

Third Annual Community Research Network Conference
Morehouse College Atlanta, Georgia
June 15-18, 2000

Summary

Attended by: Virginia (Ginny) Boudreau -Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association, Flora Murphy -St. Francis Xavier University, Maria Recchia -Centre for Community-Based Management

Launched by the Loka Institute in 1995, the Community Research Network (CRN) supports participatory, community-based research efforts worldwide. Community-based research enables grassroots, worker, and civic organizations and local government agencies to access knowledge responsive to their needs and which they can use to effect constructive social change. Community-based research often involves collaborative relationships between professionally trained researchers and community members, is based on respect, mutual learning, and empowerment.

The Community Research Network (CRN) seeks to complement the mainstream research system with a new nationwide and worldwide research infrastructure that will make empowerment-through-mutual-learning and other research benefits accessible to all citizens and communities.

Focused on solving real problems and redressing social inequities, community-based research (CBR) is a powerful tool that enables citizens to determine how and to what ends research will be conducted in their communities. CBR is by design ethically robust. A growing body of cases demonstrates that CBR is not only good science, but often produces more useful, action-oriented results for the communities that participate in CBR projects.

The theme of this year's conference-Common Problems, Uncommon Resources: Exploring the Social and Economic Challenges to Community-Based Research-reflects the growth and vitality of community-based research. In the short period since the publication of our initial reconnaissance of community-based research in 1996, numbers of projects, funding availability, and the involvement of researchers and community participants have more than doubled.

With this maturity comes new challenges and new opportunities. For example, community-based research can be especially valuable to disadvantaged or marginalized communities, yet it is often most difficult to secure funding and resources to conduct CBR in these areas. Now is the time to challenge our international network of grassroots organizers, researchers, community organizations, students, funders, and government agencies-The Community Research Network-to address these barriers and develop strategies for overcoming them.

Loka Website -www.loka.org

Conference Tracks

The conference used four tracks to direct participants' attention to questions that are critical to the development of CBR. The reasoning behind the four tracks is that each of the specified areas is critical to the success of CBR in general, and to the growth of the Community Research Network (CRN) in particular. In other words, each could be the theme of this year's conference.

We stayed with our track through out the track portion of the conference, but during the workshop portion we were able to choose from all of the track subjects. It was useful to have a common group to revisit ideas and theories throughout the conference. The time allocated to the tracks was a bit short to have extensive discussion and therefore limited the potential for addressing the issues that the tracks were designed for.

Tracks

Communication - Building Ethical Bridges - Attended by Ginny Boudreau

Once the decision is made to conduct research using the CBR methodology, the single most critical element in determining the successor failure of the project, is communication. For us, communication must include a fair and open negotiation between equal partners. The ethical principles on which CBR methodology is based, required that questions of power, control of resources, and the use and dissemination of the products be fully discussed and determined be equitable negotiations. In this track we will explore the basis principles on which CBR is based, techniques for improving communication, and methods for ensuring that the research partnership is one among equals.

Techniques in Community Based Research (CBR) (the how to's) - Attended by Flora Murphy

The CRN Annual Conference brings together folks interested in CBR from around the world - some who are new to the field, some who are old hands. The workshops in this track will describe techniques in the basics of CBR - finding partners, determination of task, etc. Also, new approaches to capacity building, survey techniques, and use of technologies - such as GIS - will be explored.

Capacity Building for Sustainability in CBR - Attended by Maria Recchia

Even as the resources for the conducting CBR projects increase, CBR practitioners and community organisations struggle to find sufficient resources to initiate new projects. Moreover, when such funding is secured, the research into action, or completed, finding resources for developing a supported infrastructure to assist it translating the research into action, or for sustaining action to more mature and effective stages is next to impossible. In this track we explore the problem of building local, regional, and national infrastructure to support and sustain community based research projects and follow-ups. The track examines ideas to strengthen the Community Research Network, and other networks of practitioners. It also develops plans and structures for mutual support.

