Our Common Ground
cultivating women’s health through community based research

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On a sunshine filled January day in 2008, community leaders in Vernon, BC gathered for our first Community Based Research workshop. Inspired by the richness of the discussion, they told us that a one-off workshop was not enough: they wanted a resource to call upon that could guide them in asking questions of themselves and their research teams. The creation of this book was borne from that conversation. We acknowledge the many people who do research ‘off the side of their desks’ with the vision of improving their communities. We are grateful to the hundreds of workshop participants across British Columbia who shaped this document by the questions they asked.

Our Common Ground would not have been possible without the support of the Women’s Health Research Network (WHRN) and the Vancouver Foundation. We appreciate the WHRN’s vision to advance community based research (CBR) in women’s health in British Columbia, and their commitment to this project. The Vancouver Foundation, through providing matched funds for capacity building in CBR, provided us with additional support for Our Common Ground.

We had many people involved in various stages of conceptualizing and writing Our Common Ground. The framework for this Primer was developed at a workshop at the 2008 WHRN Summer Institute in Victoria, British Columbia. Participants at this workshop generated exciting ideas about the possibilities for this Primer. We thank: Anita Alam, Gillian Angrove, Laura Arber, Claire Askew, Kristina Bain, Steve Chasey, Pammie Crawford, Shayna Hornstein, Nancy Jackson, Tracy Jarvis, Nicky Jeune, Christine Kreklewetz, Diwa Massahi, Candace Morris, Kenna Miskelly, Laura Nimmon, Kirstin Oulton, Lisa Osbitsch, Deb Parkhouse, Ann Pederson, Karen Petersen, Katherine Rossiter, Leah Shumka, Colleen Varcoe, Silvia Vilches, and Lauren Waugh.

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Our Common Ground was developed out of a dialogue between an academic researcher with a background in gender, women’s health, and community based research (Colleen Reid); a community based researcher and practicing social worker (Robin LeDrew); and an academic researcher with training in medical physics (Elana Brief). This dialogue was supported and encouraged by the Women’s Health Research Network (WHRN) co-leaders, WHRN members, as well as attentive and engaged external reviewers.

Throughout the development of Our Common Ground we debated language, format, and the intended audience. We wanted to develop a research guide rooted in the experiences and practices of community researchers, a guide that reflected the current Community Based Research (CBR) environment, and one that can help new researchers connect with this approach. To that end we held a series of events and gatherings that were structured as conversations with individuals and groups interested in CBR. The document before you emerged from these conversations.

In Our Common Ground we provide an overview of the scope of the CBR process as it relates to research focused on girls’ and women’s health, and gender and health related issues. Although it is not an exhaustive guide, it is intended to give you a solid understanding of CBR. We hope that you find ways to use this document to help you advance your thinking about CBR, girls’ and women’s health, and gender and health, and, ultimately to identify the kind of research that most captures your passion and imagination.

ABOUT COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH (CBR)

Traditionally the world of academia was considered the only legitimate place for building theory, conducting research, and generating valid knowledge. However, the recent popularization of CBR has resulted in increased inclusion and valuing of diverse approaches to research, researchers themselves, and research outcomes. Community Based Research approaches—known variously as participatory research, participatory action research, action research, and so on—are strategies for creating knowledge that is relevant to a community’s needs and interests (Gibson et al. 2001).
As a philosophy CBR is inclusive of different ways of seeing the world. It incorporates multiple perspectives. It recognizes local knowledge systems as valid on their own epistemological foundations and views them as contributing to a larger understanding of the world and the place of humans in it [Fletcher 2003, 32].

CBR emphasizes not only the democratization of knowledge production but also the importance of context in the development and interpretation of the knowledge itself: money, politics, culture, and environment all influence our perceptions of the world around us [Fletcher 2003]. Historically women and other marginalized groups were excluded from academia. They had no access to designing research questions nor did they have a legitimate way to influence the course of research projects already underway. Moreover, until recently, women were largely excluded from being subjects in medical research because of concerns about damaging women’s reproductive capacity, the influence of hormonal cycles on research findings, and harming a foetus during pregnancy or a newborn during breastfeeding. The result has been that there was little evidence to help researchers recognize that diseases and conditions might affect men and women differently. Excluding women from research studies has meant that data on women are lacking and often must be inferred, despite important differences that may render such inferences inaccurate, and treatments or interventions based thereon to be potentially dangerous [Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics 2008].

"Historically women and other marginalized groups were excluded from academia. They had no access to designing research questions nor did they have a legitimate way to influence the course of research projects already underway."

Feminist activists, recognizing the harmfulness of this academic history, began to develop a substantial body of knowledge critiquing the exclusion of women (and many other groups) from the dominant means of producing knowledge. At the same time the world of academia began to appreciate alternative, more inclusive approaches to research, including CBR. For decades women’s health researchers, educators, and advocates have used CBR methods to make space for women to speak about their oppression and their silencing. Community based approaches have provided a means for women’s health researchers to engage meaningfully with marginalized women. Additionally, CBR has offered strategies for achieving transformational actions and social change. These days, researchers themselves are increasingly from more diverse backgrounds, including historically marginalized groups. For many researchers and for many topic areas, this diversification has shifted how research is approached, as the insider-outsider dynamics have changed [Meyer 2000].

A key value and principle of CBR as it relates to women’s health is the democratization of knowledge through the democratization of the research process itself. In this context “democratization” means that anyone can know anything; a body of knowledge can be shaped and directed by the people, not necessarily by experts alone. Ideas about the democratization of research and using research as a tool to inform both informal and formal actions have been common in the field of women’s health research.
PURPOSE OF OUR COMMON GROUND

We developed Our Common Ground to enable people interested in girls’ and women’s health, and gender and health, to:

• ask clear, relevant, and important questions;
• design appropriate studies that are participatory at various stages of the research;
• reflect upon the relationships, roles, and responsibilities of each member of the research team;
• generate results that are meaningful for a broad spectrum of participants and stakeholders; and
• develop and implement actions that serve the people who participate in the study.

Because CBR is applicable to many different research endeavours, we worked to make this Primer relevant and accessible to a range of potential community based researchers. People from different backgrounds and experiences can use Our Common Ground, including:

• local public health nurses, social service non-profit organizations, school-based employees or civil servants who need to do research or who are required to conduct or use research to determine best practices;
• community workers who wish to gather evidence for improving and refining programs, and for expanding their agency’s effectiveness and ability to attract and retain funding for programs;
• students, graduate students, and faculty at universities or colleges who wish to engage meaningfully with community members through CBR;
• any person interested in better understanding how to apply CBR in the context of girls’ and women’s health and gender and health research; and
• any person or group who wishes to tackle an issue of vital importance to their community.

In Our Common Ground we explore the synergies between the field of girls’ and women’s health and CBR as we provide explanations of key concepts, examples from the field, individual and team exercises, and further readings.

TERMINOLOGY IN OUR COMMON GROUND

This section briefly details some of the pertinent terms used in research settings, and in CBR specifically. To be consistent, the following language will be used throughout Our Common Ground to identify various people, participants, or concepts related to CBR.

In this Primer we make reference to the inter-sectoral nature of CBR. In this context a “sector” refers to a role a person plays in her community, her training or expertise, her background or experience, or her relationship to the area of research. Inter-sectoral means that people from diverse sectors are invited to participate as partners (supporters) or collaborators (co-researchers) on a project. In CBR there is an explicit appreciation for diverse perspectives, which can enhance the research process. Inter-sectoral research teams have the potential to address complex social problems by bringing together people with different expertise and perspectives. Inter-sectoral research teams can create a supportive climate that encourages creativity and risk-taking (Ritchie and Rigano 2007). Including multiple perspectives can make the research more meaningful, which can contribute to a greater impact on the health issue under study.
Researchers are people who are engaged in research, and are doing some or all of the following: identifying the research question, designing the research method, collecting and analyzing the data, disseminating the findings. At times terms such as “local researcher” or “academic researcher” are used to distinguish researcher types. Local Researcher or Community Based Researcher refer to someone who lives in the community, conducts research locally, and may not be affiliated with a college or university. An Academic Researcher is someone with academic research training who works for a college or university. Often research projects will have several researchers involved, in these cases one researcher is usually the Principal Investigator or Lead Researcher and is ultimately responsible for the research project. Finally, a Peer Researcher is often based in the community and is involved in data collection and data analysis.

The term Community can refer to a grouping of people based on geography or location, or a grouping of people based on identity or interest. Though widely used, the term community is vague and often lacks a common definition (Waldern 2006). It is important to realize that in practice it may be impossible for CBR to ever fully represent or speak for a community, regardless of how it is defined. In Our Common Ground we do not debate the merits of using the word community or the possible pitfalls that may result. Instead, we rely on the common usages of the term community and believe that aspiring to conduct community based research that values democracy, inclusion, and participation is an important step forward.

Community Partner refers to service providers, professionals working with local government or community organizations, consultants, or any person or organization that facilitates the research process by providing important resources (e.g., finances, staff, space, supplies) through their organization or affiliations.

Policy Makers, Policy Decision-Makers, or Decision-Makers are people who work with government and/or other organizations and who are in a position to influence macro-level decisions that can have a direct impact on the issue under study. While their titles may vary, a decision-maker may be in a position to make decisions or changes in response to research findings.

The Research Participant or Participant is any person involved in the study. Because participation can take many forms, research participants are often described by many other terms, including: informants, interviewees, subjects, service users, and consumers. In CBR research participants are most often from the community under study. At times, a study is not focused on the individual, but on community. In these cases, and in some examples, the term Research Community is used.

The Research Team comprises all the people working together on the CBR project. Members of the research team make decisions about the project, and manage the research funds, ethical reviews, and dissemination of findings. Ultimately the research team (and usually the identified principal investigator or lead researcher) is accountable for the project on both financial and ethical grounds.

The Advisory Committee is a group of interested people from the community who help guide the decision-making of the research team so that the research process is in the best interest of the community.

It is important that we clarify how we understand the terms “sex” and “gender” and that we explain our use of the words “women” and “men” throughout this Primer. To begin with, we understand there to be a rich diversity of human sexes, genders, and sexualities. The world is much more complex and nuanced than simple binary categories can describe. When we use the words women and men, therefore, we are inclusive of people who identify as transgender and/or intersex, and we are cognizant of the limitations of these terms for some people. We are also mindful of the consideration that one’s gender does not [continued on page 6]
HOW TO READ OUR COMMON GROUND

Our Common Ground is structured as a workbook, moving between reflective questions, theory, exercises, guidelines, and practical tools. If you are new to research or embarking on your first CBR project, working through this Primer as it is set up would be most beneficial. However, depending on individual needs and interests, various aspects of the Primer may be pulled and used as necessary.

The chapters in this Primer explore, sequentially, the steps involved in conducting community based research. Each chapter contains individual or team exercises, research related theory, research implementation approaches, key questions for you to reflect on, and related readings and resources. The Primer also contains additional tools, exercises, and appendices to deepen your CBR knowledge and skills as they relate to you and your real-life research situations.

Throughout Our Common Ground we use various symbols to indicate different sections and activities. These symbols are described here:

**INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE**
This symbol indicates an individual exercise. In these exercises we ask you to either reflect on a series of questions, or to write notes in your journal. There are individual exercises at the beginning of each chapter where we ask you to consider your own knowledge and experience before engaging with the content of that chapter. As a part of the individual exercises we have listed several questions for you to consider. Do not feel obliged to attend to all of the questions listed, just reflect, journal, or discuss the ones that are most relevant and meaningful to you.

**TEAM EXERCISE**
This symbol indicates a team exercise. These exercises are intended to help a CBR team advance its thinking and move through the research process while keeping CBR principles and values central. If you are not working with a team, these exercises raise important questions and can be approached from an individual perspective.

**GENDER AND WOMEN’S HEALTH**
This symbol raises questions about gender and health and girls’ and women’s health. Throughout Our Common Ground we insert examples to illustrate the interconnections between CBR and notions of sex, gender and diversity.

**EMERGING AND CYCLICAL**
This symbol reminds readers that CBR is not a linear activity that begins with a research question and ends neatly with research findings and outcomes. The CBR process is non-linear, complex, and constantly doubling back on itself. This symbol highlights spots where you can take pause, double back, and reconsider past decisions, reflect on their influence on current and future decisions, and ask questions such as: “So what?” and “Why?”

Our Common Ground is intended as a resource to direct readers towards key questions and considerations when conducting CBR in gender and girls’ and women’s health. It is NOT meant as an exhaustive resource that has all the answers to adequately equip a new researcher to embark on CBR. In each chapter there is a “Related Reading” section that lists key resources for further information on the particular topics covered in that chapter. If you are a new researcher, use these related readings to supplement the information available in this Primer, and further explore different research approaches and research considerations.
necessarily explains one's sex, and vice versa, as is often assumed in descriptions and uses of the categories of sex and gender in research. For a more detailed explanation of how diversity of human sexes, genders, and sexualities can be understood, refer to Devor (2000). In addition, we recognize that particular considerations need to be taken into account across the lifespan. Throughout this Primer you will see examples of how girls and young women have been included in research. Researchers working with girls and young women have different ethical considerations and maybe asking fundamentally different questions than researchers working with adult women.

BEFORE WE BEGIN ... LET'S GET REFLEXIVE!

In CBR, researchers are expected to critically examine their relationship with power, their ethical judgments, and the ways they share information so that their exercise of power becomes explicit and transparent. Reflexivity, or engaging in a reflexive process, involves openly and honestly recognizing one's experiences and deeply considering the implications of one's power (Kirby et al. 2006). Working reflexively involves reflecting systematically on one's influence and involvement in the research, being sensitive to one's personal biography, and considering how these things come together and influence the research. At first this may seem in opposition to the ideals of scientific inquiry where the researcher is expected to be a dispassionate and objective (unaffected and unbiased) observer. However, making space for reflexivity can allow a researcher to identify her biases and assumptions, understand how they influence the research process and findings, and create more opportunities to grow from the research experience. For all of these reasons, reflexivity is integral and fundamental to CBR, and it is also one of the ways that CBR differs from more traditional approaches to research.

"Reflexivity, or engaging in a reflexive process, involves openly and honestly recognizing one's experiences and deeply considering the implications of one's power" (Kirby et al. 2006).
A Reflexive Journal is a place where you can begin considering yourself as a community based researcher by recording and tracking your evolving ideas about the research. It can help you to identify your own expectations, biases, assumptions, hopes, and dreams for the project. It can also be useful in helping you record your comments on the research process and your responses to conversations and the circumstances surrounding them, it can even be helpful in informing preliminary analyses or early attempts to make sense of what is happening and what you are discovering in the research process. Journaling can help to tease out real-world observations, the complexity of relationships, unspoken theories, political commitments, affinity to certain methods, growing research interests, frustrations, and reasons to celebrate.

Maintaining a reflexive journal is an important skill and resource for you as a researcher. Reflections documented in a reflexive journal can capture different kinds of ideas and questions—ones focused on process and relationships within the research itself, and ones focused on clarifying the overall purpose of the study. To highlight the process and value of reflexive journaling, examples of reflexive writing are interspersed throughout this Primer.

It is best to keep all of your journal entries in one place—put hand-written reflections in a binder, or electronic ones in a file on your computer—and date your entries so that you can keep track of how your ideas have shifted, or remained consistent, throughout the research process.

The reflexive journal is your resource, just for you, the researcher. However, at times it can also be useful to share some of your reflections with your research team members, or to have your research team members reflect on a set of questions and to share each others’ responses. Regardless of how you choose to use the reflexive journal, spend time getting your ideas down on paper. There is no need to worry about proper spelling, grammar, or sentence structure. The flow of ideas is what is important. Just get it down!

**INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE**

Journaling – Why research?

The purpose of this exercise is to help get your reflexive journal started, to help you become more comfortable with reflexive writing in general, as well as ground you in your own interests and desires regarding research. Listed below are several questions to help initiate your reflexive writing. Review them all and then pick three to five that resonate with you and start writing out the thoughts and responses that emerge from reflecting on the questions.

- Why did I pick up this Primer? What am I hoping to learn?
- What are my passions? What am I thinking about when I feel most alive?
- When have I had a conflict with someone about a social justice issue (e.g., poverty, homelessness, pay equity, universal health care)? What do I believe in strongly?
- What questions do I need to answer that would result in social change for the better? What would change look like?
- What is my worldview? Can I identify and name it? How do my assumptions and understandings influence what I am interested in and the work I want to do?
- How would I like to be able to describe the significance of my research?
IN THIS CHAPTER WE:

• Explore ideas about the process of knowledge production
• Define community based research
• Describe the links between community based research and the field of gender and women’s health

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE
Journaling – What does research mean to me?

