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A COLLABORATIVE RE-VISIONING OF RESEARCH

Who we are

The Broward Educational Research Alliance (BERA) was forged through a collective commitment to community building and community healing through community-based and community-informed approaches to research. We constitute a group of people engaged multiple organizational efforts across key pivotal agencies who are centrally involved in justice-oriented efforts in South Florida and beyond. All of us are researchers who use data as a central part of our professional and civic identities.

Whether working in the contexts of non-profit organizations or within formal educational institutions, we are deeply aware of how historically and culturally problematic our institutional relationships with data are, and consequently how they have hurt the communities that research is supposed to serve. As such, we recognize that decisions that impact broad-based community well-being are too often made on the basis of problematic data, gathered through narrowly conceived and/or deficit-based perspectives of local communities that result in perpetuating hierarchical and colonizing relationships between the researchers and those who are researched. It is this disjunction that has given rise to the mission central of our work. We want to disrupt these practices. We wish to re-imagine the research process and its outcomes as racially healing, emancipatory, collaborative and community-driven.

The past year has offered us an opportunity to engage in partnership with multiple community organizations to explore core ideas in emancipatory research approaches as they apply to and emerge from practitioner and community-based experiences. We have sought to learn with and from our community partners even as we sought to teach. This toolkit is the outcome of our reflections and learning, dedicated to supporting readers/users as they explore their own conceptualizations of the nature and function of research, interact with their own organizational teams as they prepare for community-engagement, and intentionally adopt emancipatory concepts and research frameworks in their everyday work.

The relevance and urgency of this work are underscored by our contemporary sociopolitical realities. Instead of celebrating the diverse histories and funds of knowledge of our communities, too many decision makers see political expediency in exploiting our differences. Such policies must be called out, interrupted and replaced with inclusive, egalitarian and emancipatory approaches to community building and community healing.

We are thankful to the Kellogg Foundation for the grant that made this work possible, and the many individuals who were willing to engage with us each week as we operationalized what it meant to “do the work” of emancipatory research in communities. That many noted that they “found community” with us and resonated with the ideas discussed, validated the need for and the nature of emancipatory research central to this project. This toolkit is dedicated to the “next step” in these efforts.
BERA FOUNDERS

Cirecie West-Olatunji, Ph.D.
Charisse Southwell, Ph.D.
Melanie Acosta, Ph.D.
Adamma DuCille
Nadia Bryan Clarke
Dilys Schoorman, Ph.D.
This toolkit has been designed to support your onward journey in community-centered, emancipatory research practices. It is intended to ease the translation of the theories and concepts learned into your everyday practices as community-engaged practitioners. It is not a set of “recipes” but instead serves as a guide for reflection and action. Expect to encounter the following components:

1. **Summaries and extensions** of the key ideas that were discussed in the modules. We integrate the perspectives of key scholars in excerpts that we hope are accessible, meaningful, relevant and inspiring.

2. **Graphic organizers and exercises** to support the application of theories and concepts into practice.

3. **Individual and collective reflections** on your role and assumptions as a researcher, your team and its needs, your communities of practice and the purpose and process of research.

4. **Case scenarios** (Need more!) for your consideration as an individual or as research teams.

5. **Resources** (quotes, readings, videos, instruments) for further, ongoing study and deepening understanding.

There is no “right way” on how you engage with this toolkit. You may pick whatever is most relevant to your immediate learning needs, in whatever sequence, and/or keep returning to the same exercise to review first as an individual, then as a team and later on as you work in the greater community.

Consequently, you may find yourself sometimes moving in “straight lines” as you establish what might be a relevant sequence of activities to do or ideas to consider; at other times you may move in “cycles” as you consider the applicability of research constructs within the community project on which you are working; you might find yourself working in deepening “spirals” as your knowledge about the community and/or the research process becomes more detailed and complex; or you may find yourself pausing to reflect or introspect more deeply on a topic, a problem, bias or assumption.

**What this toolkit is NOT:**
- It is not a “how to” set of prescriptions for what you should do next. Those are your decisions to make in consultation with your teams and the community.
- It is not a “workbook” meant to enhance discreet research skills through practice. But it is intended to support your reflections and decision making as you consider your “next steps” in community-based emancipatory research.
The urgent imperative for emancipatory approaches to research is premised on the need to disrupt the hegemonic history of research practices as well as contemporary challenges to equity and justice. The following quotations offer food for thought for the journey ahead. Consider how they might be instructive or inspirational for the journey ahead.

Reflection:

1. How do these rationales inform why you would want to undertake emancipatory research?
2. How might they cue your consciousness to patterns and practices of research about which you were unaware?

Mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304).

The social sciences ... are products of an American society with deeply racialized roots. ... If we are going to be more effective as social scientists, we have no choice but to incorporate anti-racialist norms and values in how we think and in how we create and use epistemologies, theories, and methods to examine and explain human experiences. (Stanfield, 1999, pp. 420; 424)
We have a history of people putting the Maori under a microscope in the same way a scientist looks at an insect. The ones doing the looking are giving themselves the power to define. (Mita, 1989. cited in Smith, 2012, p. 61)

These systems for organizing, classifying and storing new knowledge, and for theorizing the meanings of such discoveries, constituted research. In a colonial context, however, this research was undeniably also about power and domination. The instruments or technologies of research were also instruments of knowledge and instruments for legitimating various colonial practices.

The objects of research do not have a voice and do not contribute to research or science. In fact, the logic of the argument would suggest that it is simply impossible, ridiculous even, to suggest that the object of research can contribute to anything. An object has no life force, no humanity, no spirit of its own, so there fore 'it' cannot make an active contribution. This perspective is not deliberately insensitive; it is simply that the rules did not allow such a thought to enter the scene. Thus, indigenous Asian, American, Pacific and African forms of knowledge, systems of classification, technologies and codes of social life, which began to be recorded in some detail by the seventeenth century were regarded as 'new discoveries' by Western science. These discoveries were commodified as property belonging to the cultural archive and body of knowledge of the West. (Smith, 2012, pp. 63; 64).
Data integration by local and state governments is undertaken for the public good to support the interconnected needs of families and communities. Though data infrastructure is a powerful tool to support equity-oriented reforms, racial equity is rarely centered or prioritized as a core goal for data integration. This raises fundamental concerns, as integrated data increasingly provide the raw materials for evaluation, research, and risk modeling. Generally, institutions have not adequately examined and acknowledged structural bias in their history, or the ways in which data reflect systemic racial inequities in the development and administration of policies and programs. Meanwhile, civic data users and the public are rarely consulted in the development and use of data systems. .... Centering racial equity within data integration efforts is not a binary outcome, but rather a series of small steps towards more equitable practice. There are countless ways to center racial equity across the data life cycle. (Hawn Nelson & Zanti, 2002)

We must stop trying to benefit ourselves and engage in the process of researching for the greater good of our communities. (Tyson, 2003, p. 23)

The work we have to do must be done in the public interest. ... The questions we pursue, the projects we choose, the agenda we champion have to be about more than career advancement. If educational research is going to matter, then we have to make it matter in the lives of people around real issues. (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 10).
We are living in an age of open and violent Fascism, a Fascism that targets people of color, uppity women, the disabled, religious minorities, and our Queer and Trans children. All of us must be brave—for the coming decades—so we speak the truth as we understand it. And please remember, we are NEVER alone, and we are NOT helpless. We, in conjunction with our colleagues, must use the privileges that we have, to make this violent world a better place in which all children not merely survive, but that they thrive. (Lugg, 2022).

