

‘About time!’ Insights from Research with Pride: a community–student collaboration

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SUMMARY

Research with Pride (RwP) was a community–student collaborative initiative to promote and build capacity for community-based research exploring health and wellness in lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) communities. The event took place at University of Toronto’s Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH) in September 2009, and engaged over 100 students, community members and academic researchers in a full day of discussion, learning and networking. RwP was initiated by a group of graduate students in Health Promotion who

identified a gap in resources addressing LGBTQ health, facilitating their further learning and work in this area. By engaging in a partnership with a community service organization serving LGBTQ communities in downtown Toronto, RwP emerges as a key example of the role of community–student partnerships in the pursuit of LGBTQ health promotion. This paper will describe the nature of this partnership, outline its strengths and challenges and emphasize the integral role of community–student partnerships in health promotion initiatives.

Key words: gender and health; social inequalities in health; community-based research; homosexuality

INTRODUCTION

The field of health promotion was born out of a series of global conferences that set the vision and goals for the various forms of practice that to this day continue to evolve. From the first global conference and the resulting *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*, to the fifth global conference and the resulting *Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World*, these conferences have acted to unite and guide governments, public health and medical practitioners, community members and other stakeholders in the health field, toward creating a world in which factors are favorable for making the achievement of health and well-being a reality for all people (WHO, 1991).

Conferences today are a valuable tool for inspiring new knowledge, new connections and partnerships, and new hope for change. The following case study will explore a community–student partnership that led to the creation of Research with Pride (RwP), a conference held at the Dalla Lana School of Public (DLSPH) at the University of Toronto, exploring the role of community-based research (CBR) in the promotion of health and wellness in lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) communities. Employing a health promotion framework, this article will examine the potential for community–student collaborations to facilitate meaningful changes in our communities, and demonstrate the integral role of these collaborations in the promotion of health and wellness

in individuals, communities and populations at large.

COMMUNITY-ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR HEALTH: SHIFTING THE FOCUS

There is a substantial and growing body of literature addressing community-academic partnerships in the context of health (Bracht and Tsouros, 1990; Dewar and Isaac, 1998; Greenberg *et al.*, 2000; Wolff and Maurana, 2001; Desmond, 2003; Thompson *et al.*, 2003; Seifer and Vaughn, 2004). This literature speaks to the transformative power of academic-community partnerships in the pursuit of addressing a diverse range of social issues, including the promotion of health and wellness in communities and populations. By respecting and celebrating the knowledge, skills, capacities and lived experiences that our communities bring to the table, these partnerships have the potential to make meaningful changes in the way that research is conducted, programs and projects are developed and policies are formed and implemented (Bond and Keys, 1993; Nyden *et al.*, 1997; Dewar and Isaac, 1998; Thompson *et al.*, 2003; Suarez-Balcacer *et al.*, 2005).

While the aforementioned literature has much to offer in terms of highlighting the successes and challenges of this work, there are several gaps that remain to be addressed. One significant limitation of the current literature is that it is almost exclusively framed within the language of community-academic partnerships, and predominantly from the perspective of academic professionals. Further, while there are some attempts to include community perspectives in the literature on community-academic partnerships (Wolff and Maurana, 2001), there is a dearth of literature addressing these partnerships from the perspective of students, and more generally addressing student-initiated collaborative projects. As students are the future researchers, decision makers and service providers, it is essential that they are exposed to literature that reflects their current or potential role in this kind of work. Furthermore, it is crucial that students' involvement in these collaborations are exposed and celebrated, in order for others to learn from the successes and challenges of their peers. The following will describe the success of one community-student

partnership in working together to promote health and wellness in LGBTQ communities.

RESEARCH WITH PRIDE: A COMMUNITY-STUDENT COLLABORATION

RwP was spearheaded by graduate students in Health Promotion, at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH), University of Toronto, in full collaboration with our community partner, a LGBTQ community center in downtown Toronto. The vision for this conference emerged from discussions between students who were concerned by the lack of LGBTQ health focus in public health programs. Further, these students felt there was a disconnect between academic institutions and LGBTQ community organizations; this disconnect was later confirmed in discussions with both academic researchers and community members working in this area. These conversations reflected the shortage of opportunities to bring together stakeholders in LGBTQ health and facilitate knowledge exchange and skill building. RwP proposed to do just that; to build and strengthen relationships between academics, community members and organizations, and students; to encourage and facilitate student engagement within the broader community; and to collectively discuss LGBTQ health research, with a specific focus on the possibilities of CBR in our diverse communities.