Create a new entry in your reflexive journal. Reflect on, and write about, the following questions which are intended to help clarify what research means to you, and what types of research and research topics have meaning for you:

• What does the word “research” mean to me? What images does the word “research” conjure up for me?
• What kinds of research am I familiar with?
• How do I envision myself as part of a research team, or as a researcher? Do I wish to research on my own or do I envision working with a team? What do I offer a research team?
• What kinds of questions would inspire me to engage in research?
• What kinds of values do I feel are important for guiding research?
• How do I envision benefiting from research (generally), and the research I’m interested in (more specifically)?
• What historical and institutional factors shape the way I, and members of my community, view research?
If you are a community researcher reflect on these questions:
• What knowledge would be helpful to me and my community?
• What pressing community issue requires research?
• What limitations or challenges may I encounter from my workplace or from my community?

If you are an academic researcher or student reflect on these questions:
• Do academic reward structures allow me to do the work I feel truly passionate about?
• What time frame may be imposed on my work? Can I work within longer or shorter time frames?
• Do I have the necessary resources to do the work I want to do?
• How am I seen within the “research community”? What kind of relationship do I hope to foster with the research community and the local researchers?

1.1 WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Research is the process of discovering or uncovering new knowledge. It involves identifying what you are interested in finding out, reading up on the area, and focusing on a research question. Research is distinct from our everyday musings and problem solving because it involves a systematic inquiry into a phenomenon of interest. Research aims to contribute to what is known about a phenomenon, while also aiming, often, to contribute to action and social change (Kirby et al. 2006, 12).

With the democratization of research, not only are more people engaging in research but there are also more people who need access to research for their work or day-to-day lives. Research can be relevant to diverse stakeholders in the following ways:

If you are a professional in the health or social service field, you likely participate in data collection on a daily basis. Ask yourself, what happens to this research? What happens to participant evaluation forms? Who makes sense of the information gathered? Are service users involved in this data collection process in a meaningful way? Who is affected by the results of this process?

If you are a student or a graduate student embarking upon a program of research, you have likely been taught research methods as part of your education program. Ask yourself what kinds of research methods dominate your field or discipline. Does your field encourage working with non-academic researchers, community partners, or consumers? How does the notion of research connect with your lived experience?

If you are a community member or have participated in research in the past, are you interested in becoming more involved in the research process? What have been your past experiences in or with research? Do you want to get involved in a more meaningful or collaborative way? Are there important issues you have identified as a result of your experiences? Can you see new or innovative ways of improving community services as a result of your lived experiences?

If you have formal training in research (perhaps you are an academic at a university or college, a clinician engaged in research, or a researcher working in the community as a consultant or collaborating directly with a community organization), you will think about and conduct research as part of your job. To what degree is the research relevant to the people under study? Does your research have a direct influence on the participants in your studies? Do you wish to affect policy and practice? Are you successful?
If you are part of a research team, and you identify as any of the above, ask yourself: What type of evidence do you find most compelling? How do people on your team from different backgrounds conflict with each other and inspire each other? Does your background put you at a disadvantage in a diverse research group? How might your background be advantageous to the group?

**INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE**

**Journaling – Taking stock in a community organization [Part 1]**

Community organizations are often engaged in research. Data that are collected by organizations—to monitor their clients or to evaluate their services or outcomes—can form the basis of an underlying question to be researched. If you are involved with a community organization, answering the questions below that are relevant to you may help you to get a sense of what you are already measuring, and what the data may be telling you:

- Which population does the organization work with?
- Does the organization collect information about the participants at their programs (e.g., for a formal program evaluation that may be required by funders)?
- What information do I collect? From whom?
- Who is responsible for making sense of the data?
- Is there something that I want to know that my data may tell me? What about questions that my data cannot answer?
- Do my data point to a question that I want to ask?

1.2 APPROACHES TO RESEARCH: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE

Regardless of one’s current approach to, and interest in, research it can be meaningful and important to any person who chooses to be involved.

The deeper purpose of research is to provide people with knowledge and understanding that make a difference in their lives. Research is a form of transformational learning that increases the “stock of knowledge” that provides people with the means to engage in their lives more effectively. This does not necessarily mean fundamental changes in world view or cultural orientation...but includes the small “ah-ha’s” that enable people to see themselves, others, events, and phenomena with greater clarity or in a positively different way [Stringer and Genat 2004, 3].

Broadly speaking, there are two fundamental approaches to research that have different ways of gathering and understanding information, these are the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. Both approaches have a significant role to play in health research, particularly when health is defined as “a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” [WHO 1948]. Qualitative and quantitative approaches allow researchers to ask different types of questions that enable one to more fully consider the complexity of health.

Qualitative research crosscuts disciplines and subject matter. It encompasses both micro- and macro-analyses drawing on historical, comparative, structural, observational, and interactional ways of knowing [Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2004]. Qualitative research takes place in the natural world, and the qualitative researcher views social phenomenon holistically. Most commonly, qualitative research is an approach that seeks to understand the complexity of social interactions in daily life, and the meanings the participants
themselves attribute to these interactions. For example, in a qualitative study women may be asked why they smoke, reasons for smoking, and their smoking histories. They may also be asked about their knowledge of the health effects of smoking and if they have ever felt discriminated against because they smoke. Qualitative research often occurs in natural settings (e.g., the community, a person’s home) rather than in clinical settings or laboratories, and can encompass multiple methods of data collection (such as interviews and fieldnotes, amongst others). In fact, qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information: (1) participation in the setting, (2) direct observation, (3) in-depth interviews, and (4) analysis of documents and materials. Qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in peoples’ experiences, and is most often an emergent and evolving process (Marshall and Rossman 2006).

Quantitative research searches for relationships between phenomena that can be measured. The data are often presented as numerical information. Researchers using quantitative methods often ask questions regarding cause and effect. In a typical quantitative study, a researcher would vary one parameter of the experiment while keeping all others the same in order to measure the effect of that one parameter. For example, women in a diet study may all be asked to do the same amount of exercise and eat the same number of calories, but one group would eat high-fat food and the other would eat low-fat food. Researchers would measure the weight of the participants before and after the experiment and analyze the levels of good and bad cholesterol in the participants’ blood. A quantitative researcher would not, however, ask the women why they eat or buy certain foods, their experiences with weight loss or gain, how eating certain foods makes them feel, how they deal with food cravings, and so on. One way of differentiating qualitative research from quantitative research is that qualitative research is largely exploratory and hypothesis-generating, while quantitative research is more focused and aims to test hypotheses.

There is a long history of quantitative and qualitative researchers dismissing each other’s approaches as either too superficial and rigid (quantitative) or too interpretative and unsystematic (qualitative). Historically, knowledge generated from quantitative research has been treated as more valid or more conclusive than that from qualitative research. However neither method is definitive or more “true” than the other. In fact, incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches, using a mixed methods approach, can be complementary and effective at answering some research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods have a place in knowledge generation and both could be used in collaborative research like CBR.

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**Quantitative researchers might approach the study of gender inequality in wages by displaying statistics of the pay gap between men and women over the past decades, taking into account such factors as job experience, work history, degree of labour force commitment, years of education, and so on. Quantitative researchers’ interpretations hinge on identifying a set of factors that might account for the inequality in wages between women and men. Qualitative researchers might be interested in conducting intensive interviews with working women concerning their work situation. They may focus on such things as the meaning of the wage gap for women in terms of how women “experience” day-to-day living with lower wages and with what they believe to be the “hidden” structures within the workplace, such as the “glass ceiling” and “old boys’ network” that might lead to a lack of mobility for women in certain occupations (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2004, 1-2).**

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Key to both quantitative and qualitative research is determining if the data and results are sound. A discussion of this topic can be found in *Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research* (Golfshani 2003).
Throughout this Primer we focus on qualitative research methods. However, the broader questions posed here—identifying research questions, engaging research participants and research partners and, ultimately, owning and using the knowledge generated—can apply equally to quantitative methods. In addition, the discussion of ethical and meaningful community engagement can be useful for any researcher from disciplines as diverse as biomedicine to the social sciences and humanities.

Look at the types of data that you were considering in the Individual Exercise “Taking stock in a community organization [Part 1].” With that data on hand, or fresh in your mind, give the following exercise a try:

(a) Place the types of data on a continuum of quantitative to qualitative. Ask yourself: Do I have a mix of quantitative and qualitative data? What type of data do I need to answer the questions I am asking?

(b) Now think about the gaps in your data, and your research question. Ask yourself: What kind of research will help me answer my questions? What have my obstacles been in undertaking qualitative research? What have my obstacles been in undertaking quantitative research? What kind of research would help direct my study?

1.3 COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH: DEMOCRATIZING KNOWLEDGE

CBR is a broad term that encompasses approaches to research that are collaborative, inclusive, and action-oriented. CBR has its roots in participatory action research traditions and includes action research, participatory research, participatory evaluation, and other schools of participative inquiry (Maguire 2001; Greenwood and Levin 2007). CBR was developed to create social and individual change through engaging diverse people in the research process. It is emergent, which means that the research process unfolds and becomes more clearly known as it is underway. In many cases, the research design is not entirely predestined with a clear hypothesis and set plan. As well, CBR is iterative, meaning that the research double-backs on itself to enable reflections, experiences, and actions to feed into shaping and re-shaping the research process.

The person who frames the research, decides the questions, analyzes the data, and produces results is the one who holds the power (Clark and Hunt 2008). Being in control of these decisions in a research process will directly affect what kinds of research happen and how the research unfolds.

Community Based Research is conducted by, with, and for communities. Through CBR, a broad range of residents and organizations can identify common problems and deal with them. By design, CBR is both democratic and ethically robust. In CBR, the affected communities actively participate in every phase of the research process (LOKA Institute 2002).
Community based researchers aim to work with, rather than for, marginalized or exploited groups by involving participants in the whole research process, including an action phase (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991; Nyden and Wiewel 1992). In CBR the following questions must be asked:

- Who articulates the research question? For whom is the research question relevant?
- Who benefits from the research question being asked?
- Who formulates and initiates the research, and where does it occur?
- Who has control? How are decisions made? Who guides the process and by what principles?
- Who benefits from the research question being answered?

In CBR everyone involved grows from, learns about, and makes sense of the research. Both the process and the content are considered important in the production of useful and meaningful knowledge. By engaging in research that aims to work with participants and people in the community, the ability of everyone on the team to do research is increased. By engaging a range of people and perspectives—including academic researchers, local researchers, community members, and community partners—a level of shared ownership of the research process and products emerges. This is fundamental to CBR.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 illustrate the emergent and iterative aspects of CBR. Action occurs simultaneously and continually in CBR unlike in traditional research where the project is first designed, then conducted, and finally evaluated (Reinharz 1992).

Figures 1.1: Plan, Observe, Act, Reflect Cycle

FIGURE 1.2: Progressive Problem Solving with Action Research

Adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart 1988

Adapted from Riel 2007

Community engagement in the cyclical CBR process can lead to the development of local understanding, knowledge, skills, and resources which can then be mobilized in response to community needs (Israel et al. 1994). CBR challenges us to engage in the kind of research that creates ‘futures about which we care’ (Gergen and Gergen 2008).
Within universities, there are increasing numbers of researchers engaged in CBR. Academically trained researchers are drawn to CBR because it allows them to work directly with people in multiple communities on relevant and important issues. Many academics seek to work beyond the “ivory tower” of the academy, and CBR is a concrete strategy for doing so. Although it is still not viewed as a mainstream approach to research, CBR is now embraced in a range of disciplines including geography, education, social work, nursing, medicine and engineering. Many universities are developing programs that are particularly supportive of CBR. In addition, major funding bodies (e.g., Canadian Institutes for Health Research and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) have established funding streams with a strong focus on building collaborative community–academic partnerships.

In the community, community agencies and organizations regularly accumulate information in the form of program evaluations for reports to funders or board members. This information, or “data,” may be underutilized. If used effectively, it can be a source of power, knowledge, and change. Hills and Mullett (2000) describe how CBR can become relevant and important to someone working in the community:

Most community workers begin researching by asking questions about their programs, the needs of their clients, the effectiveness of their work, whether new ideas are feasible, possible solutions to existing community problems, and so on. These issues become community based research by formalizing the community issue into a researchable question and systematically planning for “data” collection and analysis. This formalized research process creates new knowledge upon which to base practice. It is the focus on knowledge development that distinguishes community based research from community development [Hills and Mullet 2000].

Recent influences such as the internet and, more generally, the proliferation of information, have exerted pressure for the democratization of knowledge. Not only are community agencies and organizations increasingly involved in research, but there are growing numbers of individuals and informal groups who wish to pursue their goals of social action and change through research. CBR is one way of bridging communities and institutions in which diverse voices are not normally heard.

1.4 DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN TRADITIONAL RESEARCH AND CBR

For the purposes of this Primer, we will make some broad distinctions between traditional forms of research and community based research.

In Figure 1.3 we graphically illustrate a more traditional approach to research—one that is consistent with academic research—highlighting how knowledge is used, and for what purposes. In Figure 1.4 we illustrate the more reflective, inclusive, and non-linear approach to research that is consistent with CBR. This figure also depicts the numerous academic and non-academic “inputs” and “outputs” in CBR.
These research schemas illustrate very different approaches to research. In Figure 1.3 the linear process that characterizes more traditional approaches to research has a limited number of “inputs” or background information that shape and inform the research question. The research question is gleaned from academic sources and collaborators, and through engaging in a top-down academically-driven research process, academic outputs are generated. **Academic literature** includes books, edited book volumes, journal articles, and conference proceedings. Conversely, in Figure 1.4 there are many sources of information that can be taken into consideration in shaping community based research questions. These can include, but are not limited to: previous research, academic and community collaborators, community needs assessments, policy issues or questions, service delivery questions, community activists, and academic and grey literature. **Grey literature** refers to materials that have not been formally published and includes reports written by community groups based on their research. The research questions in CBR are generated from these varying sources, and through a collaborative research process, many research findings and applications are possible. While it is common to write a final report or paper from a CBR project, other outcomes can include (but are not limited to) policy change, community action, grey literature, the development of best practices, and increased research skills (e.g., capacity building).
1.5 LINKS TO DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Over the last 70 years the field of public health has evolved from a purely biomedical approach to understanding health to viewing health as the confluence of political, economic, social, individual, and biological factors. It is generally agreed that health can not be understood simply as the absence of disease, but that it can serve as a barometer of the economic and social conditions in which people live. The relationship between health and the contexts of people’s lives is clearest where conditions are worst: poor housing, lack of adequate heating or other facilities, environmental pollution, accidental risks, and hazardous or punishing work (Walters et al. 1995).

A determinants of health framework offers an explicit theoretical position with respect to what makes some people healthy and others not. Social, economic, and political conditions shape determinants of health and the distribution of disease. Through a determinants lens we can see the systematic and systemic social and economic inequities—in terms of access to a range of social and economic resources such as money, power, and esteem—that are major factors affecting the health of individuals and social groups (Robertson 1998). The Women’s Health Research Network published a Primer entitled Gendering the Health Determinants Framework: Why Girls’ and Women’s Health Matters that explores the determinants of health.

In most national and international documents gender is listed as a key determinant of health. Acknowledging the centrality of gender in our day-to-day experiences of health and wellbeing arose from the feminist movement’s advances in women’s health. Since the feminist movement in the late 1960s, the goals and intentions of feminism have been highly contested. Despite this, many different approaches to feminism share a concern for understanding the ways that gender influences women’s lives, and seek to uncover strategies for transforming unjust power relations (Reid and Frisby 2008). Feminisms provide an analysis of the status of women (and other disempowered groups), cross-culturally and historically, so as to explain dynamics and conditions underpinning inequalities in social status and power (Van Den Bergh 1995). Feminist perspectives question how certain people possess power, property, and privilege, and how this affects social, economic, and ecological conditions (Krieger 1996). As a result of the feminist movement there is a substantial and growing field of research focused on gender and health and girls’ and women’s health concerns. In this field, researchers distinguish between the concept of sex (biological factors) and gender (socio-cultural factors), and explore how both sex and gender affect one’s health status. The Women’s Health Research Network published a Primer entitled Better Science with Sex and Gender that explores these two concepts.

More recently, feminist researchers have begun to conduct intersectional analyses to examine the influence of different forms and combinations of disadvantage and advantage. A person or group’s day-to-day experiences are lived at the “intersection” of their history, politics, geography, ecology, culture, race, and gender. For example, it is likely that an Aboriginal woman understands her lived experiences as an interaction between race, culture, and gender, and, possibly, economic status and geography or location. It is unlikely that she would consistently make sense of her lived experiences through the lens of gender alone. Intersectionality refers to the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power (Davis 2008). In intersectional analyses gender is no longer considered in isolation from other social identity categories (Lorber 2009). The Women’s Health Research Network published a Primer entitled Intersectionality: Moving Women’s Health Research and Policy Forward that serves as an introduction to the field.
Both CBR and the field of gender and girls’ and women’s health have sprung from highly politicized movements. CBR arose from Participatory Action Research which was a deliberate move away from traditional scientific approaches towards research that is more democratic, participatory, and action-oriented. The field of gender and girls’ and women’s health research came directly from the women’s health movement in which women challenged masculine-dominated approaches to, and control over, medicine and attempted to reclaim health from more holistic and women-centered perspectives. As such, it is not surprising that many girls’ and women’s health researchers have used CBR approaches in their work, as their ideals and values are consistent on many levels. Both seek to shift the way that knowledge is generated (Hall 1981), and they both share an intent to work towards social justice (Lather 1991; Maguire 2001; Greenwood and Levin 2007).