References


BERA has undertaken a purpose that is deeply felt, is historically and culturally rooted, and urgent. The BERA team is committed to research that takes a culturally-centered, specifically an Afri-centered perspective to our research and community collaborations. Such a perspective is holistic, rather than fragmented, and pervades our worldview (cosmology), epistemology (approaches to research) and axiology (the values we bring to the research process.) Our experiences as professionals and colleagues in diverse but related communities of practice have helped us to forge a set of values and purposes that have been honed over the years that we have worked together. We summarize the central tenets of our approach in terms of the following Adinkra concepts.

**Boa Me Na Me Mmoa Wo**
Signifies unity, cooperation and social transformation. Rooted in the notion of community, which – for BERA – is grounded in the history, philosophy, scholarship and lived experience of Black Liberatory Praxis. We believe that communities must be healthy and strong in multifaceted and holistic ways in order for the institutions that emerge within them, to be healthy and do work that is healing, rather than inflicting more harm.

**Wo Nsa Da mu A**
Signifying participatory governance, democracy and pluralism this is the antithesis of colonization and exploitation, helping us to refocus how we will engage in and with research. We have all been involved in research activities with communities about which we care deeply, and so let’s reclaim and recenter community voices so that the research that is done in communities is no longer colonizing and damaging in its purpose or processes. Central to this purpose is a commitment to learn with and from one another: community research work is done in, with and for community.

**Fawohodie**
Signifies independence and emancipation, freeing us from traditional conceptions of who does research, who has access to research, who conceptualizes its purpose and what constitutes research. This concept reflects our hope not merely to change how individuals do research but rather develop something far beyond the sum of individual parts: an ecosystem that serves to reclaim, preserve and sustain a way of doing and being as researchers and community members.
Sankofa
Signifies going back to get what we need from the past in order to build the future that we want, need, and deserve. It is important to remember this history while moving forward in efforts for positive progress. The heart-shaped symbol represents the reconciliation of and connection between the past and the future.

Reflection:

1. How do these values resonate with your own vision and mission for community-based research?

2. What additional or different values might be salient in your own community research?

3. What might culture-centered research practices look like for you in the communities that you serve?
Afrocentric emancipatory methodology focuses on the cultural, historical, and contemporary experiences of Blacks, the significance of those experiences, the uniqueness of Black experiences and their relationships to others and strengthening relationships between the academic and nonacademic community.

An Afrocentric emancipatory methodology consists of a) using qualitative methods to general practical knowledge about forces that affect the lives of African Americans; b) using understandings generated from qualitative inquiry to describe and analyze empirical realities of the relationships identified; c) identifying any apparent contradictions as well as convergence of the group's understandings and “objective” reality; d) participating in a program of education and action with the individual(s) under study by presenting findings and developing tools that empower the individual(s); and e) identifying and conducting research that will generate practical and emancipatory knowledge and new theories. (Tillman, 2002, pp. 5-6)
A Framework for Culturally Sensitive Research Approaches for African Americans

Tillman (2002)

Culturally congruent research methods
Methods to capture holistic, contextualized pictures of the social, political, economic and educational factors that affect the everyday existence of African Americans.

Culturally specific knowledge
The particular and unique self-defined experiences of African Americans; maintaining the cultural integrity of the participants and community.

Culturally sensitive data interpretations
Experiential knowledge is legitimate, appropriate, and necessary for analyzing, understanding and reporting data, including storytelling, family histories, and other forms of data presentation. Analysis is co-constructed.

Cultural resistance to theoretical dominance
Challenging the unequal power relations that may minimize, marginalize, subjugate, or exclude the multiple realities and knowledge bases of African Americans, including research privilege, claims of neutrality and objectivity in research.

Culturally informed theory and practice
Researchers rely on participants’ perspectives and cultural understandings of the phenomena to establish connections between espoused theory and reality and then to generate theory based on these endarkened perspectives.
Six assumptions of endarkened feminist epistemology (Dillard, 2000, p. 662)

1. Self-definition forms one's participation and responsibility to one's community

2. Research is both an intellectual and a spiritual pursuit of purpose

3. Only within the context of community does the individual appear and, through dialogue, continue to become

4. Concrete experiences within everyday life form the criterion meaning, the “matrix of meaning-making”

5. Knowing and research extend both historically in time and outward to the world

6. Power relations, manifest as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc, structure gender, race, and other identity relations within research
Before researchers become researchers they should become philosophers. ... Research requires philosophy, which captures why we do this work and who we are in the work as much as what we do not do and who we are not. ... An essential pathway to knowledge is not just asking what to do or how to do something, but also asking oneself, “How about not doing this? How about not doing that?” (Huaman, 2019, p. 172)

There are also community-based conditions that fall to the researcher to respect and remember, among them that indigenous peoples (a) hold valid and globally vital local ancestral and innovative knowledge systems; (b) are committed to the work of Indigeneity, which includes cultural autonomy, remembrance and retrieval, self-sufficiency, and community-based values that are linguistically expressed and evident through cultural practice; (c) are distinct and share similar and different narratives and experiences of colonisation; and (d) are interested in and concerned with what has happened/is happening/can or will happen in different Indigenous places and among other Indigenous peoples. (p. 180)

Indigenous innovation: (a) is distinctive, already at the centre, as theory, process and practice that is driven by Indigenous people; (b) seeks to restore, reclaim, protect, maintain and revitalise local Indigenous knowledge linked with Indigenous cultural practices and languages; (c) draws upon local Indigenous knowledge systems; (d) is equipped to conscientiously respond to imperialisms and their strategies, including colonisation and capitalism; (e) creates spaces where metanarratives are problematised, approaches evaluated and re-evaluated, and tensions appropriately addressed; (f) opens, expands and rebuilds dialogue within and between indigenous communities; (g) explores and builds connections with other knowledge systems (i.e. Western modern science); and (h) is concerned with how Indigenous people benefit and for how long. (p. 179)

Indigenous ideals in research:
• Honouring human and environmental/natural world relationships and therefore showing interest in phenomena that endanger these relationships (i.e. environmental, cultural and linguistic shifts and losses); Highlighting priorities of local Indigenous knowledge systems and maintaining rootedness in communities wherever they are;
• Acknowledging interrelatedness among problems and solutions, such as imperialist discourses and decolonial knowledge;
• Promoting ways of understanding Indigenous connections across time and space (e.g. research as locally and globally relevant where the stance is a given, but the conditions are explored);
• Engaging collaboration where collaboration is an ongoing two-way relationship built and maintained among multiple collaborators, including, but not limited to, communities and researchers within different populations and programmes in community, across participating communities, and with other stakeholders, funders, or external agencies;
• Concern with creating and furthering Indigenous spaces for research dialogue, both within and outside of the community;
• Supporting communities through contribution of self-knowledge, new knowledge and practical proposals to address historical injustices, current manifestations and the anticipation of new challenges; and
• Celebrating the diversity of research approaches that collectively work towards benefiting all beings. (p. 180)
Clarifying your Values as Community-Engaged Practitioners

How will your values (axiology) impact your role as a researcher (epistemology)?

The following is an exercise intended to make explicit your values and their potential impact on your practice. It is best done individually first, then in small groups and finally as a whole group with your team. They do not have to be done on the same day.

If you wish, you could also engage in more critical reflection to identify individual current values vs. what they should be. The discussion at the level of the team ought to consider what should be when engaging the community in research.

**Individual Values**
Identify 2-3 central values that govern who you are as a person, a professional and/or a citizen. List them in the values column for the individual in the table below. Then, consider how each of these values will translate to your work as a researcher. How would you recognize them in practice? Briefly describe them in the “practice” column.

Consider how the ideas you have listed have the potential to disrupt hegemonic practices in society and in research. If there are additional ideas to add as values and actions that you should adopt, note them on the table as well.