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

It is important to note that the use of the terms 'student', 'community/community member' and 'academic' in this context are not mutually exclusive. Over the course of this project, many of the conference organizers struggled with the notion of multiple and overlapping identities, and how this affected the work that we were doing. For example, many of the student organizers identified as members of the LGBTQ community. Some community members who contributed to this project had academic backgrounds, or were planning on pursuing future academic work. Thus, many of those involved in organizing this initiative, as well those involved in other similar kinds of partnerships, have a foot in each camp. Often, these identities are

part of the motivation for contributing to initiatives that promote partnerships of this nature.

The academic world and the world of community are often conceptualized as being completely separate entities, but it is not an either/or situation. For instance, students are not necessarily ‘outsiders’ trying to infiltrate community spaces or learn on the backs of community members. These students/community members act as bridges, spanning the distance between two foreign lands, making it possible for people from both worlds to cross over and visit the other. The skill, experience and wisdom of the individuals who straddle both identities cannot be underestimated. They are often the driving force behind the creation of

mutually beneficial partnerships based on their ability to reach out to both worlds and draw people together.

RwP consciously used the language of ‘student’, ‘community’, and ‘academic’ in order to demonstrate a commitment to collaboration and partnership between groups that often operate in silos. However, we made sure to remain conscious and reflexive about the use of this language, as is articulated in the project ‘values’ under diversity: “multiple, complex, and sometimes overlapping identities create a rich and vibrant community with many different experiences of health and wellness. These experiences will be shared and honored” (Table 1).

Table 1: Research with pride mandate, values, goal and objectives

Mandate	The Research with Pride Forum provides the opportunity for community members, academics and students to come together to explore community-based research (CBR) with regards to wellness and health among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited and queer people and communities (LGBTQ2Q, henceforth referred to as the ‘Queer’ community). Research with Pride is about exploring the potential of CBR to transform our communities and create positive change
Values	
Diversity	Multiple, complex and sometimes overlapping identities create a rich and vibrant community with many different experiences of health and wellness. These experiences will be shared and honored
Anti-oppression	We recognize that power, privilege and oppressions may not affect all members of the queer community equally or in the same way. Homophobia, heterosexism and/or transphobia may present barriers to some members of the Queer community. Many members of the Queer community may also face discrimination based on race/ethnicity, sex, gender, ability, age, class or religion. Working from an anti-oppression framework, this forum aims to address many of these complex and intersecting issues throughout all the sessions, while employing language and actions that work towards understanding and dismantling oppressive systems and hierarchies of knowledge and power
Holistic understanding of health	We support a broad and holistic conceptualization of health, accounting for emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, social and environmental aspects and determinants Collaboration, cooperation and partnership: We believe that working together in partnership is a fundamental component of initiatives that seek to promote health and wellness at both the individual and community level
Goal	Research with Pride will offer the opportunity for students, community members, academics and allies of the LGBTQ2Q communities to come together to discuss health research, with a specific focus on the possibilities of community-based research (CBR). The sessions will provide participants with a greater understanding of CBR and why it is important. The forum also aims to create a space that will allow for the forging of future successful partnerships between students, community members and academics
Objectives	
Education	Promote understanding and awareness of community-based research (CBR) and its relation to queer health issues and initiatives; share and value different forms of knowledge to better represent the diversity of experiences within the Queer community
Bridging Gaps	Raise awareness of gaps in research, and of community needs, goals and visions
Strengthening	Provide an opportunity for networking, resource sharing, partnership building and collaborations; create opportunities for continuous and future engagement
Empowerment	Strive to create an open and inclusive space that privileges different voices; celebrate and build on existing capacities and skills
Action	Work together to reduce barriers to health and wellness; support efforts to improve health and wellness; advocate for anti-oppressive programs, services, and policies; work towards eliminating discrimination and oppression

COMMUNITY-STUDENT PARTNERSHIPS: A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

