

Harter, L.M., Hamel-Lambert, J., & Millesen, J.L. (Eds.). (2011). *Participatory Partnerships for Social Action and Research*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Press.

Review by Louis D. Brown

*P*articipatory Partnerships for Social Action and Research explores many facets of community-university partnerships. The book contains 21 chapters, each of which includes one or more case studies. The format has both strengths and weaknesses. It is useful in that it is grounded in practical experience. It is limited in that it is difficult to know how well each lesson learned from a case study may apply in a unique context. Certainly, however, there are themes that arise across chapters that are broadly generalizable to forming and sustaining community-university partnerships. Part of me wishes the lessons learned across chapters were boiled down into a tight explanation of how to create successful participatory partnerships. Unfortunately, I am not sure this is possible, as it may lead to a list of obvious points that are easy to articulate but difficult to successfully implement. Thus, the hard work of sifting through and considering the successes and challenges of each participatory partnership may be the best way to learn from the authors' experiences. The book does not contain quantitative research, which may be considered good or bad depending on the reader's perspective.

Regardless, the book provides important fodder for researchers and practitioners interested in pursuing community-university partnerships. Each chapter has its own set of insights that readers can apply to their own work. The 21 case studies are loosely organized into four book sections. Each section contains a set of introductory remarks, along with a commentary at the end that summarizes and draws insights from that section's chapters. I generally found the chapters to be more thought-provoking than the introductory remarks and commentaries. The commentaries summarized and repeated many points from the chapters of each section, a type of treatment that would be useful to those who have not read the chapters' content.

Each chapter is written independently, and knowledge of previous chapters is not needed to understand later chapters. A description of each case is provided below.

Case 1 (Chapter 1) considers a neighborhood housing collaborative, and two research projects focused on lead poisoning from the home environment. The chapter provides a nice example of

how community-based participatory research projects can lead to transformational change among academics and community members. It also provides a helpful discussion of the pros and cons of paying community members for their involvement in community-based participatory research projects.

Case 2 is about a community-based participatory research effort to reduce environmental health problems related to highway traffic and air pollution. The basic idea articulated in this case—researchers partnering with an established grassroots organization that is interested in the same health issue—seems like a good strategy when pursuing community-based participatory research. The section titled “Organization and Process” discusses the struggle to engage community members in a research process, and presents ideas for addressing these challenges.

Case 3 focuses on a community-based participatory research project that developed, implemented, and evaluated a school-based mental health program called Youth Experiencing Success in School (Y.E.S.S.). The chapter outlines lessons learned. Key points are italicized, which makes them easy to find.

Case 4 describes a community-university partnership to create a process guide describing a collaborative model of art creation. The model is used in workshops that enable people with developmental disabilities to create works of art that fit their talents and interests and are also profitable. The program is interesting, but the chapter provides limited insight into participatory partnerships. The chapter reflects a conundrum: It is much easier to describe the principles of collaboration than it is to execute them. No amount of reading about community-based participatory research can replace practice.

Case 5 describes a rural health network in which agencies work to build trust and consensus, and then to provide coordinated care for children. The case illustrates that project progress can be slow but successful. It took 4 years of patience and persistence to achieve action, illustrating that the development of trust and consensus is a time-consuming process.

Case 6 focuses on evaluating a program designed to improve mental health among people living with HIV/AIDS. The research project faced major problems with data collection. It appeared that there may have been a lack of clarity related to data collection expectations at the beginning of the grant-funded program. The project also suffered because evaluation researchers who were initially based in Atlanta, where the intervention took place, moved

on to new jobs in new locations. Their subsequent distance from the case site created barriers to collaboration.

Case 7 makes a strong case for the use of narrative in community-based participatory research. It introduces the reader to narratives and their numerous applications. The chapter is not, however, detailed enough to guide execution of a community-based participatory research project using narrative inquiry methods.

Case 8 provides an introduction to the literature on youth-adult partnerships. It offers a conceptual foundation for support of youth-led participatory action research. It also discusses how to handle the power differentials between youth and adults.

Case 9 explores the benefits and challenges of participatory documentary filmmaking. It describes methods to involve the subjects of the film as participants in the filmmaking process.

Case 10 is not about community-based participatory research, but rather about the formation of partnerships between homeless individuals and employers in a supported employment program. Supported employment programs help clients find competitive jobs and provide them with ongoing support so that they can be successful in their new jobs. The chapter would have been stronger if it provided more description of how partnerships between homeless individuals and employers are formed and supported. Nevertheless, the focus on building connections between homeless individuals and the broader society is an interesting approach to addressing homelessness.

Case 11 provides an instructive reflection on a historian's failed attempt to collaborate with Black churches in Detroit to create an archive of their history. The chapter provides an interesting discussion of power as it relates to history, record-keeping, and whose story is told, along with the challenges of working with impoverished communities and individuals who are distrustful of researchers. In the end, the project failed. The interests of the researcher were not congruent with the interests of the church members.

In contrast, Case 12 discusses how researchers can effectively collaborate with church members to pursue community-based participatory research projects.

Case 13 illustrates how to create mutually transformative partnerships. It distinguishes between partnerships that are "transactional" and those that are "transformational." It explores a straightforward process for structuring a partnership so that everyone participates as equals.

Case 14 focuses on how to build research capacity in community-based organizations. By increasing research capacity, community-based organizations can become learning communities. The chapter describes a training process to develop community-based organization research capacity. It does not, however, provide enough detail for readers to replicate the training process.

Case 15 focuses on community-based participatory research in online communities such as online deliberative forums in which members co-write policy documents. Online communities possess unique characteristics that must be understood before effective collaboration can begin. For example, privacy concerns are different in online communities than in face-to-face communities.

Case 16 discusses a model of community-engaged scholarship that guides a successful service-learning program at Creighton University. The model comprises a set of principles that offer a helpful starting point in pursuing community-engaged scholarship.

Case 17 provides a model for executing successful community-based participatory research projects. The chapter has strong didactic potential because it provides case study examples to illustrate how the model can be used in practice.

Case 18 examines the evolution of a non-research-focused participatory partnership. The WakeNature partnership described in the chapter aims to improve the stewardship of nature preserves. The case illustrates how each partner's assets and needs can be useful in promoting the success of the partnership. The chapter also considers complications related to partnership structure. It, however, provides limited insight into how to address those complications.

Case 19 explores the intersection between feminist research and participatory action research. Reflections by partnership members about their feeling of "privilege" are discussed.

Case 20 describes a researcher's transition from "controller" to "collaborator" in a research process. The chapter does not provide many "take-home" points for readers.

In Case 21, a communications researcher describes his experiences with participatory partnerships. For example, he reports on how a community moved to the action phase of a visioning exercise—after rejecting his suggested course of action. His experience trying to move from a community visioning process into action is informative, as he was able to move the community to action, even though they rejected his suggested course of action.

In summary, the book is an important contribution to the literature on participatory community-campus partnerships. Although the art of cultivating effective participatory partnerships is best learned through practice, this book can help guide readers and provide some important opportunities for reflection. It suggests strategies for successful partnerships. In short, this book can help people create communities where members work together as equals to overcome the challenges their communities face.

About the Reviewer

Louis D. Brown is an assistant professor in the Division of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Texas School of Public Health. His research examines how to improve the implementation quality of community-based interventions that promote mental and behavioral health. He is particularly interested in empowering local citizens to collaborate in improving their lives and their communities. Brown earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and his Ph.D. in community psychology from Wichita State University.

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