



# GROUNDING FOSTERING RESEARCH EQUITY

## SECTION 3: CBPR VALUES AND PRACTICES IN THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONTEXT

CBPR is intentionally values-driven. In this section of the toolkit, we describe the core values of CBPR and offer a set of concrete questions and ideas to help you translate the values into actions.

Note that we intend this section to serve as a departure point with some guideposts, not a formula. Indeed, talking about values with your community partners, and agreeing together on a set of guiding principles for your work, is integral to this process. *Appendix D* includes an example of a set of CBPR principles co-created between community members and researchers.



## Value 1

### CBPR Requires a Commitment to Building Relationships Founded on Transparency and Trust

The work of building relationships with your research partners is usually not prioritized or even considered in traditional research approaches. Yet, it is the cornerstone of CBPR and must be considered and shaped in an intentional way. As you get to know your community partners, think hard about the best way to form a working relationship with them in ways that honor their histories and experiences, engage their strengths, and center trust-building and transparency. We hope that the following questions and ideas can guide you here.



#### Practice Tip

It is important not to romanticize community partnerships. Expect that you will run into tensions throughout the CBPR process. Establish a list of shared values at the beginning of the partnership so that you have something to collectively fall back on when challenges and tensions arise.



"Researcher Needs" by Ronit Barkai, Deborah Collins-Gousby, and Deborah Heimerl.



## What Steps Will You Take to Establish Relationships with Your Community Partners?

The work of building relationships with your research partners is usually not prioritized or even considered in traditional research approaches. Yet, it is the cornerstone of CBPR and must be considered and shaped in an intentional way. As you get to know your community partners, think hard about the best way to form a working relationship with them in ways that honor their histories and experiences, engage their strengths, and center trust-building and transparency. We hope that the following questions and ideas can guide you here. Over time, you may spark ideas in each other that will lead to a collaborative partnership. Opportunities can knock in unexpected places! For example, perhaps you are working with a program or group of survivors or practitioners on something else – maybe as part of a state task force, a neighborhood coalition, or a board – when an idea emerges that just has to be researched. Be open to the possibilities.



### Practice Tip

Go through your social networks to see if you already know someone connected to the organization, community, or group that you would like to collaborate with. Facilitating connections is easier when someone who is already trusted recommends you.



"Strategies for establishing and sustaining relationships with CBPR community partners"

by Nkiru Nnawulezi, PhD,  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County



Once you make an initial connection, perhaps you can offer to provide services or volunteer as part of developing your research partnership. For example, a practitioner might ask you to sit in on a meeting with a funder because the presence of someone with a title and degree would be beneficial; or you could offer to support the program with smaller evaluation efforts (e.g., descriptive analysis of already-collected data), as a precursor to a larger CBPR project.

Of course, all of this takes time and it may be tempting to delegate some of this intensive work. But the truth is that you cannot rely on research assistants for the task of relationship building. As one researcher described during an interview about CBPR “You can’t staff this out. You need to show up” (Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 13).

## How Will You Establish Trust and Transparency?

Trust and transparency lie at the heart of a CBPR relationship. In order to create and sustain these essential conditions, both you and your community partners must be clear and honest about expectations and goals, including what the personal and institutional contexts you are coming from are like, the kinds of products you want to produce, and the substantive outcomes you are hoping for. For example, researchers may need to publish and community members may need data for an evaluation. These are often mutually beneficial outcomes that everyone can work on together, but if they are not discussed upfront, misunderstandings can develop quickly.



### Practice Tip

One way to handle the relatively greater time commitment required by CBPR would be to have two arms of research going at once. One would be the CBPR arm and the other could be a different form of research, perhaps using a secondary data set from which you can publish consistently as the CBPR project develops and comes to fruition.



*"Transparency is critical in CBPR" by Shanti Kulkarni, PhD,  
University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

Transparency also means honest discussions about how funding for the project will be obtained and distributed. How will funding decisions be made? How will all parties – researchers, community partners, and survivors/participants – be funded for their participation (Palinkas, Brown, Saldana, & Chamberlain, 2015)? Who will control the purse strings? If you are in an academic setting, will your university require “indirect” costs, or money that is taken off the total amount of the grant at the outset? Who will write or collaborate on writing the budget? Who gets to see the budget?