**Small Group Discussion**
In small groups (2-3 people) share one another’s values with each person taking turns to share one value at a time. Discuss the salience of each idea, considering the convergence and divergence of perspectives. It is important to discuss divergent perspectives to identify the bases of differences, identify common ground as appropriate and/or appreciate dialectical tensions. Then, based on your discussion, identify 2-3 research values that you would collectively recommend to the team and how one would enact them in practice. Your small group recommendations could be values you share in common, completely new values or amalgamations of ideas that emerged from your discussion.

**Team Discussion**
The purpose of this stage of the discussion is to consider what your team wishes to adopt as its values, particularly in the context of community-engaged research. Each small group should report on the values that they identified as a collective and how they see those values enacted. Individuals may use the table below to record the ideas presented. It is optimal to be able to record the ideas presented in a shared format (e.g. a whiteboard; flipchart; shared document).

A representative of each small group should discuss one value at a time, but it should be noted if multiple groups share the same value. Adequate time needs to be dedicated for thorough discussion of all values.
The task thereafter is to identify 3-4 (number is arbitrary) core values that your research team would like to uphold. These values will hopefully anchor your team's culture and norms as community partners as well as your specific research practices with the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Small Group</th>
<th>Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If this exercise on values works out for your team, then the process can be adopted for other decision making as well.
References/ Resources

https://www.adinkrasymbols.org/


Our collective hope is to move towards a conceptualization of research that is democratic, inclusive, and emancipatory. Traditional approaches to research have fallen short of those ideals and have been harmful to community wellbeing. What might our journey towards re-imagining research look like? We offer the following for your consideration. As you review each of these ideas, consider where you would locate the research that your organization wants to conduct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moving away from .....</th>
<th>Moving towards .....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research in whose interest?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research in whose interest?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Individual researchers</td>
<td>- Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Government</td>
<td>- Vulnerable/ marginalized/ disenfranchised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Private funding agencies</td>
<td>- Research ethics: Make a positive difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research ethics: Do no harm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whose research questions?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research questions/ topics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions/ topics emerge from:</td>
<td>Questions/ topics emerge from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Political agendas</td>
<td>- Community needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Individual researchers' interests</td>
<td>- Community-identified problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Priorities of funding agencies</td>
<td>- Social injustices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who/what is problematized/ studied?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Who/what is problematized/ studied?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems defined in terms of individual/ group “pathologies”</td>
<td>- Systems/ structures/ practices that create the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Deficit-orientations of community that research will “fix”</td>
<td>- Community as asset-based; what is working well, how and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “Symptoms” of the problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who does/ is ‘allowed’ to do research?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Who does/ is ‘allowed’ to do research?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Isolated few</td>
<td>- Multiple types of “experts” including local knowers/ elders/leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- University professors/ clinicians</td>
<td>- Democratizing research in terms of who does it, frames and designs it, gathers and analyzes data and verifies conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Those with highly specialized training/education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “Experts” in a topic area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of the researcher</strong></td>
<td><strong>Role of the researcher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dispassionate, neutral, ‘objective’</td>
<td>- Concerned about community wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conducts research on community members</td>
<td>- Conducts research with community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of the community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Role of the community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Passive; objects of research</td>
<td>- Research in/ with community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “Data”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEFINING THE ‘PROBLEM’ TO INVESTIGATE

Case illustration:

Many educators define the disparities in test scores between different race or gender groups as a problem that needs to be resolved. To narrow the test score gap, they take students out of their ‘special’ classes such as art, music, PE to provide additional test preparation, so that the student can score higher on the test. The assumption is that it is the students who lack knowledge and skills to do well on the standardized tests. However, taking students out of the very classes that motivate them to staying engaged with schoolwork, typically has the opposite effect. Students are demoralized, causing teachers resort to “drill and kill” memorization tactics to transmit largely culturally irrelevant information for short term learning. On the other hand, we have evidence that students who are consistently exposed to culturally meaningful curriculum, engaged pedagogy and an inclusive classroom/school environment where learning is joyful and intellectually challenging do well – even on standardized tests. Consequently, if we define the problem as the ‘deficits’ in students’ knowledge and skills, rather than as a problem with curriculum that is personally and culturally relevant, we end up with different outcomes. Research focused on student deficits might “investigate” how best to fix the students; research focused on deficits in the curriculum will focus on how best to fix the curriculum.

1. What is it that you wish to investigate?

2. If you are investigating a “problem”:
   - What is the data/evidence that indicates that a problem exists?
   - Who has defined the problem?
   - Do multiple stakeholders agree on the problem definition?

3. To what extent does your problem definition counter the pathologizing of communities to highlight community assets?

4. How do the structures, policies, and practices of institutions related to the community feature in your problem definition and solution seeking?

Note: this does not mean that every problem does not have its individual dimension, nor is every institutional structure inherently problematic. But it does require us to think about how we overcome the known pitfalls of problem definition.
Reflections:

How might community needs and wellbeing be centered in:

a) the WHY (rationale) of our research?
b) the WHAT (topic and goals) of our research?
c) the HOW of our research?

How does your research illustrate the journey away from the concerns identified to the aspirations of research for community well being? Use the table below to reflect on the changes you wish to make in your own individual and/or collective community-based research practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moving away from .....</th>
<th>Moving towards .....</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
Food for thought

Research that is justice-oriented is an undertaking where:
- The rationale for the study is grounded in extant social injustices
- The goals/purpose of the study is to minimize/eliminate the injustices or the conditions that gave rise to them
- The research questions emerge from the interests of the researched who are marginalized by the injustices
- The underlying epistemological stance is one that reflects research with the researched not on them
- Research design and methodologies reflect multiple loci of expertise (where the researchers are not perceived as the sole “experts”, and where community members’ value as co-researchers is recognized)
- Participation in the research process is viewed as beneficial or emancipatory by both the researcher and the researched
- The outcome of the research process is the alleviation, amelioration or elimination of a facet of the injustice that gave rise to the study (Schoormans, 2014, p. 221)

From:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modes</th>
<th>Dominant research methodologies</th>
<th>Epistemically-just methodologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing</td>
<td>Data largely comprise text and number</td>
<td>Data are anything that is socially produced in inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilization of familiar and widely used methods of design and data collection stemming from Western scientific tradition</td>
<td>Experimental and immanent methods are used drawing from all forms of human and nature creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The research is led by the researchers from start to finish</td>
<td>The research is an unfolding, negotiated process of exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing</td>
<td>Research questions arise from gaps in existing research that are considered important to address</td>
<td>Research questions arise in articulation of problems experienced in social life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Justification for research is that nobody has done this before</td>
<td>Justification for research is that it will achieve epistemic justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Findings are published in select outlets whose prices make them inaccessible to those outside universities</td>
<td>Findings are made available in forms accessible to those outside universities as well as those within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being</td>
<td>Universities advance students and academics who reflect dominant knowledge values</td>
<td>Universities advance people whose knowledges tell us more about human life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students and academics in universities wishing to gain membership of the “marked” group adopt familiar (safe) research methods without contestation</td>
<td>People wishing to address problems and seek change are welcomed as contributors to a pluriversity fostering ecologies of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researchers value certain knowledges over others modeling this to their students without conscious critique of their colonial origins</td>
<td>Knowledge-seekers and knowledge-makers establish a tradition of sustainable connections that are alert to colonial histories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Post-Emancipatory Research training de-brief with your teams

The eight Emancipatory Research modules offered numerous ideas that resonated with many participants each week. It will not be possible to integrate all these ideas all at once into your community work. This reflective activity aims to help you prioritize and tailor key ideas that you believe are most relevant right now for your organizational contexts. The focus of this activity is to think about how the ideas of the ER training will benefit your team as you facilitate collective self-reflection on emancipatory practice.