1.6 WHAT IS YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION IN WOMEN’S HEALTH?

Any person embarking on a research project needs to be clear about the research question. The research question is the “fulcrum” or “root” of any research project; it helps guide every decision throughout the research process. Research questions can be inspired from all sorts of different sources or places, such as personal experience, work, community, or broader political issues.

Clarifying the research question can be a long process, particularly if there are a number of people involved in the research project. Figure 1.5 illustrates the various ideas that can shape one’s research interests or questions, and the broad questions that you can ask about yourself, your concerns, your co-workers, neighbourhood, community, and context. The point here is to begin considering why you want to do research and what you hope to achieve from engaging in research.

FIGURE 1.5: Clarifying the Research Question

Adapted from teaching and workshop materials developed by Dr. Allison Tom, 1996
What follows is a series of individual exercises that are intended to help you become clearer about your research question. Depending on where you began, you may not need to work through these exercises sequentially. One or two of them may be particularly helpful in gaining clarity and precision around your specific question. However, if you feel unclear and unfocused, working through these exercises in the order they appear will bring greater clarity and precision to your research questions. Again, clear and concise research questions will help you stay on track throughout the research project.

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE

Journaling – What do I care about?

Consider the following questions to more deeply reflect on what you truly care about. The questions are grouped by “expand” or “focus.” Expanding involves thinking expansively, brainstorming all possibilities, and being unlimited in one’s thinking. Focusing involves narrowing in on more specific ideas, interests, and realistic possibilities. While it is always important to think expansively in research, identifying a workable research question requires a great deal of focus and precision. This focus and precision can be honed and developed over time; this exercise is the first step towards that.

**What do I care about?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expand</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What values and priorities are important in my life?</td>
<td>• How is my work (school, practice, day-to-day life) related to my values?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is my fundamental worldview?</td>
<td>• How do I serve my values in other activities I do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How do I see the world?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What questions and concerns do I have?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expand</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What things keep (not) happening?</td>
<td>• Which concerns keep repeating in my thinking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do I wish I could change?</td>
<td>• What conversations do I keep having with colleagues or friends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do I like and want to see more of?</td>
<td>• Where am I beginning to see changes I want to pursue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where do I wish I had more skills and knowledge?</td>
<td>• What makes me frustrated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who / what do I wish I understood better?</td>
<td>• What skills can I build upon?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Where can I make a difference?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How do my concerns fit with others’ concerns?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expand</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Which of my colleagues or friends talk about this?</td>
<td>• Can I name any authors whose writing has affected how I think about these issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How are their language and concerns similar to mine?</td>
<td>• Can I identify the parts of these writings that I identify with and want to build upon?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How are they different?</td>
<td>• What parts do I disagree with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who writes about concerns like mine?</td>
<td>• What parts don’t make sense to me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who writes about concerns that are close but not the same?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What is possible?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expand</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are all of the elements I can include?</td>
<td>• Which piece of the research comes first?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Which piece of the research makes me excited enough to put my heart into?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What skills do I have? What am I best at?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What feels manageable at this time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What can be saved or postponed for a future project?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from teaching and workshop materials developed by Dr. Allison Tom, 1996
Examine what you wrote in the previous journaling exercise. In relation to what you wrote, now consider the following questions:

1. Why do I care about girls’ or women’s health?
2. Why do I care about social justice?
3. What do I feel needs to be addressed at an individual or institutional level to improve women’s health?

Ultimately, the research question that is agreed upon by the team will have a particular emphasis, depending on what you want to know. Some research questions are more exploratory, in that the area of research is unfamiliar and poorly, or not at all, understood. Other research questions are intended to find explanations or answers to a specific question, while others may have action as the primary focus. Some research questions will be appropriate for certain contexts and populations, while the same question may be inappropriate for others. When conducting CBR it is important to know your community, your particular context, the nature of the problem you want to address, and the possible actions or outcomes you hope to achieve.

For additional questions that can help researchers and research teams identify the most relevant and appropriate research questions, go to section 5.2 “Matching Our Methods to Our Questions: 5 Ws + an H.” This table provides a list of many questions to help identify the research questions and define appropriate and respectful processes for getting the work done.

What follows are questions to consider when thinking about sex, gender, and diversity in the formulation of your research questions. Depending on where you are at with your research, you may feel more comfortable starting with the first three questions, the remaining questions can help intensify how you think about questions related to gender and diversity. Reflect on these questions in your reflexive journal:

- Are women affected differently than men? May the differences be biological? social? cultural?
- Do an equal number of men and women participate in our programs? Are all the participants the same ethnicity? Why might this be the case?
- Are all the researchers the same ethnicity? What barriers or opportunities might the diversity of our research team pose?
- Are the research questions answerable? Are the research questions specific enough to achieve their stated goals?
- Were the concepts of sex, gender, and diversity taken into account in the development of the research question? Are they applied clearly and appropriately? Does the research question reflect the diversity of sexes and genders (i.e., in and among women, men, and transgender)?
- Are sex, gender, and other forms of diversity identified and defined? How inclusive is the question with regards to race, gender, class, and power?
• How might the research questions be received by all participants? How can the research questions encourage participants to fully engage? Is there buy-in from all partners in the research?

• Have the research questions been asked before in relation to sex and gender?

Adapted from the “Research Question” Working Group at the WHRN Summer Institute’s CBR workshop: Steve Chassey, Susan Dixon, Tracy Jarvis, Nicky Jeune, Christine Kreklewetz, and Nancy Poole, May 2, 2008—see section 5.8 for the questions that inspired their discussion—and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Gender and Sex-Based Analysis in Health Research: A Guide for CIHR Researchers and Reviewers.

1.7 RELATED READINGS


To begin, start a new entry for your reflexive journal. In this entry you will be exploring questions that help you understand your own identity, and examine the way that your identity interacts with your research. To accomplish this, Clark and Hunt (2008) offer the following questions to reflect on. In your journal respond to as many of these questions as seem fitting or relevant for you:

- Who am I? (Consider class, race, gender, and other axis of socio-economic location.) How does this change in the various contexts I move between? Who am I within my work? Who am I within my research?
- What communities do I belong to? How do I define community? How does the community define me?
- How do I approach work in communities to which I belong—whether through geographic location, virtual community connection, gender or racial identity, or otherwise? How do I work with “my” community? How do I work with communities when I am the “other”?
- How authentic am I in my relationships with co-researchers? With research participants? With others?
- What is my personal relationship to the issues in this research project?
- How am I impacted by intersecting systems of domination and privilege? In what relationships do I feel privileged? When do I feel less privileged?
2.1 PEOPLE, PARTICIPATION, AND RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS

In the context of CBR it is essential to acknowledge that people are multiply located. This means that it is possible, and likely, that some people involved in the research will identify with more than one label or identity. For example, in a study examining local decision-making around recreational facilities, it is possible that community partners and policy makers are also the research participants. Local researchers who are conducting research within their own communities may also have a primary affiliation with a college or university, and may therefore identify as both “academic” and “local” researchers. Jen McMillan, a member of a CBR team who began studying the health of incarcerated and transitional women while she was still in prison, offered her insights into the fluidity of her own identity:

No longer do I choose to overly identify with being an ex-inmate (or research participant in the project). I’ve had the experience of going to prison, but won’t confine myself to thinking that’s all I am and that’s all that I can offer. My reality today is not the reality of most women who’ve recently been released from prison [Jen McMillan 2008, personal communication].

The changing roles associated with CBR can challenge everyone involved. Participants may feel increasingly invested in the project over time and may even become peer researchers themselves; and community partners may wish to take on more leadership roles. The higher the level of participant and community partner involvement, the greater the likelihood that people on the CBR team will experience changes in their roles and responsibilities. A strong CBR team will develop ways to adapt to these changes.

Not only can people’s individual roles within CBR projects shift over time, but relationships in CBR are rarely straightforward. Relationships between participants, researchers, community partners, and policy makers, can vary significantly depending on the needs of the project. Ritas characterizes relationships in research projects in the following ways (see Figure 2.1; adapted from Ritas 2003):

**FIGURE 2.1: Continuum of Levels of Participation**

- **Unilateral:** Researchers not local to the community enter the community with an established agenda and obtain agreements from service organizations or other organizations to recruit clients or members for participation in the research. The researcher identifies the research question, collects and analyzes the data, and disseminates the results without input from the research community.

- **Collaborative:** The initial idea for a project comes from a non-local, often academic, researcher but the researcher includes local researchers and other community partners in some of the stages of the research from development to analysis. The initiative for the project, the bulk of the compensation for work, and the final decision-making authority rests primarily with the non-local, and likely academic, researcher.

- **Participatory:** The project is driven by a convergence of community need and non-local researcher’s interest/expertise. The decision-making, the compensation, and the initiative for the project are shared by the academic and local researchers. The primary feature of this style is that the community and research interests are both well represented in the process.
Democratic: The individual, local researchers, and community partners are democratically selected representatives of institutions. Research participants have decision-making roles in the project alongside other members of the research team.

It is rare for CBR projects to establish “unilateral” relationships—indeed unilateral decision-making contravenes the basic premises and values of CBR. Rather, CBR projects are often exemplified by collaborative, participatory, or democratic relationships. Depending on the research question(s), resources, and people involved, these three forms of decision-making can be equally appropriate. As one moves towards democratic decision-making, increasing attention is needed to establish and maintain relationships within the research process.

CBR argues that ordinary people have a right to speak and be heard in academic circles (Comstock and Fox 1993; Regehr 2000). Bringing people together around shared concerns and problems permits people to achieve mutual understanding and consensus about what to do (Kemmis 2001). Popular knowledge plays a central role in generating new knowledge that better represents the experiences of marginalized people, and motivates a community for political action (Comstock and Fox 1993). The telling, listening, affirming, reflecting, and analysis of personal stories and experiences “from the ground up” are important CBR strategies (Maguire 2001).

What is most important is that, from the beginning, all people involved in the research project are clear about the nature of research relationships within the project, while acknowledging that these could change over time.

It is also helpful to have periodic discussions throughout the project about research relationships, if and how they have evolved, and if any adjustments are required.

**TEAM EXERCISE**

**Discussion – The researcher-participant relationship**

It is essential to consider how one wants and hopes to work with the research participants and research team members. The following questions could form the basis for setting ground-rules among the research team and for establishing clear working relationships. As a team discuss the following:

- What principles or core values should guide a researcher–participant relationship?
- What does participation mean within a participant’s primary culture?
- Is there an expectation that the researchers provide clear decisions and guidance throughout the project? Is there an expectation of researcher “authority”? Have researchers agreed, implicitly or explicitly, to this?
- If you work for a community agency, will the research participants perceive you as having power over them? Do you in fact have power over them (e.g., through providing resources or services, or acting as a gatekeeper)?
- When does research constitute an imposition?
2.2 ASSEMBLING THE RESEARCH TEAM

The composition of the research team is determined by the research question being asked. Members of the team should have expertise in the topic of study, and passion to do the research.

Ideally, the research team is composed of members from diverse backgrounds who each bring a distinct perspective to the research question.

There can also be strategic reasons for certain members to be on the team: if the team hopes to influence health policy it would be a good idea to involve a health policy-maker in the research from the outset. The policy maker could help shape the research question so that it is relevant in the policy realm. Similarly, if certain actions are anticipated (for example, expanding services at a community centre) then representatives from the affected organizations may also have some important contributions to make to the research team.

There are situations when it is important to inform other people in the community about the research, but not necessarily invite them to be on the team. The CBC documentary My Big Fat Diet tells the story of Namgis First Nation working with Dr. Jay Wortman to study the effects of a traditional diet on their health. In this diet study, sponsored by Health Canada and the University of British Columbia, the participants gave up sugar and junk food, and consumed a diet based mostly on fish and vegetables, for one year. At one point in the documentary, the manager from the only grocery store in town is featured musing on the sudden rise in sales of cauliflower which she, at first, could not keep up with. This is an example of someone who would have benefited from knowing in advance what the study would involve, even though she would not need to be invited on the research team. For these types of reasons, it may be helpful to alert other services in a small community about the research so that they can be prepared for any potential changes to their service delivery.

Everyone has strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. When working on a research team, individual preferences need to be shared and considered. Finding ways for team members to be involved in CBR in the ways they want and hope for is key for the success of any CBR project.

Instructions for the facilitator:

- Give every team member two pieces of paper, one white and one coloured.
- Ask the team members to think of the part of the cycle, illustrated here, for which they feel most energized, and which they feel least energized.
- Ask the team members to write the part of the cycle that corresponds to “most energized” on the coloured piece of paper, and “least energized” on the white piece of paper. Then ask them to write their names on the paper.
- Assemble all of the pieces of paper from the team members on the wall. Take notes and discuss: Is there an even distribution of where people like to work? Do certain kinds of people [e.g., women, men, service providers, students] cluster around the same activities? Is involvement by diverse team members on the shared activities desirable? Are there gaps that may require recruitment on your team? How will this information influence the work you do together?
2.3 DEVELOPING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS ON THE RESEARCH TEAM

Group dynamics between diverse partners are essential considerations in any CBR project. Developing strategies to manage diverse needs, perspectives, and expectations can greatly enhance the experiences of those involved, additionally, it can increase the success of the project in terms of local actions and social change. The roles, responsibilities, and contributions of the academic researchers, local researchers, and community partners may shift during the lifetime of the project. Partners may change their agendas, with an adverse effect on the research (Macaulay et al. 1999). Membership may change, and each time someone new joins the group, there can be a ripple effect, with time lost as everyone adjusts to new relationships. Such events are managed best in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Disagreements and conflicts should be anticipated by also having mechanisms in place to address changes of research design, of personnel, and of mind (Macaulay et al. 1999). As much as possible, it is important to ensure that all relevant partners are as involved as they want to be and in roles that are appropriate to their positions in the project (Gibson et al. 2001).

It is important to understand the different kinds of participation that can be offered by different collaborators. For example, a university researcher earns a salary to conduct research. In CBR, researchers with academic affiliations who live outside the research community may be involved because they offer a particular expertise or perspective. They may also have access to research funds that are not available to people living in the community. Conversely, local researchers, especially those who do not have a research portfolio or mandate, may have considerably less time to spend on the research project. Local researchers may also encounter resistance from their supervisors for time spent on “non-work” activities. If the local researchers are women, there may be the additional challenge of internal and external pressures to volunteer or to undervalue ones time and energy.

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Inclusion is also critical to successful teams. Being inclusive means more than inviting diverse partners onto the team. Inclusion requires that all partners feel accepted for who they are and what they bring to the table.

It also means that partners should feel respected and supported to contribute fully to the process, and that any barriers (such as inaccessible language) are addressed, and any necessary resources to support their participation are provided (Ponic 2007). Articulating and negotiating the interests and agendas of all the partners is an essential component of a successful partnership, especially given that the overall agenda includes the complex, intertwined, professional, organizational, and personal agendas of each person in the partnership (Gibson et al. 2001). Developing a worksheet of goals with all collaborators and community partners is one way to negotiate a common research agenda (see below for Team Exercise “Making goals explicit”).

Related to the considerations described above are the finances for the project itself. Early on the research team will have to decide who is going to apply for research funding and what this may mean for others involved. Whether a researcher with an academic affiliation applies for funding
to be held at her university, or a community partner applies for funding for her organization, all team members will be implicated in this decision. For instance, if the funds are held by a university, will the team be able to decide democratically how funds are dispersed? If it takes weeks to be reimbursed by the organization that holds the funds, what could this mean for community members’ participation? Where the funding is held will also have an influence on the kinds of things that can be funded, or how certain activities are named. For example, some universities are unable to reimburse “out of pocket expenses” unless an official receipt is submitted. What might this mean for the project’s ability to reimburse the research team and community members for childcare expenses? Finally, where the funds are held will have implications for the degree of fiscal transparency required. All of these factors need to be taken into consideration when deciding on where the funds should be held.

TEAM EXERCISE
Discussion – How do we envision working together?

As a team, reflect on the following questions to help develop guiding values and principles for your work together:

• Can we name the principles that underpin our work together? Why are these principles important to us?
• How can we ensure that we follow those principles?
• How are we paying attention to gender and other forms of diversity on our research team?
• How will we deal with situations where the principles are not being followed?
Example: Reflexive Journal Entry

CBR values inclusion and hearing multiple, and at times divergent, voices. Yet it is not always easy to embrace different perspectives, especially when people involved in the project do not have the same backgrounds, education, and experiences with research. In the following example, Kelly Murphy, a research assistant at the University of British Columbia, reflects on her involvement in a CBR project and the power differences she experienced in a particular meeting.