In any case, it is important for all involved to be transparent about available funding and how funds will be spent on various aspects of the project, including personnel (both practitioners and researchers); equipment (e.g., computers); software (e.g., data entry and analysis); compensation for participants; travel; and even printing and copying (D’Alonzo, 2010). Identifying all the ways that stakeholders have their time funded is also important. Even in an unfunded project, researchers may have a base salary that covers their time, unlike community partners. Whether community partners are getting their time covered may dictate the amount of time they are able to spend on the project. Note that it may be awkward for you to engage in this level of transparency, especially when sharing a budget may mean revealing salary differentials between yourself and your partners. It is nonetheless important to not only reveal these differences but also discuss them.



*"Discussing money and budgets with CBPR collaborators" by Cris Sullivan, PhD,  
Michigan State University*

Finally, although trust and transparency are core requirements of any CBPR project, they take different levels of time and nurturing depending on the identities of the researchers and the community. For example, researchers may need to nurture these conditions with particular care when working with culturally specific communities. Program participants and staff from these communities may have faced decades of discrimination and trauma and feel deep concern about whether their ways of seeing and knowing will be prioritized, especially when the researchers are not from the same marginalized community.



*"Anticipating ways researchers can harm community collaborators" by Susan Ghanbarpour, PhD,  
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence*

## Value 2

### CBPR Entails Building on Each Party's Strengths, Resources and Interests

The very foundation of CBPR's philosophy and practice is the idea that researchers must engage with community members, not as targets of research, but instead as research partners with valuable skills and knowledge to contribute (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2010). To that end, CBPR does not mean simply "offering" something to a community, taking something from the community, or sharing resources; instead, it means that researchers and community partners co-create knowledge of relevance to communities, building on their respective strengths and resources.



"Strengths and resources that community partners bring to CBPR" by Amanda Stylianou, PhD,  
Safe Horizon

To start this process, it is critical that researchers and community partners spend time at the outset exploring the strengths, resources, and sources of power (as well as the needs and limits) that each party brings to the CBPR project, at the individual, organizational, and community levels (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Banks & Armstrong, 2012; Community-Campus Partnerships for Health). The following considerations will help you think about how to leverage the skills, resources and interests that each party brings to the table.



## Strengths and Interests That Community Members and Researchers May Bring to the Table

KNOWLEDGE OF ...	Community Members	Researchers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community history, norms, culture and past experience with research</li> <li>● Survivors' strengths and needs and how community and structural factors may support or impede them</li> <li>● What works to improve survivors' lives</li> <li>● Community slang/jargon and ability to de-code meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Existing scholarship on intimate partner violence and its intersection with other forms of violence and oppression</li> <li>● How to conduct rigorous research</li> <li>● Research language and ability to de-code meaning</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trust and rapport with study participants</li> <li>● Community-based dissemination outlets</li> <li>● Credibility (in certain venues)</li> <li>● Skills to translate activities and findings for practice audiences and policy-makers</li> <li>● Material resources (e.g., meeting spaces)</li> <li>● Traditions &amp; skills that dovetail with research skills (e.g., oral narrative traditions; group facilitation skills)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Funding sources</li> <li>● Academic dissemination outlets</li> <li>● Credibility (in some venues)</li> <li>● Skills to translate activities and findings for academic audiences and funders</li> <li>● Material and technical resources (e.g., meeting spaces; specialized software)</li> <li>● Personnel (students &amp; research assistants)</li> <li>● Search engines and the literature base</li> </ul>
INTERESTS & GOALS RELATED TO...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Building capacity &amp; skills related to earning skills and critical analysis of research that aid negotiation of future research partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Building outreach, facilitation, and presentation skills</li> <li>● Contributing to the literature generally</li> <li>● Publishing to increase professional credibility</li> </ul>
<h3>Shared by Community Members and Researchers</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gaining improved understandings of the studied phenomenon</li> <li>● Contributing to the representation of a specific community in the evidence base</li> <li>● Acting on the knowledge learned to improve programs and policies for survivors</li> <li>● Reducing experiences and impact of domestic violence</li> <li>● Expanding network and connections</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: See the Community Tool Box for a useful resource on discussing community assets and asset-mapping</i></p>		





