Community-Based Participatory Research:

Leave Your Parachute at Home
Dr. Jody Vogelzang
Grand Valley State University
**NIH Definition of CBPR**

- Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an *applied collaborative* approach that enables community residents to more actively participate in the full spectrum of research.

**CBPR Spectrum of Research**

- Conception
- Design
- Conduct
- Analysis
- Interpretation
- Conclusions
- Communication of results
Conception

- Neighborhood leaders and stakeholders
- Community organizations providing services in area

Map of Bounded Service Area
Design

- Randomized neighborhood survey
- Conducted on two separate survey dates using trained student interviewers
- Randomized to every 5th household
- 217 surveys completed
Analysis

• Not one of the 217 households reported shopping at neighborhood food stores.
• Many comments about prices being high and not having good selection
• Transportation to supermarkets outside of the neighborhood was available
• Residents do buy fruits and vegetables
Fruits and Vegetables Purchased on last Grocery Trip
Interpretation

- Phase 2:
  - What did the food environment look like at the most widely used stores outside of the neighborhood and at the few grocery stores in the neighborhood?

Map of Bounded Service Area
Conclusions

- Based on the shopping list of 14 items; none of the neighborhood stores carried them all.
- Issues exist with availability, quality and price
Interpretation

- Community brought forward the problem
- Community had a strong voice in survey development and served as the pilot
- Community center hosted the students for the March survey day and October market day.
- Survey response shaped the second phase of the study.
- Information now ready for dissemination and community discussion.

Asset Based Perspective

Wayne Squires
Diagnostic Frameworks in Evaluating CBPR

- *Stated Intentions* and *Actual Practice*.
  - Institutional Snapshots of Community Engagement
  - Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Commitments and Practices

Snapshots of Community Engagement

Social institutions and community organizations tend to interact with their immediate environments in three basic ways:

- In the community (i.e. internally focused)
- For the community (i.e. service focused)
- With the community (i.e. relationally-collaboratively focused)

[adapted from *Transforming Power* by Linthicum]
The Embedded Challenge(s) of CBPR in the Public Health Sector

Observation #1:
- Public health researchers, educators, and practitioners are shaped most profoundly by the “for” factor.
- They want to use their expertise, solve problems, and help produce better outcomes ... in the most efficient manner possible.
- This can lead to shortcuts when it comes to the ongoing participation of neighborhood/community stakeholders.

Observation #2:
- The stated intentions of CBPR clearly emphasize the “with” factor of engagement, at least in terms of residential participation in the spectrum of research.
- Yet, the process remains highly dependent on “outside” experts from beginning to end.
- If researchers are not careful, the involvement of residents can be limited to simply providing information in the context of a “research event”.
The Embedded Challenge(s) of CBPR in the Public Health Sector

Observation #3:
- Realizing the "with" intentions of CBPR means an intentional link needs to be made between the communication of research results with local stakeholders.
- and the initial utilization/implementation of research insights by these same stakeholders.

The Embedded Challenge(s) of CBPR in the Public Health Sector

- Observation #3 (continued)
  In other words, emerging insights to particular social-cultural challenges cannot be limited to interested academicians and policy makers.
The Embedded Challenge(s) of CBPR in the Public Health Sector

Observation #4:

- The SE Grand Rapids project gives evidence of the transformational potential of “with” strategies.
  - Personal concern of the lead researcher, initial feedback from key local stakeholders
  - Embodied conversations with residents
  - On site assessment(s) of business environments
  - Commitment to sharing insights/results with interested participants and community leaders

Observation #4 (continued):

Yet, sustaining a grass roots, collaborative response to identified opportunities/challenges remains a “question mark”.
ABCD Commitments and Practices

Description of ABCD:
*Asset-Based Community Development is a framework that helps individuals and organizations find out what a given community has so it can be mobilized for its own transformation. It is rooted in a process of discovery that connects with the people who live/work/serve in a particular place, recognizes their gifts and passions, and invites them to participate in things about which they care.*

ABCD Commitments and Practices

Basic Commitments:
1. Individual and neighborhood/community talents, skills, strengths, and resources are to be identified, affirmed, and utilized for the benefit of the places in which they are discovered.
2. Social change and needed development is to be driven by local/indigenous people and resources. The role of external agencies is secondary and not primary.
ABCD Commitments and Practices

**ABCD Practices:**
1. *Appreciative Inquiry*
2. *Active Networking*
3. *Participatory Methods*
4. *Democratic Involvement*

Eliminating the “Parachute Effect”: Questions for Enhancing CBPR

- Who receives the most benefit from CBPR as currently practiced? How might community residents receive more benefit from this process?
- What can be done to ensure the meaningful participation of residential stakeholders in every aspect of the research process, so that they are not reduced to “info providers”?
- How might a more appreciative view of individual gifts and community resources alter research assumptions and methodology?
Eliminating the “Parachute Effect”: Questions for Enhancing CBPR

- How might CBPR be used to connect available assets/resources and strengthen collaborative efforts already underway?
- In what instances might “follow-up” iterations of CBPR be appropriate? Does this potentially encourage greater citizen-engagement and allow for more direct application of emerging insights?

Questions?