As we gathered around the pretentious boardroom table, I contemplate the anxiety that I consistently encounter, before, during and after these monthly meetings of the Co-Investigators. It has occurred to me that it might be the setting, the boardroom and the vast distance around the table. Or could it be the name ‘Co-Investigators’; just that word makes me want to hire a lawyer. My thoughts are wandering and I am visualizing a different meeting place. The local pub perhaps, or the back of a coffee house; the smell of fresh ground beans and baked goods. What would the atmosphere feel like then? Would there be the obvious distinction between academics, peer researchers, and project staff? Yes, I can envision it now, everyone dressed in jeans, t-shirts and flip flops; many of the academics looking like throw back from the 60’s. One would not be able to differentiate between PhD, CSC, MA or MLA, in fact letters would be of no concern. Bumptious academics would unify with the struggling students (the peer researchers) in a meaningful way that emanates participatory. That is not to say that this is not happening, it’s just that there is tension and that is evident and really uncomfortable; to me. Now keeping in mind that this is my perspective, my process of an environment that is still quite foreign to me. I consider that if I can’t manage to navigate through two hours a month of seemingly “pleasantries and play acting” then how will I ever manoeuvre through the ranks of UBC academia.

As I sit here writing, I realize that my outlook might appear somewhat cynical; be that as it may, it is my process. I wasn’t entirely certain as to what was transpiring for the other members of WiH, until a door was opened into the conversation regarding “values” of the project. I have never been a person that could just sit back and allow the elephant to tromp around the room without naming it. I felt the need to speak something, anything, in order to dispel the obvious tension. But what, what was I going to say that wouldn’t make me look like an idiot. As I sat there praying, asking God to provide an opening, my will took over. Who cares? This is participatory and sometimes I forget that. There isn’t such a thing as wrong way of approaching process. And more than anything, I wanted the other women to feel safe to speak out also; to come forward if they felt the need to do so. I risk my face for the sake of the others; after all it is only false pride and ego. It wouldn’t be the first time in my life I appeared a fool and after all who was I judging here but myself. “Stop it, step up, step out!”

In validating my process, a conversation of authenticity broke out; the real deal. Unfortunately it was so late into the meeting; it felt somewhat restrained from its full potential. It was, however, a beginning. As I sat and thought about what a meeting might have looked like if WiH has the opportunity to actually “process” for an hour? Would it bridge the gap of tension? Or is the tension only mine? (Kelly Murphy 2009, journal entry).

In this case it was fortunate that Kelly had the determination to name the “elephant in the room” and to demand a more authentic conversation about the research. However, without the proper groundwork, group processes, and norms in place it is not always possible or safe for individuals to name discomforts in a CBR project.
As the project is being conceived, and as it continues to evolve, check-in with the following table to see that each partner in the research has a place to name and legitimize their goals. The goals will likely change as the project evolves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Personal goals</th>
<th>Professional goals</th>
<th>Organizational goals</th>
<th>Included in common goal?</th>
<th>How well achieved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Researcher</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Researcher</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinician</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Maker</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partner</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Gibson et al. 2001

While the “Making goals explicit” exercise can help to clarify interests and agendas, it will not dispel the inherent power differences among the research team members. For example, if the project is led by an academic researcher who is the principal investigator, she will automatically have power on the team due to her educational background, access to resources, and control of the research funds. At times it may only be possible to be openly aware of power differences, whereas, in other instances, it may be possible to actively shift them through more evenly distributing research resources and involving team members actively in decision-making processes.

Even when a CBR project unfolds in the most optimal way imaginable, there are necessary logistical considerations for ensuring that research team members are able to participate to the best of their abilities throughout the project. It may be unrealistic to expect that all team members read all emails, communications, and forms that are generated throughout any given CBR project. For example, ethics forms at universities are often 20 to 30 pages long with several attachments (e.g., interview protocols, consent forms, questionnaires, and so on). Thus, it is necessary to develop strategies for keeping people involved regardless of their desire and ability to read all project materials.

Communication is central to healthy CBR relationships. Increasingly CBR projects are using blended communication approaches that include both face-to-face and online meetings. For example, The British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health is supporting a community based research and action group that is developing a pregnancy outreach service to connect over 80 people and organizations through a web office. Members of this group use the web office to access and store documents centrally, including data, meeting minutes, fieldnotes, and research articles. They also use this tool to call meetings, form subgroups of the whole group, and communicate with each other. Web-based strategies, such as the web office, promote collective learning.
Even with web-based strategies, email access, face-to-face meetings and teleconference calls, there are many pitfalls in trying to make a project truly participatory (let alone democratic!). High speed internet connections are often impossible in more rural locations. For those with computers, there may be limits to the size of attachments or the compatibility of newer and older programs. Access to an email account or telephone should not be presumed. Teleconferencing and face-to-face meetings with transportation covered by the project are additional costs that can help address the community/academic divide. General literacy is also an important consideration; plain English is more accessible than jargon, and discipline-specific words should be defined or avoided. Computer literacy cannot be assumed, and researchers, community partners, and research participants may have different levels of computer literacy. Just because a person can open an email or send an email does not necessarily mean that they have the skills to read and/or remember the content, or the computer skills to access documents at a later date.

**TEAM EXERCISE**

**Discussion – Finding ways to democratize the project**

CBR teams need to find ways for all research team members and stakeholders to be supported in their involvement on the team. Barriers to inclusion, such as access to technology, familiarity with research language, and financial resources, need to be discussed among the team members. As a team discuss the following:

- What access to communication technologies do participants have?
- Has a communication budget been built into the project? Is training in communication technology available?
- How are emails going to be shared in order to ensure that all participants receive all communication?
- What strategies need to be in place so that communications do not solely rely on emails and attachments?
- Where blended approaches are being used what is the optimal balance between web-based and face-to-face connections?
- Are face-to-face meetings (with honoraria) built into the budget?

**INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE**

**Journaling – After a team meeting**

This is a general journaling exercise that is useful to come back to after any team meeting.

- Did I feel heard? Did I feel I could hear others?
- Where there unexpected conflicts? Unexpected synergies?
- Do I feel more connected to the team or less connected?
- Am I clearer about our goals as a team and my goals as a researcher?
At times all of the necessary people and organizations come together to create a synergy that enables an innovative project to easily get off the ground. These moments are often the result of a confluence of personal, professional, organizational, and research or project goals. Consider this example:

There were multiple relationships that were key to the development of the project. It began with a compassionate warden, a part-time prison doctor with a passion for research, and a well-loved (sort of ‘closet academic’) recreation therapist. They were willing to try “out of the box” methods to empower the women (inmates). The amount of time, desire for change, and unharnessed passion were the key factors in the women willing to participate in and follow through with the project. The existing high levels of respect and trust between the majority of the inmates and the majority of the prison staff (and contractors) at the institution was what could only be seen as highly unusual—resulting in an ideal environment for such a project. Had it not been for these pre-existing relationships built on mutual respect and trust, this project never would have gotten off the ground—the inmates would not have been interested, nor would “in the box” (orthodox) staff have tried to initiate it (because they find it frightening?). I will even go as far as to say that on the unlikely chance it was the other more “in the box” staff trying to initiate the project, it would likely never have gotten off the ground. I am not silly enough to not acknowledge the power imbalances within all institutions; but this could not have worked had the ‘us and them’ lines been set in stone [Jen McMillan 2008, personal journal].

TEAM EXERCISE
Bringing a gender perspective into CBR

What does developing strong relationships look like in the context of girls’ and women’s health research? Does it look like any other CBR project, or does it look different? These questions were posed at a workshop hosted by the Women’s Health Research Network. The group that came together to discuss these questions generated a list of considerations that should be brought to bear on CBR in women’s health.

As a team discuss the following questions:

• Who is and is not participating in this project? How are they participating, and what are the consequences?
• How will the voices and experiences of women and other marginalized groups be heard in relation to broader structural factors such as discrimination, oppression, and privilege?
• How will research questions be decided upon and who sees them as being relevant? Do the women involved have an equal voice?
• What opportunities will women and other marginalized groups have to participate in all phases of research?
• Could participation put too much of a burden on, or create a threat for, some participants? How will we know and account for this?
• Is attention being given to barriers to participation (e.g., childcare, transportation, access, language, culture, and/or gender roles)?
• What degree of participation and collaboration is ideal? Who defines those parameters? What do true “partners” look like?
• How are strategies for equitable decision-making throughout the research process defined and established?
• How is trust built? How is it earned? How is it damaged?
• What sources of conflict, power imbalances, and silences are emerging and how will these be anticipated and dealt with?
• Will participating in this project overload women who are already juggling multiple roles?

Adapted from the “Partnerships / Relationships” Working Group at the WHRN Summer Institute’s CBR workshop: Gillian Angrove, Laura Archer, Kenna Miskelly, Lisa Osbitsch, Katherine Rossiter, and Leah Shumka, May 2, 2008—see section 5.8 for the questions that inspired their discussion.

In chapter 5 we provide an example of a worksheet that can be developed for any CBR project to clearly articulate the principles that guide the project, to co-develop questions to help guide the research team, and to continually ask about the “principles in action” in the project response column. See section 5.1 “Developing Innovative Practices and Guiding Principles.”

2.5 ETHICAL QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

There are many ethical questions and considerations to reflect on and keep at the forefront of one’s mind when conducting CBR. Traditional rules for establishing and maintaining ethical behaviour are based on a model of an individual researcher working with “research subjects.” In CBR the ethical considerations take on a drastically different tone and dimension (Brydon-Miller et al. 2006). The fundamental ethical expectation in CBR is the creation of nurturing, respectful, and reciprocal relationships. CBR is strengthened by local, jointly negotiated, ethical codes or agreements that ensure the sharing of leadership, power, and decision-making from design to dissemination. These local codes should identify the ethical and political issues relevant to the research question and research team; reflect local culture, needs, and interests; and maximize close collaboration between the researchers, the community partners, and the community (Macaulay et al. 1999). The following sections examine key ethical considerations in CBR.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent refers to the process of carefully and truthfully informing potential participants about the research and all that it involves, and then receiving the participant’s agreement to the terms of their participation in the study. In CBR informed consent extends beyond agreeing to be a subject in a study. It can also involve such things as agreeing to be identified as a research participant, instead of suppressing one’s identity by using a pseudonym. Or, participants may be asked to review transcripts, and other forms of data, and be involved in data analysis and in the dissemination of results.

Since CBR often evolves over the course of the project, some people have suggested that informed consent needs to be solicited at various times during the project, and perhaps again at the end of the project (Shartrand and Brabeck 2004). Consent can be obtained in writing or orally, and it is essential to consider your research population when deciding which method to use. For example, when working with participants who are reluctant or unable to sign forms, establishing a protocol of written consent would create an unnecessary barrier to the research. Given that CBR is participatory and, in some cases, democratic, the active involvement of the research participant needs to be negotiated at all stages of the research.
ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Often the terms anonymity and confidentiality are used interchangeably. However, they mean different things and it is essential to be clear with participants about the degree of protection you are able to promise in terms of maintaining anonymity or confidentiality. Boundaries around anonymity and confidentiality are influenced by community geography, as limitations naturally arise in rural or remote communities.

**Anonymity:** The research participant can be anonymous only if the data do not include any identifiers, codes, or unique information that can be used to identify the participant. If the participant has been in a face-to-face interview, for example, she is not anonymous because her identity is known. On the other hand, the data could still be made anonymous if someone other than the researcher has removed all identifiers from the data, and any key linking the subject to code numbers or pseudonyms is destroyed.

More specifically, the identity of a research participant is anonymous if: a) she was recruited as the result of database linkages, where the researcher receives anonymous data only, or b) she completed a questionnaire that required no identifying information and she was not recruited because her membership in any specific group (e.g., patients, culture, religion, student body) [UBC Research Ethics 2008].

**Confidentiality:** In essence, confidentiality means that although a participant is identifiable to key people in the research project, there is an agreement that information that could possibly reveal the identity of the participant will not be disclosed to anyone outside the research team. For example, raw data may include the name and/or other identifiers of a participant, such as a code or membership in a group, which can be used to link the data to the subject’s name. However, although the research team has access to this information, it will not be included in the final reports of the research, nor will anyone other than those specified in the consent form be given access to the data [UBC Research Ethics 2008].

COMMUNITY CONFIDENTIALITY

As a result of injustices that have been done to small, rural, remote and Aboriginal communities, members of the community may desire community confidentiality. Maintaining community confidentiality involves stripping all data of any information that would reveal the identity of the research community itself. Researchers are able to broadly characterize the research community but not name it (e.g., referring to ”a rural farming community in central British Columbia”, but not saying the name of the town). Not only does this protect smaller communities from negative stereotypes, but it can also ensure an added layer of confidentiality for research participants from small communities. It is important to consider the potentially harmful implications of research on small communities and the individuals living within these communities. Local researchers and CBR advisory groups are in a good position to determine the appropriateness of community confidentiality.

The concept of community confidentiality was initially raised by First Nations involved in research. An example from a small Aboriginal community in northern British Columbia illustrates the importance of considering community confidentiality:

*The research around suicides was picked up by mass media with two consequences: (1) Locally, we knew who was being spoken about because of small details like age and family background, and (2) We’ve [community] had to work hard to redefine ourselves beyond what “outsiders” are saying about us. There is now more interest to research this particular issue in our community, yet this interest sometimes means we think this is “who we are” and forget we can self-determine and good things happen here too [Anne Docherty 2008, personal communication].*
On the other hand, some communities might want to be identified in order to share their findings with other similar communities, or to use the findings as the basis for local actions.

Ethical questions raised in CBR relate not only to the safety of the research participant. There are other considerations including the safety and protection of the research community and research team members. For example, a peer researcher investigating substance use may not wish to be identified in the dissemination of research results because it would force public disclosure on her own drug use. Conversely, another peer researcher may find the public disclosure freeing. Community partners, policy makers, and people living in the research community (who may or may not be research participants) must all be invested in, and aware of, the ethical dimensions of the CBR project. Conducting research locally can carry significant ethical questions for the community based researcher, including multiple roles and hearing stories or experiences that require reporting. Natalie Clark, a researcher at Thompson Rivers University, encountered the following challenges:

> I have had to report abuse, provide debriefing and support when someone has been triggered by the interview. I always ensure that I provided a direct link to supports. Community based researchers need to have the skills to deal with safety, support and disclosure and have immediate access to counselling and follow-up. In addition, if peer researchers are involved (participants interviewing each other), it is important to provide ongoing debriefing and support due to the triggering of their own past issues and need for self-care in doing interviews. Having a co-researcher who is a trauma counsellor is imperative in research with vulnerable groups [Natalie Clark 2009, personal communication].

Ethical review boards at universities often couch their requirements in language that is disempowering and difficult for community researchers and members to navigate. For example, Research Ethics Boards have been known to reject letters of invitation written in plain English because the language is not considered fitting for an academic undertaking. Language that is acceptable to a Research Ethics Board may be intimidating to community participants (Sherrie Bade 2008, personal communication). While traditional approaches to ethical reviews are still slow to ask all of the pertinent questions related to CBR, the CBR Team should engage with ethical questions through the duration of the research process.

> Ethical review practices based in community for CBR are still being developed. One promising example is The Community based Research Centre (CBRC) Sites. The CBRC is a non-profit community organization that conducts community based research and that offers an ethics review process for community based researchers. It upholds and advocates for the principles of community based research. The CBRC specializes in applied research in the areas of HIV/AIDS and gay men’s health [reb.cbrc.net].
Each research team member has a commitment to conducting CBR ethically and with integrity. From an individual perspective, reflect on the following questions.

• Is it appropriate to collect this information? How can I take responsibility for the collection process?
• Which form of identity protection can I promise to participants, confidentiality or anonymity? What are the limits of the form of identity protection that I am offering?
• As a member of the research team, do I require confidentiality in certain aspects of the project (e.g., dissemination or action)? What could this mean for my involvement?

After engaging individually with the above questions, as a team discuss the following questions. Not only are these questions intended to inform the formal ethics review process (i.e., gaining approval from a Research Ethics Board), but they are also intended to make ethical decision-making central to all aspects and stages of the project.