### Section 3: CBPR Values and Practices in the Domestic Violence Context

It may not always be obvious to you what resources or strengths you yourself might bring to your community partners. We have found that giving a brief presentation about your research at a staff meeting is one way to deepen relationships and give back to programs. You might choose to create a PowerPoint for the organization to use in presentations when you are not available. Indeed Domestic Violence Program Evaluation and Research Collaborative members consistently talk about how they never have time to read the latest research but really wish they could hear about it in brief and easy-to-digest formats. Additionally, providing staff trainings on specific research topics (e.g., survey development, data collection techniques, study designs) can expand their capacity to conduct future research (D'Alonzo, 2010). Once you have developed a relationship with a program and its staff, there may be other opportunities and resources you can offer the program. As examples, you may be able to write letters of support for a program's funding and grant proposals, or you may be in a position to nominate the program for an award (Garzón et al., 2013). In general, it is important to think about how you use your resources to enable practitioners to move closer to being able to access knowledge or even conduct research on their own if they so choose.

You and your community partners might also consider ways to connect each other to other people who can support your work. For example, you might be able to connect each other to other researchers, professional associations, policymakers, advocates, funders, or community leaders. Consider what audiences or stakeholders you have access to given your degree, institution, and area of expertise. As you do so, ask yourself what might help your community partners transform their organizations and the larger systems in which they work so that power and resources are more equitably distributed. For example, researchers situated in universities could share information about the project with their departmental colleagues or at meetings and conferences with other researchers, educating them on the benefits of CBPR. Researchers might also provide trainings about CBPR to other important stakeholders, such as the institutional review board (IRB) at their university.

As you think about how to give back, remember that although the research process may be intimidating to some community partners, especially when it comes to advanced statistics (something that many researchers are intimidated by as well), this is not necessarily true for all. It is useful instead to observe how community partners may already be employing research in their work.



## Examples of Research Practices Embedded within DV Organizations

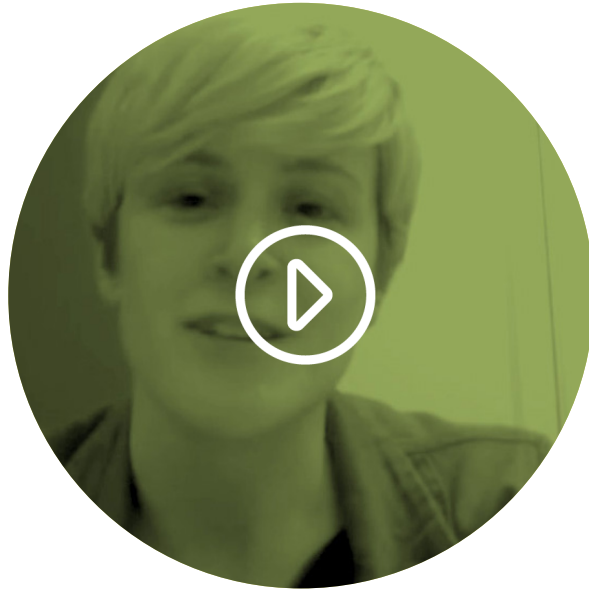
- *DOVE (Domestic Violence Ended) a domestic violence program in Massachusetts, collects strengths-based data from participants in their residential program in a creative and out-of-the-box way: On a monthly basis, this organization asks each participant to record moments when they expressed agency. Staff members collect these recordings and share them with the participant every few months to reflect back the process of expanding empowerment.*
- *Casa de Esperanza, a Latina-specific organization also engages in data collection as part of their regular operating procedure - including community needs assessments and focus groups. Researchers coming into those organizations would need to listen for practices like these even if those practices don't go by the label "research."*