Step 1: Identifying key take-aways from the ER training

As you think about the excitement, affirmation, the “aha” moments and “dots connected” through the training experience, a) identify the most salient insights that you believe will be relevant to your team and b) consider how these ideas can be used to modify/ enhance how your team operates. Each of your ideas could be a concept directly from one of the modules or could be a combination of specific ideas that you have integrated to capture your insight. Use the table below to begin your reflection or feel free to develop your own reflective tool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection – Key “Take-aways” from the ER training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Idea #1:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why this idea is significant to me:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might this idea enhance the work of the team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any challenges to integrating this idea among the team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Idea #2:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why this idea is significant to me:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might this idea enhance the work of the team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any challenges to integrating this idea among the team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Idea #3:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why this idea is significant to me:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might this idea enhance the work of the team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any challenges to integrating this idea among the team?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Communicating the relevance of ideas

Consider how you will share this knowledge with your team. This could occur in multiple steps. For example, you could have informal conversations with team members about these ideas to gauge support and solicit feedback for how the ideas might work in your context. Thereafter, you could offer a brief presentation at a team meeting (e.g. 10 minute powerpoint presentation) to solicit discussion and feedback around your ideas. Note: It always helps to share your excitement and enthusiasm about what you learned.

Once you present your ideas, it is important for the team to have an opportunity to discuss what they have heard (ensuring the voices of all participants), what ideas/questions they might have, and how you will "translate" or adapt the ideas in your work. Be sure to record/document the feedback for your future planning. Consider the following:

- Do the ideas presented resonate with your team?
- If yes, do they resonate in the same way? If no, why not?
- What additional ideas emerge from the collective discussion?

NB: While this could be your opportunity to practice emancipatory engagement with your team (instead of imposing ideas on them), we must also recognize that you could have team members steeped in the problematic traditions that ER challenges. Addressing these dynamics will require strategies unique to your specific context, but the experience will be important groundwork before you begin to engage with the broader community.

Step 3: Agenda setting for next steps

Now that the team has had an opportunity to consider the ideas presented, what happens next? What might be the short term and long-term outcomes of this discussion? Note that such outcomes could be simple actions/commitments that shift the culture or ways of being among the team and/or how the team operates. The focus of these steps should prioritize ongoing learning and development among the team. (e.g. a practice of using team meetings to briefly share ideas that a team member learned through a training opportunity where appropriate.) Document 1-2 actions/commitments that the team might collectively agree on and be sure to follow up on them. If it helps, use the following planning chart.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Action/ date</th>
<th>Individual/s responsible</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Implementation/ Timeline</th>
<th>Follow Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Proposed action (Action/date)
Individual/s responsible
Audience
Implementation strategies and timeline
Follow up (as appropriate)
As you think about the journey and the work you are about to undertake, please take time as individuals or in your teams to identify the strengths and gifts that you each bring to the process of community-based emancipatory research praxis. Consider the historical knowledge of communities, practical wisdom, principles that guide (or should guide) your work, pitfalls of past and present operational realities and your individual and collective priorities. [See graphic]

People: Who is represented?

Practical Wisdom: Insights from the community

Principles: Rules of engagement and related values

Pitfalls: Challenges past and present

Priorities: Sequencing next steps
We offer a few questions below to help in your brainstorming and reflection. Identify 2-3 responses for each dimension.

**People:**
What characterizes your “people” power?
Who is at the table and what community wisdom do they bring?
Who (individuals; groups) is represented by the people in your team?
How are connections to those they represent nurtured/maintained?
Who is not (yet) represented and how might their knowledge/perspectives be accessed? How do egalitarianism vs. hierarchy in relationships manifest your team/organization and/or community partnerships?

**Practical Wisdom**
Each of you represents organizations rich in community-based advocacy. Please reflect on your experiences and practice and highlight 2-3 key “lessons learned” about engaging in/for equity in the community.

**Principles**
What are the core principles that govern your team/organization?
How are they manifested in your routine interactions with the community?
How do your principles frame your relationship with the communities you serve?
What are the values related to these principles central to your group?

**Pitfalls**
What are the challenges experienced within each of the community-based organizations with which you work? To what extent might these challenges/pitfalls be associated with inequity? What changes do you wish to see in how you engage with your constituent communities? What pitfalls do you note in any of the following?

a) Language used to describe people, communities or issues (consider deficit vs asset-based terminology; linguistic biases)

b) Assumptions made about relationships that reveal implicit hierarchies vs. equality; charity-vs. justice orientations; exploitative/predatory vs. communitarian practices.

**Priorities**
What are your most urgent priorities with regard to:

a) what research and data that your organization would like to gather/use/make accessible?

b) how research and data will be used and for what purposes?
The following ideas are offered to support your critical consciousness about the challenges of doing meaningful emancipatory work. They are not intended to deter you, but to serve as guideposts and reminders to support more meaningful and impactful engagement in the community.

“One and done” actions
We assume that a single action, (e.g. placing members of the community on a decision making committee), has allowed us to ‘check the box’ on emancipatory research. The quest for emancipation is an ongoing struggle. Once we integrate community members on the committee, we need to think about next steps. How well are their unique voices integrated into our deliberations? In what way do they significantly re-shape in emancipatory ways the work that we engage in? We need to constantly evaluate our current actions and envision next steps in our engagement with/towards emancipatory practices.

Focus on symptoms and not the root causes
It is understandable that our first steps focus on alleviating symptoms of problems (e.g. feeding the hungry, offering mobile health clinics etc.) and consequently our data gathering and analysis also highlights the symptoms. However, we are cautioned that our efforts to treat symptoms without working to disrupt the causes, may only perpetuate oppressions. Critical consciousness about the link between symptoms and their systemic causes will contribute to the emancipatory nature of our quests.

Research priorities determined by available funding and external deadlines
While funding is fundamental to our ability to engage in meaningful work, we must be conscious about how our research priorities might be (re-) shaped by external funding opportunities. When a direct match between our research agendas and funders’ agendas is not evident, we must consider how the work we do is not compromised by externally driven priorities and timelines.

We need to be “neutral”
Many of us work in challenging contexts in which the very focus of emancipatory, justice- oriented work is under attack. The “community” that is the audience of our daily work might consist of those who have an antipathy to racial justice, just as there are those whose daily lives are adversely affected by injustice and oppression. Neutrality in the face of these divergent perspectives does not
represent the ideals of democracy or fairness; it will only perpetuate hegemony and injustice. Emancipatory research is unambiguous about a commitment to racial healing, restorative practices and a commitment to the greater common good that is uncompromising in its advocacy for those marginalized by hegemony.

**Commitment to methodology over human wellbeing**
Too often researchers define “good research” as adhering to methodological fidelity, i.e. if one follows the steps of a research method with meticulous care, the outcome of the research will be sound. Sound methodology is necessary but not sufficient in emancipatory research. The goodness of research must be understood in terms of the wellbeing of the community within/for which such research is conducted. While Institutional Review Boards that review research at institutions require that we “do no harm” in our research, emancipatory research pushes us beyond: how do we do we make a positive difference within our communities?

**Studying people, not systems**
While our data gathering often occurs at the individual level, emancipatory research requires us to focus on the systems within which people live and work. What does this data tell us about systems – both policies and practices? We are urged to maintain a critical bifocality that allows for both individual and system level analysis: studying people in the context of systems. Studying people without a commitment to understanding, critiquing and transforming the systems that perpetuate an inequitable status quo will generate limited insights for transformative action.