• What mode of communication and kinds of language should be used to ensure that participants and research team members understand what they are agreeing to? Is literacy a consideration? Are there cultural factors to consider?
• How can conversations about informed consent be kept alive throughout the research process as a way of maintaining and strengthening research relationships?
• When considering questions about “harm,” is harm always considered from all possible perspectives? Have all members of the research team considered benefits and harms for themselves personally?
• What do “safe” methods look like? What do “unsafe” methods look like?
• Under what circumstances is it not appropriate to ensure confidentiality? What are the challenges of not providing confidentiality?
• How can the research process ensure that findings are not taken out of context? How can the integrity of the research context be maintained throughout?
• Who owns the data and the findings? How will the research team discuss ownership of the project?
• Will the research community be identified in research reports, academic journal articles, or other forms of dissemination? Will action plans necessitate identifying the community?
2.6 REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND CONFRONTING ASSUMPTIONS

In this chapter many questions were raised about research relationships, roles, confronting assumptions and expectations, seeing key issues from different perspectives, and research ethics. None of these issues are simple or straight-forward. They require reflexivity and self-awareness and a willingness to examine and critically appraise personal and contextual biases. Every person involved in, or hoping to engage in, CBR needs to be upfront and honest about their own hopes and dreams for the research, and needs to put time and effort into identifying potential stumbling blocks or barriers to success.

Taking the questions raised in this chapter seriously may require that the researcher and research team revisit the research questions. Ask yourself questions like: Are expectations of the research participants and the research team reasonable and fair? How can we ensure an open and honest dialogue about roles, responsibilities, outcomes and possible negative implications? Consider revising and adjusting the project as needed to make room for engaging with these considerations.
2.7 RELATED READINGS


Couzos, S., T. Lea, R. Murray, and M. Culbong. 2005. We are not just participants – We are in charge: The NACCHO Ear Trail and the process for Aboriginal Community-controlled health research. *Ethnicity and Health* 10(2): 91–111.


Kirby, S., L. Greaves, and C. Reid. 2006. Experience, research, social change: Methods beyond the mainstream. Toronto, ON: Broadview Press. [See chapters 3, 4, and 5.]


3 METHODS

IN THIS CHAPTER WE:

• Propose questions to ponder when recruiting participants and gathering data
• Provide specific research tools for engaging in qualitative CBR
• Provide strategies for writing up CBR findings

The goal of CBR is to produce new knowledge. In this chapter we explore how knowledge can be generated using CBR in the field of girls’ and women’s health research. We start by discussing literature reviews, and then explore in detail qualitative research methods that are closely aligned with the values of CBR: one-on-one interviewing, group interviewing, and field observations. We then describe how to organize, manage, and make sense of these types of data, while discussing some of the specific considerations involved in working with CBR teams and negotiating research decisions throughout the project. This chapter also takes a look at innovative and promising new approaches to CBR that include mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative), virtual networking, photovoice, and claymation.

In this chapter we move back and forth between describing research methods that are appropriate for CBR (but that are also used by researchers not explicitly engaged in CBR) and identifying specific considerations for researchers and research teams engaged in these methods (from an explicitly CBR perspective). Thus, some descriptions throughout this chapter are related to research in general, while others are directly related to conducting CBR.
The questions posed in this journaling exercise are intended to connect (or re-connect) you with WHY you are doing research, and the SO WHAT of the research you are doing. Journal about your thoughts and reflections on any or all of the following questions:

- How will I describe the different hats that I wear? In what ways am I an insider to the community being researched? In what ways am I an outsider?
- What emotions, struggles, and successes have I experienced in building relationships?
- Why do I want to talk to people? Why do I want to listen to people? Why do I want to gather information?
- What are my strengths in building relationships, and how can I maximize these?

After journaling individually about your personal “why” and “so what?” it is important to consider these same questions as a team. Not only must the CBR team grapple with these questions, but it must also establish its working relationship and reach agreement on individual roles and responsibilities. Engaging with the following questions will help advance the team’s thinking around these issues.

- What are our team’s strengths in building relationships, and how can these be maximized?
- What are the power relations within and surrounding the project? What steps are being taken to level imbalances and mobilize power of all participants?
- How can the research be designed in order to resist or overcome traditional academic control over the process?
- Who owns the research? How will the knowledge be produced, communicated, and acted upon?
3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

In CBR and research more generally, literature reviews are important for assessing what is already known about the subject of study and for highlighting methodological issues. In any approach to research it is important to, at the very least, have some sense of the related literature to ensure that the project being undertaken has not already been done. Reviewing the literature can also ensure that the research team does not replicate mistakes made by previous research teams. The literature review can involve both academic and grey literature, which include government or organizational reports, community reports, statistical reports, research articles in academic journals or books, and many other publications.

The composition and structure of the research—including the research question, research team, method, purpose, and available resources—will largely determine the format and extent of the literature review. Your questions will help you make important decisions regarding the information you gather. For example, you will decide what must be included, what is related but not central, and what can be disregarded and omitted. Various research partners can contribute to the literature review in informative and meaningful ways. Local researchers, community partners, and potential research participants have local knowledge and likely have access to local documents of interest. Academic researchers have library resources (both through the university’s physical library and on-line services) that may not be available locally or for free. Statistics Canada and other large Canadian organizations compile data on specific health issues. The website “The Survey” ([www.womenshealthdata.ca](http://www.womenshealthdata.ca)) provides free links to reports on girls’ and women’s health in BC and Canada.

In CBR a literature review can be conducted by one person independently, or by a group of people on the research team. Often in CBR some team members will be more interested than others in delving into the literature. Regardless of how the literature review is accomplished, it is necessary for all team members to have some knowledge of previous and related literature so that they have a sense of the gap or contribution that the current project will make to the existing state of the literature.

TEAM EXERCISE

Discussion – How should the literature review take shape?

A researcher or research team engaged in CBR needs to consider HOW the literature review will inform and shape the research process, and to what degree a thorough reporting of previous literature is important to the project at hand. Attending to these questions can guide a CBR researcher or research team in making efficient and relevant decisions about the literature review. Reflect on and discuss the following questions as a team:

- What is known about the topic?
- What are the main issues or debates? What are the main questions and problems that have been addressed to date?
- What are the limitations, gaps, and errors in the current published work?
- Has anyone else done exactly the same study as the one we’ve proposed? Has anyone else done anything that is related?
- Where does the proposed work fit with what has gone before? What does it contribute?
- Why is the research worth doing in light of what has already been done?

Adapted from Silverman 2000
3.2 RECRUITMENT

A central consideration in any study involves identifying the people who will be the research participants. The first step in approaching this consideration involves determining the qualities and characteristics of the people who will be most appropriate for answering the research question[s]. The specific socio-demographic characteristics of the sought-after research participants will help clarify selection criteria. Consider characteristics such as: gender; race and ethnicity; culture; socio-economic status; age; sexual orientation; ability; location, geography or community of residence; membership or participation in a particular group, program, or organization.

The following questions are designed to identify the characteristics of targeted research participants and to draw attention to the characteristics of people who may be missing from the study. They encourage the research team to hone its thinking about how participants are included in the study, and possibly, how other participants are being inadvertently excluded. Consider and discuss the following questions on participant recruitment:

- Are there characteristics that are central to the study that are common among all participants?
- Which characteristics are less central, and do not require uniformity (i.e., they are not the basis for inclusion or exclusion in the study)?
- Who is and is not participating in this project? Is it possible to be clear about why certain groups or individuals have not been included?
- Is attention being given to barriers to participation (e.g., transportation, language, childcare)?
- Is attention being paid to the methods chosen to advertise the research? Could the advertising method itself exclude certain populations?

TEAM EXERCISE
Discussion – Recruiting research participants

The following questions are designed to identify the characteristics of targeted research participants and to draw attention to the characteristics of people who may be missing from the study. They encourage the research team to hone its thinking about how participants are included in the study, and possibly, how other participants are being inadvertently excluded. Consider and discuss the following questions on participant recruitment:

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- Is attention being given to barriers to participation (e.g., transportation, language, childcare)?
- Is attention being paid to the methods chosen to advertise the research? Could the advertising method itself exclude certain populations?
Example: Recruitment Protocol

The following table provided a framework for recruiting participants in Dr. Wendy Frisby’s *Social Exclusion in Sport and Recreation* project. The questions in the second row (e.g., “From where did you immigrate?”) were used to identify potential research participants. These same questions were also used as interview questions and were expanded upon to gain further insight into the women’s experiences as recent immigrants. The target boxes indicate the number of women the researchers wished to recruit in each category. Researchers hoped to recruit recent immigrant women with varying experiences of countries of origin, immigration, and socio-economic status.

Criteria for all participants (goal – 45 women involved)

- 1st generation immigrant, must have lived in Metro Vancouver for less than 10 years
- Age: 30 years and older
- Must have immigrated as an adult (as opposed to immigrating as a dependent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/place of origin</th>
<th>Socioeconomic Status</th>
<th>Domestic Status</th>
<th>Current Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From where did you immigrate?</td>
<td>From where do you earn an income?</td>
<td>How do you describe your living situation?</td>
<td>Where do you currently live?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Targets:**
- Hong Kong = 13-16
- Mainland China = 13-16
- Taiwan = 13-16
- Other = 2-6

**Targets:**
- Income assistance = 20
- Work/partner income/other income source = 25

**Targets:**
- Partnered = 30
- Not partnered = 15
- Women with dependents (children, aging parents/relatives) = 35

**Targets:**
- Vancouver = 13-16
- Richmond = 13-16
- Burnaby = 13-16
- Other = 2-6

Adapted from *Draft Sampling Protocol: Social Exclusion in Sport and Recreation*. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Standard Research Grant, Principal Investigator Dr. Wendy Frisby.
This set of questions is intended to probe the ethical and moral implications of recruiting participants into a CBR project. They range from practical questions about finding participants, to explicit questions intended to get the research team thinking seriously about the promises made in the recruitment process, and how the team plans to uphold such promises.

Reflect on the following questions as you consider participant recruitment and ethics:

• How will potential participants be contacted? Is there a recruitment bias?
• Who will recruit participants, and what is their relationship with the research community?
• How and from where will participants be recruited?
• Do the participants fully understand the cyclical and iterative nature of the research? Will they feel their time has been wasted if they do not see immediate results?
• What do participants think they are consenting to? What are they getting from the project? Why are participants interested in being involved?
• Were the participants coerced to participate? Is offering an honorarium coercion? Does this matter? If an honorarium is offered, does it merely cover participants’ out-of-pocket expenses, or does it remunerate them for their time?
• Do research participants understand what is asked of them and how their words or responses will be used? Do they understand what data are? Are participants aware of the data storage, principles for accessing data [e.g., do other academic partners, whom they may have never met, have access to the data for analysis and publications?], and timelines for the project itself?
• If you live in a small rural town or Reserve with only one office, social service agency, health unit or school and the CBR project is being run from that organization, how will this affect participants?
• Is there an implicit contract about who owns the data?
• What is the process for participants to end their involvement in the project?

Adapted from the “Recruitment” Working Group at the WHRN Summer Institute’s CBR workshop: Anita Alam and Silvia Vilches, May 2, 2008—see section 5.8 for the questions that inspired their discussion.

3.3 WHAT ARE DATA?

Data collection is an integral component of any research undertaking, and that is no different for CBR. Similar to more traditional approaches to research, in CBR data refer to a collection of information or facts usually gathered as the result of experience, observation, or experiment. Data can come in the form of numbers, words, or images. Qualitative data are usually words or chunks of text that are gathered and then woven together to make meaning of a particular phenomenon.

There are many research methods that can be used in CBR. As a researcher, you will have to make decisions about the most appropriate and useful research methods to answer your research question. For example, if you want to know about a woman’s experience with a health care clinic in order to recommend possible changes to improve service delivery, then it makes sense to use one-on-one interviews to ask women who are using the clinic about their experiences. While there are many research methods that can be used in CBR, in Our Common Ground we cover three in detail: one-on-one interviews, group interviews, and observations.
In CBR data collection poses its own set of distinct considerations in the research approach. For example, in CBR there is often more than one person collecting data, and in some cases, data collection may occur in different locations simultaneously. This raises specific questions about the skills of the people gathering the data, the methods chosen, and the systems in place to organize the data. Working in a team requires frequent communication about the process itself and a system for recording insights, reflections, and areas to address or change. Working on a team demands that every team member takes the iterative nature of CBR seriously and works collaboratively with the other team members.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

One-on-one interviews, group interviews, and observations are the most common data collection techniques used in CBR. This section overviews these methods, while linking with the additional tools and detailed information relating to these techniques provided in chapter 5 “Additional Tools.” As you read through this section, you may want to flip back and forth between the additional tools and content in chapter 5 to enhance your understanding of CBR data collection techniques.

TEAM EXERCISE

Reflection – How do we begin data collection?

As a team it is necessary to consider why you are gathering information, from whom you are gathering it, who wants to gather it, and any sensitive or ethical issues to consider. Working with a team also demands attention to who will collect the data and who has the skills required to collect data ethically and rigorously. As a team reflect on the following questions:

• What data collection activities will be used? Why were these ones chosen? How do these activities help answer the research question? Will these tools provide all the data required to answer the research question?
• Do the people collecting data require specialized training (e.g., group leadership skills, using computer programs, conducting an interview)?
• Are there any sensitive issues to be aware of as the data are collected? For example, if focus groups are chosen as a research method, will participants be comfortable discussing personal issues in a group setting? Will participants need support after participating, due to the nature of the questions? Is the group prepared to deal with disclosures of information that will need to be reported to police or social services? How are participants being informed about these limitations to confidentiality?
• Will the chosen data collection methods allow access to the unique experiences of each research participant? Will the methods enable understandings of the dynamics of gender, race, ethnicity, and other forms of diversity?
• Might the chosen methods put too much undue burden on some participants? How will this be accounted for?
• Is it advantageous for the people gathering the data to be similar to, or different from, the research participants? To what degree are the people collecting the data “insiders” or “outsiders”? What are the implications of their location vis-à-vis the research participants?
I. INTERVIEWS

Interviews are a very common data collection technique. Individual interviews can be the most appropriate research method when the topic is sensitive, and intimate participant details may be shared. In these cases, participants may be most comfortable sharing in a one-on-one setting. Individual interviews may also be desirable to avoid potential disagreements or hostility, either of which could undermine the safety of participants or researchers.

Broadly speaking, there are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. (If you are unfamiliar with these distinctions, or would like more information on the specific types of interviews and how they differ, see section 5.3 “Interviews” in chapter 5.) All types have their strengths and limitations, serve different purposes, and help answer different kinds of research questions.

Consider a scenario where three members of a research team are conducting research in their respective communities across BC. Generating data that is comparable across these communities requires consideration of the interview technique being used. A more structured or semi-structured interview would facilitate gathering these kinds of data, as opposed to an unstructured interview which might leave too much room for variation across sites. For someone who has less experience with qualitative research methods, a more structured interview can often feel easier than a less structured interview. Less structured interviews can feel unwieldy and out of control, which can be difficult for new researchers.

However, it is possible, and in some cases desirable, to generate large quantities of high-quality data from more unstructured interviews. This requires a level of training and experience among the researchers, and regular check-ins to compare data and to problem-solve along the way. In these instances the researchers should work together to examine their interview style, the kinds of responses they elicit, and how they probe and move through the interview questions. Adjustments can be made to ensure that the interview styles are comparable and that they are consistently getting the same kinds of information from the participants.

For an explanation of several strategies for documenting interviews, tips for conducting individual and group interviews, and a description of different kinds of interview questions, see section 5.3 “Interviews”.

II. FOCUS GROUPS, GROUP MEETINGS, OR GROUP INTERVIEWS

In research settings, gatherings of 6 to 12 individuals are often considered an optimal number of participants. Group interviews are consistent with the ideals of CBR as they enable groups with similar or diverse interests and backgrounds to share experiences, learn from one another, and possibly formulate action plans. A group interview can be an effective research tool because:

- Sharing ideas in a group conversation can aid recall.
- Interactions among group participants can foster more democratic relationships within the research project and possibly elicit a great number and depth of responses.
- Members of groups who have been traditionally marginalized may prefer group gatherings because they can be less intimidating; some participants hesitate to provide information one-on-one and some participants may appreciate sharing experiences in a group setting.
- Groups can tilt the balance of power away from the researcher[s] and towards the group, thereby reflecting the agenda of the participants. This can help clarify a meaningful research question.
- Groups provide an opportunity for the researcher[s] to observe how focus group participants interact and create meanings. For example, focus groups can provide insight into questions that explore social norms and processes.
If there are several researchers collecting data, as is often the case in CBR, having three or more researchers at a focus group can help manage many of the challenges of conducting group interviews. The researchers can take on the various roles required—one facilitates the meeting, a second takes notes, and a third manages the logistics of the room and equipment. To facilitate the group process, it is possible to establish group norms for sharing ideas in the group interview, such as speaking one at a time and stating one’s name before speaking. For more information on group data collection techniques, see section 5.4 “Focus Groups, Group Meetings, or Group Interviews”.

TEAM EXERCISE
Discussion – Honing group interview skills

The purpose of this exercise is to help research team members hone their group interview skills. It is also intended to expose all team members to the various roles involved in conducting a group interview.

