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## Leadership in Community-Based Participatory Research: Individual to Collective

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**ABSTRACT** Multi-sector collaborative partnerships hold much promise in tackling seemingly intractable and complex social issues. However, they often encounter many challenges in achieving their goals. Leadership can play an important role in reducing the impact of factors that threaten a multi-sector partnership's success. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) partnerships are collaborative and, in many cases, multi-sectored. While there is a developing literature and practice on multi-sector, collaborative partnerships, leadership in CBPR is relatively unexplored, especially at various partnership stages (i.e., formation, implementation, maintenance, and accomplishment of goal). Through the method of focused ethnography, we explored the research question "How is leadership exercised during the formation stage of a CBPR partnership?" Eighteen partners (government, community, and university sectors) were interviewed about the leadership during the formation stage of their partnership, and data were qualitatively content-analyzed. Partners explained that leadership was exercised during the formation stage through (1) individual characteristics, (2) actions, and (3) as a collective. Our findings illustrate that CBPR leadership shares many of the characteristics of traditional leadership and adapts them to support the collaborative process of CBPR, leading to a collective form of leadership. These findings have implications for the study and practice of CBPR leadership.

**KEYWORDS** community-based participatory research; leadership; partnership; multi-sector

### **The Need for Multi-Sector Collaborative Partnerships for Complex Social Issues**

Multi-sector collaborative partnerships (i.e., partnerships involving three or more sectors such as government, business, non-profit, etc.) have emerged globally in the last decade, and have made a strong case for the need for such partnerships to address seemingly intractable and complex social issues (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2007; Roper, Collins & de Jong, 2015). The promise and possibility offered by multi-sector collaborative partnerships lies in their ability to: a) secure a large amount of funding, which often contributes to the long-term sustainability of the project being led by the partnership and opportunities for the partnership to risk implementing new, innovative ideas (Roper et al., 2015); b) impact public policy and systemic

change and, in this regard, move beyond programmatic and service delivery changes (Roper et al., 2015); c) create new, innovative solutions because of the diversity of skills, knowledge and experience present in a multi-sector partnership (Roper et al., 2015); d) establish an equal distribution of resource expenditure which alleviates the challenge of only one or two sectors bearing the weight of over extending their resources (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2007; Woulfe, Oliver, Zahner & Siemering, 2010); and e) secure positive public reception to the solutions offered by the partnership because different sectors within the partnership can ultimately reach a wider audience (Roper et al., 2015). However, while multi-sector collaborative partnerships may seem as though they are inherently structured for success, they often encounter many challenges in functioning well and achieving their goal. In fact, Wolff (2001) has noted that failures of multi-sector partnerships that emerge from a community's response to a pressing social issue are as frequent as successes.

### ***Why Multi-Sector Collaborative Partnerships Fail***

Though much of the research published on multi-sector collaborative partnerships has focused on factors that have led to their success (often defined in the literature as the partnership's ability to meet their project's goals), some of this literature has also highlighted the factors that in turn lead to their failure. For example, Edelenbos and Klijn (2007) explain that consensus in decision making is often difficult to achieve because different sectors are mandated by different priorities. Thus, multi-sector collaborative partnerships often fail because partners remain focused on the needs of their sector, rather than the needs for success of the partnership (Woulfe et al., 2010), or worse, because partners are opportunistic and thus not committed to the common vision (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001). Partners' past experiences with failed multi-sector collaborative partnerships due to opportunistic behaviour, or more generally, difficult histories between sectors, can lead to mistrust within the partnership (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2007; Woulfe et al., 2010). Subsequently, mistrust can often lead to an unwillingness to share information which can also contribute to the failure of the partnership, given that "learning and creating new solutions for complex problems require that organizations exchange...specialist information and capabilities" (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2007, p. 32). This is of particular concern because, as Edelenbos and Klijn (2007) have explained, trust is one of the most important success factors of a multi-sector partnership.

### ***The Role of Leadership in a Partnership's Success***

While multi-sector collaborative<sup>1</sup> partnership success can be difficult to achieve, leadership within the partnership can play an important role in reducing the impact of and even eliminating factors that threaten the partnership's success. For example, leaders play a crucial

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<sup>1</sup> As in many new and emerging fields, the literature around community-based participatory research is complex. We could not find a well developed literature specifically on leadership in community-based participatory research. Consequently, we turned to literature describing multi-sector and collaborative partnerships as this literature seemed most relevant to community-based participatory research. We expect that as these fields evolve, the distinctions among various collaborative partnerships will become more clear; however, at the moment we are working with the literature that currently exists.

