CHAPTER ELEVEN

An Evaluation of Canadian Research-Community Partnerships in Child Welfare

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INTRODUCTION

In today's era of emerging "knowledge-based communities," child welfare must now fulfill a crucial mission: knowledge management. Within this "shared knowledge" perspective, child welfare as a field needs to successfully develop strategies for amalgamating collective intelligence (Brown and Lauder 2001). This notion of shared knowledge is not the product of a few researchers; rather, it represents the combined knowledge of all those committed to child maltreatment issues. It endorses collaboration and interaction between researchers and other members of the community. Together, they generate, share, use, and apply knowledge in order to better understand family issues, support the development of innovative practices, and evaluate various programs. However, these partnerships must be analyzed in order to appreciate their characteristics, functions, and impacts so as to identify future directions.

An Evaluation of Canadian Research Community Partnerships in Child Welfare, a research project by the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare (CECW), is part of a global strategy aimed at increasing the applicability and impact of research subsidized by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The purpose of this study was to identify the criteria needed to assess the impact of research-partnership projects on practices and policies. This chapter presents the evaluation results.

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NON-TRADITIONAL METHODS AND PATHWAYS: THE IDEOLOGY OF RESEARCH IN PARTNERSHIP

The advantages of, and the need for, research-practitioner collaborations to resolve major social issues have been written about extensively in various fields. This current focus on partnerships has brought together knowledge in the field of child welfare. The suggestion that research be conducted "with" rather than "on" people (Lieberman 1986) has had a strong impact, and has led to the belief that collaborative frameworks that bring together two worlds empower people at the same time they develop knowledge. Partnership research works to recognize the harm in using knowledge as a source of authority and control (Hagey 1997; Reason 1994), and endorses the idea of researchers and non-researchers jointly sharing power to affect change. This notion is a departure from the positivistic tradition in research that assigns all expertise and knowledge to the researcher. Within the research-partnership framework, results must be analyzed throughout the research process and questions must be reformulated based on exchanges between the various partners. The principle of "zone of shared meaning" (Lieberman 1986) helps to formulate an understanding of the need to work towards common goals.

Underlying Paradigm for Research Partnerships

This section focuses on the paradigm that underlies research partnerships. Theoretical data on the subject are abundant, most notably on the research process required rather than on anticipated outcomes. The following is an outline of the characteristics, the functions, and the impacts of research partnerships, as proposed by the authors. The research partnership model is structured around four components defined in terms of nature (functions) and intended goals (impacts). The four components comprising the model are: scientific, social, political, and educational (Savoie-Zajc and Dobec 1999).

Scientific component

Research function. In research partnerships between researchers and service providers, the identification of problems in the course of a study can stem from either or both partners. In the first case, researchers typically make an effort to attract interest from targeted areas of practice. In the second case, practitioners faced with a specific problem usually approach researchers in order to gain a better understanding of the problem and develop the idea into a workable research agenda. Either

way, a key component of a successful partnership is that valid reasons for carrying out the project are held by both partners (Desgagné 1997, 1998; Lenoir 1996; Savoie-Zajc and Dolbec 1999). This suggests that throughout the research process, all of the players negotiate the various stages of the project as well as the separate roles they play within it. For some researchers, the active and full participation by community members at all stages of the research is an essential component of participatory research (Hall 1975). Others function from the belief that the practice community controls the process and researchers commit to it (Mason and Boutilier 1996). Scientific information is gathered and used continually by the various players in defining the research objectives, determining the data collection methods, and interpreting the research findings (Denis and Lomas 2003; Sullivan et al. 2003). In other words, applied research must function according to established principles guiding the production of knowledge and must reflect the needs of the community for which it is being conducted.

Research impact. The goal of all scientific research is the advancement of knowledge. The term science, from the Latin "scientia," means "knowledge" or "acquiring knowledge." This is the very essence of research. The quality of the acquired knowledge reflects the intellectual rigor applied throughout the research process. Research precision is defined in terms of predetermined criteria that encompass both quantitative and qualitative tenets by paralleling (Mucchielli 1996) internal validity and credibility, external validity and transferability, dependability and consistency, and objectivity and reliability. The results of this type of approach are evidence-based advances in research.

Social component

Social function. In traditional research partnerships, links between researchers and practitioners are minimal (Cousins and Simon 1996). However, in many current research partnerships, there are strong interactions between the partners. The highly collaborative nature of research partnerships enhances the human relationships between participants. The researcher has theoretical knowledge (abstract conceptualizations), whereas the practitioner has practical knowledge (concrete experience). When both worlds work in partnership, new knowledge stems from collaborative effort. Jointly developed knowledge is the result of interdependency (Charest 1997; Panet-Raymond and Bourque 1991) and dialogue (Do 2003) among the various players.

The process of interaction allows participants to establish links among themselves and formulate a common research goal. In a collaborative

effort, researchers and users focus on a research goal in terms of what it represents for them (Mead 1967). The research partnership progresses with a series of interpretations and reinterpretations based on a subjective reality of shared symbols (Callon and Latour 1986). The symbols are interpreted by the participants in terms of their respective interests and perspectives, then translated into a more realistic, adapted approach with new meaning being shaped by dialectical exchange between the participants. Shared discussion allows the players to define themselves and their identities. The resulting product is only possible through collaboration; it cannot be produced by any other means (Callon 1986). An analysis of partnership research simultaneously takes into account the interconnections that bring together the participants and the resulting organizational system of knowledge production; the two dimensions mutually sustain one another.

Research impact. Within a context of shared management and formal partnership (Lévesque 2007), participatory research is structured around evaluating practices, the needs of the community, and social innovations, with the ultimate goal being to respond more adequately to populations in need. According to a number of authors, the ultimate goal of the participatory research approach is to improve living conditions for the most destitute (Freire 1974).

Policy component

Policy function. One of the objectives of partnership research in the field of child welfare, like similar partnerships in other fields, is that it is undertaken with a utilitarian approach: it is a tool for problem-solving and an instrument for decision-making and formulating public policies. As such, it is in keeping with the new Canadian public sector policy "based on obligations to demonstrate, review, and take responsibility for performance, for both the results achieved in light of agreed expectations and the means used" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada 2002). Methods used in this results-focused management model are a departure from the policy model in which only a few government experts make judgements and decisions about what is best for all concerned (Dahl 1989; Lindblom 1977; Popper 1960). Instead, this model reflects a more deliberate form of democracy in which authority reaches all levels of the community because all experiences related to a social issue are viewed as essential to problem-solving. All players are invited to take part in the process: researchers, planners, managers, service providers, the public, the media, and others (CIHR 2004). Thus, this model reflects government recognition of the credibility of all participants, with their

various individual skills, and constitutes a more democratic approach to science.

The development of a collective intelligence (Lévy 1994) from mutual adaptation among participants' values, in a pragmatic way, only what is deemed to be socially useful (James 1927). Here, new knowledge is acquired by putting adaptation of the partners to the test (Dewey 1933). This is rarely studied, but such knowledge may be as important as the research results produced, if not moreso (Dupuis 2004). "How one delivers public services, uses authority, and handles public money are more than means of achieving results: they are ends in themselves, important reflections of public sector values and ethics" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada 2002). For many, the most important aspects of such a democratic exercise are the social links, participation, deliberations, and common actions undertaken, rather than the empirical results or decisions it produces (Renault 2005).

Policy impact. Within this new Canadian model of horizontal governance (Paquet 1999), research findings hold a privileged position in the political process. Research-based results must now "inform" policies. Public policies and programs are founded on evidence-based data. The value of scientific knowledge is recognized according to its evidence-based characteristics, its capacity to take into consideration all aspects of an issue, and to focus on the best practices for finding solutions to problems (Bogenschneider et al. 2000). The various participants in the scientific process are all key players in the well-being of a community.

