Getting grounded in CBPR

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What is Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)?

“A collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings”.

--W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2001)
Rationale for CBPR

- recognition that “traditional” research approaches have failed to solve complex health disparities

- Community members are increasingly demanding that research address their locally identified needs
Rationale for CBPR (cont.)

- Significant community involvement can lead to scientifically sound research
- Research findings can be applied directly to develop interventions specific for communities
- This approach generates greater trust between communities and researchers
Development of CBPR: Conceptual & Historical Roots

- **Action Research** (1940’s, Social Psychology): Bridging gap between theory and practice by involving stakeholders within organizations

- No community/social change element to Action Research

- Continues today as action science, insider-outsider research, educational action research, and collaborative action research
Development of CBPR: Conceptual & Historical Roots

- Participatory Research and Participatory Action Research (1960’s, Sociology, Anthropology, Community Planning): Involving citizens in research and community development process with an explicit community/social change focus.

- Origins in the Third World—Africa, South America, Asia

- Influenced transformation of research relationship from communities as objects as study to communities and active participants.
Principles of CBPR

- Recognizes community as a unit of identity
- Builds on strengths/resources within community
- Facilitates collaborative partnerships in all phases of the research
- promotes a co-learning & empowering process that attends to social inequalities
- involves a cyclical & iterative process
- addresses health from multiple perspectives
- disseminates findings & knowledge to all partners

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Common problems experienced by communities in research:

- Irrelevance to the community
- Poor methodology (waste of resources)
- Research is not given back
- Communities feel over researched
- Communities feel coerced
- Communities feel researched upon rather than partners in the process
- Communities are lied to
- Insensitivity to community concerns or issues
- Benefits to community are minimal

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Ethical issues to consider in CBPR

- Are we raising expectations?
- Who is the research for?
- Who benefits from the research?
- What are the risks for communities?
- Be clear about who will benefit and how
- “Power relationships” among researcher partners and communities of interest
- Is self-interest and opportunism driving the agenda?
- Does your research team have the skills (e.g., cultural competence, listening, sharing power)
Institutional Review Boards

- Unfamiliarity of many IRBs with CBPR partnerships and methods often make them overly critical of methods.
- For community agency partners conducting research, requirements of Federal Wide Assurance, etc.
- Requirements of Key Personnel in partner agencies to take IRB training.
- Important role of partners with IRBs to educate all other partners on the IRB process early.