

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

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Background

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.

Methods for Defining & Assessing Equity Within CBPR Partnerships

Research Question

Equity as a core goal in community-academic CBPR partnerships is well established. However, how best to define and measure equity within partnerships is not clearly established within the field. As part of a broader five-year NIH NINR funded study, we aimed to clearly define and assess partnership equity in successful long-standing (> 6 years) CBPR partnerships.

CBPR Expert Panel

- 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.

Key Informant Interviews

- Sixteen (16) in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted from February to July 2017 by members of the multi-disciplinary research team.

- Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and entered into NVivo qualitative software program for data organizing. Data were analyzed using focused coding and the process of constant comparison.

- Themes identified from the key informant interviews have been used to inform the constructs to be measured in the MAPS survey questionnaire.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Assessing Equity Within the Partnership

Definitions and Indicators of Equity Within Partnership

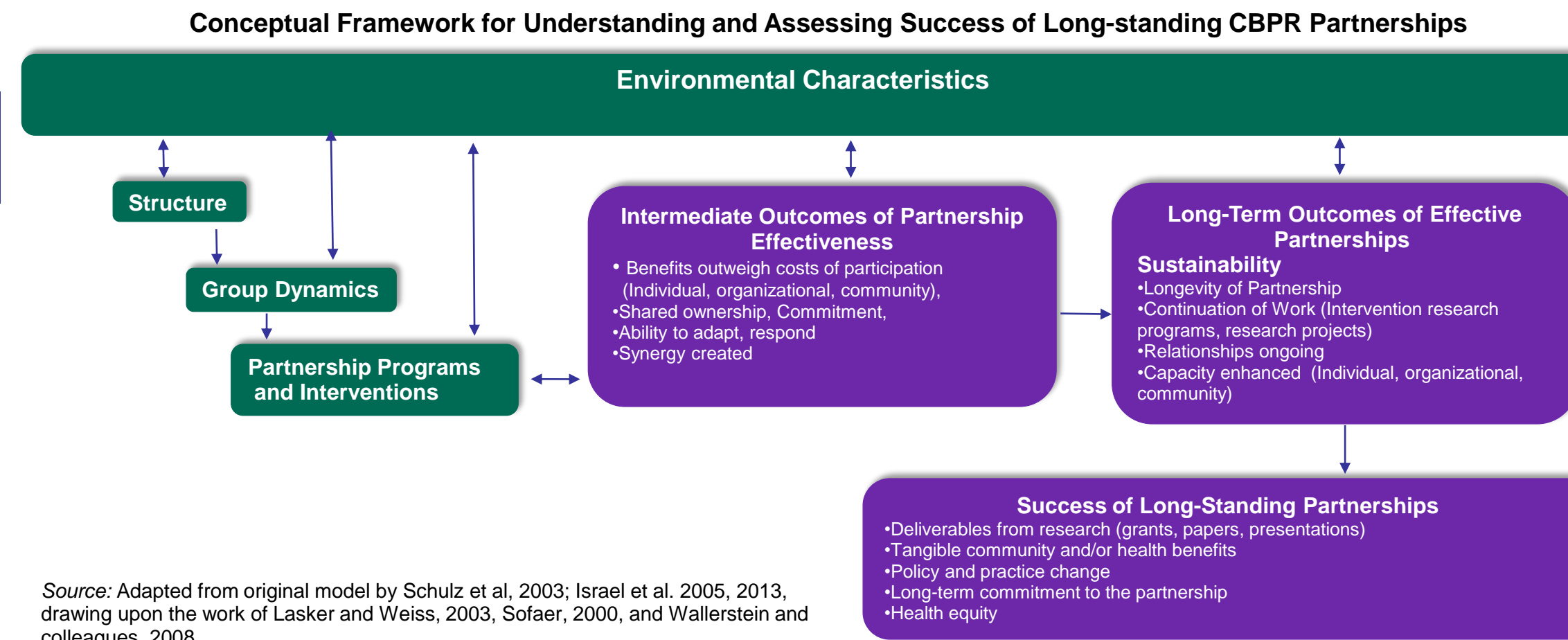
- Definition: In thinking about long-standing CBPR partnerships in general, how would you define equity within the partnership?

- Indicators: What would tell you or indicate to you that a partnership has achieved equity?



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The research team wishes to gratefully acknowledge the MAPS Expert Panel for their contributions to the conceptualization and implementation of this project: Alex Allen, Elizabeth Baker, Linda Burhansstipanov, Cleopatra Caldwell, Bonnie Duran, Eugenia Eng, Ella Greene-Moton, Marita Jones, Meredith Minkler, Angela Reyes, Al Richmond, Zachary Rowe, Amy Schulz, Peggy Shepard, Melissa Valerio, and Nina Wallerstein.



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

Outcomes

- Mission is health equity which is a long-term outcome
- Community partners equitably 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

Sustainability

- 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 participation has increased (for community)

Results: Factors Contributing to Equity Within Long-standing CBPR Partnerships

Major Equity Themes (response to specific questions asked)	Key Quotes
Equitable recognition for community partner's contribution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding may have to be heavily weighted to community participants Shared credit for research or action Perception that all members are respected and treated equitably (e.g. benefits equitably distributed) Community partners get recognition for work they do Support community ways of knowing 	"Everyone feels like they've gotten something positive out of the experience. So the benefits are equitably distributed, and that doesn't mean the same thing. It may just be getting what you want when you need it." -Academic Expert Panelist
Equity in distribution of money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reciprocity in money exchange over time Equity in decision-making about the distribution of money Appropriate compensation for scope of work Equitable burden of costs and distribution of benefits. 	"It's everybody in the circle feeling like they have a voice and that what they say is important and is valued... it's building that safe atmosphere and trust that whatever you say will be considered in a good way and... it's all about that equal partnership." -Community Expert Panelist
Equity is a societal outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity in society or in health issues is the outcome 	"I think equitable also means that we do try to pay attention to the different ways that we value or acknowledge what people bring, and some of that is just being respectful and listening and asking questions, if we don't understand." -Academic Expert Panelist
Partnership structures and processes that ensure equity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency in budgets Equal voice in decision making (consensus decision-making structure) 	"When I am reviewing applications that say they are CBPR... I look at the budget, and if I see in the budget that the tribal partner or the Latino partner, whatever the underserved, the community group is, that they're getting 20,000 and the Academicians are getting 120,000, my 'BS' detector is raised the rest of the time." -Community Expert Panelist

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

This presentation was made possible by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) award R01NR016123.