Education component

Education function. Participatory learning relies on a socio-constructivist philosophy, which holds that human beings not only build on learning from a previous stage (Piaget 1947), but also construct knowledge through social interactions (Vygotsky 1962). Desgagné (1997) defines a research partnership as an educational process in which participants learn from one another in their effort to co-produce knowledge. The learning process is multi-dimensional. First, because they come from different professional and organizational backgrounds, researchers and practitioners must learn about their respective cultures. Cultural environments are steeped in their own values, logic, and ways of doing things (Chamberland 2000; Oh and Rich 1996). Collaborative research makes possible a transformation from an individual culture to a collective culture.

Second, researchers and service providers are able to develop shared understandings by working together (Cousins 1999). If researchers have

more frequent interactions with service providers, then it is reasonable to assume that they will develop a better understanding of user contexts and needs. Partnerships with practitioners will compel researchers to adopt more creative and flexible methods that are better suited to user needs and to various clinical contexts (Palacio-Quintin et al. 1994). In addition, practitioners will benefit from a closer collaboration with researchers because it will allow them to better integrate research data into their knowledge structures (Cousins 2001). According to Cousins and Leithwood (1993), "the stronger the links, the higher the potential for the researcher to develop an understanding of the practitioner's needs and communication system and for the practitioner to fully understand and appreciate the implications and relevance of a given set (or sets) of data."

Third, collaborative partnership research can also be viewed as a form of continuous education. Social agents contribute to the development of professional practices in social work. The reflective role of practitioners who are called upon to conduct a systematic review of their practices for the purpose of shedding light on them, or improving them, provides an opportunity for increased knowledge (Desgagné et al. 2001).

Education impact. This learning takes place within the framework of a new form of governance in which an organization's collective intelligence is recognized as the only source of sustainable competitive advantage (Le 1999). We now recognize that an organization's performance capability resides in the ability to mobilize the collective intelligence and knowledge of its stakeholders (Zara 2004). Moreover, each community represents a dimension in the production of knowledge (Lévy 2000). As stated by UNESCO (Delors 1996), education in the twenty-first century is based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. These are the fundamental backdrops to a lifelong effort in which education is based on research and the constant update of knowledge and qualifications (UNESCO CONFITEA IV 1997). These undeniable requirements are the modern-day drivers of economic and social growth in a local and global environment that is changing and becoming more complex at an increasingly rapid pace. The knowledge economy increases the capacity of communities to adapt to constant change in ways that stimulate humane and sustainable growth (UNESCO 2005).

Table 11.1 is a summary of the theoretical concepts described above.

Table 11.1. Function and Anticipated Outcomes for Four Components of a Research Partnership Model

	Dimensions	
Component	***Function***	***Anticipated outcome***
Scientific	Participation of both researchers and practitioners at all stages of research	Advancement of knowledge; compliance with scientific criteria
Social	Social interaction; dialogue	Improvement of services
Political	Participation of the fields of research and practice in finding solutions to social issues, policy decision making; knowledge sharing	Formulation of new policies
Educational	Knowledge of the culture of each participant; Building of shared knowledge; Lifelong learning: continuing education	Skills development or increase

Sparse Empirical Data

Despite the presence of theories on research partnerships, empirical data on the topic are very sparse. Of the available data, most are results of evaluations of other forms of partnerships. Of these, community coalitions for the promotion of public health, community health, and development projects (e.g. *Community Health and Development*) are the most thought-provoking. case-based literature reviews in this area (Butterfoss 2006; Butterfoss and Kegler 2002; Granner and Sharpe 2004; Roussos and Fawcett 2000), and taken together illustrate the diversity of concepts analyzed and measures used. They give greater importance to the collaborative process than to research outcomes, and stress the relationship between the effects observed and the processes that led to them. However, the results of the systematic synthesis presented in the first chapter of this book (Saini and Léveillé) provides some indication of the necessary ingredients for success and the impacts of a knowledge management partnership.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP STUDY

Objectives of the Study

Inspired by empirical data and theory, the present study aims to explore the functioning and effectiveness of collaborative research partnerships in the field of child welfare. Its purposes are to:

1. identify the components of the process for 20 research partnership models in the field of child welfare,
2. outline the outcome of the research partnerships,
3. determine the criteria for success for these partnerships,
4. extract a partnership research typology,
5. examine how the process related to the partnership is connected to the criteria for success, and
6. develop a conceptual framework for the creation, functioning, and outcome of successful research partnerships.

Methodology

The case study method of analysis is an explanatory exercise, conducted for the purpose of establishing causal links between facts and complex situations difficult to dissociate from their context (Yin 2003). Two levels of analysis are used: an intra-case analysis and an inter-case analysis. The analysis examines 20 participatory research projects, studied individually (intra-case analysis) to outline the partnership components present. Work began with a triangulation of the data on each theme drawn from the opinions expressed and codified by the respondents for each participatory research project.

Next, a comparison among the participatory research projects (inter-case analysis) was conducted to highlight each project's most distinctive or influential components. This chapter outlines the results of the inter-case analysis only.

The research was based on a heuristic type of methodology founded on a successive evaluation approach to the issue under study. In concrete terms, the partnership between researchers and users was analyzed with a series of evaluations of individual interviews with key informants. Three separate sets of data were compiled at 18-month intervals for the period between November 2003 and June 2007. The examination of multiple case studies allowed for the development of a typology of research

partnership methods resulting from subjective and objective measures. It was also possible to connect each typology with a distinctive process.

In total, 20 Canadian research partnerships were evaluated based on three sets of data. Table 11.2 provides a list of the partnerships. The research projects were sponsored by the CECW with additional financial support from IRSC, PHAC, and SSHRC.

Table 11.2. Participatory Research Partnerships

- Secondary analyses of data for the *Étude sur l'incidence et les caractéristiques des situations d'abus, de négligence, d'abandon et de troubles de comportement sérieux signalés à la Direction de la protection de la jeunesse au Québec (ÉIQ)*
- Effectiveness of a respite program for families with young children under child welfare
- Evaluation of a multidimensional model of intervention for neglectful families
- Evaluation of a placement program for children with disordered attachment
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of self-managed respite services to meet the needs of families recipients of child welfare services
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of "*Beyond the Basics"* parenting groups intended for parents and service providers with young children under the child welfare system
- Evaluation of the factors that contribute to positive results within the framework of the Awasis Agency *Pimicikama Cree Nation Kinship Care Program*
- Evaluation of the process and impact of the *IRI-Accueil du Centre jeunesse de Montréal* program
- Evaluation of the *Baby First Home Visiting* program to determine the impact of prevention in cases reported to child welfare
- Evaluation of the parental capacity reinforcement program entitled *Éduquons nos enfants sans correction physique*
- Determining factors for children with disabilities (including fetal alcohol syndrome) (FASD) in care
- Leadership development forums for Aboriginal child welfare agencies – Alberta
- Leadership development forums for Aboriginal child welfare agencies – Saskatchewan
- Impact of service provider changes on child welfare

Table 11.2 Continued

- Lessons learned from the *Changing the Script Program*: *Supporting Foster Parents to "Go the Distance" with the Children in their Care*
- *Family Group Conferencing*: evaluation of the long-term effectiveness of a differential approach to child welfare
- Data analysis of services provided by child welfare
- Project on maltreatment and outcome for youth
- Family group conferencing and decision-making in child welfare within the Mi'kmaq community of Nova Scotia
- Addressing the impact of child maltreatment within the perspective of domestic violence: *Wood's Homes Habitat* program

Approximately two-thirds of the studies (65%) consisted of research evaluations with funding of $25,000 over 1.5 years (see Table 11.3). Of the projects, 25% were large scale projects with funding of more than $180,000 over a period of five years. These were spread across the various regions of Canada, and included both French and English language partnerships, and Aboriginal partnerships.

