

Atlanta Clinical and Translational Science Institute's
Community Engagement Research Program (ACTSI-
CERP) Forum

“Community Health Matters: Building Successful
Academic and Community Partnerships to Achieve
Health Equity.”

Cultural Considerations for Community-
based Training and Research

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Introduction

As academic, corporate and community partnerships are forged to achieve health equity there are cultural considerations that must be taken into account to ensure that the community's interests are being protected. Some of these considerations include:

1. recognizing the inherent cultural limitations of standard approaches to research (training, technical assistance partnerships),
2. appreciating that training/research must have an ecological (encouraging reciprocity between people and their environment) orientation,
3. fostering a commitment to social innovation,
4. facilitating a commitment to empowerment within communities, and
5. respecting cultural diversity, translating this respect into a planning design and methodology that is consistent with the cultural reality of the targeted community.

This presentation will highlight best practices and will consist of a brief PowerPoint presentation and hands-on participatory instruction.

Consideration #1: recognizing the inherent cultural limitations of standard approaches to research (training, technical assistance partnerships)

What is Culture?

Culture

- “Culture consists of all ideas about why to do things, how to do things, how to do things, the language required to convey those ideas and the tools and techniques involved in doing them.”- Theophile Obenga
- Why would cultural considerations be critical in developing community partnerships to achieve health equity?

When “research” goes wrong...

- The limits of Western Empiricism
 - The imposition of Western/European values on other cultures
 - The concept of “the other”/Racism, other “isms”
 - Historical violations predicated on the above (genocides, domination, experiments,...)
 - Result in un-empowered, oppressed people, cultural groups
 - “standard” approaches to community research, technical assistance, training, evaluation, partnerships are based on these concepts...the benevolent benefactor



Understanding Cultural Identity

Cheikh Anta Diop



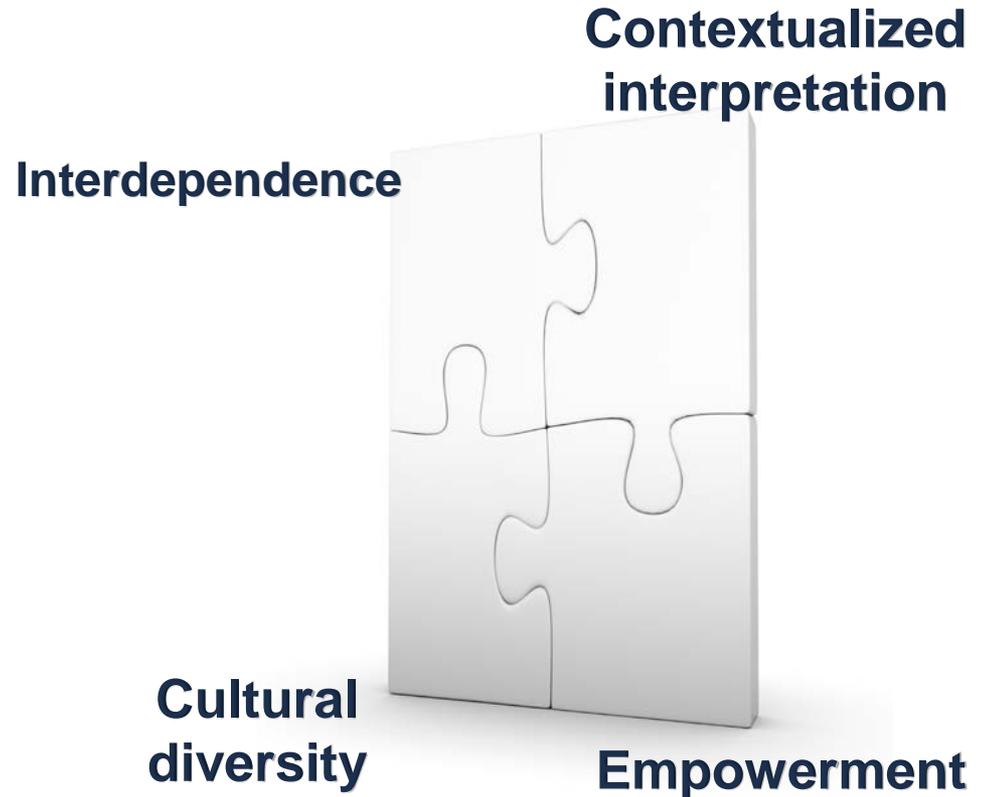
Three factors that contribute to the formation of a collective personality or cultural identity:

- I. The Historical Factor
- II. The Linguistic Factor
- III. The Psychological Factor

Consideration #2: appreciating that training/research must have an ecological (encouraging reciprocity between people and their environment) orientation

Partnership values

- **Interdependence** between partners (academic, corporate and community) which requires us to respect the community by including it as a functioning collaborator in the research enterprise;
- **Cultural diversity** which requires us to recognize the limitations in western empiricism when culture is not accounted for in the process of empirical investigation; and
- **Contextualized interpretation** which requires us to recognize and attend to the environmental context of the phenomenon under investigation, such that the meaning applied to behavior is congruent with the contextual setting in which the behavior occurs.
- Community **empowerment** in which the “community” is the agent of its own story , which leads to community and social change



co • a • li • tion (kō'əlish'ən) *v.*

“A voluntary, strategic alliance . . . to enhance [our ability] to achieve a common purpose by sharing risks, responsibilities, resources and rewards.”

