Community-Based Participatory Research for Health
Edited by Meredith Minkler and Nina Wallerstein
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Reviewed by Kara Granzow

In the book *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health*, editors Meredith Minkler and Nina Wallerstein assemble writings significant for would-be and current researchers in the fields of community research and health. This collection demonstrates the intimate connections between social justice and health and calls for methodologies designed to reflect the intricacies of those relationships. Both broad in scope and detailed in its use of case studies (including two on rural health in Chapter 11), this collection functions well as an introduction to community-based participatory research (CBPR) and as a resource for those involved in CBPR. Because studies in rural health often rely on participation with rural communities and community members, the approaches offered in this volume would be useful for community-based efforts towards rural health improvement.

In a general progression from theoretical to more practical issues, the book embraces complicated epistemological concerns, poses difficult questions about the relevance of research and researcher, considers the ethics and the methodological implications of CBPR, and provides realistic strategies for doing CBPR, all the while situating discussions in the context of pertinent case studies. The book's contributors are concerned about what it is that motivates, and what it is that should motivate, research and social change, and about whose interests and goals are being met, and whose interests and goals should be met, by such change. A serious and careful use of this guide will help ensure that CBPR efforts towards social justice are prioritized and realized within health research processes.

The book is divided into seven sections. The first (Chapters 1–3) provides a thorough introduction to the values and goals of CBPR. It outlines the historical development and theoretical orientations of CBPR and offers tips for following through with a CBPR approach. Chapter 2 is particularly helpful to the critical reader, as it dwells on issues such as knowledge, power, and praxis. It is noteworthy that such important issues are not limited to this discussion but emerge frequently throughout the book; this demonstrates a concern with the complexity of the issues and the need to consider them in specific cases. The second section (Chapters 4–6) addresses the issues of "power, trust, and dialogue" in relationships

among researchers, among community members, and within communities. In an exceptional piece, Chávez et al. (Chapter 4) consider the social and historical embeddedness of racist ideology in social change and research efforts, and focus on internalized racism and historical trauma as consequences requiring particular attention in CBPR. Challenging oppression also calls for a questioning of privilege, and Stoecker, in Chapter 5, disputes presumptions of research(er) relevance. Stoecker critiques the roles commonly taken on by researchers in participatory research, and offers a reworking of these roles based on the CBPR prioritization of social change over research, a prioritization held constant throughout this collection.

Use of the term "community" requires debate, and, in recent theoretical writings, attention has been given to deconstructing the concept. CBPR, however, seems to rely on the notion of community as unproblematic. The reader does not get beyond Chapter 6 before the presuppositions frequently underlying a preoccupation with community (and with notions such as participation) are addressed. Using findings from a community-based study, the authors reflect on what constitutes community. They discuss the roles of shared demographics and interpersonal relationships in defining community. As is crucial to any consideration of CBPR, this excellent chapter pays mind to frequently ignored issues such as why we think community is innately good and the forms of exclusion we engage in when we advocate for community-based research.

The third section (Chapters 7–9) is concerned with "Identifying Strengths and Selecting Issues with Communities." Minkler and Hancock (Chapter 7) compile principles useful in deciphering the issues and resources in CBPR, elaborate the utility behind key insights (e.g., "starting with the people") and methods (e.g., "community asset maps"), and consider how arts-based methods and representations (e.g., "visioning processes") can be used to highlight community assets and help to bring about change. The reader is exposed to Internet-based tools in Chapter 8 and to an arts-based approach in Chapter 9, with Wang et al.'s impressive description of photovoice.

Part 4 (Chapters 10–13) is dedicated to issues in methodology, ethics, and evaluation, and again features case projects. Chapter 10 convincingly moves a general acceptance of validity and rigour out of CBPR, to replace the terms with "choice points" as relevant criteria for research. Choice points take into account the relational nature of research and, as revamped criteria for evaluating CBPR, present CBPR as a case-specific and change-oriented alternative to both modern and postmodern approaches. Chapters 11, "Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Community-Driven Environmental Justice Research: Two Case Studies

from Rural North Carolina," 12, "Ethical Challenges in Community Based Participatory Research: A Case Study from the San Francisco Bay Area Disability Community," and 13, "Issues in Participatory Evaluation," each demonstrate the particular issues arising in CBPR projects.

Part 5 returns to the problems of power and privilege in CBPR. Specifically concerned with research with and by "diverse" populations, these chapters use approaches such as feminist and Frierian to discuss projects with communities of women (Chapter 14), Cambodian girls in Long Beach (Chapter 15), and members of a transgendered community (Chapter 16). Taking the strength-focused approach advocated throughout the text, these studies work through the dynamics of exclusion and marginalization to offer possibilities for collaborative research across social boundaries and inequalities.

The final chapters of *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health* address CBPR's action orientation. In Chapter 17, Themba and Minkler expand on frameworks for achieving policy change, and subsequent chapters demonstrate pathways for realizing policy goals through case studies. Chapter 19, for instance, takes an exemplar case in CBPR and delineates how each step in the process was negotiated such that the end result was a change in the work responsibilities, and thus in the health, of hotel room cleaners. This CBPR process is being reproduced elsewhere, and Chapter 19 provides analysis to enable its effective duplication. To further assist readers embarking on CBPR, the editors have provided such useful appendices as basic protocols for CBPR; issues around federal funding patterns and problems; standards for CBPR assessment; "Thirteen Policy Principles for Advancing Collaborative Activity Among and Between Tribal Communities and Surrounding Jurisdictions"; neighbourhood-level indicators of community health; and tools for risk mapping, for creating dialogue in question posing, and for locating outside resources. In addition, many authors refer to external sources such as Web sites.

This volume is intended for those who want to learn about and use CBPR — researchers, academics, students, and community members. It is an accessible text with repetition in some critical ideas (e.g., power differentials) and key issues (e.g., the challenge of limited resources and time for CBPR) mitigated by the use of checklists, external resources, and practical examples. More attention to the assumption of a "liberatory" model of humanity, as well as to the danger of idealizing all things "community-based," would be a welcome addition. As well, more focus on the limitations or trappings of CBPR might be helpful. Despite several attempts to the contrary (e.g., Chapter 6 and the "lessons learned" in Chapter 15), CBPR is presented as the answer to research-produced oppressions of the past; in so situating this approach and in overlooking

the abuses that inevitably also occur in it, the potential for critical uses of CBPR is somewhat circumscribed.

With its thorough consideration of CBPR, its detailed case studies, and its helpful appendices, Minkler and Wallerstein's book is an excellent resource for CBPR. It is an enjoyable and edifying read, and I highly recommend it.

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