Table 11.3. Characteristics of 20 Participating Research Projects

Characteristic of research in partnership	***n (%)***
Nature:	
Evaluation of needs	5(25)
Evaluation of practices	13(65)
Innovation	2(10)
Anticipated timeframe:	
1.5 years	15(75)
5 years	5(25)
Amount of funding:	
$25,000	11(55)
From $120,000 to $149,000	4(20)
More than $150,000	5(25)
Cultural identity:	
Aboriginal	8(40)
Anglophone	7(35)
Francophone	5(25)

Interviews

Participating key informants. The technique of drawing a non-probable sample relies on typical case sampling. The process is called "logical choice" (Desabie 1966) as it entails focusing, as much as possible, on typical cases or persons who meet the criteria of an "ideal type" according to the objectives of the research (Mayer and Ouellet 1991). The study sample consisted of key informants who participated in at least one of the research partnerships listed above. The key informants were also selected for their professional roles as service providers, managers, or researchers. In addition, they were included in the present study only once the partnership had produced preliminary or final research results.

Twenty researchers were informed of the study and were invited to take part and to submit a list of all collaborators in the research partnership process for which they were jointly responsible. Next, service providers and managers were asked to take part in a phone interview in order to have, at a minimum for each project, the point of views of a researcher, a service provider, and a manager.

In total, 91 persons were interviewed. Forty percent (40%) were researchers, 32% were managers, and 24% were frontline service providers. Fifteen percent were interviewed twice, and 7% were interviewed three times. The majority of those who took part in more than one interview were researchers (58% twice; 67% three times).

Interview guide. The above-mentioned theoretical and empirical data were used as a basis for developing interview guides to gather information on the following themes:

- The origin of the research partnership:
    - the initiator of the project, and
    - the research infrastructure.
- The functioning of the research partnership:
    - the level of contact between the researchers and practitioners,
    - the level of participation by both groups at each stage of the research,
    - leadership,
    - favourable and unfavourable conditions, and
    - roles assumed by researchers and practitioner partners.

- The impact of the research partnership on:
    - the practice network,
    - research development, and
    - public policies.

Procedures for the pre-analysis of content

All audio recordings and phone interviews were transcribed using a word processing software program. The transcriptions were then imported into a software program for qualitative data analysis, *NVivo 7.0* (QSR International 2006). These steps were the basis of a pre-analysis that relied on a systematized procedure by L'Écuyer (1990): 1) preliminary readings and a recorded list of statements; 2) selection and definition of classification units; and 3) categorization and classification.

Coding grid development

Coding grids were used to encode replies to semi-structured questions. A coding grid was created for each theme. All replies to a question were read and reread to gain a full understanding of the content. The "floating texts" made it possible to extrapolate main points from the available information; these main points were then transformed into main categories. The tool is developed based on an open concept; in other words, the categories are corpus generated (L'Écuyer 1987).

Data coding

Procedure. The material was coded by a research officer qualified in content analysis and by two research assistants. First, the code writer read all of the transcripts linked to a theme for an overall view of the material. Next, the research officer identified the related units of meaning, then assigned a content code every time the text revealed information datum. One code only was assigned to each unit of meaning. The units of meaning were identified semantically, according to a conveyed theme or idea. This process was carried out simultaneously with the assigning of codes.

Conceptual validity and reliability of code grids. Strategies were present throughout the pre-analysis process in order to attain and maintain the quality of data validity. More precisely, the coding system was the object of a content validation process with monitoring of the inter-judge agreement to ensure that interpretations by the judges (or code writers) converged. In other words, the meaning assigned to the information provided by the interviewed participants must be similar to

whoever the code writer might have been. The preferred process here is to have a 100% inter-judge agreement for all material to be coded. The code writers performed an independent analysis of all the material. The codes unanimously assigned were not discussed. However, disagreements led to discussions to reach a consensual agreement.

Derived products

The dissemination products for all research partnerships were compiled in CECW annual reports, produced each year since the Centre's establishment in 2001. Beyond the strategy used in the pre-analysis stage of the content provided by key informants, a code grid was developed to gather the data on research products under analysis. All findings were coded independently by two code writers. Two content categories were assigned to each product: the type of product and the target user. The validity process applied also included a consensus on all of the material.

Results and Discussion

The results are presented according to the objectives of the study.

Objective 1: Identification of the Procedural Components for 20 Research Partnership Projects in the Field of Child Welfare

Origin of the research partnerships

Two aspects of the origin of the research partnerships that were considered to have a particularly strong influence on how they functioned were examined: 1) who initiated the research partnership; and 2) the type of infrastructure that was in place at the time. As indicated in Table 11.4, the user network initiated the research partnership in more instances (40%) than the researcher network (30%). Few research projects were launched jointly by both communities (15%). In 15% of cases, opinions expressed by the participants diverged on the issue. It is reasonable to believe that the user network that invites the academic world to join in partnership research, and the research world that approaches practitioners to work with them, are two essential and complementary components for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. There are documented instances of successful research partnerships in which users took credit for results when the project had been initiated by researchers or emerged from the practice community (Lefebvre 1996). Various fields of activity are now increasingly attracted by a more hybrid, top-down/bottom-up research strategy.

Table 11.4. Initiator of a Research Partnership

Partnership initiator	*Number of projects (N=20)*
Users	8
Researchers	6
Joint communities	3
Contradictory data	3

An analysis of the structural foundations in place at the onset of the research partnerships indicated that when projects were launched, research tools were not only found in university settings (55%), but also within the institutional network of child healthcare services (60% and 5%). Table 11.5 illustrates the range of research tools used by practitioners to support their research from the onset of the partnership. Whether it is the existence of a quality control service department in a child welfare agency, the possibility of accessing a computer data system within a given institution, making contact with a research group in a provincial public health agency, or having access to data at a community organization, results suggest that there was, at the very least, a research infrastructure in place within the practice networks before the launch of a research project. This reflects a keen interest in research and a willingness to get involved in the process on the part of the organization. However, it is surprising to note that only half of all cases had some form of scientific input. It is quite possible that the information providers simply did not identify the university component of the research infrastructure, which is inherent to the nature of their partnership. As well, in 25% of cases, points of view did not converge on whether or not a research infrastructure was established at the outset of the partnership.

Table 11.5. Research Infrastructure in Place at the Onset of a Research Partnership

Infrastructure Components	*Number of projects (N=20)*
Established research infrastructure	
Academic world	11
Researcher consultant	6
Institution/faculty of social work	6
Research group	2
Statistician	1
Inventory of knowledge	1

Table 11.5 Continued

Institutional practice network	
Child welfare agency	12
Contact-person	7
Task force	4
Research centre	3
Access to databanks	3
Public health agency	1
Research centre	1
Community network	1
Research centre	1
Government program	2
Contradictory data	5

Level of contact between the user and research communities. Monthly meetings were the most frequent means of contact for research projects. However, in more than one-third of all partnerships, various forms of contact took place based on need. In one-quarter of all cases, the points of view expressed by participants diverged in terms of the frequency of meetings held in the course of a project. It is possible that this incongruence may have resulted from some partnerships having multiple levels of participation, with some informants referring to one level and other informants referring to another level. In this study, working meetings were used as the measure of contact (see Table 11.6). It is also possible that the number of meetings would have been higher and more often corroborated by key informants if the various types of electronic communication mechanisms (e.g. Internet, Webcam, videoconferencing, and teleconferencing) had been taken into consideration in evaluating the frequency of contact between participants. The results, like those obtained in the systematic synthesis of chapter 1 (Saini and Léveillé), suggest that maintaining consistent contact facilitates functioning.

Table 11.6. Frequency of Meetings

Frequency of meetings	*Number of projects (N=20)*
Monthly	8
As needed	6
Quarterly	1
Contradictory data	5

Level of participation by users and researchers. Considering the importance of the actors' commitment in the efficient conduct of collaborative research (chapter 1; Saini and Léveillé), Figures 11.1 to 11.4 were created to illustrate the relative participation of service providers and researchers within the research projects. Results indicate that the researchers were actively involved at all stages of the research process (80% were involved in formulating research questions, 85% in gathering data, and 90% in data analysis and interpretation). A little more than half (60%) of researchers reported participating in assessing results. The service provider network took part in the research process in a variable way, depending on the stage of the project. Its contribution is more notable during the data collection process (50% of cases reporting participation) and less evident during the stage of data analysis and interpretation of results (40% of cases reporting participation). It is during this last stage of the research project that the consensus regarding researcher commitment was highest. These findings could indicate that the two communities continued to maintain their specific roles within the interdependent structure of the project.