Race, Class, Gender, and Culture - Challenges to CBR Participation

Many of the problems that CBR is most effective in addressing are found disproportionately in communities of color. Women, workers, and even people living in cultural homogeneous communities, face circumstances that present rich ground for community-based research projects. In spite of the special needs of each of these groups, each also faces special difficulties in gaining access to CBR support and resources. This track examines how and why this severe disparity exist between needs and resources.

Friday, Workshops Round 1

Techniques in CBR Track - Ginny Boudreau

"New Research Partnerships: A Dutch Experience to Increase Community Participation and Commitment" (Elise Kamphius, Community Research Institutes for Economics, University of Groningen, Netherlands)

The Community Research Institutes (CRI's) started out with a research question from a community organization and a student would carry out the research then present it to that organization but this research was usually questioned or invalidated because it was viewed as being one-sided. The CRI's have adopted a new method where public forums or think tanks are arranged around the stakeholders involved in the research question. The students with an academic supervisor collect data from all sources and produce papers from this data, which is combined for a final presentation to the stakeholders and usually initiates dialogue and sometimes an action plan is devised. This gives the research more visibility and validity.

Because there was only an hour to present, we did not get to apply the workshop participants' suggestions with new CRI's approach. This new approach seems to be trying to address the problem of validity and visibility as well as trying to be all-inclusive and possibly democratic in their reports.

It will be interesting to see how their recent research unfolds with the pharmaceutical companies. They are researching the financial statements of the pharmaceutical companies' research and development actions to determine if they are spending enough on local and necessity drugs or just supplying drugs for the cost increase. (Viagra vs. Malaria Medicine)

And

"European Experience in Community Research with EASW Methodology" (Teresa Rojo)

The methodology used in community research was launched in 1994 by European Commission of the European Union in order to promote involvement of citizens' associations in decision making and public choices for a more sustainable living. Citizens get together with technician, politicians and enterprises at the local level. A series of plenary sessions and group discussion seminars are organized during 1 day or 2 day workshops. There are approximately 30 participants representing all the 4 groups and they are first set in a group with like-minded participants. They set an agenda based on the issues that group feels are relevant to the problem and are set in a 'In the future' context. This is a democratic process using a vote method. The groups then merge and each group presents its list of issues and the other 3 groups vote on the suggestions to put them in an order of importance. All groups do this process and then the groups separate and remerge in new groups with representation of one group being mixed with all other groups. The issues are revisited and a vote system puts them in a new order of importance and as the groups remerge a final set of main issues are voted on for a research agenda. This stage can be repeated for an action and evaluation stage.

I found this method quite interesting in that it is so democratic and it first gets the main issues from the separate groups and then merges this with the other groups voting on the issues of importance. It ensures that everyone is heard from and time is not wasted on the whole group bickering about what the main issues are. This method produces results immediately. This could easily work with a small group or a large one and can be adapted to large development strategies or research agenda identification. (Very good Workshop) Handout provided was very useful due to language barrier but again one hour was limiting the presenters group discussion and involvement. Group participation would have been very effective here.

Techniques in CBR Track - Maria Recchia

"Transferring Technological Skills in Community Research-Options for GIS" (Geographical Information System) (Michael Barndt)

And

"Assessment of Community-Level Use of Information Technologies: Developing Tools for Evaluating Efficacy" (Pau M.A. Baker, Andrew Ward)

Communication Track - Flora Murphy

"Partnering for Outreach to Underserved Communities: Development of Effective Community-Based Research" (Daniel Blumenthal, Elleen Yancey, Ella Trammell)

This portion of the workshop discussed effective community-based research by drawing on a community health based research project, based at Spellman Medical School on the Clark Atlanta campus.