**Underestimating our own agency**
The commitment to systemic change is often overwhelming – how can I change a system? The essence of emancipatory work is that it is collective. There is agency and power in collaboration. Furthermore, do not underestimate your voice and your capacity to safeguard community knowledge. If you have been invited to participate on a committee it is because you have something unique to offer. Speak truth to power when the opportunity arises.

**Resources:**


Key to becoming research literate is understanding and applying concepts central to emancipatory research processes. What follows is a list of terms that might be useful to review as one considers next steps. The idea here is not to memorize vocabulary but rather to understand ‘big ideas’ that will enhance our research and community-based practice.

**Community Stakeholder-Scholar Model TM:** Allows community members to approach their work as formal research projects and to use empirical evidence in everyday practice.

**Critical consciousness** - The ability to reflect on one’s personal biases in working collaboratively with individuals and community stakeholders to take action and transform existing obstacles to a satisfactory quality of life.

**Cultural Marginalization/Minoritization** - When groups of people are pushed to the edge of society and accorded lesser value than those in the mainstream.

**Decolonization** - Right and agency of all people to practice self-determination; for all to practice self-determination.

**Deficit-oriented research** – research that is premised on and subsequently reinforces the stereotyping and pathologizing of historically underserved groups.

**Diunital** – Rather than making either/or, apparent opposing concepts coexist.

**Ecosystemic** – Taking a holistic approach to investigations that includes the socio-political-cultural environment.

**Emancipatory** – (both in terms of process and outcomes); having cultural, social, ideological and political freedom.

**Ethnocentrism** – Belief that one’s own cultural values are superior to others.

**Hegemony/hegemonic** – A system of power, hierarchy or belief internalized and accepted by the dominated.

**Intersectionality** - Recognition that individuals experience multiple identities simultaneously.

**Reflexive Practice** – The process wherein the community and the researcher engage in continuous self-critique and assess the ecological contexts that influence their research processes.

**Sampling bias** – The failure to include diverse populations and groups in the sampling, but generalizing the results of this biased sample to all groups.

**Trans subjectivity** - An ability to know beyond one’s individual self, outside of objectivity.
Terms and Meanings

The words we use to describe our world often shape our thinking. Yet the same words don’t always mean the same to everyone. While glossaries provide us conceptual definitions for common understanding, applying these terms in practice might yield different operational definitions, depending on our contexts. Consequently, we must be mindful of our intended meanings and how our words are understood by those around us, and are put into practice in our community-based research endeavors.

Here are a few to consider. Please add your own as appropriate:

- Empowerment (What does this entail? Who is empowered? By whom/what? How?)
- Poor/Poverty (Describes people or policy? Experiences or possessions?)
- Wealthy/Wealth (Who has it? Who does not? As a consequence of what policy, practice or assumptions?)
- Literate/Literacy (What are the different forms of literacy salient to the work?)
- Community (a set of people; or a feeling experienced in common by them?)
- Trust (as a function of a relationship; what its presence or absence looks like)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>How you wish to define it</th>
<th>How you recognize it in practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection #1: Host vs. Guest relationships in community partnerships

For each of us, we are either a host or a guest in our community partnerships: that is, we were either invited into a collaboration or we invited partners to collaborate with us. Either entry point requires important considerations for our role in a community collaboration. The following are reflections designed to clarify and improve your role in the partnership as you move towards a truly reciprocal collaboration.

1. Who invited whom to the table?
2. For what/whose purpose?
3. How might the power dynamics shift based on who invited whom and their purposes?
4. What are the stated and unstated role expectations?
5. What are the stated and unstated expectations of who has decision making power?
6. Who makes decisions over the budget?
7. Are their role relationships that need to be clarified?

Recommendations for Guests
- Assess the invitation: Inclusive or exploitative?
- Honor the culture/ norms of hosts
- Fulfill with professionalism the role you have been invited to play
- Learn from and with your (under- represented) hosts
- As under-represented guests – stay true to your values, needs

Recommendations for Hosts
- Recognize that your culture/ norms/ language could be different/ alienating for guests
- Actively develop an inclusive climate for participation
  Value the insights of guests in the capacities they seek to offer it
- Develop the capacity to listen, particularly to unfamiliar perspectives
- Assess benefits to guest vs. you
- Build coalitions to better inform practice
Reflection #2: Moving from “expert” to “co-learner”

Community collaborations are necessarily coalitions comprising members with diverse talents. While we each bring a certain “expertise” to the table, others on the team each have valuable contributions to make. This reflection supports the movement from individual expert to a collaborative co-learner.

1. How is “expertise” understood? Who is deemed knowledgeable about what?
2. What might an “outsider-in” or “bottom-up” perspective of your institution reveal - as perceived by those traditionally marginalized in society?
3. What are the varied “literacies” and “illiteracies” that you bring to the partnership?
4. What are the explicit ways in which traditionally marginalized voices are honored?
5. How do traditionally privileged members demonstrate capacity for listening?
6. How is collective learning facilitated? What does that process look like?

Reflection #3: Moving from deficits to asset-based perspectives

Mainstream/dominant perspectives on research and on communities often frame difference in terms of deficits. It is important for us to be critically conscious about this framing and interrupt such characterizations and their implications for problem definition, data collection and analysis, recommendations and dissemination.

1. Consider how community partners, particularly those of historically marginalized backgrounds, are described and depicted in the literature and media you use and produce.

2. To what extent are the goals and processes of your partnerships framed in terms of “fixing” particular target groups vs. highlighting their strengths with the aim of learning from them?

3. How does your organization’s framing of community problems highlight “deficiencies” that are individualized rather than broader social barriers? (e.g. a bread winner’s lack of a GED rather than the low minimum wage that places a family in poverty; immigrants framed as “problems” rather than assets in the community)

4. Can you name assets of the community that are central to the success of your community-based partnerships?

5. How do Black, Brown and Indigenous communities view the socio political, economic, civic, and/or educational structures within which they operate? For those marginalized by these structures, what might a “view from below” of these structure yield? How might these communities view the collaborative research in which they participate?
Reflection #4: Enhancing Collective Community Well-being

In an essay exploring the concept of “good” research, Hostetler (2005) noted that typical definitions of “good research” were largely linked to the methodological fidelity of the research design, rather than a conceptualization of “good” research as one that attended to the wellbeing of the community.

1. Is collective community well-being enhanced or diminished by your community partnerships? To what extent does your organization facilitate vs. counteract a collaborative vs. divisive orientation to community?

2. Do you adopt a “Failure is not an Option” approach to any goal/task? If so, what would that be? How might you articulate what you have learned through community partnership? What is the relevance/significance of such learning?

3. How do you move from projects of mutual benefit for individual partners to projects of community health and well-being?
Levels of community-engaged research

A central facet of emancipatory research is the researcher-community relationship. Emancipatory research practice advocates for engaging in collaborative research with communities as opposed to conducting research on communities. How might we move from a hierarchical research relationship to one where the academic researchers are seen as fellow learners within the community?

Reflection:
1. Which of the following diagrams best depicts
   a) your current research relationships?
   b) your desired research relationships?
3. What would be the “next steps” in your journey towards an emancipatory research relationship? Consider what you like to change, why you would like to change and how you might change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What needs to change</th>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>How?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. What tangible benefits will accrue, and to whom from the changes you make?
Typologies of Community Engagement Relationships

Scholars and institutions have offered a variety of typologies that support our journey towards more emancipatory and healing research relationships. Three are presented below. Consider their usefulness to your own conceptualization of desired research relationships.