## Value 3

### CBPR Attends to Individual and Structural Power and Works Toward Redistributing Power More Equitably

Unlike many traditional research approaches, CBPR acknowledges and addresses the ways that power and oppression shape research. The power to conduct and disseminate research creates access to numerous resources, audiences, and sources of funding. By viewing research participants as passive targets of research and by restricting community members' ability to "own the means of knowledge production," traditional research approaches can uphold oppressive systems of power (C. Burke, personal communication). This may be particularly damaging in the domestic violence context: coercion and control lie at the very heart of partner violence, often undergirded by broader systems of oppression such as sexism, classism, heterosexism, racism, and xenophobia (Fuschel et al., 2015; The NW Network, 2017). Survivors themselves and those who work with them are therefore highly attuned to power dynamics in their relationships with people and organizations. Given these dynamics, it is not surprising that potential CBPR partners are reluctant to collaborate with researchers who fail to take power into consideration in their work with communities (Coughlin, Smith, & Fernandez, 2017; Kerstetter, 2012). As you shape your research process, it will be important to commit to exploring and navigating power dynamics with your community partners as you shape the research process (Muhammad et al., 2015). The following questions and ideas may help you to think about these issues more carefully.





*"How structural oppression manifests and functions within a CBPR partnership" by Carrie Lippy, PhD,  
The National LGBTQ Institute on IPV*

## **How Is Structural Oppression (Racism, Xenophobia, Classism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Etc.) Functioning Throughout the CBPR Project?**

As described by Leticia Nieto (2010), when thinking about structural forms of oppression, the question is not "is something oppressive functioning in this moment?" but rather "how is it functioning?" (p.38). As a CBPR researcher, you cannot have the expectation that with enough effort, you will not be oppressive. Simply because of your role as an academic researcher, you carry power, privilege, and status as a producer of scientific knowledge (Muhammed et al., 2015). You may also hold power and privilege based on your class, education, race/ethnicity, or other identities. It is critical to acknowledge these dynamics and consider how they are operating in the partnership even in subtle ways such as, for example, expecting community partners to come to a university for a meeting without considering their expense or comfort; failing to translate research tools into languages that would provide more opportunity for a wider range of participants; or planning meetings on non-Christian religious holiday.



### **Practice Tip**

It may be the case that discrimination, bias, and exclusion will arise as issues that need to be addressed at some point in the CBPR process. Be prepared. It is critical to know background literature about diversity, inclusion, cultural competency, and anti-oppression work within domestic violence fields.



## **How Can This Project Increase the Equitable Distribution of Resources?**

Ultimately, our attention to power is designed to ensure as equitable a power dynamic as possible both during the CBPR project and beyond. As you move through the CBPR process and continue to reflect on your own social location, you will need to continually consider the resources that you can bring to the project, including, perhaps, how you can use your own privileges to change the systems in which the CBPR project is situated. How can your credibility or that of your institution be leveraged in service of the project? What resources and connections can you bring to the project or share with partners? Value 1 includes many examples of potential resources you may be able to share.

## **How Are You Building in Access for Marginalized Communities?**

The equitable distribution of resources means ensuring the inclusion and support of marginalized communities. This means budgeting for items such as language access supports (such as interpretation and translation) and supports for people with disabilities; appropriately compensating community partners for their work, particularly when asking them to participate in activities outside of their normal workflow (such as meetings after work); and funding for transportation, meals, child care, and similar supports (D'Alonzo, 2010). The Vera Institute of Justice has developed a set of [tip sheets](#) to help with planning and implementing accessible meetings that address the needs of all people, including people with disabilities and folks who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

## **Value 4**

### **CBPR Requires Equitable Decision-making and Mutual Accountability**

It is important to establish as clearly as possible what roles and responsibilities each member of the collaboration will take on, how decisions will be made, and how people will be accountable to each other throughout the process.

Of course, equitable power-sharing can look different in different projects. Indeed, a variety of decision-making arrangements make sense in the CBPR context, as long as they are discussed in a transparent way to ensure that they respond to the needs and goals of each party and attend to how power is operating in the discussion. The following questions can help you think about the variety of ways to make decisions in partnerships.





*"Strategies for collaborative and transparent decision-making in CBPR" by Rebecca J. Macy, PhD,  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

## Who Determines the Research Topic?

A core principle of CBPR research is that research questions arise from practice-based needs rather than from the ivory tower. This principle can be manifested in a variety of ways. If you have experience working in the trenches, it is entirely possible that you have a question in mind already. If you can find stakeholders who share your interest in this question, then there is nothing wrong with making it the basis of the partnership.