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role in establishing mutual trust among partners as well as establishing a mutually agreed upon vision and objectives (Woulfe et al., 2010). They also act as champions both to garner commitment from partners, as well as public approval of the importance of the social issue that inspired the formation of and the remedies proposed by the partnership (Woulfe et al., 2010). Overall, leadership is important for stimulating the synergy, participation, and success of a collaborative partnership (Butcher, Bezzina, & Moran, 2011; Crosby & Bryson, 2005; El Ansari, Oskrochi, & Phillips, 2009; Gray, Mayan, Lo, Jhangri, & Wilson, 2012; Suarez-Balcazar, Balcazar, Taylor-Ritzler, & Iriarte, 2008; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006).

However, the necessary traits of leaders for the success of a collaborative partnership are less clear. Some scholars recognize that collaborative partnerships require their leaders to possess many of the traits and behaviours of leaders in traditional contexts (Armistead, Pettigrew, & Aves, 2007; Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2005) such as the ability to direct decision making processes, make decisions for the group, and assign tasks (Winkler, 2010). In this regard, according to Winkler (2010), traditional leadership is often understood as hierarchical and unidirectional. Yet others argue that the leadership of a multi-sector partnership cannot be “located in a single charismatic individual who launches and sustains” the partnership (Wolf, 2001, p. 183). Traditional leadership traits have little applicability in collaborative partnerships because of their diverse membership with varied organizational goals and cultures (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2005). Therefore, leadership in collaborative partnerships must strike a delicate balance between recognizing the diversity among partners, while ensuring equity and avoiding control by a single individual or partner (Alexander, Comfort, Weiner, & Bogue 2001; Williams & Sullivan, 2010). Indeed, the more heterogeneous and diverse a partnership, the more developed its leadership needs to be (Mitchell & Shortell, 2000). Moreover, leadership in multi-sector collaborative partnerships is largely voluntary and often unclear (Alexander et al., 2001; Armistead et al., 2007; Huxham & Vangen, 2000). A common resulting challenge is what Huxham and Vangen (2005) call collaborative inertia, where ambiguous leadership and limited resources slow and sometimes stall a partnership’s progress.

Leadership also changes throughout the lifespan of a collaborative partnership, and leadership functions often vary according to the partnership stage (formation, implementation, maintenance, and accomplishment of goal) (Ansell & Gash, 2008). For example, collaborative partnership formation generally begins when one or more lead organizations brings together a group of potential partners to focus on a social issue of concern (Butterfoss, Lachance, & Orians, 2006; Kreuter, Lezin, & Young, 2000). This formation stage involves developing the vision, mission, and objectives; formalizing rules, roles, and procedures (Kreuter et al., 2000); and developing strategies to reach identified goals (Roussos & Fawcett, 2000). Leadership has been consistently cited as one of the factors that contribute or inhibit to the formation of collaborative partnerships (Butterfoss et al., 2006).

## The Study

While there is a developing literature and practice on multi-sector collaborative partnerships, leadership specifically in community-based participatory research (CBPR) partnership is relatively unexplored, especially at various partnership stages (i.e., formation, implementation, maintenance, and accomplishment of goal). With this in mind, the authors of this study looked to a CBPR partnership was, where leadership was dispersed among partners, to understand what the context of this partnership might suggest for the exercise of CBPR leadership. In particular, this study reports on the role of leadership during the first stage—the formation stage—of a multi-sector CBPR partnership that came together to conduct a project we refer here to as Project X. Project X materialized in response to a community and government request to academics for research-based evidence to inform policy and programming regarding the delivery of health and social services to low-income families (Drummond, Schnirer, So, Mayan, Williamson, & Bisanz, 2014). Project X partners included 16 organizations from the community, government, and university sectors. This partnership is referred to here as Partnership X.<sup>2</sup> Using CBPR as a framework, Partnership X was formed over five years (2001-2005). During these five years, Project X partners worked together to design the research (e.g., develop the research questions, data collection tools), develop partnership documents (e.g., communication and risk management plans, a project charter, a governance structure) and secure funding. Once these elements were in place, the interventions were implemented and studied (2006-2014) (Drummond et al., 2014). The partners agreed that study of Partnership X could not be published until the interventions concluded.