### Transformative

- Outcomes unattainable w/out community;
- Community leadership in framing problems; managing solutions

### Transmission

- Two-way communication; limited community control

### Transactional

- Providing information, funds and/or volunteer time


### Community as partner

- Shared decision making; equal partnership

### Community as advisor

- Community provides guidance/supervision/input

### Community as source

- Community provides access to participants/facilities

### Community as audience

- Researchers share knowledge/research findings with community

Adapted from: Florida Atlantic University Office of Community Engagement https://www.fau.edu/community/about/Levels%20of%20Engagement.pdf
Swartz & Nyamnjoh (2018) outlined a continuum of engagement between researchers and the communities in which they conducted research. Their three-part typology outlined research that was interactive, participatory and emancipatory. A summary of these distinctions is offered in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Interactive</th>
<th>Participatory</th>
<th>Emancipatory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>A commitment to <em>applied</em> knowledge and the <em>co-construction</em> of knowledge</td>
<td>A commitment to <em>mutual and sustainable learning</em>, self-reflection and the <em>empowerment</em> of research participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Slight inclusion; <em>shared power on researcher’s terms</em></td>
<td>Modest inclusion; <em>shared power</em></td>
<td>Complete inclusion (or partnership on participants’ terms); researcher <em>relinquishes power</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion and power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research agenda</td>
<td>Research agenda is <em>predetermined</em></td>
<td>Research agenda is developed through <em>consultation</em></td>
<td>Participants <em>choose research agenda</em>, enlist services of researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>Research is <em>already designed</em> when research commences</td>
<td><em>Joint planning of design</em></td>
<td>Design is <em>initiated</em> by participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination</td>
<td>Dissemination is decided by <em>researcher</em></td>
<td>Dissemination is a <em>shared</em> responsibility</td>
<td><em>Participants decide</em> what is done with the research findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorship</td>
<td><em>Retained</em> authorship</td>
<td><em>Joint</em> authorship</td>
<td><em>Relinquished</em> authorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Research is <em>mine</em></td>
<td>Research is <em>ours</em></td>
<td>Research is <em>theirs</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Swartz and Nyamnjoh (2018) also analyzed four research projects in which Swartz has been engaged to consider to what extent they exemplified the different approaches. They asked the following questions about each project and then used the yes/no response to place the project on this three-part continuum. These questions may be useful in your own explorations of your research practices.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Interactive</th>
<th>Participatory</th>
<th>Emancipatory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How have the chosen research activities allowed participants to be engaged and for their voices to be heard polyphonically?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What evidence is there of transparency and self-reflection to make clear the researcher’s politics of involvement?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How has the researcher attempted to develop respect and trust in order to diminish inherent power differences?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How have decisions about language and representation contributed to or prevented acolonizing discourse?</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To what extent are participants co-authors in the research or at least involved in ‘member checks’?</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To what extent are participants involved in its dissemination?</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What commitments have been made to mutuality, ‘research-as-intervention’ and an intentional ethic of reciprocation?</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. To what extent have participants been agents, that is, deciding on the problem of choosing and/or involved in the design of the research?</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. To what extent has space been provided for participants to continue the process of agency and self-emancipation?</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. To what extent has this research been emancipatory and relational rather than dominating and oppressive?</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflections:

1. To what extent is the continuum and the questions useful to you? Do you wish to make modifications in the questions to better fit your own context?

The different models representing levels of community engagement are integrated in the table below with a few additional concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Role of Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformative</strong></td>
<td>Emancipatory</td>
<td>Community as partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes unattainable without community; community leadership in framing problems and managing solutions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared decision making; equal partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transmission</strong></td>
<td>Participatory</td>
<td>Community as advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way communication; limited community control</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provides guidance/supervision/input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transactional</strong></td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Community as source/audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing information, funds and/or volunteer time</td>
<td></td>
<td>Voluntarily provides access to facilities/participants; receives findings from researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pathologizing</strong></td>
<td>Patronizing</td>
<td>Community as problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with community to ‘fix’ perceived cultural deficiencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Passive recipients of researchers’ designs, and sources for data gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exploitative</strong></td>
<td>Colonizing/Predatory</td>
<td>Community as victim/target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using community to enhance one’s research by expropriating data or inflicting harmful experiments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = Bowen et al (2010).
2 = Swartz & Nyamnjoh (2018)
3 = Florida Atlantic University Office of Community Engagement
Data collection and analysis are ongoing tasks, not merely an isolated phase in authentic community-based research. The search for confirming and disconfirming evidence must be ongoing until data saturation is reached.

The following table is designed to assist you in planning your research as it relates to data collection and analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Phase</th>
<th>Data sources and imperatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem Identification</strong></td>
<td>What are the data sources that have been consulted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who has defined the problem?</td>
<td>- Community elders/ leaders/ organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the ‘problem</td>
<td>- Community data bases/ archives/ newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identification’ reject individual/</td>
<td>- Prior community-based research and their outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community deficits?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the problem identification highlight historical patterns of structural inequality? Is the problem definition shaped by funders’ priorities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember: if we define the problem in culturally problematic ways, we will likely perpetuate culturally problematic research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there convergence/ divergence in perspectives?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing a Plan of Action

If community healing and emancipatory praxis is the goal, who decides on what action needs to be taken? How do we prioritize action steps?

How do we justify that our planned action a) does not perpetuate an inequitable status quo? b) is not culturally-blind/neutral? Who is accountable to whom for carrying out the action? On whose timeline? Develop a plan for a) implementation of action and b) data gathering on its effectiveness.

The plan of action could take the form of action research (i.e. community-based, participatory) which entails iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

What information/data drive the action plan?

How do community-based perspectives emergent in the problem identification inform action planning?

Whose voices and agency are prioritized in the action? Has existing literature informed the action? Is there clarity and agreement on who is responsible for completing the action?

Decide on what data will be used to determine success and/or lack of success, areas for improvement. Who will be responsible for data gathering and storage?

Those involved in implementing the action should take detailed field notes on the process and outcomes. Regular team meetings to evaluate the process will be optimal.

Evaluation of Action Plan

To what extent has the plan of action met the goals and expectations of the problem identification and action planning phases? What data supports success and/or lack of success?

What explanations can be offered for success or lack of success?

Remember: Transformation in an inequitable world will be a struggle. Identify and celebrate the small victories in the ongoing effort to make our communities kinder, humane, inclusive spaces for all.

Data to be gathered and analyzed:

Multiple stakeholder perspectives on the process and outcomes of the plan of action.

Identify and document evidence of positive outcomes as well as shortfalls.

Use quantitative and qualitative data that include participant and researcher perspectives during and following the action plan.

Data could include:
- Numerical measures of satisfaction, effectiveness, participation/engagement, impact/reach; pre- and post-test assessments
- Qualitative data from open-ended surveys, interviews, testimonials, researcher and/participant observations/field notes/journals

Dissemination of Results

Results are derived after multiple cycles of data analysis that seek to respond to questions about the effectiveness of the action plan and identify new knowledge that emerges.

Preliminary data/analysis should be shared with key stakeholders/participants for their input on the validity of the emerging findings. Consider how community members could be active participants in the dissemination of results.

Steps in analysis to derive results

- Initial data analysis by source (e.g. single case/site analysis; survey data; interviews)
- Cross data sources analysis (triangulation; search for patterns of convergence/divergence across multiple data sources)
- Comparison of findings with extant literature
Sharing of initial findings with participants and key stakeholders, if they have not been involved in previous steps; their responses may also be recorded as additional data.

- Collaborative constructions of the explanation of findings (what do these emerging findings mean?)
- Reflexive analysis: Asking if there is an alternate or different explanation for the results
- Exploring catalytic validity: What changes for the benefit of community, as identified by the community were facilitated by the research?
- Trans-subjectivity statement: How has the research process changed the researcher?
- Identification of implications (what do the results mean for us?) and recommendations for actions for diverse stakeholders

Dissemination of results could entail numerous formats. These formats and the information shared should be accessible to diverse community stakeholders.