In other cases, you will start off with one question and then modify it in collaboration with your partners. For example, Yoshihama and Carr (2002) were forced to make many unexpected detours in their CBPR project with Hmong women.



### Practice Tip

At the initial meeting with potential community partners, ask whether they have ever been involved in a research or evaluation process before, what they appreciated about the process, and what parts of the process they would have changed. Clearly communicate how participatory approaches to research and evaluation differ from traditional approaches.



### Section 3: CBPR Values and Practices in the Domestic Violence Context

Although they went into the project wanting to focus on domestic violence as it intersects with race, class, and gender, they soon learned that discussing partner violence was taboo and potentially unsafe for collaborators so they decided to expand the focus of their project. Similarly, scholar and activist Beth Richie described how she went into a CBPR project wanting to focus specifically on partner violence against African American women. Instead, her collaborators taught her that violence by an intimate partner must be examined in the context of other forms of violence and oppression. She wrote that if she had kept to her original focus, "I think it would have skewed what people were comfortable saying and would've made them focus on something that wasn't a discrete concept to them" (B. Richie, personal communication, 7/3/98, as cited in Edleson & Bible, 1999, p. 89).

In many cases, you will co-create the research question with your community partners because they are in the position to understand what is most useful for their own work and for the field (Poleshuck et al., 2016; CPH). A consistent theme in research and conversations with domestic violence practitioners and survivors is the desire to conduct research that has action implications. As one practitioner reported, "Study things that are important. Don't tell me that domestic violence is bad, but how to stop it! Some studies have been done to death. We need to break new ground!" (Mouradian, Mechanic, & Wililams, 2001, p. 5). Of course, a range of other questions may be important to your partners. In some cases, community partners will come to you requesting that you engage with them to address a particular question; but often you will need to create the time and space to collaborate with your partners to develop a set of questions relevant to their work.



"Working together to implement measures" by by Ronit Barkai, Deborah Collins-Gousby, and Deborah Heime





**Sriya Bhattacharyya, Ph.D. Student in Counseling Psychology at Boston College, describes why she does CBPR and where her commitment comes from.**

*As a doctoral student and an emerging researcher, CBPR is an orientation I truly value because it (a) shifts power outside of the often oppressive ivory tower academy into communities, (b) leans on the pre-existing expertise of groups, which in and of itself can be healing for those who have been systematically marginalized, and (c) provides a more dynamic, rich, collaborative research experience in which I have the honor of building relationships with communities and using our varying privileges and capital to further community-based causes.*

*My commitment to CBPR stems from an array of experiences going back to my childhood. For example, I benefitted tremendously from being involved with an all-girls feminist school for “at risk” youth. The program stressed the value of interrogating, questioning, and flipping power; as a result, I learned skills of critical analysis, leadership, and ongoing self-reflection at a young age. My mentor at the time modeled the importance of sharing power and listening to communities. She also helped me to engage in deep self-reflection work (i.e., “pre-work”), which would be essential for my later engagement in CBPR.*

*Finally, my commitment to a participatory approach was solidified during my work in a genocide survivor’s village in Gisenyi, Rwanda. Part of this work involved a needs assessment in which survivors in the community drew their visions of peace, unity, and wishes and then shared the images at the genocide memorial. Collaborating with this community demonstrated the importance of translating research to practice and doing so within long-standing community partnerships and guided by leaders most affected by the issues of interest. The lessons I have learned from community programs and practitioners continue to guide me in very profound ways, and I look forward to lifelong learning through CBPR*



## **Who Designs the Methods and Interprets the Results?**

In term of designing the study itself, sometimes all parties will want to make decisions collaboratively at every step of the process. Sometimes this will feel burdensome and a decision will be made to divide decision-making power across stakeholders according to expertise, interest, time, or impact of the decision at hand. For example, in the Domestic Violence Program Evaluation and Research Collaborative, the group felt that it was important to decide on the research questions and overall research design together, but chose to divide some of the decision-making power within each of those arenas, such as how and when to ask survivors if they'd like to participate in the study (practitioners), how to analyze the data obtained (researchers), and how to interpret the findings (both). What is key here is that the way decisions are made is negotiated collaboratively and that any particular decision can be revisited (Ross et al., 2010).