Overall, the service provider network displayed less of an attachment to the research process than did the research community. However, the points of view of the various participants were also the least well defined in terms of the degree of involvement by the user network. In fact, in approximately one-third of all cases, participants did not agree on the level of participation by service providers at each stage of the research. Results point to the possibility that the expectations and indicators regarding the sharing of the research process were unclear. In addition, with reference to the scientific function of research partnerships, the data reaffirms the basic premise that both groups have a role to play at every stage of the research project. In fact, both communities did participate, but participation varied according to each partner's abilities.

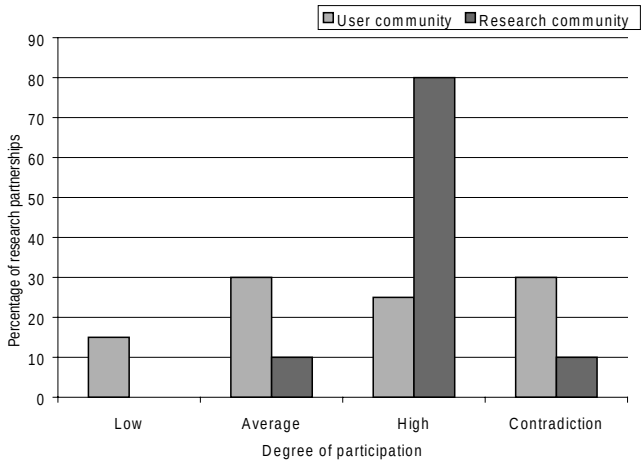

Figure 11.1. Degree of participation by the user and research communities in the formulating of research

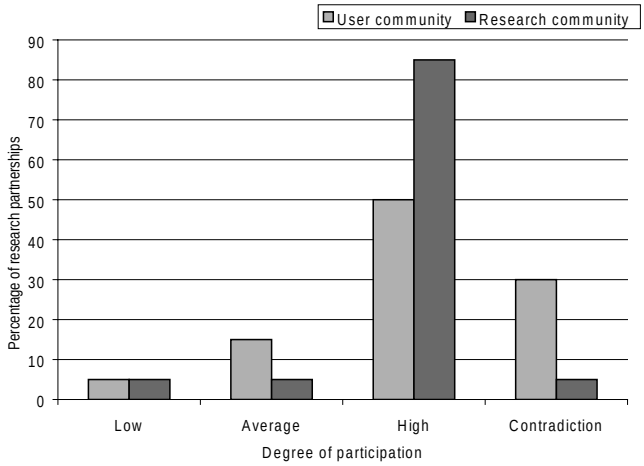

Figure 11.2. Degree of participation by the user and research communities in the data collect.

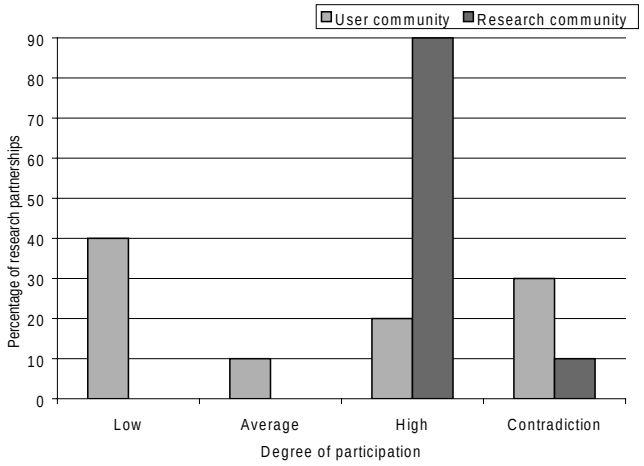

Figure 11.3. Degree of participation by the user and research communities in the analysis and interpretation of data.

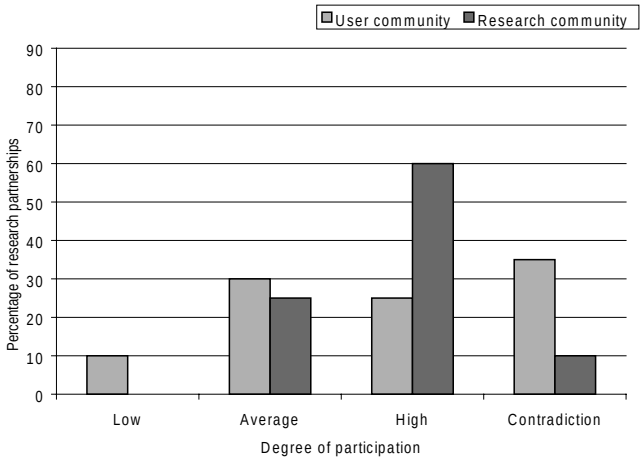

Figure 11.4. Degree of participation by the user and research communities in the research valorization.

Leadership. Leadership is the ability to effect persuasive power and the ability of one group to influence another in obtaining active support for ideas, objectives, and so on. As emphasized in the systematic synthesis of Saini and Léveillé (chapter 1), a strong and active leadership

is a necessary factor for effective partnerships. Two dimensions of the leadership concept were explored: operational leadership and decisional leadership. Analysis of leadership involved identifying which group managed operations in order to see a research project to its conclusion and which group made the decisions. Data in Tables 11.7 and 11.8 indicate that leadership was more often shared than assumed by one group, both at the operational (35%) and decision-making (50%) levels. In a number of cases, both types of leadership were assumed by the researchers (30% of partnerships for operational; 35% of partnerships for decision-making). The service provider network, for its part, rarely took on the management of operations and decision-making within a research project. Moreover, in almost one-third of cases, it was impossible to identify the operational leader.

Table 11.7. Operational Leadership Holder

Operational leader	***Number of projects (N=20)***
Joint leadership	7
Research network	6
Practice network	1
Contradictory data	6

Table 11.8. Decision-Making Leadership Holder

Decision-making leader	***Number of projects (N-20)***
Joint leadership	10
Research network	7
Practice network	2

Optimal conditions versus obstacles in partnership research

Optimal conditions. Of the four categories of factors conducive to the smooth running of the research partnership (see Table 11.9), the predominant one was the relationship between research and practice (95%). Second, in the majority of cases (60%), a number of components converged, indicating that both researchers and service providers shared many commonalities. A third major influence (55%) was the adjustment factor between the two groups. Finally, a positive partnership experience seemed linked to having had a connection with the other partner or to having worked together previously (45%).

Table 11.9. Optimal Conditions for Research in Partnership

Optimal conditions	***Number of projects (N=20)***
Optimal conditions linked to the field of research	9
Personal or professional conditions for the researcher	7
Adjustment	1
Organizational characteristics of scientific work	2
Reflective nature of scientific work	1
Precision	1
Optimal organizational environment for research in partnership	1
Consistency of personnel	1
Optimal conditions for the field of practice	9
Personal or professional conditions for the practitioner	1
Liaison	1
Organizational conditions for intervention work	8
Interest in evaluating practices	3
Environment enhancing research	2
Direction/mandate	1
Access to databanks	1
Interest in research	2
Commitment	1
Optimal conditions linked to interaction between research and practice	19
Convergence	12
Commitment of participants	2
Shared openness	1
Shared interest in research results	1
Shared willingness to meet user needs	1
Participant availability	1
Shared willingness to see the project to its conclusion	1
Communication/co-construction/adjustment	10
Collaborative nature of the relationship	2
Complementary nature of the relationship	2
Informal nature of the relationship	1
Knowledge sharing	2
Prior relationship	9
Other optimal conditions linked to interaction	2
Optimal conditions linked to the context of research in partnership	6
Needs/opportunity	3
Inclusion of a research infrastructure	2
Funding	1
Other factors linked to the research context	1

In almost half of all cases (45%), the scientific community encouraged the partnership. Effective collaboration was more connected to the personal or professional attributes of the researcher (35%) than it was to the organization of research work (10%). This pattern was reversed when the elements associated with the practice community (45%) that enhanced the research process were analyzed: the organizational aspects of the interventions (40%) were more influential than the personal or professional qualities of the service providers.