The presenters started by describing what should be avoided when doing community research, treating community as a laboratory, as a classroom or prop for study, nor as a charity case. They also listed what the community in this project had outlined as successful characteristics for Community-University research:

1. Mutual Respect.
2. All people have a right to self-determination.
3. Individual and community informed consent.
4. Community should be involved in all stages of the planning and implementation.
5. Research and outcomes should benefit community - hiring community members whenever possible.
6. Community should be part of the analysis and interpretation of data, and the input on how the results are distributed (look at the impacts of the results).
7. Partnership should be encouraged to continue after the research partnership has ended.

I was particularly interested in evaluation techniques that a community-university partnership would use to measure their success in meeting goals, who do you evaluate yourself? This was addressed briefly, this particular project formed a coalition board of community and university to be involved in the evaluation. This may be similar to the Steering Committee in the SRSF.

Two other notes of interest were the grant writing classes that were provided for the communities to sustain funding at the end of the initial grant, also training was given to researchers to increase their community orientation.

And

"Sharing Resources through Partnerships: Using an Effective Model" (Therese Turman and Margie Brown)

The second portion of this first workshop was not as useful, the presentation had been geared to an American audience, an audience working within American resources, and their governmental and legal structure. But I was able to draw on some basic broad principles for university-community partnerships. First, before the money is found for a partnership that the relationship be formed. Second, the leadership of the project is broken down between the partners, this allows for more equitable decision making, this could be reflected in a representative board. Third, communities should draw

on resources existing in their communities, such as universities.

Friday Wrap Up - Break Out into Track Groups

General Report on Track Groups

Communication Track Overall Summary- Ginny Boudreau

Track report backs were an excellent source of information from all the workshops going on simultaneously.

Main Communication Barriers in Community Based Research

- Between academic researcher / the community / funding agencies
- Language barriers whether they are ethnic, cultural, regional, municipal, (Racism, economics, language, social class or structure)
- Is the community telling the data collector the accurate information or just what they think they want to hear? More inaccuracies from government or agency data collectors. (Child services, Housing authorities, Academics)
- Visibility / Accountability / Privacy
- What we hear everyone else in a community saying may not be acceptable from an outsider.
- Must not try to integrate or impose yourself on another culture or community, as it is better to have a main contact to the community, for the purpose of introduction to that community.
- Conflicts should be seen as learning opportunities as people are usually more honest in their feeling in a conflict situation. (Forming, storming and reforming gets all perspectives out in the open.)
- Who has control or ownership of the data collected?

Suggestions

- Insure that the CBR is actually representative of the people in the research community. (Their questions, their design, their data collection and their results) The community should be included in all stages.
- Academics are on an academic calendar, the community has its agenda and the funders have their criteria but this is only a problem if the partnership is not transparent from the start.
- You cannot validate so called CBR if you cannot initiate the participants to engage in academiology and visa versa.
- Communication is not conversation as communication can be in a memo form but a conversation must be person to person.
- Traditional knowledge is as valuable as any other source of information.
- It is important to include the community in the design of the design study.
- Cultural diversity should be celebrated but common problems should be shared.
- The community, the academics and the funding agencies always involve at some stage or all stages of CBR; fear.

Hardcopy Suggestions

- *Public Liberation*, David Mathews (Politics for the People, engage the people to identify their needs first, then the academic)
- *All Our Kin*, Carol Stack (communication barriers)

Techniques in CBR (the how to's) Track Overall Summary - Flora Murphy

Discussion surrounded community-based research

What is community-based research?

Community defines the research.
Serves as a method of decision support.
Embedded in community-development principles. Increase capacity of the community.
Creating/facilitating a social dialogue with the community.

Based at what level?

For whom, by whom?

Researchers must be aware of their own political/personal bias.
Ethics for whom and by whom, who is being represented in the research?
Is the process making a difference for the community, how are we evaluating the process and the project?
Are researcher prepared to do community research, are they connected to the community needs?

Who is community?

Important to identify the power structures and to look for long term change to the power structures.
Who is the researcher hearing from in the community, what views and issues and being represented?

How is the community issue addressed?