## **Who Disseminates the Results?**

The discussion under Value 6 describes the many ways that CBPR findings can be disseminated so that they reach the broadest possible audience. Products might include peer reviewed publications, webinars, curricula, newsletters, policy and practice briefs, and videos. It may be that responsibility for dissemination should follow the nature of the specific product and/or that researchers and community partners disseminate the same products to the different networks to which they have access. Again, it is important to discuss these issues upfront so that this last stage of the process can proceed quickly once results are obtained.

## **How Will You Ensure That Discussions About Decision-making Will Be Carried Forward Throughout the Project?**

Ideally, discussions about decision-making processes should be formalized through an organized, coherent, and collaboratively developed plan that is documented and shared by those involved. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) can be a useful tool here. At some universities, faculty may not be able to engage in a formal MOU due to organizational policies. In such cases, a formal letter of agreement may be useful instead. Such a document should clearly describe mutually agreed upon (a) contributors and roles – e.g. who will be responsible for roles as varied as sending communications, planning and attending meetings, submitting proposals to Institutional Review Boards, and recruiting participants (b) expectations and goals for the project; and (c) processes that will be used throughout,





including how meetings will be run and how disagreements or unexpected events will be navigated; and (d) how results will be shared and disseminated, described further under Value 6 (Minkler, 2004; Sullivan et al., 2017). There are many [examples of CBPR MOUs](#) available.

## Value 5

### **CBPR is a Flexible and Creative Process That Responds to the Ongoing and Evolving Needs and Priorities of All Stakeholders**

One of the compelling aspects of CBPR is that it is flexible and allows for – indeed requires - creativity, role flexibility, and innovation. Researchers’ willingness to be adaptable is critical to the success of the CBPR process.

#### **What Kinds of Twists and Turns Might You Expect?**

If you are doing CBPR with domestic violence programs, you can anticipate that certain challenges are likely. For example, primary and secondary trauma among survivors and staff in domestic violence programs may well enter the work, potentially causing burn-out and high rates of turnover (Shoultz et al. 2006; Slattery & Goodman, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2017). CBPR researchers need to work with their community partners to anticipate and manage this situation so as to ensure that the project continues without overburdening those practitioners and survivors who remain.



“When the project or intervention does not go as planned” by Rebecca J. Macy, PhD,  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Major events may well divert attention from the project, some of which can be anticipated and some of which emerge in the form of crises. Survivors in programs may face individual crises related to emotional or physical safety that must be attended to immediately. For instance, in one collaboration with youth at a local middle school, there was an incident of self-cutting that caused a pause in the research process for the group. Instead of stepping aside, the researcher, who was embedded in a clinical psychology department, sought resources to bring to the middle school the young people attended. This allowed the researcher to further deepen her relationship not only with the youth involved with the project but also with the school staff (Sánchez. & Serrata, 2016). Alternatively, unexpected crises may occur that affect many or most participants in a program. For example, domestic violence programs may become temporarily and suddenly overwhelmed when the community with whom they work faces a crisis such as an immigration raid, a large-scale hate crime, a domestic violence homicide, or an instance of police brutality. You should expect that CBPR projects will be put aside in the face such pressing individual or community concerns. Then there are regular events that will likely take resources from the CBPR. For example, June is typically very busy for LGBTQ-specific domestic violence programs because it is Pride Month, and organizations often participate in a number of community events throughout the month. December is often another busy month because of holiday gift drives or other holiday celebrations. Anticipate that practitioners' research responsibilities will likely take a back seat during these times.



#### Practice Tip

Participatory data analysis is a great way to enhance practitioner skills and promote an organizational change process. Numerous scholars have developed participatory frameworks for data analysis (see Adams, Nnawulezi, & Vandenberg, 2015; Patton, 2008; Torres, Preskill, & Piontek, 2005).

Unexpected twists and turns can also arise in the context of developing methods that align with community partners' worldviews. Sometimes, finding common ground takes CBPR researchers into unexpected methodological territory. For example, CBPR researchers often talk about the deep creativity and sense of adventure they have experienced when they have stretched themselves beyond traditional research methodologies to consider non-written approaches such as photo-voice or digital storytelling (DiVietro, 2015; Shoultz et al., 2015; Yonas, Burke, & Miller, 2013).