As students endeavoring to undertake a conference on LGBTQ health, it was established very early on that it was necessary to include diverse stakeholders in an ongoing and iterative planning process. For RwP, this meant engaging both community members, organizations, students and academic faculty members. Based on a health promotion framework that values collaboration as an opportunity to empower and engage individuals and communities (Israel *et al.*, 2003; Laverack, 2007), RwP planners' first step was to create a diverse organizing committee. A call out for committee members was sent out through various channels on campus inviting interested individuals to attend the first planning meeting. This introductory meeting allowed us to establish a committee composed of both Masters and Doctoral students from a range of academic disciplines including public health, nursing and health policy. A professor at the DLSPH was elected to be our faculty representative, in order to keep other faculty up to date with our planning process, as well as to gain access to resources available to student groups, such as room bookings and equipment use. However, it is important to note that our faculty representative did not attend committee meetings and was therefore not included in our decision-making process. This was important in maintaining our group dynamic, and achieving our goal of making RwP a student-led community oriented initiative.

At the same time as we were garnering the support of our fellow students and beginning to seek out funding opportunities, we were actively reaching out to the community, building connections, and establishing partnerships. It had been established at the conception of this conference that although collaboration among fellow students was integral to our initiative, ultimately we would hope to extend the scope of these collaborations to individuals and communities outside of the academy. This hope was based not only on our appreciation for the principles of participatory engagement and reflexivity regarding power relations within our own practice as health professionals, but on our desire to facilitate an event that would advocate for these core values in a meaningful way. As such, we began to brainstorm ideas for ways to

engage and collaborate with other stakeholders in the planning process.

The literature refers to this relationship building process as one that is met with many challenges (Suarez-Balcazer *et al.*, 2005). Building partnerships is not something that can be done overnight; it can take anywhere from months to years, as it involves a process of trust building, and the development of a mutual respect and shared vision or goals for the relationship (Roussos and Fawcett, 2000). The initial stages of partnership building can indeed be the most difficult. For instance, how is one to know if or when they need a community partner? How should they know whom to approach for partnership? These are ideas that are rarely discussed in the classroom, but ironically are of the utmost importance when it comes to a diverse range of professional practices within and beyond health sector.

Reflecting back on our process, we were clear from the start that we wanted to engage in a partnership with a community organization in order to make this conference accessible to both community, students and academic researchers, as well as to make sure that this conference would meet the needs of all of these groups. After brainstorming ideas about which community organization would make the most sense to partner with in terms of meeting the goals of the conference, the organization that we selected was an obvious possibility given its history and location in Toronto's LGBTQ Village. Further, one of our planning committee members had worked previously with a prominent community researcher and service provider at this organization, who subsequently expressed interest in our initiative and agreed to meet with our planning committee. After several meetings wherein the goals and vision for RwP were discussed, we had established the beginnings of a working relationship with our community partner. Although we had made an agreement and commitment to work together, it is important to note that the nature of this partnership was not predetermined, but was something that naturally evolved throughout the course of our work together.

SHARING THE VISION

An important ingredient in any collaborative initiative is that all parties share a common

vision, set of goals and expectations for the project at hand (Gillis *et al.*, 2001). In the case of RwP, one of the first things that we did as a group was engage in a collaborative process of creating a group mandate, breaking down and articulating our group's values, goals and objectives (Table 1). Communicating openly about this was key to the success of this partnership, as all committee members had an obligation to their respective institution or organization. This was particularly important in the context of our community–student partnership, as RwP was not a school project but rather a project motivated by student determination. Thus the obligations of students were to represent our school, and funders, while working with our community partners and their organizational goals and objectives. Having a mutually created framework from which to base this project was thus critical to developing a respectful working relationship, and to creating a conference that met everyone's needs and expectations (Wolff and Maurana, 2001; Suarez-Balcacer *et al.*, 2005).

BEING OPEN TO CHANGE: ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

The majority of the planning committee had never contributed to conference planning, and therefore being flexible and open to change throughout the entire planning process was another factor that significantly contributed to the success of RwP. One example where this played out was in developing the focus of the conference. Initially, we had planned on addressing LGBTQ health broadly, and planning committee members were generally interested in the idea of bridging the gap between students, academia and community this work. We had additionally identified a need for LGBTQ health promotion initiatives from both an academic perspective (i.e. students and faculty), and from a community/service provider perspective through our partnership. However, we really wanted to hear what the needs of our potential conference attendees were in order to create a conference that would address the learning goals of the diverse range of people we were setting out to engage. Thus the first initiative of the RwP team was to organize a community sounding.