Instructions for the facilitator: In advance, prepare the group interview questions for your project. Ask for volunteers from the research team or from the research participants, and designate specific roles:

• 2 facilitators
• 2 participants
• 2 note-takers

The rest of the team members will act as observers. Arrange participants into a fishbowl setting with the facilitators and participants in a circle in the centre of the room, and the observers in a circle around the periphery of the room. Give the facilitators the group interview questions and allow them some time to familiarize themselves with the questions. Then have the facilitators conduct a 5–10 minute group interview with the volunteer participants in the middle of the room.

Once complete, come together in the full group again and conduct a group debriefing—ask the following questions:

• **Participants** – Did you feel listened to? Did you feel comfortable to share your perspective? What did you like about the focus group? What could have been improved?
• **Facilitators** – How did it feel to facilitate a focus group? What did you like about your facilitation of the discussion? What did you feel you could have done better?
• **Note-takers** – What did you find challenging about note-taking?
• **Observers** – What went well during the focus group? What could have been done better?

Adapted from Shallwani and Mohammed 2007
Online focus groups are increasingly being used as a research strategy that can bridge distance and create safety for diverse perspectives to be aired in ways that face-to-face groups cannot always accomplish. The “Preventing FASD Through Providing Addictions Treatment and Related Support for First Nations and Inuit Women in Canada” project used virtual focus groups to seek the perspectives of researchers, service providers, and health system planners working on Aboriginal women’s health from across Canada. Seven virtual focus groups were held using a web meeting format. The thirty participants who attended the focus groups resided in urban and rural communities and came from six provinces and three territories. www.coalescing-vc.org/virtualLearning/community5/documents/Cmty5_InfoSheet1.pdf

III. OBSERVATIONS AND FIELDNOTES

Fieldnotes are another useful CBR data collection technique. They are written or typed notes that capture information gathered through observation and reflections about the content of the research, the process of observing, and the experience of being the observer. Fieldnotes are especially valuable for documenting what is not easily captured by recording devices; things such as mood, non-verbal communications, physical setting, and overall impressions and reactions. Documenting these sorts of details is critical, as meaning can be expressed through vocal quality and body movements, not only through words alone.

Example: Fieldnotes

In the interview she [research participant] did not sit still for the first half of the interview. She sat on the edge of her chair and moved constantly. She didn’t look at me directly. When I began asking her more straight-forward questions about her life currently (as opposed to the questions I had been asking which were focused on her history of abuse, neglect, and trauma), she visibly relaxed (Colleen Reid’s fieldnotes 2004).

Although this research participant was very forthcoming about her traumatic past, she initially displayed her discomfort with her body movements. The reflections documented in the fieldnotes helped to capture these significant non-verbal cues, which in turn helped the researcher shape her approach to the subsequent interview with this participant.

Fieldnotes should be written as soon as possible after the data collection because they can help the researcher get at discrepancies between memories of the interviews and the transcripts. Later the researcher can expand on her notes and dictate extensive descriptions of data collection (e.g., Did the interview questions resonate with the research participant? Were some questions worded awkwardly or difficult to understand?), emerging understandings of the topic (e.g., Does the research question still make sense? Does it need to be fine-tuned? Are interesting or important insights surfacing from the data collection? Are understandings of the topic shifting or evolving? Are there new leads to follow?) and overall impressions of the research context and environment (e.g., Was the location of the interview or focus group suitable? How could the research participant’s behaviour be characterized? Did anything unexpected happen? In the context of a focus group, did anyone dominate? Did this shift the discussion? Was there any side-talking taking place?)

Talking into a tape recorder is an effective way to get at overall impressions and to make the link between the experience of the interview and the researcher’s reflections of it. These tapes would then need to be transcribed, identified, and labelled systematically in order to be useful in the research process.
I often spoke my field notes into my tape-recorder immediately after a data gathering session. This typically happened in my vehicle as I left the site, but also took place in odd locations such as a public bathroom stall when time between interviews was scarce. I believed that the sooner I created the fieldnotes the better, as the situation would be fresh in my mind. I transcribed these field notes in conjunction with the transcription of the session as a whole. When it was not convenient for me to speak my fieldnotes into the recorder, I wrote them out as soon as possible following the session. Upon analysis of these notes, I discovered that, despite the time lag, the field notes that I wrote out were more detailed and reflexive than the ones I tape-recorded despite my presumption that it would be the other way around because of the immediacy of the tape-recorded notes. I believe that this discovery speaks to the depth and value of writing as reflexive process (Ponic 2007, 133).

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE

Reflection – Research methods and participant comfort

As a community based researcher it is necessary to reflect on the data collection process from beginning to end. It is essential to consider how the participants engage with the research and the agreement you have with them. Reflect on the following questions:

• Are the research methods allowing participants the opportunity to talk freely and in complex ways?
• Do I have other constraints regarding data collection in terms of my own time, the time of the research team, and my budget?
• When will I stop collecting data? Do I have enough information to guide my analysis? Am I hearing the same things repeatedly?
• If necessary, can I access resources to protect my participants and myself?

Questions, particularly those who have previously experienced trauma, may trigger memories that are difficult for respondents to deal with post-interview. To help protect yourself and your participants, you should set up support plans in advance of the interview. This might include having a list of social service resources to provide to the participant, ensuring that she has family or friend support systems in place, and/or placing a follow-up call to check in with the participant after the interview. For the researcher, you may want to set up a support structure for yourself, such as a peer debriefing, or seek additional training.
When interviewing sexually exploited youth or adults in the sex trade I have received disclosures of current and historical abuse. Statistically, abuse and trauma are a part of the daily lived experience for many of the participants we are interviewing and much of this abuse and trauma remains undisclosed and untreated. Focus group facilitators and interviewers need to be skilled in recognizing possible symptoms of trauma and in providing strategies to support a participant who is triggered by an interview. The body response to trauma and the remembering of trauma can occur in one of two ways: hyper-arousal (over-reacting) or numbing (under-reacting). These two reactions are interrelated and can occur in response to a trigger, or a reminder of the trauma (which interview questions can induce). Immediate interview strategies include stopping the interview and/or focus group in order to decrease contact with the trigger and assist the participant to identify the level of their reaction (scale from 1-10 and work to decrease to a level that is manageable). In addition, deep breathing, relaxation exercises, and speaking in a calm and soothing voice to reassure them that they are safe now are useful strategies. Finally, and most importantly, provide a direct link to supports and follow-up. Simply providing phone numbers is unethical at this point as the participant needs to be provided with immediate support and follow-up and the nature of the trigger will prevent action on their own behalf in many cases.

For researchers who are not trained in this area it’s imperative that they receive training on possible signs of trauma and that they understand the importance of safety and containment with those who they are interviewing, and referral to trauma therapists when possible. Researchers also need to be familiar with reporting guidelines with respect to children and youth and understand and inform participants of possible outcomes of disclosure so that the individual is empowered to choose to disclose her abuse. In addition, if a research participant begins to disclose abuse during a focus group session, it is important to interrupt her and even stop her disclosure, in order to remind her of limits of confidentiality and to encourage her to choose to disclose in privacy.

It is always imperative to report all disclosures of child sexual abuse. During research conducted with sexually exploited youth and adult sex trade workers I had a young woman disclose childhood abuse to me following the focus group. She indicated she had never told anyone of this but had felt safe and supported at this time to share this with me. I provided immediate support and connection to a trauma counsellor in her community and offered follow-up support as well. This was a young woman who no one in the service provider community had been able to connect with and therefore the outcome of this disclosure was a positive one. Had I not identified her as being triggered during the focus group I would not have connected with her after for an individual check-in and sharing and the outcomes may have been negative. Seek consultation if in doubt! [Natalie Clark, 2009, personal communication].

In a WHRN workshop a group of participants were tasked with listing key considerations in conducting CBR in gender and women’s health. In keeping with fundamental CBR values and principles, they suggested that how the method is chosen is as important as the method itself. Intentions about data collection need to be clear from the outset to ensure that the methods chosen reflect the goals of the community. Open-ended approaches were preferred over more structured ones because they accommodated resistance, disagreement, and reshaping of the research process. The notion of respectful research methods was central in terms of respecting the community and its culture, values, and safety. From the perspective of gender and women’s health, research methods were viewed as a source for healing, creating common ground, and understanding differences. Finally, when possible, multiple methods should be chosen—including qualitative and quantitative, traditional and non-traditional, text and images, and so on.

Adapted from the “Research Methods” Working Group at the WHRN Summer Institute’s CBR workshop: Claire Askew, Kristina Bain, Natalie Clark, Shayna Hornstein, Nancy Jackson, Diwa Massahi, Candace Morris, Deb Parkhouse, and Lauren Waugh, May 2, 2008—see section 5.8 for the questions that inspired their discussion.
The purpose of this exercise is to have research team members brainstorm their plans for collecting data. For each data collection activity, list your response to the question placed at the top of the column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection activities</th>
<th>How many?</th>
<th>Who are the participants?</th>
<th>Where?</th>
<th>When? (approximately)</th>
<th>By whom?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For example: One-on-one interviews</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Women on low-income who have lived in Prince George for over 5 years</td>
<td>In women’s homes</td>
<td>May 1 – June 30, 2009</td>
<td>Peer researchers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.5 TRANSCRIBING THE DATA

Much like fieldnotes, a transcript serves as a memory aid to individual or group interviews. How one approaches transcription depends on variables such as the research question and what the researcher wants to get out of the transcription (Poland 2003). The amount and form of transcribing depends on factors such as the nature of the material, the purpose of the research, the time and money available, and the availability of a transcriptionist (Kvale 1996).

Every transcription from one medium to another (e.g., actual interview to notes, notes to word processor, or interview to word processor) involves a series of judgments and decisions. For example, the researcher can choose to transcribe verbatim or summarize and condense sections with less relevant information (Kvale 1996). How you choose to transcribe depends on your research question. Is it necessary to have the exact wording, syntax, pauses, and so on? Or, are you just looking for general ideas and feelings? If you plan to use quotations from your data for analysis and writing, then the exact wording is definitely necessary (i.e., do not paraphrase if you are quoting!).

As a community based researcher you may have chosen individual interviews, group interviews, observations, or a combination of these three methods as your method for collecting data. Regardless, you will require an audio taped or written record of the data you have amassed: individual and group interviews will produce transcripts while observations will produce fieldnotes. These records are essential to you as a researcher in documenting your participants’ ideas and responses.

### 3.6 MEMBER-CHECKING

Member-checking involves returning the transcript of the interview to the interviewee to ensure accuracy. The interviewee is then invited to make changes, delete text, and provide more information where desired. Member-checking is now standard practice. It can be a useful way to follow-up with an interviewee and gain more clarity on things she said in her first interview. Also, if second interviews are being done, reviewing the transcript of the first interview can form the basis for the second.
Although extremely beneficial, member-checking can also prove to be challenging because it can create discomfort. Interviewees often comment negatively on their lack of full sentences. It is very important to advise interviewees about this before they read their interviews. No one speaks in full sentences, we all sound somewhat incoherent and awkward when our speech is transcribed into text. Verbal interactions follow a logic that is different from the written prose, and therefore tend to look remarkably disjointed, inarticulate, and even incoherent (Poland 2003).

**Example: A Verbatim Interview Transcript**

This example illustrates what a verbatim interview transcript can look like.

**Researcher (R):** Anything else you can think of about good health?

**Participant (P):** Goodness. (pause). I’d like to maybe learn more about I know I’m not a good eater. But that’s been my, I’ve twice gone anorexic. And that’s all, you know, been through all that it’s, in turn I’m not the best of eaters. And I’ve really tried not to pass my bad habits onto him [son]. But I don’t know I think some of it might be slipping on to him. But that you know because that’s what they say you know you don’t eat properly then you won’t have the energy and blah, blah, blah. So. I think if maybe we, I’d like you know maybe we could do something with the group somehow. Like we all know how to cook. And all that. But you know just good knowledge.

**R:** Where do you think your idea of good health comes from?

**P:** I think good health and image a lot of it is portrayed like what you see and what you view. And it’s no wonder a lot of people do get like eating disorders and that especially when you see what’s portrayed in the media. And in the magazines and that. And I know my growing up years a lot of that if you weren’t skinny and if you didn’t have the cute little wiggles and the giggles. Yah and you know be a little cheerleader. And I don’t know if that’s answering your question. (laughing).

**R:** No. So you think. No it is because it’s like let me see if I understand what you’re saying. Is that your idea of good health comes from what you see, an image. Like the image of health is.

**P:** Yah it’s kind of like what you’re you know like you’re brought up with the stereotypes you know. You know like just like girls wear pink and boys wear blue. It’s just what you’re brought up with. And how it’s done. I think. I don’t know if I answered that.

**R:** No, no. For sure. Because actually I’m very interested in that. In terms of why so many people consider themselves to be unhealthy. Is it because they’re dealing with real health concerns? Or is it because they just have this image of what they should look like, and how they should be, and they don’t fit it?

**TEAM EXERCISE**

**Discussion – Member checking**

Before embarking on member-checking, as a research team you must agree on your overall philosophy about making changes to your data. As a team you must consider, and come to agreement on, the following questions:

- What is the extent of the changes that we will accept? Who has control over this decision?
- Is the possibility of changing (or not changing) the transcripts made clear to the research participants?

If your research team is clear about the answers to these questions from the outset, the member-checking process will be more transparent and easier to navigate for the research participants.
Member-checking is not always possible or desirable to the research participant herself. In a study examining the relationship between employment and women’s health, some participants were transient and others worked irregularly and at night. Member-checking proved to be very difficult, and in three cases the researchers were unable to reach the participant after the interviews. In other cases, participants may simply be uninterested in reading their transcripts. They may not have the time or inclination, or they may be unable to read. In these instances alternatives can be offered: meeting with the participant to review the transcript together, or providing excerpts of the interview transcript that will be used for analysis.

In one case I met with a participant who I knew had issues with literacy. I had prepared a package to review with her. The package included all of the quotations from her interviews that I hoped to use, as well as a brief description of how I understood and framed the analysis of those quotations. Our meeting took almost 2 hours (Colleen Reid fieldnotes 2002).

It is also possible that participants ask to keep a copy of the transcript. In one study, the women who participated felt that their stories, which were often told in their entirety for the first time in that research project, had value because of the time spent interviewing and transcribing them. Keeping a copy of the interview transcript can be meaningful for some research participants. In the context of individual interviews this can be a straightforward process that raises few concerns. However, care must be taken before distributing transcripts from group interviews. Circulating transcripts from group interviews, where there are data from a number of research participants, can violate ethical agreements and expose participants to being identified as research participants. While member-checking is considered a necessary component of the CBR process, it can be time-consuming and it can raise difficult questions about data ownership and ethics.

3.7 INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO CBR DATA COLLECTION

New and alternative forms of data collection are possible in CBR. This can include methods such as diaries and journals, dialogues and interactive interviews, participatory workshops, poetry, photography, film, performance, and other forms of art. Many community based researchers have had success in achieving their research goals through exploring alternative approaches to data collection. Alternative approaches can often reach a broader participant base than traditional methods, they can help transcend cultural or literacy issues, and can have tremendous transformative potential. They are also consistent with CBR goals of legitimizing non-traditional approaches to research. Alternative approaches can also serve as a mechanism or route for communicating findings in ways that increase the accessibility of research to the broader community. While we are not able to provide an exhaustive overview of the many emerging forms of data collection, we have provided some short examples here.

