Chapter 1  
  
Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a way of doing research in which people who live in a community and academic researchers work together as equals. Everyone shares ideas and decisions from the start. Community members help choose the topic, plan the steps, collect information, and look at the results. The goal is to make research useful and fair for the people who are most affected.

In CBPR projects, community partners join every phase of the work. They help write the research questions so they answer real problems. They guide methods for gathering data in safe and respectful ways. When results come back, community members help explain what the numbers mean. At the end, everyone helps share findings in ways that reach local groups and leaders.

The roots of CBPR come from action research, where planning, doing, and learning happen in circles. Paulo Freire taught that teachers and learners share power and learn from each other. Feminist theory and community organizing also stress fairness, respect, and working together for change. All these ideas build the strong partnerships that CBPR needs.

Real examples show how CBPR works. In Everett, Massachusetts, immigrants and researchers studied how ICE checkpoints made people afraid to seek health care, then changed local police rules so that traffic stops did not lead to arrests. In Somerville, city leaders and health experts used community surveys to respond quickly when young people faced a suicide and overdose crisis. In Cambridge, African American leaders teamed with school staff to study high childhood obesity rates and design new health programs.

CBPR brings clear benefits. It asks the right questions, builds trust, and attracts more participants—especially in communities that usual studies miss. It leads to solutions that fit local needs and can last over time.

At the same time, CBPR takes extra time to form and nurture partnerships. Plans change as community needs shift, so flexibility is key. Researchers must be open to sharing control and learning from community knowledge. Despite these challenges, CBPR can create real, positive change by letting communities guide the research that affects their lives.

Chapter 2

It explains how to choose and work with a community in CBPR. It begins by showing that a “community” can be a place (a city or neighborhood), a group of people with the same background (for example, immigrants or parents), or those who share a common concern (such as people with a health condition). The chapter reminds researchers to spend time meeting people, learning local customs, and finding groups or organizations that know the community well. This helps make sure the research is useful and fits real needs.

Next, the chapter asks who should speak for the community. Working with formal groups—like community centers, churches, or local councils—can help reach many people. But not every group truly represents everyone. The book offers simple questions to decide if a group really knows and cares for the people most affected by the research topic.

The chapter then introduces a community advisory board. This board is a team of local leaders and members who guide the research from start to finish. They help set goals, share ideas on how to gather information, and review early findings. The advisory board keeps the project on track by meeting regularly and keeping an open dialogue.

Power and trust are key themes in this chapter. Researchers often have more training and resources, while community members have deep local knowledge. To balance power, researchers must be honest about their aims, share control over decisions, and show respect. Spending time at community events and listening with humility builds trust over the long term.

Finally, the chapter offers checklists for both researchers and community partners to see if they are ready to work together. Questions cover goals, roles, time, funding, data ownership, and benefits for the community. It also recommends writing a simple agreement that lists everyone’s duties, a timeline, the budget, and plans for sharing results. Clear rules help avoid problems and keep the partnership strong.

Chapter 3

It shows how to plan and carry out research with community partners in simple steps. It explains that doing research together can make the work more real and useful for everyone, but it can also bring new challenges.

First, you work with community members to pick a clear research question. They tell what problems are most urgent, and you share what is already known from past studies. Together you narrow a broad concern into a focused question.

Next, you build a simple model or picture that shows how different factors link to the problem. For example, in Everett researchers and immigrants drew a map of how local police stops, fear of ICE, and lack of driver’s licenses fit together. Community members helped add new parts to the model that the researchers had missed.

Then you choose methods that fit both science and the local setting. Common methods in CBPR are:

* Focus groups (small group talks) led by trained community members
* Interviews with key people
* Surveys written and tested with community input
* Review of existing records or reports

These methods let the community help collect and interpret data. To keep results strong and fair, you must watch how you pick people to join (sampling) and note who says “yes” or “no.”

If you need stronger proof later, you can move from simple designs to more controlled studies. You might first test a program in one neighborhood and later compare it to another (cluster randomization) or give the second group the program later (delayed intervention).

The chapter reminds us that sharing power is vital. From the start, everyone must agree on roles, rules, money, and how to share findings. Openness, clear communication, and time spent building trust help the partnership last. When done right, CBPR teaches both researchers and community members new skills and leads to results that can bring real change.