## **How Can You Build a Realistic, Clear, and Flexible Timeline?**

When developing a timeline, being realistic and collaborative are important – to plan for what is possible and to expect the unexpected. This means working together to establish deadlines but building in extra padding for those processes where a clear timeframe is hard to predict. Make sure to leave sufficient time for all parties to review and provide feedback on several iterations of the evolving frame.

As you think about your timeline, also remember that turnover both within the research team and within your partnering organization is likely and will require extra time for new training and orientation (D'Alonzo, 2010; Shoultz et al. 2006).

## **Value 6**

### **The Products of the CBPR Process Belong to All Partners**

At the heart of CBPR is the idea that research products should be co-owned by researchers and community partners and disseminated to both practitioner, community and scholarly audiences (Banks & Armstrong, 2012; Wilson, Kenny, & Dickinson-Smith, 2017). Indeed, the research takes on value to the extent that its results are relevant and accessible to those who are doing the work on the ground, and those who are most affected by the issue. The following questions can help you think through how this might work in your own partnership.

## **Do You Have a Plan for Developing and Disseminating Research Products That Are Creative, Meaningful, and Useful?**

CBPR stakeholders must also consider how to best get research products and information out to people (Banks et al., 2013; Brydon-Miller, 2012; Palinkas, 2017; Israel et al., 2005). Developing a thoughtful dissemination plan is not an “extra” part of the research, but is, instead, at the very heart of the unique nature of CBPR and its capacity for transformation. Importantly, differences in opinion around the dissemination of research can cause the greatest amount of tension between researchers and community partners (Sullivan, Hunter, & Fisher 2013). Thoughtful discussion and planning can avert major blow-ups at the end of a project.





"Disseminating CBPR findings" by Rebecca J. Macy, PhD,  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## How Will You Handle Findings That Might Be Misinterpreted Or Harmful?

Findings may emerge that have the potential to cast a negative light on the community in which you are partnering and/or on the organization itself. When a community is already subject to racism, bigotry, or other forms of oppression, findings that are not thoughtfully framed or presented can add to the burden of oppression and be damaging to practitioners and the communities with which they work (Israel et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2017).

Likewise, programs that are operating with limited funding may be reasonably concerned about how findings that do not show positive changes from their services may affect their reputation and funding. Factor this possibility into your collaboration and agreements from the beginning. Ideally, trust will be enhanced by transparent discussion of this issue. For example, if funders require that all results need to be shared with them, such requirements need to be made clear before the project begins and all stakeholders need to work out how they will collaborate to present negative results. The Domestic Violence Program Evaluation and Research Collaborative did just this: They agreed from the beginning that they would work together to interpret and frame all results jointly to help each other ensure that any negative findings could be properly contextualized.

In addition, non-significant and/or negative findings concerning program activities and services – while initially disappointing– can provide important feedback and opportunities for growth, development and new directions. Such findings might help advocates and service providers to understand that their programs are not working as well as they would like or in the ways that they intended. Rather than casting a negative light on the program and its services, a program’s participation in research can show that the program is willing to undergo rigorous evaluation to ensure that their services are working as well as they can for survivors, their family and the community at large. Again, researchers should work to build transparent, trusting, and respectful relationships with program staff to help ensure that non-significant and negative findings are used in ways that promote a program’s positive growth and development, rather than undermine a program’s standing with its funders and in the community.

### **Who is Responsible for Writing/ Authoring and Disseminating Results?**

All those involved in a particular CBPR project should have the chance to co-author the products of that project. In some cases, different stakeholders will want to write different pieces for different audiences.

Even when only one party does the writing, however, shared authorship is usually appropriate since conceptualizations have been co-developed. Note that in the case of shared conceptualizations that emerged from the process, it is important for community members to continue to receive credit for their work even as researchers continue to build on it beyond the original project (D’Alonzo, 2010).



