather based on the design of the research. For example, co-researchers involved in a study could desire to highlight their distinct experiences due to differing identities. However, utilizing a CBPR methodology may influence the researcher to attempt to highlight a collective voice rather than valuing the complexity of co-researcher experiences.

### **Position of the Researcher**

Considerable debate exists within Fat Studies research about the importance of the researcher to not only value Fat liberation, but at times live in a Fat body. At times, some may argue that researchers within Fat Studies must be Fat and value Fat liberation in order to conduct ethical, community-oriented research. There is also speculation that thin researchers who value Fat liberation who conduct Fat Studies research unfairly benefit from the stories of Fat people, while not having the lived experience of anti-fatness (Pausé & Taylor, 2021). The requirement to be Fat in order to conduct Fat Studies research is a complex and not yet settled argument (Manokaran et al., 2021). We concur with Manokaran et al. (2021) who propose that thin allies who wish to undertake Fat Studies research must work alongside the Fat community. For example, it would be paramount for thin allied researchers to have research collaborators or advisors who are both Fat and value Fat liberation. While Fat Studies notes the complexity of the role of the research in Fat Studies, CBPR methodologies do not require the researcher to be an insider of the group experience (Minkler et al., 2002). While CBPR outlines the important considerations of insider/outsider dynamics in research, researchers within the CBPR framework tend not to require the researcher to be either part of the community or have those with lived experience guide the research, which presents potential issues with Fat Studies research, given the unsettled debate about Fat identities in research.

There may be risk to adopting CBPR methodologies within Fat Studies, particularly for researchers who are not Fat or who are not involved in the Fat community. There could be an easy pathway to rely on CBPR underpinnings to allow the researcher to be at a distance to the Fat community, while seemingly conducting community-based research. Furthermore, if the researcher is not an ally to the Fat community in some way, there is great potential to conduct harmful research that further marginalizes Fat bodies and voices, while elevating the prestige of the researcher.

**Risk of Re-stigmatization**

Fat bodies are consistently stigmatized through various forms of Fat stigma (Pausé, 2017). The risk of enacting further fat stigma exists with the employment of CBPR methodologies, as the focus on negative and critical experiences of the group may be shown in a new context (Kwan & Walsh, 2018). For example, a visual-focused CBPR study may highlight fat stigma in workplaces as a means to change opinions and discourse about fatness. However, there is potential that by highlighting visual depictions of a collective experience of Fat stigma, further harm could be done to the Fat community by introducing this issue to those who support obesity discourse. Advocating and creating action-based research may run the risk to the larger Fat community by those who do not value Fat people's lives. Furthermore, by only portraying stigma experienced by groups, such as Fat people, there is risk of highlighting only negative experience without highlighting positive embodiments of Fat. However, if attuning to the principles of CBPR, researchers should attend to the voices of co-researchers and address the issues with the co-researchers' solutions, which serves as a critique of stigma.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

While the tensions highlighted above are noteworthy and important for scholars at the intersection of Fat Studies and CBPR to consider, there is considerable opportunity for this work. For example, the alignment with Freirean (Friere, 1970) and Fat pedagogy (Cameron & Russell, 2021) can offer a unique guide towards social transformation in CBPR research processes that work alongside the Fat community. In this way, the blending of two separate but aligned pedagogies keeps the focus on social transformation within the research process while paying important attention to the knowledge of Fat community members. Similarly, while we highlighted the tension of potentially portraying a singular unit of identity of Fat, attuning to the principles of CBPR also has the potential to disrupt this practice. For example, CBPR may offer potential ways for Fat people to examine their identities both within and outside fatness to capture the important intersectional analyses of the axis of Fat oppression alongside other identities (Freidman, 2012). Further, if researchers are using CBPR methodologies within Fat Studies, there could be the potential to produce research that articulates the diversity of a collective experience while representing the distinct nuance of experiences of co-researchers. Lastly, as the action-focused part of CBPR is guided by the co-researchers, there is ample opportunity to create meaningful social action that benefits the Fat community, while not solely elevating the prestige of the researcher.

If scholars consider the tensions of essentialism, positionality of the researcher, and risk of re-stigmatization, the parallels we aligned earlier provide ample opportunity to imagine the promise of Fat Studies and CBPR. While these tensions we discussed are not unique to the context of Fat Studies research and indeed are inherent in many forms of critical research, they are worthy to consider if adopting CBPR methodologies in Fat Studies. Similar to other transformative approaches, CBPR methodologies offer distinct ways of conducting research that should be considered within Fat Studies research. The focus on combatting marginalization, valuing lived experience, liberation, and roots in critical theory between CBPR and Fat Studies have the potential to create innovative, collaborative, and critical research that will move forward both the methodology and area of study. ■

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**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:**

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**Carly-Ann Haney** is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. Carly-Ann's work focuses on the intersection of social work, fat studies, queer theory, arts-based, and participatory research. Carly-Ann has published in national and international journals across these varied topics. In addition to her research, she is also an experienced social work educator, commonly teaching undergraduate and graduate courses on policy, field education, sexuality, and more.

**Christine A. Walsh** is a professor at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary. In her community-based, action-oriented, and arts-informed research, she partners with community-based agencies and communities to understand the lives of individuals who are impacted by interpersonal violence, poverty, housing insecurity and homelessness, and social isolation/exclusion. Her research centers the voices of marginalized populations including older adults with histories of abuse, social exclusion, poverty, and homelessness. Christine aims to create the necessary knowledge base to inform policy and program development to improve the health and social well-being of vulnerable members of society. To achieve this objective, she employs innovative knowledge dissemination approaches to increase public awareness and decrease stigma for members of marginalized and socially excluded populations.

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