Bring the identified stakeholders together.
Ask the community what has been the problem with past research done in their communities.

Friday Evening

Social with Jazz in the Clark Atlanta University Art Gallery

Exhibit titled To Conserve a Legacy: *American Art from Historically Black Colleges and Universities*.

Saturday, June 17, 2000

Speakers

Bill Jenkins, Epidemiologist, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

And

Camara Jones, Epidemiologist, Harvard School of Public Health

Dr. Jones discussed the role and extent of racism on health and welfare of people and as a waste of resources.
Three types of racism:

1. Institutionalised- Government and corporations.
2. Personal- Believing that others are not equal due to race.
3. Internal- Believing that you are not as good because of your race.

Communities need to call for research and if they do not then the research should not be done.

Saturday, Report back from all Track groups

Race, Class, Gender and Culture Track

Community-based research terminology is still coming from the top down, who is defining it and why?
The Loka Institute should have more diverse people of race working with them.
More youth should be involved in the conference, and more scholarships should be available.
Have some urban and rural break-ups.
Have presenters discuss both the failures and successes of their research experience.
Black universities need to do more with their communities.

Communications Track

Cannot become part of a culture if you are not.
People need to learn about communication and how it can create barriers.
Work on common problems that we are all facing.
Honest communication.

CBR how to's Track

Mutual learning, a two-way skills transfer.
Understanding power and power structures.
The conference should frame what CBR means.
The track group framed what CBR meant to them:

- Solving problems framed by community,
- Contributes to community development,
- A two way social dialogue is created,
- Skill transfer,
- Joint design,
- Joint funding between both community and university,
- Knowledge needs to be applied,
- Scientific support.
- Two way capacity building:
 - how to translate research into action,
 - need to shift the paradigms,
 - make the ideas of CBR more common in all areas,
 - accountability addressed from the beginning.
- Community control of the resources.
- Evaluate the level which the research is based?
- Sustained partnership:
 - personal face to face relations,
 - build on trust,
 - communicate often,
 - flexible,
 - expect change,
 - focused objectives,
 - make the research more visible.

Saturday, Workshops Round 2

Capacity Building for Sustainability in CBR Track - Ginny Boudreau

Capacity Building for Sustainability in CBR: Where and How Do We Begin. Irene Luckey (Institute for Families in Society, University of South Carolina)

The workshop highlighted the relations among funders, universities, and communities in capacity building efforts.

Project presented was on the issue of absentee fathers being a root cause of child poverty. The initiative was help men become better fathers by helping them be better men. They looked at all aspects; employment, legal (child support), anger management, education, relationships, paternity, communication, heart of the man (faith base) and team parenting. The community organization requesting the funding must prepare a concept paper with partners being identified. The first criteria are a clear agenda on how to engage the men in the program and who are the assisting agencies and contacts.

The funding procedure was explained from start to finish, which is quite lengthy but worthwhile since the amounts are \$120,000 yearly for three years. A grant is also awarded for the capacity building area of concept paper writing, in the amount of 1500.

This was a very informative workshop as the presenter was a professor at the university hired by the foundation to work with the community organizations in preparing their proposals to the foundation. What an ideal setup with all perspectives being showcased. I took pages of notes and can

provide them to anyone who would like to see more.

Challenges

The communities have the difficult problem after receiving the funding. All partners identified in the proposal must remain in the project or the funding is lost. Organizations cannot be listed as partners in name only and insures community partnerships are built to last throughout this project and possibly future projects. It also insures that the pool of funding is not divided up among the partners for other usage. Community dynamics sometimes interferes with the process if they are in survival mode instead of the progressive mode. There is too much information on this workshop to include everything.

- Evaluation
- Funding communication to Organization
- Technical support for Organization
- Think Tanks
- Partnership and Networking
- Is the process reflective of the participants and is it practical. Funders networking on behalf of the organizations?
- Sustainability after the funding and is 3 year funding enough?

