

# Defining and measuring synergy in long-standing community-based participatory research partnerships: Results from Measurement Approaches to Partnership Success (MAPS)\*



APHA November 6, 2019 – Roundtable 5056.1  
Sponsor: Community-Based Public Health Caucus



Chris M. Coombe

University of Michigan School of Public Health

Ella Greene-Moton

Community-Based Organizations Partners, Flint

Co-authors: Barbara A. Israel,\*\* Michael Muhammad, Angela G. Reyes, Zachary Rowe, Melanie Meisenheimer, Eliza Wilson-Powers, Megan Jensen, S.Y. Daniel Lee, Barbara L. Brush,\*\* Laurie Lachance\*\*

## Highlights

- Synergy is considered central to effective partnerships.
- Measures of partnership synergy *specific to long-standing CBPR partnerships* are lacking.
- A 7-item measure of Partnership Synergy was developed by integrating knowledge from diverse community-academic CBPR experts and from a focused literature review.
- Assessing partnership synergy can strengthen CBPR partnerships to promote change for health equity.

Understanding what contributes to success of community-based participatory research (CBPR) partnerships is essential to ensure their effectiveness in addressing health inequities. Synergy, the concept of accomplishing more together than separately, is critical to many frameworks of CBPR and partnerships broadly. However, we know of no definitions and measures of synergy specific to long-standing CBPR partnerships.

## Measurement Approaches to Partnership Success (MAPS)

To better understand success in long-standing CBPR partnerships, the Detroit Urban Research Center is conducting a mixed methods study, MAPS, to develop and validate an instrument to measure synergy and other dimensions of partnership success. Synergy is an intermediate outcome in the model. This practical tool can be used by partnerships to assess and strengthen their own partnership efforts to achieve health equity.

## Methods

MAPS is employing a multi-phase, mixed methods, and community-based participatory approach, framed by a conceptual model and guided by the Detroit URC Board. Methods include:

- Key Informant Interviews
- Three-round Delphi Process
- Pilot Testing
- Literature Review
- Cognitive Interviews

**National Expert Panel.** A national panel of 8 community and 8 academic experts with extensive long-term experience in CBPR is engaged in all major phases of MAPS, including serving as key informants and participating in the Delphi process. The panel represents all regions of the US and includes urban, rural, and suburban communities, and tribal nations; three-fourths of panel members are persons of color.

## Results

### *Partnership Synergy Definition*

Community and academic partners accomplish more together than could be accomplished alone to make changes identified by the partnership.

### *Partnership Synergy Items*

Through an iterative process using multiple methods, a set of questionnaire items were developed to measure partnership synergy as an intermediate outcome in the model of CBPR partnership success.

\*With acknowledgement to the National Institute of Nursing Research (Grant #RO1NRO16123) and colleagues at the Detroit URC.

\*\*MAPS Principal Investigators

*Themes and quotes from key informant interviews:*

**1) Whole is greater than sum of the arts: better together than alone**

“You come with a set of skills and an identity, but you don’t necessarily force something in a direction that is inappropriate for the other person. You work together to actually mirror each other, and where you get to is better than either would’ve gotten to alone, if you just stayed in your own self.” *Academic Expert Panel member*

**2) Leveraging existing resources in building partnership capacity and enhancing each other's work**

“It’s how you leverage the resources around your [partnership] to aid new opportunities for community input in other issues we hadn’t thought about before... Because of that, we leveraged our creative synergy for another project that’s doing its own thing now.” *Community Expert Panel member*

**3) Combining different perspectives to form new knowledge**

“I think that’s what CBPR does, is you bring in opposites, the professional academic perspective and resources and culture with the community resources and culture perspective, and you create a whole third view.” *Academic Expert Panel member*

*Developing Questionnaire Items: Example from Theme 1*

<i>In Vivo</i> Codes from Key Informant Interviews	Draft Questionnaire Item for Delphi Process	Delphi (Rounds 1-3), Cognitive Interviews, Pilot Testing	Final Item in the MAPS Questionnaire
Where you get to is better than either would’ve gotten to alone. Having diverse partners together can accomplish more than could separately. Collaboration among diverse partners helps the partnership accomplish its objectives.	B-2. Having diverse community and academic partners together accomplishes more than could be accomplished separately.	Delphi Round 1: Item Deleted for redundancy Delphi Round 2: Item Reworded, re-added Cognitive Interviews: No change Pilot Testing: No change	76. Working together the partnership accomplishes more than partners could accomplish separately.

The final partnership synergy measure contained seven items to be included in the MAPS questionnaire.

**MAPS Next Steps**

1. Administer MAPS survey to 55 longstanding (6 + years) CBPR partnerships across the US.
2. Test questionnaire’s psychometric qualities (validation) in a sample of long-standing CBPR partnerships;
3. Revise and finalize the questionnaire and model;
4. Develop a mechanism for partnerships to feedback and apply partnership evaluation findings to improve their partnership; and
5. Disseminate the MAPS questionnaire and practical feedback tool in a readily accessible and usable format.

**Publications**

- Israel, B.A., Lachance, L., Coombe, C.M., Lee, S-Y.D., Jensen, M., Wilson-Powers, E., Mentz, G., Muhammed, M., Rowe, Z., Reyes, A.G., Brush, B.L. (in press). Measurement Approaches to Partnership Success: Theory and methods for measuring success in long-standing CBPR partnerships. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships*.
- Brush, B. L., Mentz, G., Jensen, M., Jacobs, B., Saylor, K. M., Rowe, Z., ... Lachance, L. (2019). Success in long-standing community-based participatory research (CBPR) partnerships: A scoping literature review. *Health Education & Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198119882989>



**Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center (Detroit URC)**

MAPS is a project of the Detroit URC, a community-based participatory research (CBPR) partnership founded in 1995 to equitably engage community-based organizations, health service institutions and academia to foster research, programs and policies to improve health equity in Detroit.

**For more information or to participate in the survey contact,** Megan Jensen, MAPS Project Manager at [mlaver@umich.edu](mailto:mlaver@umich.edu) or (734) 764-6029. **Visit our website** at: [www.detroiturc.org](http://www.detroiturc.org) or [bit.ly/33GMq6](http://bit.ly/33GMq6).