Himmelman

Community Coalition Action Theory

As an action oriented partnership, a coalition usually focuses on preventing or ameliorating a community problem by analyzing the problem; gathering data and assessing need; developing an action plan with identified solutions; implementing solutions; achieving outcomes; and creating social change (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002).

Constructs

- **Formation, Structure & Process**
 - Stages of development (propositions 1 & 2)
 - Community Context (proposition 3)
 - Lead agency/convener group (propositions 4-6)
 - Coalition membership (propositions 7 & 8)
 - Coalition operations and processes (propositions 9-13)
 - Leadership and staffing (propositions 14 & 15)
 - Structures (proposition 16)
- **Interventions and outcomes**
 - Pooled member & external resources (proposition 17)
 - Member engagement (proposition 18)
 - Assessment and planning (proposition 19)
 - Implementation of strategies (proposition 20)
 - Community change outcomes (proposition 21)
 - Health and Social outcomes (proposition 22)
 - Community capacity (proposition 23)

**Consideration #3: fostering a commitment to
social innovation**

Innovation is a process of constant reinvention

- ***How to embrace social innovation:***
 - ***Plan***
 - Innovation is not a nebulous notion that only happens every decade in large companies like apple. Set aside time in your weekly, monthly or even daily meetings where staff have an opportunity to share ideas and projects.
 - ***Change the Space (and do it often)***
 - Embrace experimentation, allowing staff and your organization to make mistakes. Be willing to take risks that make you uncomfortable and learn to do it cheaply. Ask your staff to develop a new way of completing an old task weekly.
 - ***Embrace Technology***
 - Don't run from technological changes. Be willing to use new software, media, and platforms. Think ahead and try new systems to accomplish everyday tasks with the intent of simplifying and becoming more efficient.
 - ***Pollinate***
 - Collaborate and share often. Cultivate creative clusters within the organization that share best practices, knowledge and perspectives. Don't let your team members remain anonymous when genius strikes.
- The capacity of your organization to build, grow and expand is based on its ability to innovate, particularly in service industries like non-profit organizations, CBO's and NGO's. You have the transformative power to facilitate change, not only within your organization but also within the community. Remember that innovation requires opportunities for continuous learning, using old things in new ways, and making mistakes. Enjoy the innovative process and the growth that comes from it.

Consideration #4: facilitating a commitment to empowerment within communities

Partnerships must

- emphasize community empowerment,
- engage in strategies such as community organizing/mobilization, constituent involvement and development of resident leadership,
- involve the community in defining and resolving community issues,
- conduct projects which promote change at the level of the individual, family, neighborhood, group, and broader society,
- and are devoted to systems change and policy change as a way to promote health, prevent disease, and/or address social problems.

A Community Capacity Building Model



**Consideration #5: respecting cultural diversity,
translating this respect into a planning design and
methodology that is consistent with the cultural reality
of the targeted community.**

What is cultural diversity?

- Cultural diversity
 - the cultural variety and cultural differences that exist in the world, a society, or an institution
 - the inclusion of diverse people in a group or organization (dictionary.com)
 - **Cultural diversity** (also known as **multiculturalism**) is a group of diverse individuals from different cultures or societies. Usually cultural diversity takes into account language, religion, race, sexual orientation, gender, age and ethnicity. Companies started to embrace corporate diversity in the early 2000s. This was due to many trends in demographics and a changing workforce. (study.com)
- Moving from cultural diversity to cultural pluralism: respecting intersectionality and respect for human rights

Cultural Considerations for Partnership Engagement

- How to vet an organization
 - how do actions support words? Where is the money invested, what were the outcomes?
 - Places for investigation
 - 990s (if 501 c3), company annual report
 - Internet
 - Community References
 - Alignment with culture, values
 - Commitment to social change & empowerment
- Pledge to become “Cultural (Health) Workers.”
 - Understand who you are?
 - Understand the culture and values of your community members
 - Understand the culture and values of others
 - Base partnerships on shared understanding, respect and ensuring mutual benefit

Activity

- Cultural Genograms (Hardy & Laszloffy MFT)
 - Purpose: awareness and sensitivity
 - Directions
 - Culture(s) of origin- (cultural group(s) from which you've descended)
 - Organizing principles- fundamental constructs which shape perception, beliefs, and behaviors of members of a group, basic structures upon which all other aspects of culture are based
 - Principles of pride/shame
 - Create your own symbols/colors- develop a key
 - Identify intercultural marriages/relationships
 - Identify common cultural health conditions
 - Identify other cultural information you want to share
 - Presentation & Group discussion

For more Information:



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