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In Memoriam: Sabra F. Woolley, PhD

The study reported in this volume is a testimony to the dedication and vision of Sabra F. Woolley, without whom this work would not have come to fruition. In the following, we highlight just a few of Sabra's contributions and fondly dedicate the research reported in this volume to her memory.

Sabra Woolley was a cultural and medical anthropologist dedicated to the reduction of health disparities and the transformation of social and behavioral research. She believed that the application of social science constructs and processes—especially those of her own discipline, anthropology—to health services, treatment, and prevention research was essential in conquering health disparities. This commitment was evidenced in the many publications, conferences, workshops, and grant initiatives she supported and participated in, as well as in her work in medical education and training. Specifically, Sabra's contributions to the study of health literacy, attention to social cultural issues in research and training, and championing of the critical role of the social sciences for health disparities research influenced the cultural shift that occurred over the last 10 years at the National Institutes of Health (Bachrach & Abeles, 2004) where she served as Program Director in the Health Communication and Informatics Research Branch at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the NIH.

Sabra's interests included cultural components of health-seeking behavior among diverse ethnic groups in the United States, as well as the study of biomedical practitioners as a cultural subgroup. As the first anthropologist in NCI's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, she helped to foster an entire cadre of researchers in scientific discovery for cancer control. She vigorously supported community-based participatory research, and qualitative and mixed methods in health research. She fostered the training of new investigators, provided critical support and inspiration to her grantees, and offered grant writing workshops for new investigators.

Sabra's work ranged from the practical to the conceptual. She was a pivotal member of a working group sponsored by the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) and the NCI, whose purpose was "to expand and contextualize concepts and methods in adherence research at the NIH" (Chrisman, 2002). Her recognition of the importance of transdisciplinary research and training was evidenced in her contribution to the publication of "Qualitative Methods in Health Research: Opportunities and Considerations in Application and Review" (<http://obssr.od.nih.gov/pdf/Qualitative.PDF>), a primer both for qualitative researchers on how to write an NIH proposal and for reviewers to aid their evaluation of qualitative and mixed methods applications. This monograph opened the door to many social scientists previously marginalized by the grant review process.

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Much of what is reported in this volume was made possible by Sabra Woolley's tireless dedication to her profession and her grantees. Her passing is a profound loss to her colleagues and to health disparities research.

—Rena J. Pasick and Nancy J. Burke

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