

Book Review

Community-Based Participatory Research for Health

Meredith Minkler & Nina Wallerstein (Editors)

Reviewed by Lana Sue I. Ka'opua*

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Research Praxis “for and with” communities

Eliminating cancer disparities and promoting a legacy of wellness for and with Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities are goals shared by many of the authors whose works are featured in this issue of the *Pacific Health Dialog* [PHD]. “For and with” communities is a common theme and reflects the view that research is *praxis*, a term used by Friere¹ to describe knowledge created by the interaction of reflection and action taken by people in their efforts to promote social change. From this perspective, research development is a context for empowering historically marginalized, yet culturally rich communities and necessarily involves meaningful collaboration between community members, community-based organizations, government agencies, and academically-based researchers. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is the term currently used most in enunciating this emancipatory research paradigm, or way of knowledge building. ‘Imi Hale—the Native Hawaiian Cancer Awareness, Research and Training Network—and its community and academic partners emphasize the importance of research development guided by CBPR principles^{2,3} that include: (1) collaboration of community members and researchers in a process that allows for both to equitably contribute; (2) co-learning among partners; (3) systems development and community capacity building; (4) empowerment through which participants increase control over their lives; and (5) balance between research and action.

Application of CBPR principles is the focus of the book, *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health* edited by Drs. Meredith Minkler and Nina Wallerstein⁴, both of whom are respected for advancement of community health

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agendas. Review of this text on CBPR is timely, given Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities’ growing interest in understanding the relationship of socio-cultural factors and health, as well as their concomitant intention to effectively promote action-oriented, community-based research.

Critical questions to guide a new generation of research

This book is a collection of *praxis*-relevant readings written by a multi-disciplinary cadre of academic researchers and community practitioners engaged in work at the nexus of health disparities research, action-oriented innovation, and community empowerment. Critical questions linking disparities research to community empowerment undergird this thought-provoking anthology and speak to the need for a new generation of health research that considers fundamental questions like: Why are some groups of people healthy and others not? What is the socio-cultural-political context of research? How has the portrayal of knowledge about culture, communities, and health been colonized by researchers and others? How has this knowl-

edge also colonized views of what is considered scientifically rigorous research and the roles of academics, practitioners, and communities in research development? How are communities engaged so that re-

search development reflects meaningful participation, tangible benefits, and enhanced community capacity? Finally, how can our efforts to promote wellness and health equity be a vehicle for community empowerment? Such questions guide CBPR in general and this text on *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health* in particular.

Content and organization of the book

CBPR theory and applications are presented in 19 information-dense, *praxis*-relevant, and reader-friendly chapters. Chapters are thematically organized into six parts. A brief overview of substantive content follows:

Section 1: Introduction to CBPR

1. “Introduction to CBPR”: Key principles are outlined and applications in health disparities research *praxis* discussed.
2. “Conceptual, Historical, and Practice Roots of CBPR and Related Participatory Traditions”: Emancipatory theories and related terms are defined, compared, and contrasted.
3. “Critical Issues in Developing and Following CBPR Principles”: CBPR principles and specific considerations for developing strategies for obtaining multiple perspectives are explicated.

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Section 2: Power, Trust, and Dialogue: Working with Communities on Multiple Levels in CBPR

4. "The Dance of Race and Privilege in CBPR": Considerations and practical suggestions for reducing institutionalized racism in research *praxis* are provided.
5. "Are Academics Irrelevant? Approaches and Roles for Scholars in CBPR": The roles of initiator, consultant, and collaborator are identified and discussed in the context of research for social change.
6. "Community-Research Partnerships": Research development and evaluation of governance structures that ensure community participation and representation are provided, using examples from Seattle Partners, a research center that addresses social determinants of health in low-income, ethnically diverse communities.

Section 3: Identifying Strengths and Selecting Issues with Communities

7. "Community-Driven Asset Identification and Issue Selection": Methods for asset identification are described, including key informant interviews, community capacity inventories, asset maps, and visioning processes. Criteria are provided for issue selection and the role of outside researchers discussed.
8. "Using Internet Tools to Build Capacity for CBPR and Other Efforts to Promote Community Health and Development": The Community Tool Box, an on-line resource for supporting and evaluating CBPR is described. Planning, intervention, systems change, improvement in population-based outcomes, and sustaining efforts are highlighted.
9. "Using Photovoice as a Participatory Assessment and Issue Selection Tool: A Case Study with the Homeless in Ann Arbor": Documentary photography is used as one method for enabling communities to record and reflect upon their strengths and needs, as well as to encourage dialogue and action. Examples are offered from the Light Project, a Michigan-based program for decreasing negative stereotypes about the homeless.

Section 4: Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Planning and Conducting CBPR

10. "Issues and Choice Points for Improving the Quality of Action Research": Seven choice points or criteria are identified for community discussions on assessment of research outcomes, sustainable research infrastructures, and inclusion of diverse ways of knowing and knowledge building.
11. "Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Community-Driven Environmental Justice Research: Two Case Studies from Rural North Carolina": This chapter discusses the vulnerability of community partnerships to

larger political agendas and provides strategies for influencing policy decision-making and resolving ethical dilemmas in potentially compromising situations.

12. "Ethical Challenges in CBPR: A Case Study from the San Francisco Bay Area Disability Community": Challenges of a project designed to explore attitudes of the physically challenged toward controversial legislation are identified. Issues highlighted include the pervasive nature of power in the research relationship and the differential use of study findings by diverse groups within a "community".
13. "Issues in Participatory Evaluation": This type of evaluation is distinguished by involvement of all stakeholders and an orientation to use results in influencing change. Case examples amplify applications in community health promotion.

Section 5: CBPR with and by Diverse Populations

14. "Engaging Women in CBPR for Health: The East Side Village Health Work Partnership": Background on this partnership and its work to address social determinants of health on Detroit's East Side are described and issues of limited health resources, health concerns, mistrust of research, and building mutual support are addressed.
15. "CBPR with Cambodian Girls in Long Beach, California: A Case Study": Strategies used by the Hope Project to promote reproductive health among Southeast Asian girls are identified. Specifically discussed are issues related to training and support for addressing sexual harassment in this population.
16. "CBPR with a Hidden Population: The Transgender Community Health Project": CBPR principles are discussed in the collection of epidemiological information among transgendered people living in San Francisco. Promoting bi-directional learning to reduce discrimination and stigma in research development is highlighted.

Section 6: Using CBPR to Promote Social Change and Healthy Public Policy

17. "Influencing Policy through CBPR": Policy enactment provides a means for sustainable changes resulting from CBPR. Strategies derived from two conceptual models for influencing policy are presented.
18. "Advocating Policies to Promote Community Reintegration of Drug Users Leaving Jail: A Case Study of First Steps in a Policy Change Campaign Guided by CBPR": The first stages of a campaign to change local policies contributing to adverse health consequences of illegal drug use in Central and East Harlem are discussed.
19. "Participatory Action Research with Hotel Room Cleaners: From Collaborative Study to the Bargaining Table": Collaboration between academics, labor unions, and their membership are discussed in the context of balancing research and action.