Possible formats:
- Community meetings/townhalls
- Power point/poster presentations; Q&A sessions
- Executive summaries/infographics in appropriate community languages
- Videos/podcasts/local TV/radio interviews
- Attendance at local community events (e.g. school PTA/SAC meetings; cultural events; local community coalition meetings; social service organization events)
- Readers’ Theater; Poetry; Newspaper articles/Op Eds; Magazine articles/features
- Formal academic presentations
- Publication in academic journals
This section of the BERA Toolkit is dedicated to offering examples from the life experiences of the BERA founders as they each encountered challenges to and experienced the possibilities for emancipatory research practice. The stories vary in length and style. We hope each offers a personalized and authentic reflection on the importance of emancipatory research.

**Funding Priorities: The School District and the Family Literacy Program**

A community-based Family Literacy Program (FLP) was invited by a school district to be a community partner on a multi-year Even Start grant for which the district would serve as the fiscal agent. The FLP served families that were immigrants of indigenous Central American descent, a unique population that also made the grant more competitive.

Through the grant, the FLP would gain funding for an additional staff member and curriculum materials; they would adopt the Even Start model of family literacy that comprised four components: Adult Literacy, Early Childhood Education, Parent Education, and PACT (Parent and Child Together) Activities. The FLP would also provide the district with their participants' performance data to support grant-related reporting.

**Reflection #1:**

Based on this information, how would you rate this as a potential partnership? Win-win? Win-lose? Lose-lose?

Explain your answer.

Now consider this additional information.

Even Start valued adult literacy education in English (only) as measured by standardized test scores, number of participants who earned their GED, and/or gained employment. This meant that the FLP had to report adult literacy outcomes measured in terms of standardized test scores in English, although English was the participants' third language and many of them had not learned to read or write in their first or second language as yet, since few had the opportunity for formal education. Scholars note that language acquisition is best in one's first language prior to learning a second or third language.

Although standardized measures of development (as required by the grant) were used to document Early Childhood Education, students' kindergarten readiness scores which the district collected were not made available to the FLP; nor comparative data between students in the district who had been to the FLP and those who did not. The FLP was aware that the students who had been in the program entered school with strong scores.

The funding structure of the Even Start grant was such that the budget required a gradual decline in funding each year. Consequently, the FLP's status as a funded partner was cut, even as they were required to continue to provide 'data reports' to the
district throughout the grant period. The discontinuation of funding was not revealed to the FLP when they were recruited as a community partner when the grant was procured.

Reflection #2:

1. How does the additional information reveal potential tensions for each of the community partners in this collaboration? How might they be mediated?

a) How did the grant funding priorities represent colonizing vs. empowering values in research and program practices for communities of color?

b) In what ways did the relationship between the school district and the family literacy program represent transformative vs. exploitative practices?

2. Consider how similar tensions might be evident in your own community partnerships. How might they be mediated?
Addressing our Cultural and Literacy “Blindspots” in Community-Based Work

HIV-AIDS was on the rise in a community of color. A team of educators that worked in the community sought to address the problem through the development of a HIV-AIDS education and prevention curriculum. However, they faced a few cultural blindspots and challenges as they embarked on this task.

- All of their expertise in curriculum development was limited to print-based products.
- The audience for this curriculum were from oral cultures, did not have formal education and print was not yet a part of their literacy skills.
- The target audience represented multiple language backgrounds
- The cultural norms and mores around traditional gender roles, taboo topics (including discussions of sexual relationships), assumptions about fatalism vs. individual agency of the target audience were different from their own
- Due to the lack of formal schooling and access to formal science education, the concept of a virus was alien to members of the target audience at the time, since there was no word for ‘virus’ in many of their languages

Recognizing that they were facing a matter of life or death for the community, the team undertook the task of developing a curriculum conducive to effective education in HIV-AIDS education and prevention. “Effective” curriculum development meant that participants would:

a) Acquire knowledge about how HIV-AIDS was spread, and how it could be prevented
b) Understand the implications of what it meant to be HIV-AIDS positive
c) Volunteer for HIV-AIDS testing (something previously culturally taboo)

It also meant that curriculum would be culturally responsive and not reliant on print, offered in multiple different languages that represented the language groups of the target population. On this task, the team resolved that ‘failure was not an option.’

The team, engaged in the following tasks:

- Interviewed community elders, leaders, persons of influence about how best to gain the trust of the community to engage in HIV-AIDS education, including addressing sensitive and culturally taboo topics
- Gathered detailed information from local health authorities about HIV-AIDS infection rates, the symptoms of the disease, risk behaviors, preventive measures and strategies for public health education
- Learned about diverse cultural mores particularly around machismo, gender roles, values of family, parenting and social responsibility that supported openness to the discussion of difficult and awkward topics (e.g. How do we make sure that this pregnant lady's baby is healthy and that this mother is not infected? How do we make sure all in the family stay healthy?)
- Developed scripts for HIV-AIDS education curriculum development through theater, story-telling and metaphors
- Conducted interactive ‘platicas’ on HIV-AIDS education and prevention in small groups, in mixed and gender-specific groups, in diverse community-based venues including community members’ homes, indoor and outdoor workplaces/community agencies.
- Community members were centrally involved in the education efforts as hosts, ongoing requesters of topics to be discussed, translators and co-presenters.
Reflection:
1. In what ways did the approach taken by the team represent culturally responsive community-engaged practices?
2. In what ways might their approach have been limited/limiting?
3. How was the divergent expertise of the community integrated into addressing the problem?
4. Considering the importance of researchers and program planners needing to engage in cultural humility as learners and social responsibility as community advocates, what insight does this case scenario offer you in your own community-engaged research and practice?

Data ownership
A researcher wished to record the historical narratives of females of color who had grown up in poverty and had reached a high level of professional success. The researcher sought out participants who represented diverse cultures and life histories. When contacting potential participants about the research, the researcher noted that each participant would be obligated to a minimum of two in-depth interviews and would be accorded the opportunity for “member-checking” – reviewing the transcript of their interviews. One of the potential participants asked if they could use the transcript of their narrative in their own work within the community. The researcher declined this opportunity noting that the data would be copyrighted to the researcher.

The participant declined to participate noting the following:
- Participation in a study does not preclude my ownership of my own story
- Participation in a study must benefit the participants beyond the “satisfaction of having contributed to a study” by someone else of someone else
- The analysis of data of my historical narrative should involve me
- The publication of articles and dissemination of conclusions drawn about my life story should include me as a co-author and co-presenter.

Reflection:
In her text, “Decolonizing Methodologies” that examines the deleterious impact of mainstream research on indigenous populations, Smith (2012) notes, “They came, they saw, they named, they claimed” (p. 83). The process of extracting and owning (e.g. through copyrights and patents) the knowledge of communities represented research as a colonizing process. The Emancipatory Research modules reminded us that the truths of the community belong to the community and that we need the community’s permission to share those truths with others.

1. In what does the actions of the researcher represent the research practices in which you are involved? Consider what you might do, as a researcher or as the researched, to ensure that participants’ knowledge is not colonized or exploited for private institutional gain.

2. Review your current and proposed research practices and identify how the researcher and the researched benefit from the research project. Consider how the benefits to the researched can be increased.