The formation stage lasted five years because both Project and Partnership X were highly complex in that, not only was the Partnership made up of 16 organizations, but these organizations came from the community, government, and university sectors, which in themselves are heterogeneous. For example, the government sector included municipal government and provincial government and the university partners included representation from different faculties. Partner organizations also had distinct yet overlapping mandates that centred around support for low-income families, creating everyday conditions that at times made them allies (e.g., co-delivering programs and services) and at other times competitors (e.g., competing for program funding). The Partnership members also represented positions throughout individual organizational hierarchies, including front-line staff who delivered services, through to senior administrators or policy-makers. Project X was designed to be longitudinal, meaning that it was costly and that partners needed to commit to building and sustaining momentum, along with funding, for a minimum of 10 years. These factors resulted in an extremely complex CBPR Partnership that demanded a unique leadership approach. In fact, during the five-year formation stage, the Partnership members identified that they had never been part of such an ambitious initiative and made the decision to study the way they

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<sup>2</sup> Sixteen organizations came together to develop and guide Project X. Project X refers to the actual delivery of health and social services to low-income families to determine which combination of services were best for families. “The study” refers to that which is reported in this paper; the study of Partnership X’s leadership.

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worked together over the course of Project X. Their goal was to document and understand how they, as diverse partners from multiple sectors, work together to guide the Project. As Partnership X, they applied for and received federal government funds to study how they worked together. This paper is about the Partnership's leadership that enabled the realization of the Project. It contributes to the CBPR literature by identifying how leadership was exercised through individual characteristics, through actions, and as a collective during the Partnership's formation stage.

### **Methods**

The method of focused ethnography was used to answer the question, "How is leadership exercised during the formation stage of a CBPR partnership?" Focused ethnography, as with traditional ethnography, aims to describe the culture of a given group—as the individuals within the group see it—but is "focused" because the inquiry is led by a specific research question and conducted within a particular context (Knoblauch, 2005).

All Partnership X members who were instrumental in, accountable for, and knowledgeable about Partnership's formation stage (from February 2001 to November 2005) were asked to participate. This made it a complete sample of 18 Partnership members. Four of these 18 members (one from the municipal government, one from the provincial government, one from the university and one from the community) were also considered to have played a leadership role by the other Partnership X members. An invitation email outlining the study, along with the information letter and consent form, was sent by a Project coordinator to all 18 members. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were chosen as they enabled partners to fully and freely describe their experiences and concerns, allowing them privacy and time for reflection. Of the 18 partners, 10 were from the government sector (municipal, regional, and provincial), four from the community sector (not for profits, local funders), and four from the university sector. The interviews were conducted between 2005 and 2006. They lasted 50 to 90 minutes each and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The University of Alberta research ethics board approved the study. All staff involved in this study signed a confidentiality agreement.

Analysis of one-on-one interviews followed qualitative content analysis, an inductive approach that does not fit data into predetermined categories developed from theory or interview questions (i.e., directed or deductive approach), but starts with a process of open coding and then categorizing the primary patterns in the data (Mayan, 2009). Open coding is the first step "by which the researcher becomes familiar with and starts to organize the data" and may "include overall impressions, points of interest, plans for working with the data, and so on" (summarized by Mayan, 2009, p. 171). In our study, similar codes were put into categories, and after a category started to take shape, the researchers would "[read] through the excerpts, ensuring that they all 'fit' within the category" and re-work categories and developing schema if categories were weak (Mayan, 2009, p. 171). Preliminary results were taken back to the Project X partners and other relevant stakeholders for critique, further interpretation, and re-working. Once the Project X partners were satisfied that each category reflected their

experience, the categories were then judged by two criteria: internal homogeneity (the data reflect the category) and external homogeneity (the relations among the categories are bold and clear) (Mayan, 2009).

Rigour was determined according to Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers' (2002) verification strategies (e.g., methodological coherence, appropriate and sufficient sampling, iterative data collection and analysis) as well as other established strategies (e.g., prolonged engagement, partner interpretation/checks, audit trail) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through these strategies, we were able to ensure that the findings were logical and an accurate representation of the data. All partnership members<sup>3</sup> are identified by pseudonyms.

## Results

Partners' description of the leadership within Partnership X during the formation stage consisted of three levels: (1) leadership exercised through individual characteristics; (2) leadership exercised through actions; and (3) leadership exercised as a collective.

### *Leadership Exercised Through Individual Characteristics*

When Project X partners described the characteristics of leaders within the Partnership a number of commonalities emerged. Specifically, partners described three chief characteristics that each of the leaders possessed and practiced at the individual level during the formation of this CBPR Partnership. According to the partners, Partnership X leaders were credible, trustworthy, and bold.

*Leaders were credible.* The first, and the most recognized characteristic that the leaders brought to the Partnership and thus, the Project, was their credibility. The leaders were highly regarded individuals in the community, both personally and professionally. They therefore brought "instant credibility." As one partner said of this group of leaders: "When [they] speak people really listen." This leadership characteristic was instrumental in the successful formation of the Partnership as it brought together both interested and otherwise uninterested individuals to learn more about Project X, and ultimately become involved with and provide different kinds of support to it. As described by another partner: "I think because they were spearheading it, people decided, out of curiosity, to come, to think ... 'well, this might not be something, this might be something, cuz Brenda Marshall and Phil Cook are big on it.'"

Partnership X leaders' credibility not only attracted a rich group of potential partners to the Partnership, but also allowed them to actively recruit people whom they thought would be instrumental to the Partnership's success. As a result of this proactive recruitment, the Partnership was much stronger. One partner recalled:

So if somebody like Terry Pearson says, 'We really ought to get so-and-so to the table,' you ask why and, you know, and you ask about the person and so

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<sup>3</sup> To improve readability of the paper, we use "partner" to refer to "partnership members" for the remainder of the paper.

on, but if Brenda says it, she has been through these things [complex projects] before and that carries an awful lot of weight.

*Leaders were trustworthy.* Often the leaders' credibility was discussed with regards to their trustworthiness. The leaders themselves talked about how they admired each other and were worthy of each other's confidence. As one leader put it: "I'm always giving in to Phil because, if Phil raises it to the level of, 'this is really important,' I trust him." Another leader echoed the sentiment: "So, you know, there's a time and a place. Phil won't yell 'The sky is falling!' unless the sky is falling. So, I trust him." Because leaders were considered trustworthy, partners got involved in the Project. As one leader said: "Will this [Project X] work? I don't know but Mary is there so I am gonna be there." Another partner agreed and added that the leaders' positive influence was so strong that people almost had no choice but to join the Partnership and believe in the Project's value and importance. They knew that the leaders "didn't lend [their] name to trivial interests," and had a track record of delivering what they said they would.

As the above quotes illustrate, the leaders' trustworthiness worked well on the individual level. But the leaders' influence did not stop there. Trustworthy leaders also exerted influence at the organizational level:

Linda Chan is one of the most respected ADM's [Assistant Deputy Minister] that's around, so having her voice and her signature, or fingerprints, whatever you wanna call it, attached to something like this, certainly pushed some of the other Ministries to get on board.

*Leaders were bold.* Due to the Project's longitudinal nature and large scale scope, the partners involved took a big risk in terms of potentially sacrificing their credibility (and their organizations'/institutions' credibility) and over-extending their resources. Instead of devoting resources and time to other less-risky initiatives, the leaders boldly took on Project X and were genuinely committed. They were a group of individuals who were senior in their careers and had little further to go in advancing them. They understood the risks that were involved, both for the Partnership and for their careers. As one leader put it:

I'm going to gamble a huge part of my legacy as Operations Manager on this Project. What's the worst thing that could happen? You know. If the Project goes bust, well, half of the population will think, 'good that you tried' and half the population will think 'what a naive person you are.' That's the worst thing that could happen. If it comes out as being a huge significant piece ... now I'm the genius!

Partnership X leaders also recognized the amount of effort needed from their staff to stay committed to such a long-term, risky project. They understood that "[their] role is to say [to their staff], 'We are doing a good thing. Here is what it is going to be like.'" The leaders anticipated "bumps along the way" and reassured their staff with statements like, "This is a

tough patch but we will get through it, let's keep going.” They led by example and demonstrated perseverance through numerous uncertainties. One leader provided the following summary on her experience:

With things like this you have a crisis a week ... all of a sudden the funding you thought you were gonna have you don't have, and the staff change at some agency and the new person is not at all sure they want to do this. I mean, once you are there, you kind of look back, and it sort of gets covered with this happy glow of accomplishment, but while you are going through it, it's tough.

### ***Leadership Exercised Through Actions***

Aside from their individual characteristics, the leaders also acted in ways that led partners to hold them in high regard as leaders. According to partners, because of what the leaders did for the Partnership—they campaigned, macro-managed, and valued the collective—Partnership X was able to push forward.

*Leaders campaigned.* Project X leaders brought with them an ability to “[engage] the group around the table in moving forward with the Project.” As a partner recalled about one of the first presentations on the Project to recruit potential partners: “They had their presentation well prepared, and they knew what they wanted, and they asked for it very concisely and clearly.” Ultimately, the leaders took ownership of the Project, and became campaigners and crusaders for it. One of the leaders talked about her role as follows:

I think you have to have a very clear vision of what it is you want to accomplish. I think you need to be able to articulate that and describe a better future to people so they could say, ‘Yes, I can see how that would be.’ ... and being able to articulate that, ‘This is where the benefit is for you.’

As leaders took ownership of Project X, it was no longer just one of the many projects in their portfolios. It was *their* project. Project X partners were especially impressed with the commitment shown by the leaders from the government sector, as one partner put it:

It was actually fabulous to see them providing that leadership, and being part of it [the Project] in a major way, not just with money but with staff; and there [are] a few people around the table, and to have a government department so committed to what was very much a community-based initiative, I think, spoke loudly to the Project, and to their commitment.

*Leaders macro-managed.* The leaders also focused on the “big picture” by macro-managing. The leaders trusted their staff, allowed space for them to do their work by telling them to “go away, go do it. Let me know when you need me to ‘part the bushes,’ you know, for something else to happen, and keep me informed.” The leaders’ role, in their own words, was “to keep the

eyes on the big picture and the goal as we were going.” The leaders were also happy in their role as macro-managers, as stated by one of them, “I often said I have the best job, I have the easiest job.”

The partners appreciated both the support and the trust that the leaders showed in them, and recognized that “it takes a good leader to kind of get out of the way and let staff just go do the work.”

Getting out of their staff’s way, however, did not mean being removed from or indifferent about the Partnership or the Project. In fact, the leaders were a determined group in their efforts in making sure Project X would be a success. As one partner said of one of the leaders:

Bjorn Bonn is a bulldog, you know, almost single-minded in terms of, push, push, push, push, push all the way through. I don’t think he insisted that it had to be this way, or that way, or the other way, but he wanted something done that had to be good and have maximum impact.

*Leaders put the Partnership first.* The last, and perhaps most appreciated action demonstrated by the group of leaders, was that they were genuine in their commitment to and belief in the Partnership, so always put the Partnership first. One leader pointed out:

If leadership starts worrying about, you know, naming my department or where is my department, or the last time I heard Project X I heard them talking about the university and not the City or, you know, that kind of stuff, that will kill it, very quickly; people have to remember what we are doing here.

The partners were described as having “no ego.” The leaders quietly did “behind-the-scenes work” to make sure “things would be in place” and to make sure that their organizations would always have good people working on the Project. The leaders were not only actively fostering the collective process, they were also doing the necessary work themselves: “[They] went through all of that hard work of bringing everybody along together instead of it being one person’s idea and charging ahead with it and having the other people just window browsing.”

### **Leadership Exercised as a Collective**

In addition to what the leaders were and how they acted, Project X partners also described a collective element of the leadership that was attributed to the entire leadership team. This team of leaders became, and was viewed as “one,” and included “not one weak person.” As one partner said of the Project X leadership team:

The key to me was they [leadership team] were not there for themselves, to make themselves look good. They were people who were truly committed to the work they did. I can’t name a person who was weak on, what I saw as the leadership team.

This collective leadership approach required the leaders to “leave their organization at the

door.” It functioned as a positive feedback loop, with the focus on the leadership team fostering a sense of group identity that, in turn, made the group function more cohesively. One partner explained, “It isn’t because we’re individual stars and able to do things, it’s because we work together and coalesce.” When challenges arose, leaders began to ask “how is our [Partnership X] going to deal with this?” rather than approaching challenges as representatives of individual organizations. This collective identity as leaders with shared responsibility prevented fragmentation, competition, and blaming, as described by one partner:

[Partnership X is] the first committee I’ve even been involved in when, even when things weren’t going well it wasn’t, “My Ministry” even when we might have been a culprit with something, that was never taken out with me, it was “how are we as a group going to manage this.”

Not only did the partners find this collective approach demonstrated by the leaders very refreshing, the leaders themselves also found each other’s commitment to the leadership team eye-opening, debunking the stereotypes of high-ranking decision-makers. One partner described her experiences working with one leader as follows:

Working with Linda completely redefined for me what an ADM could be like and I had no idea that they could be so idealistic and pursue things so hard and not ... be so completely driven by their political master.

## **Discussion**

A key contribution of this study demonstrates that CBPR leadership requires a specific set of skills that draw, not only on collaborative leadership, but also leadership from more traditional, hierarchical settings. Given that Partnership X operates within a large hierarchical and traditional system, it makes sense that traditional leadership characteristics still held importance. Specifically, the leaders in Partnership X were deemed by others to be credible, trustworthy, and were in senior positions in their career, thus making it easier for them to be bold and take risks that were integral to Project X’s longitudinal nature and massive scope.

Literature on leadership within collaborations is strongly focused on analyses of individual characteristics (Armistead et al., 2007; Huxham & Vangen, 2000). This is not surprising considering the common understanding of traditional leadership as itself being an individual characteristic. It is, however, also becoming increasingly clear that focusing on individual-level analyses alone in a CBPR context has its limitations. Project X leaders possessed traditional individual characteristics, but also acted in less traditional ways. They campaigned for the Project, drawing others in to foster widespread participation; they macro-managed and kept their vision on “the big picture,” and empowered others to direct important aspects of the Project; and they put the Partnership first, had “no ego” attached to the Partnership, and were happy to engage in more “behind-the-scenes work.” In shifting from traditional characteristics of leaders to non-traditional actions of leadership, the collective nature of Project X’s

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leadership began to be visible.

What became essential in this CBPR context is that these more traditional traits of leadership were adapted to support the collaborative work of the CBPR Partnership X rather than undermine it. Traditional leadership traits became enacted for particular tasks (e.g., securing funding and gaining widespread commitment for the Project), but were adapted by an underlying collective understanding of CBPR leadership (e.g., putting the Partnership first). It is this collective aspect that makes leadership possible, and important, in the CBPR context.

One aspect of this collective leadership was the synergy (i.e., the power to combine the resources and skills of a group of people to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its individual parts) (Lasker & Committee on Medicine and Public Health, 1997; Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001) that was generated between leaders when they became a leadership team together. This synergy not only gave them protection against potential fallouts, it also made the team much stronger than it would have been if the leaders were only exercising leadership at the individual level. Each leader knew that they were not fighting against barriers on their own, but had the entire leadership team behind them providing support. This is ultimately what effective CBPR leadership is all about: the leadership team not only helped the CBPR Partnership X create the necessary synergy to sustain momentum and move forward, but in doing so, they also created synergy amongst themselves, making them a strong, collective leadership team capable of creating even more synergy for the CBPR Partnership, and the cycle continues.

Like many CBPR partnerships that require a shift from traditional, hierarchical organizational structures to collaborative ones, leadership in the context of Project X also needed this shift. This research provides an important contribution to the CBPR literature and practice by drawing attention to leadership as a collective creation that was important during the formation stage of a CBPR partnership.

## **Conclusion**

Leadership in CBPR is a unique form of leadership and must be embraced if CBPR partnerships are to be developed, sustained, and successful in meeting their goals. Our findings showed that CBPR leadership shares many of the characteristics of traditional leadership and adapts them to support the collaborative process of CBPR. In Project X, it was the collective nature of leadership, in addition to individual leadership characteristics and actions, which contributed to its success. We acknowledge that due to the size and multi-sectoral nature of Partnership X, our findings may not apply to smaller partnerships or partnerships that involve partners in the same sector. Nevertheless, when results were shared with the others who do partnership work through presentations, a handbook, fact sheets, and a website, many expressed the applicability of this study's results to their partnership work.

Faced with examining leadership in the context of CBPR, our study shows that non-hierarchical leadership is possible. Even when traditional forms of leadership arise within a

CBPR partnership, our findings suggest that how these forms of leadership are mediated and adapted for, and by the CBPR context, need to be considered. This finding has implications for how those interested in CBPR partnerships study leadership, as it calls for an examination of the very processes and practices of leaders as a collective, rather than a focus on individuals who could be defined as leaders. This shift in focus should be considered for future research into CBPR leadership.

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