

- **No.44**
- **Creating successful mutual learning partnerships through applied community psychology research**

- Name: **Cook**
- First Name: **James**
- E-Mail: jcook@uncc.edu
- Organisation: **University of North Carolina at Charlotte**

-
- Authors: **James R. Cook and Ryan P. Kilmer**

- **Abstract:**

- Central to community-based participatory research (CBPR) is the creation of partnerships that enhance mutual learning among all partners. In addition to shared decision making and mutual ownership of processes and products, core elements of CBPR include co-learning and the reciprocal transfer of expertise and knowledge (Balcazar et al., 1998; Viswanathan et al., 2004). Involving students as partners in CBPR provides multiple benefits, as students learn about community processes and systems from community members, and community members and organizations learn and enhance their research competencies via work with students. This presentation draws on examples from a community psychology research and training program that includes research teams of faculty and students, a curriculum that focuses on applied community change efforts, and multiple ongoing community partnerships – including helping plan and evaluate a school–multi-agency partnership to address the needs in an impoverished neighborhood; evaluating the impact of “family partners” providing support for families involved with child protective services; developing and evaluating supportive processes for families in public housing; and increasing research capacity and evaluating the impact of a family advocacy organization – to illustrate benefits, challenges, and issues in developing and sustaining partnerships with community groups. The presentation focuses on: 1. Partnership Development: Partnerships are based on trust and mutual benefit, and focus on addressing short- and longer-term needs for all partners. 2. Community Learning: Applied research findings can guide decision making, resource allocation, and practice. Staff and organizations can build research capacity, including learning to use data to track processes and outcomes efficiently. 3. Student Skill Development: Students learn firsthand by engaging in applied work. They gain skills and understanding through meeting organizational needs; exposure to perspectives of staff, administrators, and other community stakeholders; and seeing faculty mentors in ‘action’. 4. Faculty Roles: Faculty can provide infrastructure or funding to support experiences for students. They broker their connections to build partnerships, help students understand complex issues, and maintain relationships and address organizational needs as students change. 5. Conflict Resolution: Several challenges can arise: managing students in supervisory roles with their peers, balancing short-term student perspectives with longer term community needs, shaping student writing to match community needs, and ensuring that analyses clarify, not obfuscate. Students obtain these experiences and develop skills through volunteering, courses with com-

munity service-learning projects, independent study courses, practicum courses in which service-learning is the primary task, paid staff positions on funded projects, or Master's theses and doctoral dissertations.