The goals of the community sounding were similar to those of a community needs assessment: to explore the strengths, existing capacities, needs and interests of community members, and to see how we could make RwP an event that they would want to attend, and from which they would benefit (Bartholomew *et al.*, 2006). The community sounding was held at our partner community service organization on a week night, and it was widely advertised through LGBTQ and health-related listservs, poster in selected neighborhoods in downtown Toronto, and circulated through various university and community online networks. The turnout was great, and two committee members (one student, and our community partner) facilitated a thoughtful discussion about what people would like to get from a conference of this nature.

The main findings from the discussions at the community sounding were that there was a lack of understanding from the community about research, and few opportunities for community members to learn about and gain skills in the area of research. When these findings were brought back to the planning committee, students expressed that they too felt that there were few opportunities in the academic context to learn about CBR, and in particular, connect with people in the field who were doing or were interested in doing this work.

CBR is grounded in a belief system that values partnership, collaboration and social justice as a means to achieving meaningful, sustainable change. The research process can be seen as a tool of empowerment. By doing research that is relevant and meaningful to the community, community members become vehicles of social change, and use their existing strengths and assets to achieve positive health outcomes for themselves and their communities (Hall, 1993; Israel *et al.*, 2003; Migliardi, 2006). Thus the focus of RwP developed out of this mutually articulated need for more space to talk about the promise of CBR in the promotion of health and wellness in our communities.

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

It is important to note some well-documented barriers or challenges in community–academic partnerships, and how they were addressed in the context of RwP. There is a history of power

imbalances and tokenism in the context of participatory initiatives, and as such, a pervasive sense of mistrust of the academy on behalf community members and organizations has developed over time (Wolff and Maurana, 2001). It was important to the RWP committee to ensure that these issues were not only addressed in the context of our work together, but also in ensuring that our conference was as barrier free as possible to all who were interested in attending.

In order to address this issue in our planning committee, we relied on group transparency, inclusiveness and respect to build a strong working relationship with all members. First and foremost, RWP planning meetings were open to the public, and advertised on our website and listserv. We welcomed participation from anyone who was interested in attending, and we were privileged to receive a number of community members at our planning meetings. Additionally, we encouraged all committee members to attend the meetings regularly, in order to encourage team-decision making, and a non-hierarchical planning structure. When sub-committee meetings were necessary, report-backs to the group were done in order to keep the entire group up to date as our plans progressed. Being transparent also meant sharing our decision-making process with those who were unable to attend meetings; for example, by posting our meeting minutes on our website, and circulating them through our listserv.

A circulating facilitation process was used, where all members were provided the opportunity to facilitate a planning committee meeting. This built facilitation skills within our team, and also encouraged all members to participate and have ownership over the planning process. All input and opinions were valued at these meetings, and our facilitators ensured that the discussions were conducted in a respectful manner that created a safe space for voices to be heard. For instance, we did this by having small group discussions within meetings to make sure everyone had a chance to contribute, and demonstrating positive leadership skills by actively inviting attendees to speak.

There are always politics involved in event organizing, and thus one of the planning committees' main priorities was to ensure that the RWP conference was as barrier-free as possible. Fundraising is without question an essential ingredient for event planning. The availability of funds, or lack thereof, determines major

decision-making including the physical location of the event, and the number of people your event will be able to accommodate. Lack of funding is a major barrier for a range of different community-based activities, and can limit the availability and accessibility of these activities. As such, fundraising was a top priority for the RWP planning committee, and was initiated very early on in the planning process. As a fairly large committee, we were able to come up with a comprehensive list of organizations, agencies and academic departments to contact for donations. We were extremely fortunate to receive a generous response from a range of sources that allowed for our committee to address a number of accessibility issues discussed below.

The first issue we had to address was the physical location of the event, and the challenges of holding a community-oriented event in an academic space. This was something that was discussed at length as a group, and additional feedback was sought out at our community sounding. After exploring all of our alternatives, it was eventually decided that the event would be held at the DLSPH given our limited resources and the fact that our community partner's facility was under construction at the time. However, effort was taken to address some of the challenges related to the accessibility of the space, many of which came out of discussions and feedback at the community sounding. For example, large clear signage with the RWP logo was used to transform the main conference area into a friendly and inviting space. These signs were also used to provide clear visual indicators to people entering the building that they were in the right space, and to make the building easier to navigate. A list of important information about the building (for example, where gender-neutral washrooms were located, and where all the conference sessions were being held), were included in participants conference packages.