#### **Practice Tip**

For most researchers, developing publishable manuscripts is critical to career advancement. There are a number of ways to marry this imperative with CBPR values:

- Publish the CBPR project findings in peer-reviewed journals with your partners.
- Write about the process of conducting CBPR. Such research is sorely needed in the literature.
- Consider other types of related manuscripts, such as literature reviews and theoretical analyses that can be published while you are engaging in CBPR.

Collaborating with community partners on disseminating different kinds of products is beneficial to everyone! Community members get credit for their contributions, researchers are able to publish more, and the larger world benefits from the knowledge obtained through the process.



There are exceptions to the general rule of shared authorship, however: For example, in some cases, a community partner may feel that being included as an author would not be strategic because the target audience may perceive bias. Or a researcher may want to focus on peer-reviewed scholarship and choose not to collaborate on other types of reports in the interest of time. Any arrangement is possible within a CBPR approach as long as all stakeholders have a chance to discuss it in the context of careful attention to power dynamics (Atalay, 2012; Muhammad et al. 2015).

Consider also exactly who will be responsible for disseminating the products of the research and how. This will involve careful thinking about who is best positioned for what kinds of dissemination, recognizing the different strengths, social locations, skills, and networks of various stakeholders. It will also involve careful analysis of power to prevent researchers from being the only ones to present at or disseminate to resource-rich settings or audiences (e.g., professional conferences). Be creative as you consider all the potential avenues for dissemination.

## What Sorts of Products Will Be Most Useful and Influential?

The products of CBPR are intended to be innovative, original, digestible, and geared towards change and sustainability (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003).

Although peer-reviewed publications may be critical products for researchers, if CBPR is to “belong” to multiple stakeholders, including the community, then the results must be presented, shared, and owned in multiple ways. Indeed, one survey of domestic violence service providers found that they were most likely to obtain information from newsletters, and least likely from peer-reviewed journals (Murray & Welch, 2008). In general, provide brief and straightforward documentation of findings in a way that clearly communicates the real-world relevance of the research in non-technical language and provide clear recommendations (Sullivan et al., 2017). Multiple audiences should be considered, including community members, fellow researchers, policy makers, city council members, advocates, survivors, external funders, and administrators (Sullivan, Hunter, & Fisher, 2013). Also, be sure to consider how



### Practice Tip

Potential avenues for dissemination of CBPR project findings include webinars, curricula, fact sheets, infographics, posters, guides, webinars, newsletter entries, measures or assessment tools, policy and practice briefs, toolkits, short videos, and white papers.



the products of the research can become a part of the knowledge base of the community partners themselves in a way that is sustainable and useful (Burke et al., 2013).

## How to Address Dissemination Obstacles You Might Face within Your Own Institutions.

Beyond the complexities that arise between CBPR partners related to dissemination of products, pressures must sometimes be confronted beyond the partnership itself. Some universities expect researchers to be sole owners of the data and results from projects, including theoretical knowledge production. This may mean working with academic institutions to help them understand the centrality to the CBPR process of co-ownership (Bloom et al., 2009). Researchers may need to work with their IRBs or departments to advocate for communities and challenge existing policies or practices (Bloom, et al., 2009). Some researchers do this through extensive relationship building with members of their IRBs or even joining the IRB to provide more opportunities for education. Researchers may also need to educate colleagues about CBPR so as to cultivate allies who can support this orientation. Researchers can try presenting at department brown bags or other informal meeting venues. Newer faculty might benefit from partnering with more established faculty in this process. See Appendix F for an example of an infographic that summarizes results of a scholarly paper in a more accessible way.



"Achieving success in the academy as a CBPR researcher" by Shanti Kulkarni, PhD,  
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

## Concluding Thoughts

It is no small feat to work through to the end of this toolkit. In many ways it is a journey of learning and self discovery: you've read about the history and values of CBPR in the DV context, looked inward to prepare yourself to conduct CBPR, absorbed a wealth of tips for how to execute CBPR, and – if you're accessing the toolkit through the website – heard directly from a variety of CBPR practitioners and researchers. We truly hope that you feel more confident in your desire and ability to engage in CBPR with the DV community. Please remember that this resource is yours to return to whenever you need to revisit a concept, remember a tip, or be reminded of why you chose CBPR in the first place.





# POWER THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

## A CBPR TOOLKIT FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESEARCHERS

