Defining and measuring equity in long-standing community-based participatory research (CBPR) partnerships: Findings from an expert CBPR panel

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A partnership approach to research and interventions between community and academic partners is a viable strategy for examining and addressing health inequities. Community-based participatory research (CBPR), with its focus on equity, is one such approach. This research is part of Measurement Approaches to Partnership Success (MAPS), a broader study that aims to further clarify the intermediate and long-term factors that contribute to the success of these long-standing partnerships, develop and test a measurement tool to assess partnership success, develop mechanisms for feeding back partnership evaluation findings, and share widely the tool and knowledge gained to strengthen partnership efforts in order to achieve health equity.

Background

A national panel of 16 academic (8) and community (8) experts in CBPR who are members of long-standing CBPR partnerships was recruited and selected through reputational sampling based on CBPR experience, contributions to the peer-reviewed literature and the field, and geographic and ethnic diversity.

Cross-cutting Themes Related to Partnership Equity (responses to questions about other dimensions of success)

Outcomes
- Mission is health equity which is a long-term outcome
- Community partners equally compensated for what they contribute
- Community compensated for university using community partner’s reputation

Success
- Equity in general is having real relationships with people from different backgrounds and different perspectives
- Tangible support for all partners extends beyond partnership
- Academic institutions make resources available to community organizations (e.g., facilitating factors for future)

Cost & Benefits of Participation
- Compensation for community’s time has improved over time (academics write it into grants)
- Over time the benefit of partnership has increased (for community)

Discussion
- Partnership equity should be viewed holistically rather than as an isolated domain of CBPR partnerships
- Factors relating to partnership equity were often discussed in response to questions about other domains
- Evidence that partnership equity has dimensions that are relational, process oriented, structural (e.g., interpersonal, organizational and systems change), and outcomes related
- Over time, commitment to CBPR principles synergistically embeds equity across domains within long-term CBPR partnerships