Communication - Building Ethical Bridges Track - Maria Recchia

"Community and University/College Readiness" Carol Maloney and Meg Donahue-Davis

And

"Mutually Beneficial Community/University Partnerships" Rebecca Thoma and Anita Lyndaker

Race, Class, Gender and Culture - Challenges to CBR Participation Track - Flora Murphy

"Building Cross Class Working Relationships - A Structured Dialog" Ernie Smith and Steve Schumacher

The presenters discussed the problems arising from the oppressions of social class structures faced in their community in Cincinnati. The problems traditionally arose from middle class researchers working with lower class communities. They discussed the problem that working class children have when trying to find a sense of belonging in schools, which are structured and governed by middle and upper class sectors of society. This can be further extended to working class people having difficulty identifying with researchers. Communities have also had previous experiences of the gap between the research being done, the publishing and then the action. Communities become skeptical of the purpose of the research and who are the beneficiaries.

The community in Cincinnati that Mr. Smith and Mr. Schumacher were working with have created "Learning Teams" designed to bring citizens together to educate them on the research process and to evaluate the community's. These teams assisted in reducing the barriers between researchers and communities by increasing the awareness of each other.

And

"Reality Check: Challenges and Benefits of Action Research" Sharon Prager

Ms. Sharon Prager from the Washington Welfare Reform Coalition discussed the survey that they had conducted with welfare recipients and the success that her group had had with the media in Washington. They were able to bring the media on to their side of the struggle with the State government by building a relationship with the media in which the media came to see the coalition as the authority on welfare reform.

Their experience with the survey was to have the welfare recipients write the survey to keep it as user friendly as possible. In order to qualify the survey and have it recognized by the government officials the group had a sociologist validate the survey. This was of interest to the social researchers in attendance for the presentation as they felt that the community's work should be valid on its own merit. I felt that this might have reflected some naivete or perhaps reluctance to acknowledge the power that "scientific" research still holds on the part of some of the social researchers present.

Saturday, Workshops Round 3

Techniques in CBR (the how to's) Track - Ginny Boudreau

"Promoting Participation in Community Research Planning: Lessons Learned from the University of Tennessee", Tony Hebert, Virginia Seitz Jamey Dobbs, Kim Naujock (Community Partnership Center)

The methodology used here is the Planning Team Approach where a diverse and representative group of community stakeholders lead the participatory research and planning process in collaboration with project facilitators. They then transform research and planning methods into sustainable community projects- drawing more participants to the process, providing immediate benefits to the community, and adding to the existing civic structure. This method stresses equitable partnerships and collaborative decision making across diverse stakeholder groups, while building participant capacities and shared plans. There are 14 phases to this process and was accompanied by a handout explaining each step. A tools bazaar was provided which could be quite useful as well as a graph visual that explains the relationship between different types of research methods and the data collected with an ownership and trust factor added.

This workshop was very busy with too many presenters jumping up and down as well as trying to provide a lot of information in a short period of time. There was no time for participant discussion on the method and maybe if they had the resources to bring 4 presenters a community member would have been interesting.

Hardcopy

"Grassroots Participatory Research" Lee Williams, Ph.D.
E-mail Lee@FCRsearch.org

Race, Class, Gender, and Culture - Challenges to CBR Participation - Maria Recchia

Building Relationships with Native American Tribes: Experience from Colorado Plateau (Cheryl Wiescamp and Hubert Williams)

Capacity Building for Sustainability in CBR - Flora Murphy

Community Health Assessments and Community-Based Research (Susan Patton, Larry Patton, Shelia Wilson, and Larry Wilson)

The presentation discussed the conditions in Bell County, Kentucky from the pollution and contamination of the environment by industrial contaminants. These Appellation communities experienced abnormally high rates of cancer, birth defects and death rates. The community battled with the corporate companies and government to prove that the area was being poisoned and for compensation. The presentation discussed the health survey and assessment that the community initiated to create an alternative to the traditional government studies that do not always adequately address the problems or may be unwilling to address the extent of the problem. The presentation was interesting in that it came from community members, rather than external community representatives. Unfortunately the presentation became a bit too focused on the health survey and assessment and lost some of its impact in the details of the survey's implementation.