In order to increase the accessibility of the conference in general, it was decided early on that the conference would be free of charge, it would be held in a wheel-chair accessible space, public transit tickets would provide to participants who requested them and ASL interpretation would be provided if requested. A glossary that covered commonly used terms related to research was provided to all participants in their conference packages in order to

make the language used at RwP more accessible. The planning committee made the provision of local and nutritious food a priority throughout the day, not only to ensure that the cost of food was not a barrier for participants, but also to create a shared space where people could eat and interact with one another, building connections and facilitating discussion.

Finally, as the broader LGBTQ community has complex histories, tensions and divisions, and because our partner organization has been an epicenter of LGBTQ community action and organizing since its inception, it has been in the middle of those tensions on occasion over the last few decades. Thus there is a possibility that certain people may not have wanted to get involved with RwP based on our relationship with our community partner, in the same way that they may not have wanted to get involved with RwP based on our university affiliation, or the fact that it was student-led. The committee was very conscious of these tensions, and made many efforts, as mentioned above, to try and make this event as accessible as possible to a diverse range of people with different and sometimes conflicting needs. Despite this, the positive elements of our relationship including the invaluable input and dedication of our community partner, and the support and legitimacy that we gained through this partnership, far outweighed any unknown negatives that may have had an impact on a small minority of participants.

BEING REALISTIC ABOUT EXPECTATIONS

The delegation of roles and responsibilities can be a point of contention in any kind of working partnership (Wolff and Maurana, 2001). Communicating openly about what and how group members can or cannot contribute from the get go, and being flexible to unexpected changes (i.e. people having to back out of their commitments, or needing to adjust what they can or cannot take on) is important to maintaining balance and flow throughout the planning process. Although RwP had a large planning committee (i.e. approximately 10–15 people would show up at our committee meetings), the work was mainly distributed among six core members. However, this is not to say that the other committee members did not contribute; it

was extremely beneficial to have the other planners present at meetings, to generate ideas, help facilitate discussion and gather feedback. Further, by the time the conference date came around, we had established a strong team that was there to help when the numbers were needed, for example, volunteering in various ways throughout the day. Being flexible and acknowledging each person's capacities, resources and strengths when working with people who are volunteering their time, and who have many competing demands in their lives, will help ensure that everyone is able to contribute meaningfully in a way that meets their own needs and the needs of the team.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

On a more practical level, community–student partnerships are a valuable and enriching learning opportunity for all team members (Greenberg *et al.*, 2003; Seifer and Vaughn, 2004; Suarez-Balcacer *et al.*, 2005). RwP committee members had the opportunity to develop skills in group facilitation, fundraising, community needs assessments, events logistics and problem solving/conflict management. Team members benefited from the opportunity to network with peers, people from other disciplines and people with different experiences and perspectives. Further, as a team we were able to experience firsthand the value of community–student collaborations, and the benefits of working on projects that are relevant and meaningful to the community.

IMPACT

RwP brought together a diverse group of participants in an open and engaging environment and allowed for the forging of successful partnerships between students, community members and academics. This conference engaged over 120 participants from across the province of Ontario. RwP was successful in reaching out to a very diverse audience that included undergraduate and graduate students, faculty members from a range of Ontario universities, researchers, community members, health service providers, community-based agencies/organizations and government representatives.

As part of the knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE) plan, a post-conference evaluation was distributed through Survey Monkey in order to give participants the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences. Participants were asked to speak to their experience of the day, what they liked and disliked, whether or not they had the opportunity to connect with people from other disciplines and what they learned about CBR in the context of LGBTQ health. Here is what some of the participants had to say:

I was excited about the possibilities of CBR in queer health research. It was interesting to learn about the effectiveness CBR can have at the policy level, the role it can play for the communities themselves. It didn't influence my desire (to do CBR), but it reaffirmed it, and showed me new possibilities.

...there was quite a mix of participants, especially among the student population. Given that this was a student-led event and there were so many students attending, I found it useful talking to them to find out their backgrounds, experience, etc.

...it was very useful to have such a diverse group of individuals brought together by a common cause.

About time!