USING PHOTOGRAPHY, INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND GROUP INTERVIEWS

*Shedding light on the barriers to housing for women fleeing violence: A photovoice exploration*

The BC Non-Profit Housing Association and the BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses is conducting a photovoice research project to understand and address the barriers to housing faced by women who have left violent relationships in four communities across BC. In each community, a group of 10-12 participants will be involved in a group interview to collectively identify the key barriers they face. Each woman will be given a camera and asked to take photos that illustrate her experiences of these barriers. The photos will then be used as the basis for an individual interview, to further explore and generate narrative around the meanings and experiences behind each photo. Finally, the participants will come together again to collective review and analyse a selection of the photos, to deepen the group’s collective understanding of themes. More information on the project can be found at: www.bcnpha.ca
SURVEYS CREATED BY AND FOR INCARCERATED AND TRANSITIONING WOMEN

Doing Time: A time for incarcerated women to develop a health action strategy

This aim of this project is to work with incarcerated and transitioning women to improve understandings of factors that contribute to their physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological health in order to develop a community based action health strategy that will support their re-integration into society. We are conducting a prospective longitudinal descriptive study in which we examine the impact of health and social factors on re-incarceration among women who are released from a provincial prison. Using a participatory action approach, we are using multiple methods, including qualitative and quantitative research methods. The participatory action research approach will enable the direct translation of research into the design of action-based strategies that are responsive to the needs of this population and we anticipate that aspects of this knowledge will be relevant to other prison populations, both in Canada and worldwide. The survey tool that was developed for this project can be found at: womenin2healing.org/doingtime/DoingTimeBaselineInterviewJune2008.pdf

SPEAKING THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY AND CLAYMATION VIDEO

Intersections of Gender, Culture, and Space

In a recent research project with youth living in rural communities and small cities examining their transition experiences to adulthood Natalie Clark used photovoice and claymation video as tools which allow vulnerable and marginalized youth to “speak” through the medium of photography and art-based cinema about the issues impacting them. The youth were able to use visual imagery to address issues of racism, date rape, homophobia and other topics which are not easy or often safe to speak about in society. For examples of the videos and to read the report please visit the Centre for Community Based Youth Health Research at Thompson Rivers University at www.smallcities.ca/home2/current_cura/site_folder/ccbyhr.html

Gathering Geographically Diverse Researchers Using the Internet

Virtual community of inquiry model

Over the past five years, virtual communities of inquiry have been developed by researchers at the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health to study and promote action on improving policy and services for women with substance use problems. The communities are multi-sectoral, involving women’s health researchers, health service practitioners, health system planners and women with substance use problems. The virtual communities have been designed as forms of virtual, dialogic spaces, accessed in a voluntary way by diverse users to validate and expand their interest in learning and activism on improving the health and status of women with substance use problems. In the communities, academic and grey literature is presented, and/or presentations by invited practitioners made, providing the participants with optimal space to bring their insights to the material. Tangible products from the virtual communities are information sheets, articles, presentations, as well as a website, all of which synthesize the broad base of knowledge and experience that the participants from multiple sectors bring to the project. On a broad scale, the project learnings continue to influence the design and delivery of substance use treatment systems in Canada through presentations and collaborative projects. On a smaller scale, individual participants report by phone and email how they are applying the learning and using the information sheets in various ways in their daily work. More information on the virtual communities is available at: www.coalescing-vc.org
CHILD AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING, SERVICE, DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

In her research on neighbourhood influences on children’s health and well-being, Jayne Pivik collaborates with girls and boys in research planning, analysis, and action. For one study, the children identified concern about their safety through interviews, maps of their neighbourhood and photographs. One aspect of the research dissemination was an art show in the community art gallery. After hearing the children’s voices and seeing their pictures, numerous safety measures were enacted such as greater speed enforcement around their schools. More information on the research is available at: www.aprioriresearch.com

TRAINING MANUAL FOR COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCHERS

In 2007 Sadaf Shallwani and Shama Mohammed published a Training Manual for Community Based Researchers that describes using traditional and innovative data collection methods including photovoice, community timelines, and community mapping. The manual was written for training workshops in Pakistan. It is a very useful manual, not only because of the clear descriptions on how to use various tools, but also because the text is culturally appropriate for their audience and would likely be foreign to many Canadians’ ears. Reading the manual provides a good opportunity to read examples that are not based on the dominant Canadian culture. The manual can be accessed at: individual.utoronto.ca/sadaf/resources/cbpr2007.pdf

3.8 DATA MANAGEMENT

As soon as you start data collection, if not before, you need to consider strategies for data management and organization. This is especially important in team-based research because it is essential that all team members can easily find and recognize the data files. When working collaboratively the research team needs to create and adopt a uniform system for labelling data so that any team member can easily identify and retrieve it.

Example: Naming Files

Choosing a way to name files is personal – it depends on the kinds of information you need and whether the names of the documents need to maintain any level of confidentiality. Here are two examples of naming systems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>date</th>
<th>20081010 = October 10, 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kind of data</td>
<td>20081010 = October 10, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviewee</td>
<td>IT = Interview Transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community/location</td>
<td>Barb = with “Barb”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviewer/researcher</td>
<td>EB = Elana Brief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example: Naming Files

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>date</th>
<th>20081025 = October 25, 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kind of data</td>
<td>20081025 = October 25, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviewee</td>
<td>FG = Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community/location</td>
<td>V = Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviewer/researcher</td>
<td>EB = Elana Brief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a team it will be useful to discuss and plan for managing and organizing your data. Team members with previous research experience may have a lot to share about their successes in storing data. As a team discuss the following:

• What system will be used to retrieve data files easily on the computer? How will it be obvious which documents are the current/active documents, and which ones are older/archived versions?
• What is the plan for backing up the project computer(s)/data?
• Do all research team members have compatible software programs?
• Does the research team plan to use a qualitative data analysis program to manage and code the data? If so, which program is most suitable? How will all team members gain access to the program and share documents?
• How will a system for integrating different sources of data be created (e.g., interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, observations, fieldnotes, journal entries)?
• How will emerging ideas and insights be documented and recorded?
• Is there an ethical obligation to destroy the data upon completion of the project? If so, who is responsible for this?
• How will the data be protected (e.g., password, locking cabinet)?
• How will the data be stored over the length of the project?
• For how long will the data be archived?
• Are there procedures imposed on the project (e.g., by an external Research Ethics Board) regarding data management (labelling, storage, archiving, and destruction)?

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is an ongoing process where the researcher tries to make sense of her data. Data analysis does not necessarily happen only after the data are collected; rather it is happening all the way through the research process as researchers make decisions about what questions to ask, who to recruit, and so on. All of these decisions help shape and inform the analysis, in this way the analysis occurs before a researcher begins, as the researcher listens, and as the researcher transcribes. The research team needs to consider how the data will be interpreted and analyzed, as well as the kinds of training required for researchers in the CBR project to accomplish this analysis.

STAGES OF ANALYSIS

There are various stages of analytic work in a research project. While the researcher may begin to form initial understandings of the findings during data collection, the formal data analysis process begins as the data are managed and organized. In developing a data management system remember that it makes sense to organize the data set in a way that will work intuitively with the analysis that is envisioned. For example, if the intention is to compare women’s health outcomes from two different communities, it would make sense to group the data from each community so that they can be easily compared. Once the data are organized it is then possible to delve into the next stage of analysis. Figure 3.1 presents an overview of the stages of analysis, moving from descriptive coding, to connecting the codes, testing the codes and connections, and finally searching for alternative explanations. An example of a descriptive
coding framework is provided in chapter 5 section 5.5 “Developing a Coding Framework,” and a thorough description of the stages of analysis as depicted in Figure 3.1 is provided in section 5.6 “Stages of Analysis.” For more extensive and specific guidance on the analysis stage of the research, refer to the “Related Readings” section at the end of this chapter.

**FIGURE 3.1: Stages of Analysis**

Although the data analysis process is written in a step-wise format, it is rarely straight-forward, especially on a CBR team. Essential considerations include:

- Who is included in the analysis process?
- Does everyone understand the level of analysis that is expected from them? Has this been discussed and agreed upon?
- How will the project accommodate different learning styles and literacy in this process?
- Do all research team members understand and participate in coding? Consider that a community partner who is a social worker may conceptualize different codes than one who is a public health nurse.
- Has the lead researcher made room for community partners to give voice to their local informants by inclusion of locally named codes?
- How will the project deal with negative instances? Who has the final word on inclusion or interpretation?

As a CBR researcher and research team interested in women’s health, it is essential to consider how gender and other forms of diversity are brought into the analysis. The following two questions should be considered:

- Will the data be separated and analyzed by sex, gender, or other forms of diversity?
- How might gender intersect with or mask other factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or location?
In CBR it is essential to consider who has control over data interpretation. Engaging the research team throughout the analysis and discussing all results with the research community allows for joint interpretation of the data. Engaging in this kind of collaborative and respectful process increases the cultural and internal validity of the research, minimizes harms (e.g., stigmatization of individuals and the community, self-stigmatization, embarrassment, and shame) and maximizes the possibilities for the research to harness and inform social actions and change (Macaulay et al. 1999).

### 3.10 MOVING FROM CODING AND ANALYSIS TO WRITING

Writing up the results of your research is a critical part of being able to communicate findings and initiate actions for change. However, moving from the analysis to writing stage is often intimidating for researchers who have little experience doing so or have large or complicated data to communicate. It is important to remember that moving from analysis to writing is an individual and creative process and emerges in different ways for different people. It can be helpful to understand writing as another step in the analysis process, rather than as a distinct experience from the coding. Through writing the researcher is continually making sense of the data. Writing up the results involves many decisions: for example, deciding which data to use in order to best capture the stories and experiences that the participants described. Important decisions include choosing how much to allow participants to “speak for themselves” through quotes, versus how much you will summarize and describe the data. Other decisions involve how to organize the quotes and themes and how to make sure that all participants are represented in the document.

In CBR the principal investigator or lead researcher does not always have to do the writing. It does not have to be an academic deciding whose voice is most prominent. Involving team members in the writing process can be a very powerful way of challenging assumptions around who has the right, and the skills, to write. Alternatively, team members, advisors, or elders on the project can write a forward to contribute to the conclusions. To facilitate this stage of the research it can be useful to work through a step-by-step guide to moving from coding and analysis to writing. Included in chapter 5 of this Primer is exactly such a step-by-step description to help you move from coding and analysis through the writing stage [see section 5.7 “Steps Involved in Moving from Coding and Analysis to Writing”].

A final note on the writing process: It is important to remember that CBR in women’s health is predicated on a research relationship of speaking and listening. Including a range and variety of voices in the final report is vital. Unlike more linear or traditional approaches to research, since CBR most often happens with teams and in collaboration with stakeholders in the community, a variety of interpretations of the data may result. In some cases, if the partners cannot agree on the interpretation, research teams can create publications that include dissenting views (Macaulay et al. 1999).

Much like other aspects of CBR covered in Our Common Ground, through the data collection and analysis stages it is important to recall the iterative and emergent aspects of CBR. While it may be frustrating to some, CBR is neither sequential nor linear. Decisions about recruitment, data collection, and analysis need to be revisited and examined. Ethical questions are not dealt with solely at the beginning of the project; rather, they are constant considerations for the CBR team and can evolve over the duration of project. This aim of this chapter was to present CBR methods in a clear and accessible manner and guide the reader to the additional tools provided in chapter 5.
3.11 RELATED READINGS


Kirby, S., L. Oreaves, and C. Reid. 2006. *Experience, research, social change: Methods beyond the mainstream*. Toronto, ON: Broadview Press. [See chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10.]


Salmon, A. 2007. *Walking the talk: How participatory interview methods can democratize research*. *Qualitative Health Research* 17: 982. http://qhr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/17/7/982


Throughout the research process, the research team likely forged connections to groups and individuals interested in the research. Now is the time to share the research findings in ways that are appropriate and useful. CBR is expected to actively make a difference to the lives of participants. When engaging in CBR, whether as a researcher, community partner, research participant, and/or a person living in the community, one actively imagines how CBR can account for and lead to changes in the community. For example, CBR can:

- Help document and/or sustain effective programs, services, and interventions.
- Help to create needed change in programs, services, and policies.
- Advocate for a group or organization.
- Bring together a group of women who then form an ongoing support group around a given topic.
- Provide research evidence that forms the basis for products (e.g., brochures, flyers, videos, newsletters) that help keep community organizations viable.
- Bring visibility to a long-standing community, social, or health issue so that individual and community empowerment are promoted.
As your team discusses the following questions, use your emerging thoughts to help guide your next steps.

- Have people emerged from the project strengthened by their connection to research? What can be put in place to nurture their growing skills and interest?
- Throughout the research process, what actions were dreamed about?
- Who are obvious allies for taking action in the community?
- How can the research findings give strength to the desired actions?

Various terms are used to capture how research findings are used. Dissemination, knowledge translation, knowledge exchange, taking action, and social change are commonly heard in CBR and other approaches to research. Knowledge translation is a term currently used by many health researchers and is particularly relevant for CBR in gender and girls’ and women’s health.

**Knowledge translation** is a current buzz-word in health research. It is a dynamic and iterative process that includes synthesizing, sharing, and applying research findings to improve the health of Canadians [http://www.cochranemsk.org/professional/knowledge/default.asp?s=1 retrieved March 31, 2009]. Community based and feminist researchers have long been focused on finding ways to meaningfully disseminate knowledge acquired from research. It is promising that knowledge translation is increasingly emphasized and valued in mainstream and CBR approaches to research.

Community based researchers have thought about what is accomplished with their research findings long before the term knowledge translation was coined. Traditionally community based researchers used the language of action and social change to capture what they hoped came from the research, or, how the research findings are used. **Social change** can be defined as “the long haul struggle to create a world in which the full range of human characteristics, resources, experiences, and dreams are available to all our children” [Maguire 2001, 66]. On the other hand **action** can mean anything from speaking out to validate oneself and one’s experiences in the world to “the process of doing something” such as taking a deliberate step towards changing one’s circumstances [Reid et al. 2006]. Action can include: determining the causes of problems and figuring out what to do, developing a sense of self and collective efficacy, believing that effective action is possible, and identifying and developing strategies for future actions [Israel et al. 1994]. Although it can be difficult to know if individual or collective actions contribute to social change, it is nonetheless important to see how taking action can contribute, in small or big ways, to changing the lives of those involved in such projects. Viewing action broadly allows us, as community based researchers, to both understand women’s daily struggles and experiences and to value the process of meeting as a group and attempting to work together.
Example: Growing Community Connections from CBR

Women Into Healing aims to facilitate the community integration and community development of women in British Columbia who have recently left prison. The project will engage these women in a community based participatory action research process as “peer researchers” to assist them to become more engaged and supported in the community. To date women engaged in participatory research outside of prison have developed various means of peer support and ways of contributing to society including: 1) Developing a Facebook network (now comprising 52 formerly incarcerated women) to provide emotional and psychological support to one another; 2) Developing a Women into Healing Webpage to host community resources for women leaving prison; 3) Collecting information on community agencies in the areas in which they live; 4) Organizing reunions for prison alumni; 5) Visiting homeless women; and 6) Creating a research Blog page. Planned activities focus on Women into Healing participants encouraging and supporting each other to develop personal nutrition and exercise self-plans and to access their neighbourhood community recreational centres as research shows regular exercise and healthy nutrition improves self-esteem, reduces drug cravings and decreases anxiety. (www.womenin2healing.org)

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE

Journaling – Dreaming of action

To help you reflect on action, and what it means to you, try addressing the following question in your journal.

How do I define action?

How do I describe action with respect to:
• The social justice I seek?
• My own personal growth?
• My capacity to engage in research?
• The research community’s capacity?

Is there such a thing as an action that is:
• Too small?
• Too big?
• Too simple?
• Too complex?

Example:

Arts Based Action in Mental Health

The Collaborative RESearch Team to study psychosocial issues in Bipolar Disorder (CREST.BD) is led Dr. Erin Michalak, Assistant Professor in the Mood Disorders Centre of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of British Columbia. The CREST.BD group includes researchers, clinicians and consumers (people who identify as recipients of mental health services) – all having a special interest in bipolar disorder. Among the research team is Victoria Maxwell, a writer and actress who draws on her own history of mental illness for her performances and keynote addresses. CREST.BD has applied for a CIHR ‘Knowledge to Action’ grant for a study entitled: 'Quality of life, stigma and BD: A collaboration for change'. For this work, Victoria Maxwell will be creating and performing a show that will highlight the prejudices often associated with mental illness that will provide crucial information on how to deal with it openly and effectively, in the workplace and elsewhere. The piece will be presented to clinicians and other health professionals to inspire reflection and conversation on stigma and bipolar disorder. (www.crestbd.ca)
With your research team, consider which audiences need to hear about your research, and what message they need to hear. To facilitate this process, the chart below has a list of potential audiences, and each “audience” has corresponding questions to consider. Some audiences and messages will be more relevant to your project than others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funder</td>
<td>Do they have specific reporting requirements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Providers</td>
<td>Is there a potential change in practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Participants</td>
<td>What has been learned from their participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Colleagues</td>
<td>Are my colleagues curious about the work I have been invested in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbours</td>
<td>Is there some community action that neighbours should take part in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community groups</td>
<td>Have my results pointed to unacknowledged needs in the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media/Broader Public</td>
<td>Is there a message that needs to reach a very broad audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government (local, provincial, federal)</td>
<td>Is there evidence that can inform policy change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 The Power of the Written Word

In traditional research, results are typically published in peer reviewed scholarly journals or books. For a researcher to publish her findings, she would have to have done most, if not all, of the following: engaged in conversation with other researchers, reviewed the published literature, refined the research question with input from the academic community, conducted the research, presented draft results at conferences and other forums of discussion, submitted the resulting manuscript to review boards for publication, and edited the manuscript by incorporating the feedback from the review boards. The manuscript, once published, would become part of the body of formal academic knowledge. The assumption underlying this process is that the sole audience for the knowledge produced by the research is other academic researchers, and the only legitimate form for scholarly knowledge is the written word. Not only is academic writing considered the ultimate form of dissemination, but peer reviewed publications (articles, book chapters, and books that undergo a blind review process by other scholars) are more highly valued than those that are not peer reviewed.