The context of the partnership was the partnership catalyst in 30% of cases. This factor was neither the product of the research or practice community, nor the result of interaction between them.

In summary, a number of factors were involved in the success of a research partnership, the most important being the interrelationship between the research and practice communities. This finding supports the section of Saini and Léveillé's systematic analysis in chapter 1 entitled "Attention to Relationships." Next in importance were the qualities of the researcher. Human relationships are a determining factor in the success of partnerships. This finding supports the recent literature on the importance of relationship capital (i.e. resources stemming from personal and professional relationships networks) in the application of knowledge and in economic development. Landry et al. (2000) demonstrated that the relationship capital of researchers is the most significant factor in the successful transfer of social research outcomes. Putman (1993) showed that geographic regions that have a rich relationship capital, including such elements as strong cooperation networks, civic duty norms and a spirit of confidence, benefit by having dynamic regional administration and strong economic development. Regions that lack relationship capital do less well, often having a more passive administrative climate characterized by mistrust and social isolation.

Obstacles. Partnership research projects were hampered equally by factors associated with research (55%) and those associated with practice (55%). In seventy percent of all cases, the obstacles were due to an incompatibility between the two communities. As Table 11.10 indicates, obstacles were apparent in both structural and functional parameters. Organizational conditions hindered both the research field (45%) and the practice field (55%), as well as the area where the two converged (divergence of environments: 30%). The process of obtaining research ethics approval, the study design, a lack of support by the agency providing services, a heavy workload for service providers, and conflicting organizational structures between the research and practice communities were all working conditions that limited the proper

functioning of a partnership. These data point to a need for increased flexibility in working structures so that they can support the horizontal management style advocated by the public sector (Human Resources Development Canada 1999). Differences between the organizational cultures of research and practice were also identified as primary barriers to collaborative research by Saini and Léveillé in chapter 1.

Two other overarching factors hindered the functioning of the research partnerships: insufficient funding grants (25%), and the distinct character of some clienteles (10%).

Table 11.10. Obstacles to Research in Partnership

Obstacles	***Number of projects (N=20)***
Obstacles linked to the field of research	11
Personal or professional conditions for the researcher	2
Organizational obstacles to research work	9
Research ethics	2
Heavy workload	1
Too scientific	1
Lack of coordination	1
Obstacles linked to the field of practice	11
Personal or professional conditions for the practitioner	3
Organizational obstacles to intervention work	11
Heavy workload	3
Turnover of personnel	3
Lack of support by the organization	2
Administrative nature of databanks	1
Funding challenges of the organization	1
Restructuring	1
Obstacles linked to interaction between research and practice	14
Divergence	6
Conflicting organizational cultures	2
Lack of knowledge of the other's culture	1
Diversified organizational cultures within the field of practice	1
Lack of knowledge sharing	1
Remote concept of the presentation of research results	1
Different views of the research design	1
Lack of structure	1
Lack of communication	1

Table 11.10 Continued

Other obstacles linked to interaction between the two communities	5
Obstacles linked to the context of the research partnership	10
Lack of funding	5
Other obstacles linked to the context	3
Obstacles linked to the clientele	2
Other obstacles	4

Summary. Successful partnerships are supported by strong networking; the interactive relationships underlying research activities are very important to their success. Partnerships are hindered by divergent organizational cultures in the working environment of the collaborative partners. Conner (1993, 1998) acknowledged that organizational culture is a challenging adversary to collaboration.

Roles of service providers and researchers

The roles assumed by the research and practice fields respectively within a partnership were explored in detail. Major themes concerned the nature of individual roles, how these were defined, and when they occurred.

Nature of the roles. Table 11.11 provides a definition of the roles within a partnership. Role-related functions were two-dimensional: the role assumed at a given stage of the research and the role assumed in the research process. In terms of roles assumed at various stages of the research, results coincided with the analysis of the degree of participation for each given community. The service provider community had a pronounced involvement in the data collection stage in 45.5% of cases. The research community had a role at various stages, especially (54.5%) in the analysis and interpretation of data.

Both communities were involved in advising and guiding the research, although the researchers did so more commonly (54.6%) than the service providers (36.4%). Researchers guided the research process most of the time (63.6%), provided help to users (45.5%), and did the required writing (36.4%). Service providers determined the issues to be addressed, selected practitioners for research, and trained and supervised them.

Table 11.11. Definition of Roles in a Research Partnership

Nature of the roles	*Number of projects (N=11)*
Roles assumed by the practice community	
Role linked to a stage of research	**7**
Gather data	5
Disseminate/apply	2
Request funding	1
Role linked to the research process	**8**
Advise/guide	4
Determine the issues to be addressed	3
Select service providers	2
Aid/support	2
Train service providers	1
Supervise	1
Ensure funding	1
Other roles linked to the research process	3
Other roles assumed by the practice community	**1**
Roles assumed by the research community	
Role linked to stages of research	**8**
Analyse data	6
Compile data	4
Request funding	3
Disseminate/apply	2
Meet ethical criteria	1
Role linked to the research process	**10**
Ensure research structure	7
Advise/guide/direct	6
Facilitate/support/assist	5
Write	4
Inform	1
Evaluate a program	1
Translate/interpret	1

How and when roles are defined. Roles were defined officially in almost three-quarters (72.7%) of the research partnerships; more than half of the projects (54.5%) had roles defined at the outset. There were different points of view as to how tasks were to be defined (18.2% of cases) and when tasks were to be determined (36.4% of the projects).

Overall, this research supports the perspective that communities negotiate their roles within the research process (Goodson and Fliesser 1995). The research also supports the view that roles should be decided upon and clearly set out, and that steps should be taken to limit role ambiguity (see also Saini and Léveillé, chapter 1).

Summary of objective 1

A number of summary points can be made from the foregoing discussion:

- Overall, research partnerships are initiated by either research partner but, more frequently, by the research community. From the outset, they can rely on a relatively solid research infrastructure.
- Task force members meet on a monthly basis or, in many cases, on an as-needed basis.
- The research community is more involved in research practice than is the service provider group. The service provider community is variably involved according to the stage of the research project.
- Decisions are more often made jointly. The research process is also more frequently led jointly; nevertheless, in approximately one-third of research projects, opinions differ as to who is to assume the role of operations manager.
- Overall, relationship capital is a favourable condition for the partnership to succeed, but the organizational culture of one or both communities can be an obstacle to the proper functioning of partnership activities.
- The research group plays a major role in the analysis and interpretation of results, whereas the practice community plays a key role in the gathering of data. The roles are generally made official at the beginning of the partnership research project.

Objective 2: Focussing on the Outcomes of Research Partnerships

The performance of a research initiative is usually measured by two indicators: outputs and outcomes. Outputs are the direct products stemming from the activities of a research initiative; they are the partnership deliverables. Outcomes define the impact of a research initiative; they may be immediate, intermediate or final, expected or unexpected, and desired or accidental.

Within the framework of the present study, outputs were compiled by way of CECW annual reports (impartial data). The results, or outcomes, were generated from interviews conducted with key informants (perceptive data), and were then triangulated. On the whole, the findings of this evaluation point in the same direction as those of the systematic summary presented in chapter 1 (Saini and Léveillé).

The impact (outcomes) of the research partnership

The changes resulting from the partnerships were evaluated as they were perceived by the main participants.