In addition to this feedback, the conference evaluations demonstrated that there was a high level of diversity and balance in participant type (students, service providers, community members, faculty members, etc.). Many conferences are geared towards researchers and service providers, and are often inaccessible to community members and students. The goal of RwP was to provide not only an accessible space, but also a space where all groups could be on equal ground, and move toward addressing their common interest and goal. In general, people were excited about the forum and satisfied with how it went. RwP was positioned as a much needed first step to linking students, academics and community members to discuss CBR in the context of LGBTQ health. In fact, one major critique was that the forum was only 1 day and not a weekend or part of a series of events.

As part of our KTE plan, RwP committee members developed a workshop and manual entitled 'Rewriting the Script: Queer-Positive Health Care in Action' based on the discussions and themes emerging from RwP. Re-writing the

Script explores the use of role-play and other theatre-based approaches in working with clients, staff and others groups, with a focus on providing sensitive health services to LGBTQ communities. Theatre-based approaches provide a valuable alternative to traditional knowledge exchange and training methods, and are a useful tool for working through challenging communication situations. This workshop received excellent feedback when delivered at the Guelph Sexuality Conference in the summer of 2010 and the 2010 DLSPH student-led conference entitled 'The Art of Public Health'. Our team continues to work together with a shared commitment for partnership, and our belief in creative approaches to the promotion of health and wellness in LGTBQ communities.

IMPLICATIONS

Working in a mutually beneficial partnership with a LGBTQ community-service organization ended up being integral to the planning process, and the success of this initiative. While this case study is not intended to provide the 'how-to' for community-student partnerships, there are a few key factors that made this particular kind of partnership work so well.

The literature speaks to the mutually beneficial nature of successful partnerships, wherein groups can benefit from having access to different and potentially complimentary resources, experiences and capacities (Suarez-Balcacer *et al.*, 2005). In the case of RwP, team members felt that the nature of our community-student partnership was unique in that students brought different resources and capacities to the table than would faculty members or other academic partners. For example, there are specific funding opportunities available for students to promote to their engagement in volunteer or extra-curricular work. RwP planners found that the organizations we approached for funding were thrilled by the idea of supporting community-student collaborations, and we were actually able to raise more funds than we had anticipated, which allowed us to increase the number of participants at the conference, and engage in a number of extra KTE opportunities. Further, by virtue of being students and not faculty members, the dynamic on our planning team

was less distinct than is often depicted in the literature in more formal community–academic partnerships. This allowed for an easy and fun transition into our partnership that was met with very few challenges along the way.

Another unique aspect of community–student partnerships is that while faculty members and community representatives may be limited in numbers due to other competing responsibilities (i.e. we had one community representative from our partner organization), we had a lot of students on our team who had more flexible schedules, and who were able to commit to more time-consuming tasks such as fundraising and canvassing. Furthermore, students are in a privileged position within their academic institutions to bring new and innovative ideas and projects to the attention of their professors, departments and faculties. Although students do not have the same status or authority as faculty within our institutions, this can work in our favor, as there is more room to challenge the institutional norms and bring new perspectives to the table.

Community members on the other hand often have years of lived experience and knowledge from the field. This can include access to their communities through online networks, and through relationships with other community organizations and leaders (Suarez-Balcacer *et al.*, 2005). Their expert knowledge of the communities in which they work are the key ingredient to building bottom-up solutions to health issues. However, due to several challenges in building partnerships with academic institutions, a topic that goes beyond the scope of this discussion, these collaborations are often difficult to initiate and maintain (Wiewel and Lieber, 1998; Wolff and Maurana, 2001; Suarez-Balcacer *et al.*, 2005). By facilitating this process with students early on in their academic or professional careers, it is possible to instill first-hand knowledge of the benefit of these collaborations in our work, and in doing so build future capacity for students to address ‘real-world’ issues in our communities and populations (Seifer and Vaughn, 2004).

CONCLUSION

This case study has provided valuable insight into the successes and challenges of RWP, a community–student partnership for the

promotion of health and wellness in LGBTQ communities. It has demonstrated the significant role that students can play in the context of community–academic partnerships. RWP was about exploring the potential of CBR to transform our communities and create positive change. There is immense capacity for the combined efforts of students and communities to create social change and improvement in outcomes in health and wellness. It is our hope that others can learn from this model of partnership, and work together to create meaningful changes in their own communities.

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