And

How Do You Evaluate Community Capacity Building? (Douglas Greenwell, Jodi Merriday, Juanita Gross, Phillippi Lawal, Randy Peterman, Michael Giles)

The presenters outlined the questions and process they followed when evaluating a project that they looked at in Atlanta. The evaluator, Dr. Michael Giles, had two main questions; what are the goals of the project? Is their agreement on these goals? The first step to answering these questions is to look at the process that project is following. Then, who is designing the process? Is there a management board, if so what is its representation? From looking at these elements Dr. Giles found that the main deficits were:

- The goals were not well communicated to the participants;
- There was no training for the community members;
- The level of participation was very low and superficial;
- There was no salient issue to draw people together;
- There was no community model (what did empowerment mean to the community).

The presentation was useful in that it demonstrated a completed project that was not successful and they were able to discuss the characteristics of the project which lead to its inability to address the community.

Saturday 4:30 - 6:30pm

Juneteenth Celebration at Project South

Juneteenth, or June 19, 1865, is the day that U.S. territories got the news that slavery had ended. The celebration included African drumming, DJ, food, drinks, and dancing.

Sunday, June 18

Innovative Projects in Community Based Research

Presenters:

Lee Williams, Forestry Project
Researcher from the Center for Disease and Control in Atlanta (CDC)
Ginny Boudreau and Flora Murphy, Social Research for Sustainable Fisheries

Ginny and Flora presented to the conference participants on the Social Research for Sustainable Fisheries project. The project goals and governance were outlined by Flora and Ginny spoke about what the project meant to her association.

Community Research Network Development

In this plenary discussion the Loka took proposals and recommendations to direct the work of the Community Research Network for the upcoming year. Discussion surrounded the strategy for a national campaign to promote and grow Community Based Research.

Wrap up Speaker and Parting Thoughts - Larry Wilson, Appalachian Focus

Discussion on the impact of Community Based Research on his community in Bell County, Kentucky and the their experiences with top down decision making by the corporate and government community.

Overall Conference Summary

Ginny Boudreau:

A very informative and worthwhile trip as I learned about many aspects of CBR and a variety of projects engaged in CBR. There were a lot of workshops to choose from. This made the decision difficult but I did find the track sessions helpful in gaining insight into the topics discussed in the workshops. You could not attend all the track sessions in all categories. A very good variety of academics and funders but the community presence was very minimal which I feel defeats the purpose of the conference (to discuss community-based research). It was mentioned in one of my track sessions that the community could not afford to attend this seminar and maybe more scholarships could be granted. (80 were granted but certainly not to community members as I ran into one other community person other than myself) There was a small representation of youth at the conference, which I feel was a missed opportunity. There were a lot of programs reviewed and presented on youth initiatives but no youth to discuss the capacity they had gained from the CBR. These comments are not to suggest that I did not gain capacity myself because I did and I also made a few useful contacts as well as hardcopy resources. Thank you for the opportunity to do so.

Flora Murphy:

The conference was a positive experience in several aspects. We were exposed to numerous other community-based research projects, it was inspiring to meet people from across the world dedicated to their communities. The conference was also an opportunity to create some connections with those already working in the field and draw on their experiences. It was also an opportunity to reinforce the elements of the SRSF that we are doing right and to give thought to other areas and elements of community research that we may not have developed fully. Overall I came away from the conference feeling very positive about the steps that our partnership is taking, but aware of the potential for unattainable or unfulfilled goals that other projects have

encountered.

I also felt as Ginny did that the community participation in this conference was low, perhaps an indicator of the failures of some community-based research. It would have been useful to hear more evaluations from community members on the research they were participating in.