Impact of the research partnership on service providers. Table 11.12 outlines the impact of the research partnerships as reported by participants. In almost all cases (90%), the practice group reported an increase in level of empowerment. This empowerment translated into increased awareness or greater knowledge (60% of cases) at one stage or another of the research process, either through acquisition of knowledge or consolidation of skills (75% of cases), exchange of information (60% of cases), or the exercise of power (20% of cases). This increase in knowledge, awareness or level of skill was one of the anticipated impacts of the research partnerships, which were developed with the aim of improving or advancing the skills of the partnership affiliates.

In addition to recognizing the role of practitioners in finding solutions to issues of child maltreatment, the participatory research projects fostered changes in practice on the part of service providers (45% of cases) and their clientele (30%). Supported by the social network of the research partnerships, the effectiveness of the service providers was improved.

Table 11.12. Impact of the Research Partnership on the Practice Community

Reported impact on the user community	*Number of projects (N=20)*
Empowerment	18
Awareness/increase in knowledge	12
Skills/power	15
Consolidation of existing capabilities	10
Acquisition of new capabilities	8
Networking	10
Communication	12
Promotion	7
Dissemination	5
Access to information	2

Table 11.12 Continued	
Power	4
Of influence	4
Decision-making	1
Innovation	14
Organisation	9
Clientele	6
Community/social group	1

Impact of the research partnership on the scientific community. More than one-third of research partnerships had no effect whatsoever on the academic community (35%: 13 research projects). Among the partnerships that produced an impact, half generated new research questions (7 out of 13) and approximately one-third introduced a new approach (4 out of 13) in terms of concepts, procedure and measurement. Two-thirds of the partnerships, therefore, succeeded in contributing to research development and attained the scientific objective of the participatory approach to research. Since both collaborating communities played a role in achieving the objective of the research, both needed to work together to answer the new questions that emerged from their collaboration, thus fostering a cycle of increased interdependency.

Table 11.13. Impact of the Research Partnership on the Research Community

Reported impact on the research community	*Number of projects (N=20)*
Introduction of new research questions	7
Innovation	4
Changes in the practice community	3
Understanding of the practice community	2
Dissemination	2
Training of graduate students	2
Training of new researchers	1
No impact recorded	7

Impact of research partnerships on public policies. In almost half of all cases (45%), no impact on public policies was noted. There may be a number of reasons for this: the type of participants involved in the research, the objectives of the participatory research, too short a time span after the end of the research for makers of public policy to take up the results, and others. Key informants reported that the participatory

research projects had something to teach policy strategists (25%) and that they provided a new way of thinking for policy developers (25%).

Table 11.14. Impact of Partnership Research on Public Policies

Reported impact at the policy level	*Number of projects (N=20)*
Heightened awareness/understanding by decision-makers	5
Innovation	5
Influence	3
Visibility	2
Access to information	1
Development of a culture of program evaluation	1
No impact reported	9

Deliverables (outputs) of the research partnership

The 20 research partnerships generated 355 deliverables divided into 19 categories (Figure 11.5). Results indicate that oral communication topped the list (29%), followed by articles (28%) and information sheets (14%). The outputs fall under 12 target categories (non-mutually exclusive).

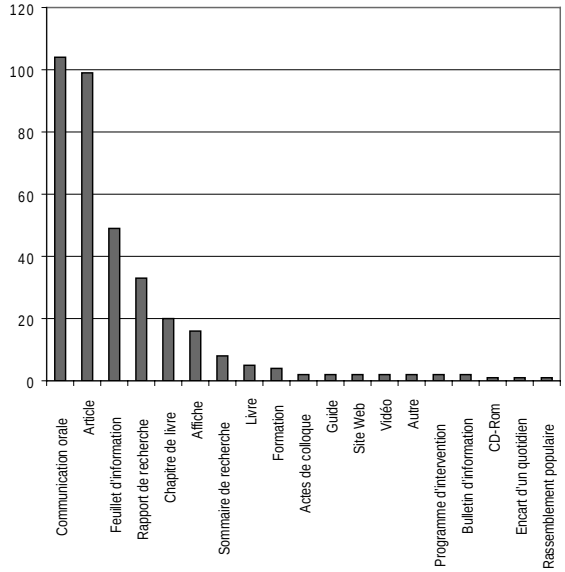

Figure 11.5. Types of knowledge products produced by the research partnerships.

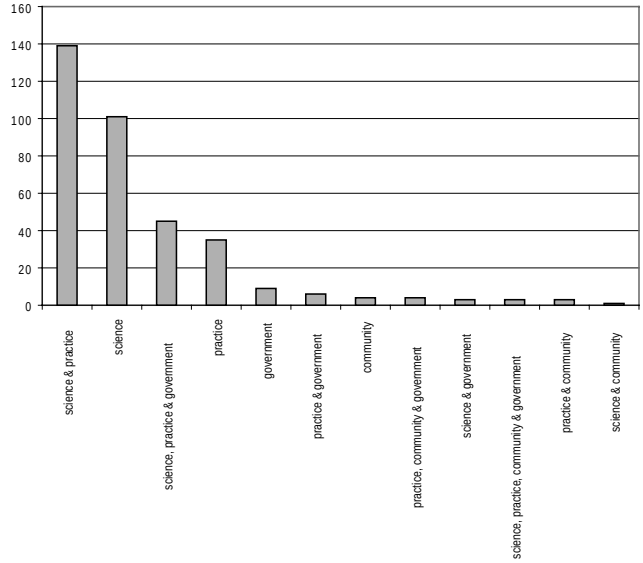

Figure 11.6. Distribution of target markets impacted by research partnership products (outputs).

Figure 11.6 indicates that 38% of research partnership results affected both the fields of research and practice, and that 29% affected the field of research only. In total, only 18% of deliverables exclusively reached the service provider communities. The results suggest that most of the research products were not adapted to practitioner needs. In order to validate this hypothesis, a recoding of the deliverables was conducted.

Recoding of deliverables according to their level of applicability in the user community. Although deliverables are an indicator of the performance of research partnerships throughout the knowledge exchange process, they are not an indicator of their potential use and application in non-researcher communities. A partnership can deliver a considerable number of products and services to a wide range of users without research findings being applied in a way that changes practice. Consequently, each product of a partnership was again coded according to its potential level of use. A three-code graph has been developed for this purpose based on a number of written documents on its use (Landry 2000), application (CIHR 2008), and valorization for research results. The codes are: knowledge dissemination, knowledge transfer, and valorization. Knowledge dissemination refers to making published information accessible (e.g. articles, conferences, inventories

of current knowledge). Knowledge transfer consists of the production of products and services that stimulate thought and understanding of knowledge (i.e. training programs, conferences, forums for discussion). Valorization is concerned with producing material to support evidence-based practice, such as information kits, learning resources, or a website. The three categories of knowledge application represent three degrees of knowledge acquisition and application on a continuum: the lowest degree is dissemination while the highest degree is valorization. In other words, the distribution of a written product such as a report is less likely to see the knowledge being integrated into practice than a valorization product such as a tip sheet for practitioners. Table 11.15 outlines the ways research findings were distributed to practitioners for all 20 research partnerships. The dissemination of knowledge products accounted for more than 60% of all research outputs. The transfer of knowledge made up more than one-hird (35.2%) of products delivered.

Table 11.15. Three Types of Knowledge Distribution for All Research Partnerships

Type of knowledge distribution	*% of all types distributed (n=355)*
Dissemination	61.7
Transfer of knowledge	35.2
Valorization	3.1

Summary of objective 2

- The effects of partnerships, as reported by participants, were felt at the research, social, political, and educational levels. The educational level appears to be the most targeted, whereas the policy implications are less often given attention.
- Partnership deliverables were, for the most part, numerous and diversified, and reached various users. However, the vast majority of them were tools used to transmit knowledge. Tools that would help knowledge to be appropriated into evidence-based practice, as observed under research performance, were seldom reported.