3. The research participant in the case scenario developed a set of conditions for participation in research. What conditions might you develop to ensure that research participants are protected against colonizing research practices?
In Spring 2023, I had been nurturing a relationship with a local community group related to a historical preservation project in an African American community for almost a year. This group was biracial, including Black and White folks, most of whom were older residents of the community in which the restoration project was to be located. I got involved with the organization after hearing about the project and attending an on-site event hosted by the organization and designed to introduce community members to the business partners who would be contracted to carry out the work. Immediately, there was a connection between me and some of the group’s members. They took me on a walking tour of the land and the inside of the structure to be renovated. As we walked, I was immersed in the community’s stories. Group members shared stories about the goodness of the space and about their enduring fight with city government to get financial support for improving the building. We talked about the history of the community, the state, and the world. I listened intently and was baptized into the spirit of this little town with each story, laugh, and sigh of frustration shared. At the end of my initial visit, I was given a business card of one member and the telephone number and email address of two other group members as they all invited me to keep in contact. I was caught up in rapture of this budding relationship and began meeting with the group every month. Mostly, I listened and asked questions. While I had been a resident of the state for much of my life, I quickly learned that I knew very little and what I was learning was fantastic and fascinating! I offered my ideas as they were requested, as well as encouragement when I sensed the group needed it. For the first time in a while, I was part of a community where I had the space to just be.

As time passed, my involvement with the group solidified. I was asked to be part of a subcommittee and had made two additional visits to spend time talking with community group members, a 3-hour drive each way. Group members invited me to their homes and places of worship to talk about their lives growing up in the community. Our subcommittee also met one time per month and had progressed in our group decision-making such that we had decided that we needed to engage in some research to better identify our priorities and objectives. I then determined that this research project was a good use of the funds I was awarded at my institution. I was awarded $5000 to use at my discretion for community engagement work, and I had been very careful in my thinking about the use of the funds thus far. In fact, I had gone all year without spending any of the money. After writing up and submitting the necessary proposal for use of the funds, I received a response from the award administrator questioning the legitimacy of my approach to expending the funds I was awarded. I was asked to provide more detailed information about my proposed expenditures, after listening to her talk about how she conducted similar research in a way that suggested that my approach was strange, albeit, inappropriate. Mind you, for this award, faculty are typically afforded great autonomy and flexibility in executing their ideas. With a deep sigh, I emailed the award administrator and reminded her of the specifics of the award agreement I signed two years ago that indicated the fact that awardees could use their funds as they saw fit. Then, in response to her query as to why I did not choose to execute my community engaged research approach like hers, I simply informed her that her way did not align with how I conducted community engaged research as an emancipatory research methodologist. Two days later, she responded thanking me for the clarification and assuring me that my proposal would be accepted, and funds disbursed without any further delay. She then thanked me for such creative ways I was carrying out my work as part of this community engagement award. I inhaled intensely and exhaled slowly. In my 3rd and final response, I thanked her for her encouragement and explained that my research as an emancipatory
methodologist is philosophically and methodologically grounded in firmly established theories, concepts, and principles. In other words, my work is not without thought, theory, and ideation. After clicking the send button coolly, I could finally return my attention to planning the summer literacy lab I was facilitating in partnership with a local Black-led performing arts non-profit in my hometown. It was going to be an amazing summer.

Reflections:

1. Institutions seeking to fund community-based work have limiting conceptualizations of how such work evolves and is best conducted. Consider the tensions that emerged in this case story, why they arose and how they were navigated.

2. How might your awareness of emancipatory research support your own navigation in parallel institutional contexts, particularly around funding?

Institutional Review Board Policies and Participant Rights

Introduction
In the modern philanthropic landscape, the concept of “evidence-based” is relegated to activities that outline the need of a program that is already pre-designed or that use disparate pieces of information at the end of a funding period to nebulously talk about the impact of what is done. While worrisome, this dynamic is not the only one possible and represents an opportunity to lend significant attention to doing good research as a living, breathing part of an engaged cycle of decision-making within non-profits. It also points to the potential to foster emancipatory inclusion and benefit to the overall success of communities and the organizations that serve them. Good research goes beyond mere percentages and frequencies. It requires more than what already exists and warrants the participation of every impacted individual for the studied program, project or initiative to have an equal opportunity of success, regardless of who is at the helm or the social standing of the community targeted for help. This case study examines one of my earliest obstacles with implementing emancipatory research activity in a company that operated as if its research lay beyond the reach of considerations for social inequality.

Background
The company is a non-profit governmental education agency and its investment in research was limited to staff that were mostly self-taught or formally instructed in education research while in-field. To address this, the company depended on research consultants for a few big-ticket projects that needed strong research to satisfy the request of the board. The company employed researchers that were primarily White and/or male; among those who were formally trained researchers, most of them did not come from the field of education.

Scenario
I was the only Black female Ph.D. in the department and the only Black research supervisor in an agency that was celebrated for being a majority-minority one. I was also the only Ph.D. with formal study in education. Stepping into my empty cubicle, I quickly grabbed my folder with the notes I needed to comment on the recent Institutional Review Board (IRB) application we had received from an external research agency that the department of education typically contracts for its research contracts. The agency wanted to survey principals of Title I-funded schools concerning their spending, allocations and priority areas they applied their
funding to. The district at the time had just 1) begun a discussion on the amount of surveys staff, families and children were asked to complete during the school year 2) raised the minimum percentage needed to qualify for Title I status due to the high level of need across schools and 3) prepared guidance for schools who needed to be updated on the change in Title I policy at the state level with the arrival of a new Title I team in the state department. With these factors in mind, I was especially concerned with the informed consent being listed on the final page of the survey. School-based personnel were especially inclined to believe a survey of this nature could be tied to their funding, and the informed consent which clarified that completion was 100% voluntary and in no way tied to funding could be seen only after respondents had completed the survey. To make matters worse, the survey was a time intensive one. When I raised my concern and suggested that we ask the agency to move the informed consent to the cover page of the survey (as is customary), I was told that the district was in no position to say no to the external research agency as they were too important to offend. After extensive discussion, my vote was ignored and I was removed from the IRB at that agency—a decision that would remain in play the length of my tenure.

Reflections
1. Consider the organization's approach to IRB applications and processes and who benefited and who lost in the case as described. What could/should have been done to enhance inclusive policies and practices and mitigate biased decision making?
2. Consider how transparency with 1) decision-making throughout the research process, and 2) recruitment and hiring of research personnel might have protected and maintained the integrity of the research practices and processes in the agency.
3. Consider how your agency invests in research personnel who have emancipatory values and are well trained. Note the role/requirement of continual training, specifically mandatory workshops on informed consent, research processes and education phenomena better equip employees with tools to identify and address bias in their research decision-making as well as enrich them with a sense of responsibility for the largely minoritized groups of employees their decisions impact.

Facilitating Agency
My most memorable example of emancipatory research comes from one of my early engagements with a public housing community. I had been working with community members for a couple of years, and we had been collecting and analyzing data to better understand what programs need to be developed. On one occasion, I was late to arrive at a community meeting. When I walked through the meeting room door, I realized that the community members had started without me and were theorizing about the research findings. When the team noted that I had arrived, they looked up and said, “Hey Doc,” and then returned to their theorizing. At that moment, I realized that we were genuinely practicing emancipatory research and smiled. The community members demonstrated their ownership of the research process.

Reflection
How are you intentionally practicing emancipatory research that facilitates the agency and ownership demonstrated in this case? What practices support your agency as an emancipatory researcher? What practices support the agency of your participants in their assumption of the ownership of the research process?
Resources

Articles:


Videos:

What is Emancipatory Research? https://youtu.be/uHHrBFTc7MI

Prof. Linda T. Smith https://youtu.be/BUm3DVsek-l

Dr. Fiona Cram https://youtu.be/BGwDX2DTgcI

Ebony White: You Don't get to Name me https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XcFCQ-IhLs

Websites:
https://aisp.upenn.edu/centering-equity/

Toolkits
Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy – A Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Collection
https://aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/AISP-Toolkit_5.27.20.pdf