Objective 3: Establishing Success Criteria for Research Partnerships

Principles of market reach and penetration were used to measure the quality of the research partnerships empirically. This was done by analyzing the scope and the concentration of targeted service providers.

The term "scope" refers to the diversity of the target groups for which a research partnership is likely to have an impact. In other words, it is the capacity of a product's output to be of interest to the largest number of possible communities. In terms of perceptual data (application of the partnership as noted by the participants), there are three distinct target groups: practitioners, researchers, and policymakers. In terms of outcome measures (products of a partnership as recognized in the CECW 2006-2007 Annual Report), there are eight target groups: researchers, practitioners, community, the research-practice community; the practice-policy community; the research-policy community; the combination of community/research/policy; and finally the combination of the fields of practice and policy at the various regional levels.

The term "market concentration" refers to the extent to which a research partnership will have an influence on a target group. It indicates the capacity of the product's output and results to carry weight in a given type of community. It corresponds to the influence of a research partnership within a given community. In other words, it concerns the number of products of interest to a community.

Finally, the success of partnerships was also evaluated in terms of how applicable the deliverables were to the user community. The more the products fit into the "knowledge valorization" category, the better are the chances that they will be acknowledged and integrated into social work practice by community agencies and other user groups. On the other hand, the more the deliverables come under the category of "dissemination of knowledge," the fewer are the chances that they will penetrate user communities. This third criterion of research quality is measured by the diversity of the types of research findings as well as the product concentration.

Rating system for quality research criteria

A maximum rating of 3 was assigned to the range of research effects as well as to the range of targeted groups affected by the reported deliverables. In addition, a maximum rating of 3 was assigned to the concentration of reported effects and to the deliverables. However, the concentration ratings were weighted according to key structural

components of partnership research from which they stemmed: the amount of funding granted, and the length of time for which financing was granted. There were three categories of research partnership funding: large scale (more than $180,000 over five years), medium scale (from $120,000 to $150,000 for 1½ years) and small scale (from $25,000 for 1½ years). Consequently, the criteria for the outreach and impact of research findings individually were rated on a scale of 0 to 6. The applicability of research findings was also rated on a scale of 0 to 6; there was a scale of 0 to 3 for the diversity of usable products and another scale of 0 to 3 for the number of deliverables per category.

Summary of objective 3

The quality of participatory research was acknowledged by measuring impact and deliverables according to three criteria: 1) the reach of user "markets" affected by the impacts and deliverables, 2) the "market" concentration, and 3)the usefulness of the product.

Objective 4: Establishing a Research Partnership Typology

From the methods explained above, a typology for research partnerships emerged. This research typology included four levels of research partnership success:

1. Deeply established outcomes (n=5; research partnerships 1, 2, 3, 12 and 19),
2. Widespread outcomes (n=4; research partnerships 11, 16, 18 and 20),
3. Traditional outcomes (n=6;research partnerships 5, 10, 13, 14, 15 and 17), and
4. Specialized outcomes (n=4; research partnerships 6, 7, 8 and 9).

Deeply established partnerships were those with a high impact, concentration and usefulness. In other words, they produced an impact on various groups in a major way. Partnerships with widespread outcomes were those with high impact, but average concentration and usefulness; they reached various groups, but without major impact. Partnerships with traditional outcomes had an average impact and concentration and a low level of applicability. Partnerships with specialized outcomes had either a widespread effect or a high concentration.

Summary of objective 4

Four types of research partnerships can be described: 1) deeply established, 2) widespread, 3) traditional, and 4)specialized.

Objective 5: Assessment of the Ways That the Research in Partnership Process is Linked to Criteria for Success

In order to meet this objective, research projects were grouped according to the new typology, with the functional elements of each type of partnerships being taken into account. The characteristics and function of each type of research partnership are summarized in Table 11.16.

Table 11.16. Portrait of the Characteristics and Functions for Each Type of Research Partnership

Name and description of the type of research partnership	***Portrait of characteristics and function***
Deeply established: high degree of three quality criteria	• Large sized projects • Comprehensive research • Established research infra-structure both in the child welfare agency and in the academic institution in all cases • Identification of a greater number of favourable con-ditions rather than obstacles to the research process • Shared operational and decision-making leadership in most cases
Widespread: the impact is high; the concentration and applicability are average	• Mid-sized projects – with funding exceeding $120,000 for a one-and-a-half year period • Initiatives in Aboriginal communities • User participation somewhat high throughout the process • Identification of a higher number of obstacles than of favourable conditions to the research process

Table 11.16. Continued

Traditional: the scope and concentration are average and the level of applicability is low	• Small research projects in all cases – with funding of $25,000 for a period of 1½ years • Evaluation type research • Operational and decision-making leadership more often assumed by research
Specialized: high scope or high concentration	• The user community launched the initiative • Contradictions noted regarding the research infrastructure at the outset of the project • High number of contradictions in terms of the degree of participation by one or the other group in the course of the research process

Objective 6: Establishing a Conceptual Framework for the Design, Implementation, and Actualization of Successful Participatory Research

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of 20 collaborative research projects, outlining their characteristics, function, and impact in order to propose guidelines applicable to the field of child welfare. The analysis highlights the importance of the various functions that can be assumed within research partnership projects. Specific collaborative research models are outlined that show the various needs and realities within child welfare.

Research partnerships that fulfill their social, educational, political, and scientific mandates

The 20 research partnerships analyzed in the present chapter highlighted the distinct, but somewhat variable, mandates underlying this type of research approach (see Table 11.1).

Notably, the study emphasized the indicators of social function in each of the models. For most of the partnerships analyzed, contact between researchers and practitioners occurred on a regular basis, with a frequent

number of meetings at the outset of the project and more infrequent meetings toward the end. The frequency of contacts between participants has been identified as a key beneficial component of partnerships (Israel 1982; Putman 1993). Social frameworks established at the outset of a project, often by official agreement, will characteristically result in project members taking on different roles and interacting with one another. Other empirical studies confirm the importance of formalizing tasks, functional roles and mechanisms for decision-making in order to achieve optimal success in collaborative efforts (Butterfoss 2006; Kegler et al. 1998a, 1998b; Mayer et al. 1998; Reininger et al. 1999; Rogers et al. 1993).

Our study also revealed the existence of pre-research relationships. Previous work experience on the part of participants appears to be a condition that favours the best functioning of a partnership. Interaction (close and continuous knowledge exchange) (Beaudry, Régnier and Gagné 2006) not only took place throughout the research process, but also occurred prior to the research project. These conditions, combined with adjustments made by all participants throughout the research process, likely fostered points of convergence that were clearly acknowledged by all as being beneficial to the project. In other words, frequent, timely, structured, ongoing and adapted interaction between researchers and users provided a meeting point for all players involved. These interactions seem to have had an educational component that was particularly valuable for the practitioner communities. Participants agreed, saying that the effects of the research partnership on the practitioner network were due largely to their heightened awareness of the issue being addressed, the scientific process, or the organizational culture of each partner. This is not necessarily a new idea. Hall (1981) and Maguire (1987) claimed more than twenty years ago that this increased awareness is a favoured mechanism for change in participatory research. The increased level of knowledge acquired through the project is a starting point for increased empowerment on the part of practitioners. The results of this study focus on the acquisition of several specific kinds of empowerment (Ninacs 1995; Rappaport 1987): knowledge, skills, communication and power.

It should be noted that the collaborative research models in this study varied in nature. Most of them focused on a form of intervention already in place in the field of practice. One-quarter of them were based on a descriptive design (illustration of a situation or evaluation of needs). Two called for innovative social models. Each of the three types of

research relied on specific frameworks of evaluation. Although all of the models fostered the sharing of knowledge by virtue of their participatory nature, they did not all present the same political challenges. For example, program evaluation includes three components: knowledge-building, judgment, and decision (Demarteau 2002). Within this context, knowledge-building implies that intervention practices be both evident and straightforward to compare by describing the analysis of the conducted research and by exploring the nature and level of the interventions carried out (Lesain-Delabarre 2007; Patton 1986). Judgment is based on the value assigned to the intervention; even if the evaluation is conducted in a neutral and non-partisan manner, it is an assessment of the performance of a program (Palumbo 1987). A decision is made based on how the results of the evaluation will be disseminated, and how the program itself will be put into practice. These are processes that the various stakeholders in the project may not all see from the same perspective. They may differ in a number of areas, such as how they think service provision should be managed, their concepts of appropriate intervention practices, or how they think public policies should be improved (Rossi, Freeman and Wright 1979). Evaluating intervention practices is a challenging undertaking, particularly when addressing such issues as:

1. the origin of the evaluation (i.e. who wants the evaluation, and why?),
2. the type of organization (i.e. governance; evaluation and procedures to ensure quality control),
3. the purpose of the evaluation(i.e. supervision or shared power, incentive towards change), and
4. the type of professional guidelines followed by the organization (i.e. their credibility and level of practice within the organization; organizational acceptance or resistance to guidelines; Bouquet, Jaeger and Sainsaulieu 2007).

In order to address issues such as these, the evaluation must be explicit in pinpointing the numerous challenges involved.

These political issues describe what can occur between researchers and service providers within the context of a project evaluation. They would probably be different if the issue consisted of profiling clients whom the practitioners wanted to help, or if it consisted of an epidemiological study monitoring the well-being of a population. In future participatory

research evaluation, it would be interesting to look at the type of research being conducted (such as evaluations of programs, needs, or innovations) or to analyze the influence of the research. It would also be beneficial to observe the challenges "on the ground" (such as the interactions between researchers and service providers, or those between agencies) and how these have an impact on social policies. Is the political influence heightened when the participants are able to have an impact on the development of innovative programs at these various stages? What about descriptive or evaluative forms of research? How should the inherent political challenges for each type of research be addressed in order to reach a socio-political target?

In spite of the fact that the political context may have varied from one research goal to another, the study nevertheless clearly reveals the nature of the collaboration by the participants at the various stages of the research project. Researchers were actively involved at all levels of the research but were less involved at the stage of moving research evidence into practice. Practitioners were less present at the stage of analysis and interpretation of results. They left these tasks to the researchers and became more involved in data collecting. This pattern of involvement, based on complementary, interdependent contributions by both researchers and practitioners, calls into question the concept that partnership research always implies equal collaboration at all stages of the research project. The challenge to researchers involved in this type of collaborative research is not to try to make practitioners experts in methodology, analysis and interpretation of data. Conversely, it is not a question of making the researchers experts in the field of practice. The mission of this type of project is to conduct research with scientific rigour and to combine divergent ideas for the purpose of improving services for the protection and welfare of children. It gives weight to the view that what cannot be done alone, can be accomplished in a group (Mattessich 2003).

Various types of research in partnership for various needs and realities

The main role of the present study is to establish the links between the research process and the results and effects of community-research partnerships. This type of collaborative research calls for openness and flexibility on the part of the various partners in order to produce results (CHSRF 2007). A key aspect of the partnership network is its capacity to communicate with the outside world. A group's flexibility is tied to its ability to adapt to its environment. It is a system in true balance with

its environment, where knowledge exchange is an adaptive, ongoing process. The criteria for high quality collaborative partnerships that emerged from this study were:

1. the openness and trust established in the relationship between the researchers and the various kinds of practitioners and their communities,

2. the usefulness of the outcomes; by this we mean the potential transfer of research results into practice, which depends on the ability of the partnerships to adapt themselves to the needs of practitioners.

The four types of partnerships found in this study (deeply established, widespread, traditional, and specialized) all had distinct roles, since the reasons for conducting research were diverse in nature.

Deeply established partnerships are the most open and flexible. They have numerous targeted users, multiple strategies for the transfer of knowledge, and optimal ways to make use of the research findings. Research projects of this type benefit from the most resources, in terms of time, financial means, and a pre-established research infrastructure. They are descriptive in nature; management and decision-making are shared roles.

Deeply established partnerships show that time, money, research characteristics and shared leadership are essential factors for success. They are the most productive forms of collaborative research; practitioners are most involved; and the products and services generated are more apt to be adopted by institutions since they are highly adapted and entrenched within their organizations.

Widespread partnerships are also very open, although to a lesser degree than deeply established partnerships; their flexibility is moderate. They reach a wide range of users and make use of various design strategies moderately adapted to their targeted users. They have a short period of time to reach their goals, but benefit from significant project funding. In this study, they almost all took place within Aboriginal communities and service providers are involved at all stages of the research process. Although the research process seems characterized by more challenges than advantages, their effectiveness is highly satisfactory. With more time, they could become deeply established forms of partnerships. Whatever the case, widespread partnerships suggest that the somewhat high participation by the user community throughout the research process is a factor that possibly offsets the various obstacles encountered. The

user involvement indicates that social commitment and participation in community life, which are characteristics of most First Nations (Ministry of Education of Saskatchewan 2001), foster the development and implementation of effective research partnerships. Widespread partnerships generate clear and far-reaching outcomes; the potential impact on users is high.

Traditional partnerships focus on one targeted community only; methods used generally are not very adapted to the needs of potential users. Funding is low and the project must be completed within a short time span. The research community usually conducts the program evaluations at both the decision-making and research process levels. Traditional research partnerships stem mainly from initiatives by researchers, with practitioners restricted to the role of consumers. This type of partnership, moderately open and only slightly adaptive, emphasizes the importance of time and money in putting into place a participatory process and shared leadership. All traditional research partnerships in the study are linked to the evaluation of a research program. All program evaluations analyzed were funded in the amount of $25,000 each over a period of 18 months. The determining factor here is not so much the type of research as the relatively low level of resources in place. It appears that more successful partnerships require both adequate time and money.

Finally, the effectiveness of the specialized partnerships is established either at the surface level (a widespread target audience) or in-depth (high concentration of a target audience) accompanied by a low degree of user appropriation. Collaborative efforts of this type are open but not well adapted to user needs. At times they reach a variety of target audiences, while at other times they target one group only. In all cases, the service provider community launches the project. Participants in these types of partnerships display the highest rate of disagreement, either on the existence of a preliminary research infrastructure in place in the service provider community, or in terms of the level of participation by the protagonists throughout the research project. Specialized partnerships come under two categories. Some are established with the goal of meeting the specific needs of an organization, profession or sector; their goals as such are centralized and focused. Others are launched with the purpose of stimulating awareness among the various players or action through the spread of knowledge; they share common goals related to the dissemination of knowledge.

This typology is a reminder of the range of realities in which researcher and practitioner roles evolve, including the motives that form the basis of their collaborative efforts. Partnership contexts vary. Prior to launching a research project, the various players must consider:

- their resources, both in terms of time and finances,
- the type of research to be undertaken,
- their goals, both in terms of the research tasks (outcomes, target groups, etc.), collaborative effort (nature of the outcomes and deliverables, groups targeted by the results, application of the results),
- their methods (e.g. the exercise of leadership), and
- the role of each partner in the various stages of research.

For these reasons, establishing a working, or partnership, protocol between the scientific and practitioner communities is a major component for the success of a research project. A re-evaluation of the research process at various stages is also a requirement.

In conclusion, flexible and adaptive research partnerships are key instruments for the production of knowledge and services likely to enhance the well-being of children and their families. We submit that deeply established partnerships are the most promising, as their outcomes are simultaneously scientific, educational, social, and political in nature. For situations in which time and funding are limited, traditional partnerships are in all likelihood more appropriate, with the main challenge being to implement the most rigorous possible design. Finally, specialized partnerships with far-reaching goals best meet social and educational issues. The hypotheses presented here are clearly exploratory; future research is required for validation. It is our hope that this study will generate questions to stimulate future research on partnerships between researchers and service providers. The effectiveness of practices in child welfare remains the main challenge.

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