Knowledge production in CBR goes beyond contributing to scholarly publications. The underlying assumption in CBR is that new knowledge seeds the growth of new understandings, ideas, and actions. The potential of applying this new knowledge is realized through communication with a variety of audiences in a variety of formats. In CBR it is essential to find meaningful ways to communicate findings with different audiences, including research participants, and especially vulnerable groups, who are more likely to be excluded from access to research findings. If researchers do not share what they have learned, the knowledge is effectively taken out of a community. Sharing findings beyond academic publication contributes to a positive research experience, the possibility that all people involved in the research can benefit from the findings, and the possibility that research participants and non-academic researchers will want to continue to engage in research to create social change.
Writing about the research findings is one of the most common ways to communicate what was learned through the CBR process. A written document, whether it is a research report or an academic paper, ensures that the research findings can be shared with a broad audience and can be referred to when taking action in community (e.g., providing evidence that informs service delivery or policy change). The research report becomes part of the grey literature, something that can be accessed by service providers, policy makers, and both academic and non-academic researchers. The written report grants a kind of legitimacy to the project for people outside the research team. Based on the research report, other types of documents can be written including policy briefs, newsletters and newspaper articles, formal recommendations for service delivery change, and reports to funders.

“In CBR, the ultimate judge of the credibility of the work is the community in which the research was conducted. If the community can act on the findings, then the project has been successful.”

Unlike in traditional research, however, simply publishing the findings does not render it valid and legitimate or successful. In CBR, the ultimate judge of the credibility of the work is the community in which the research was conducted. If the community can act on the findings, then the project has been successful. In writing a research report, researchers will find that questions of who is speaking for whom may emerge, and will thus need to be resolved. Also, the style of language and the ultimate means of publication will determine who will be able to access the work, and who will not. Unlike in traditional research, in CBR there is no assumption about how the results of the research will be shared. It is the job of the research team to consider the communications tools (beyond the written word) that will be most relevant to their audience.

4.2 FINDING THE RIGHT VEHICLE

It is the responsibility of the research team to disseminate findings to the various audiences and partners involved in the research so that the new knowledge may be applied. Different audiences require different modes of communication. For some groups, a written report may be a less effective means for communicating findings. For example, a written report is only accessible to those who can find it and read it. Virtual methods are gaining in popularity as a way of reaching between communities and providing a more interactive way for people to engage with the findings.
Consider the audiences you identified in the team exercise “Who needs to hear about our findings?” As a team, fill in the table below to see which of the following communications tools would be most appropriate for which audience. Is there someone on the research team who wishes to take a lead on the creating of that tool? Working through this table can help you identify what you can do, with which methods, and what gaps may exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication tool</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Who’s taking the lead?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Brief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community forum or public discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter Article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Release</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video or film</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listserv</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking Website (e.g., My Space, Facebook)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following questions focused on “action” are grouped thematically. Consider and discuss the questions that resonate with you and your team.

**Vision from Team Members**

- What are the research team members’ visions for action in the future?
- What levels of action have been documented during the project (e.g., individual, group, policy making, institutional)? What could be undertaken in the future?
- How does the CBR project lead to sustained leadership in the community?
- How are intended actions discussed and implemented?
Considering Partners and Decision Makers External to the Research

- Who can influence change?
- Are structures gendered? Do structures favour dominant groups?

Weighing the Consequences of Action or Inaction

- Who is benefiting (or not benefiting) from the actions being taken?
- What forms of action (or inaction) were apparent before the project began?
- Do the actions contribute to a larger goal of social change? What steps could be taken to accomplish this if desired?
- Are the actions contradictory, being resisted, or too risky/difficult to implement? What are the implications of this?
- How will the results be communicated locally, to government (and other policy makers), and in the academic community? What kinds of reception or resistance might be expected in each arena, and how will this be dealt with?

Recognizing and Measuring Success

- How is success measured?
- Has an evaluation of action been undertaken by the group? If so in what way has the project been expanded, refined, or altered? If not, why has it remained the same?

Adapted from the “Action / Knowledge Translation” Working Group at the WHRN Summer Institute’s CBR Workshop: Cecilia Benoit, Pammie Crawford, Olena Hankivsky, Laura Nimmon, Kirstin Oulton, Ann Pederson, Karen Petersen, and Colleen Varcoe, May 2, 2008—see section 5.8 for the questions that inspired their discussion.

4.3 THE FINAL HARVEST: OUR COMMON GROUND

In CBR, the harvest is the part of the research that includes recognizing the new knowledge that has been produced, celebrating the increased skills and competence of members of the research team, identifying effective methods for acting on the results of the work, and being inspired by new questions that emerged from the project. The harvest metaphor is used to capture the idea of gathering what sustains us while also separating the seeds out for the next planting.

“Ultimately the community based research process is organic and generative.”

During the project there may be different people involved at each stage. The people who attended the first community meeting may well have been replaced by others by the time the data are being analyzed or the report is being written. New people may arrive at the dissemination and action stage, feeling invigorated by the potential for change that the research has created. CBR can accommodate and benefit from these changes. Renewed enthusiasm from newcomers can infuse the project, and those who have gained skills throughout the research process can move on to establish other research teams. Ultimately the community based research process is organic and generative.

The democratization of knowledge and sharing of power among many leads to healthier communities, not only because of the research results, but by the process of conducting the research: community activism can flow into policy changes, policy changes can raise service delivery questions, and service delivery questions can lead to community needs assessments. Using CBR in women’s health research forges links between groups who ought to talk to each other, but rarely do. That is the challenge, the richness, and the power of CBR.

Women’s health research has gained a great deal from listening to women’s voices, engaging women in all stages of research, and putting research results into the hands of concerned women so that it can be acted upon. Our hope is that those reading this Primer will be inspired to ask new questions, find new partners, and bring about meaningful change in their communities through CBR.
4.4 RELATED READINGS


5 ADDITIONAL TOOLS

In this final chapter we provide a series of additional tools to give further direction and illustration of the concepts covered in chapters 1 through 4. Some of these tools are specific examples drawn from CBR projects, others are “how to” guidelines for different stages of research, and still others are lists of questions to consider or check-lists for moving through the research process.

5.1 DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following worksheet can be developed for any CBR project. The point of the worksheet is to clearly articulate the principles that guide the project, co-develop questions to help guide the research team, and continually ask about the “principles in action” in the project response column. What follows was developed by Clark and Hunt [2008] for their CBR project with experiential youth and adults.
**Example: Commercial Sexual Exploitation Project Checklist**

This list has been adapted from *Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Innovative Ideas for Working with Children and Youth*, and the CRIAW publication *Participatory Research and Action: A Guide to Becoming a Researcher for Social Change*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Project Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
<td>How are the principles of the UN convention on the Rights of the Child reflected in our research practices and goals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Coalition of Experiential Women</td>
<td>How are the principles of the National Coalition of Experiential Women reflected in our research practices and goals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of experiential youth and adults</td>
<td>Are experiential youth and adults given leadership roles in our project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How are experiential youth and adults supported in taking leadership positions in our project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does our project have an advisory committee of experiential youth and adults?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent are experiential youth and adults involved in decision making about the research they are participating in?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent are experiential youth and adults empowered to make decisions about their own lives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are experiential youth and adults considered key stakeholders during evaluation of the project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective responsibility</td>
<td>Has our project created working partnerships with other members of the community who are addressing sexual exploitation and sex work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do we attempt to educate the broader community about issues impacting the levels of violence in the lives of sexually exploited youth and adult sex workers?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do we work with partners from other sectors in our work on violence?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is our project informed about larger systems of power in society, such as law, education and colonization?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity of access to services</td>
<td>Do experiential youth and adults feel they can approach our project without being judged?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do youth have voluntary participation in our research project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How is a youth perspective incorporated into our strategies for accessibility for youth?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do our research practices create barriers to accessing our project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do we let experiential youth and adults know about our research project? Are there any gaps in our outreach?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are we aware of all the Aboriginal communities in our area? How are we engaging with them in an accessible manner?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does our project make experiential youth and adults feel welcome?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally specific programming</td>
<td>How do we ensure that our project is free from judgement toward experiential youth and adults?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do we train our researchers to ensure sensitivity to the diverse needs of participants?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do we address homophobia, racism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination in our research project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do we offer culturally-specific opportunities for participants? Do we offer gender-specific opportunities for participants?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do we conduct our research project in a manner that addresses the specific cultural needs of youth from diverse communities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational perspective</td>
<td>Is there room in our project for workers to get to know the participants and to maintain contact with them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the project work to foster naturally evolving relationships?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does our project honour the relationships that participants already have within their peer groups, families, and communities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting First Nations communities</td>
<td>Have First Nations communities been given an opportunity to collaborate on the research in their community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have First Nations communities been engaged adequately in outreach for participation in the research project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflective practice</td>
<td>Does the project allow for continued reflection, evaluation and critique of ourselves as community researchers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 MATCHING OUR METHODS TO OUR QUESTIONS: 5 WS + AN H

The most important aspect of a research project is to identify the most relevant and meaningful research question[s] to guide the process. All other decisions made in any research project rely on a well-identified question. Before launching into the research itself (e.g., recruitment, data collection, and analysis) the research team should be able to address, or at the very least discuss in depth, the following 5W + H questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY</th>
<th>Questions focused on the overall intention, “so what?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why bother? Why is this worth everyone’s time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why has the community identified this as a priority?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why does the team feel excited about this? Is there a desired action that has been imagined?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>Questions focused on the formation and relevance of the research question(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the research question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the values for this project? (see 5.1 Developing Innovative Practices and Guiding Principles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What issues are central to the everyday experience of the girls and women who are participating in this project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the potential benefit of this research? What will be the benefit of the process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the community’s strengths? What expertise do members of the group have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What health issues are pressing? How do the problems relate to health? How is “health” understood and defined?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the scope of the research? How big is the problem under study?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What level of government is responsible for any existing and relevant policy (local, regional, provincial or federal)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>Questions focused on who is involved and in what capacities (e.g., research participants, researchers, community partners, policy makers, other?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who will be involved in the research project? How do the research team members identify themselves (e.g., community partner, policy maker, researcher)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who identified the research question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who on the team will take responsibility for each part of the research process? What does each research team member require to do their part?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who will be recruited as research participants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who determined the methods to be used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who “owns” the knowledge that is generated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who will take responsibility for the deliverables and the ethical standing of the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who are the influential community partners and organizations? Are they directly involved or more peripheral?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who else has interest in this issue (e.g., service providers, local government)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHERE</th>
<th>Questions focused on the research community and the physical locations for developing the research question, planning meetings, data collection, data storage, data analysis, action, and celebration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where is the community? How is it identified and described?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where is the project taking place? How is the research community named? What are its boundaries?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where will team meetings be held? Do all team members have equal access? Will all team members feel equally comfortable in the space?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where will the funding be held for the project? What are the implications of this decision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where will the data collection take place? Where will data be kept safely?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where will findings be distributed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### WHEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions focused on the timeline for each phase of research, accounting for and managing potential delays, and the broader political, economic, and social climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When does the research team hope to reach the project’s short, medium, and long-term goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When do important decisions need to be made regarding the research process and outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is known about the political time frames relevant to the research?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the political and social context for the issue? Is this the best time to do this research?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### HOW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions focused on ethical considerations, group process, managing disagreement and conflict, and issues of control and ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How was the research question identified?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are ethical issues discussed, managed, and implemented? What are the ethical considerations for this project at each stage of research?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the team make decisions about participation in the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does gender, class, race, or other power relations affect the issue or research question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will people work together? How will they communicate? How will decisions be made? Do the dominant decision-making processes typify unilateral or more collaborative approaches?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will the time spent on this project be viewed by the colleagues of the academic and the community based researchers? How will researchers and participants be rewarded for their involvement? How much time can community based researchers afford to spend on meetings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will conflict be identified, managed, and resolved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will the needs of the community members, research participants, and community partners be addressed and accommodated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can the team put processes in place to ensure respectful acknowledgment and recognition of differences while encouraging all participants to build relationships and work across differences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the social, political, and economic climate in which this project takes place affect group decision making, processes, and outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will data collection, analysis, and report writing be managed in the most responsive and appropriate ways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the process for the community to revise or stop the research project if it is not following the agreed upon structure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can the Team create a vision for sustaining long-term funding (and interest in) the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will successes and milestones be identified, appreciated, and celebrated?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Ritas 2003

### 5.3 INTERVIEWS

This section offers detailed information on interviews as a data collection technique. We start by offering an overview of different approaches to interviewing then detail different kinds of interview questions, offer tips for conducting individual and group interviews, strategies for documenting interviews, and some final tips for transcribing the interviews.

#### 5.3.1 APPROACHES TO INTERVIEWING

**Structured interviews** are often used if there are large numbers of people in the sample, as they can allow for an ease and consistency in data collection. They are generally consistent with more unilateral approaches to research [Ritas 2003]. Typically the interview questions are determined and ordered ahead of time, and questions are always asked in the same order. Structured interviews are standardized and predetermined, and the participant answers are most often short. In structured interviews there is little room to explore the potential complexity of the research participant’s perspective.

The distinct advantages of structured interviews are that they are less prone to interviewer bias, take less time to administer, and are potentially easier to interpret (if the right questions were asked!). Collecting pilot data with structured interviews can help define some of the parameters of the project because the data can offer a “snapshot” of what is happening, and could deliver reliable and comparative qualitative data. Service providers, community partners, policy makers, managers, and people who have limited time to invest in research may be more likely to conduct highly structured and controlled interviews to gain insight into a particular issue.
Some of the disadvantages of structured interviews are that, at times, they can feel unnatural. For example probing into conflicts may be inappropriate with this approach. In structured interviews it is also more difficult to follow-up on interesting pieces of information, due to the predetermined flow of the interview.

**Semi-structured interviews** are consistent with collaborative and participatory approaches to research (Ritas 2003) but may be used in some forms of democratic research as well. Semi-structured interviews are guided by a series of pre-determined questions or issues, though the exact wording and order are not set in stone. Researchers are free to make adjustments and respond to what comes out of the interview.

**Unstructured interviews** are often used in democratic forms of research (Ritas 2003). They are exploratory in nature, and aimed at learning about a situation in order to develop questions for further interviews. Unstructured interviews tend to feel more like a conversation, but the researcher listens more than shares while guiding the conversation (and avoiding tangents) by asking questions related to the purpose of the research.

It is not uncommon for additional semi-structured or unstructured interviews to be needed. When the research design is long-term (longitudinal) and involves building relationships with the participants though multiple interviews, a more semi- or unstructured interview can allow the researcher to build on what has been learned, and to have an adaptable research plan. The more unstructured the interview, the more time it takes to conduct the interview and to transcribe, member-check, and analyze it. Given all of this, it is easy to get off track in unstructured interviews, and they can be difficult to control. It is important to remember that in this type of interview, it is also the researcher’s ethical responsibility to manage participants who “open up” and reveal difficult and highly personal information. There are times when it may be appropriate to remind the participant that they are being recorded, or to turn off the recording device if the participant wants to continue disclosing information.

The following is an overview of what a researcher should consider when preparing for and conducting interviews. This list is intended for new researchers, but it may also be helpful for established researchers to review.

**Components of an interview:**
- **Introduction**
  - purpose of study
  - duration of interview
  - how information will be used
  - consent/ethics
  - permission to tape record and take notes
  - offer to address any questions or concerns
- **Warm-up**—Easy, inviting questions that help the participant relax and settle in. Often these questions can be demographic and factual.
- **Main body**—Questions that relate most directly to your research purpose and research questions.
- **Cool-down**—Questions to wind down the interview, and end on a positive note.
- **Check-in on participant’s experience:** “how was that for you?”
- **Closure**—Thank you, setting expectations for follow-up, and good-bye.
5.3.2 KINDS OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Regardless of whether you choose a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured approach to interviewing, the questions you will ask will have varying intentions. Some questions will be intended to gather factual information, whereas others will solicit opinions, experiences, and perceptions of the interviewee(s). Different kinds of interview questions are described below.

Fact questions compile quantitative information related to the research topic (e.g., How many people come to this program? What services does it offer?)

Experience/behaviour questions are aimed at understanding the participant’s experiences, behaviours, actions, and activities (e.g., For how long have you been attending the program? How often do you attend?)

Opinion/value/meaning questions are aimed at understanding how the participant thinks about something (e.g., The phrase ‘functioning well’ is sometimes used to describe wellness. Would you describe what functioning well means to you? Erin Michalak 2009, personal communication)

Sensory questions explore what a participant sees, hears, smells, touches, or tastes (e.g., What do you see when you walk into the program?)

Feeling questions are aimed at understanding the participant’s emotional responses through experiences and thoughts (e.g., How do you feel when you go to the program?)

Demographic/background/clinical questions gather information regarding age, education, gender, and so forth, and are used to situate the participant in relation to other participants or non-participants.

Open-ended questions help frame an issue, event or circumstance, and allow wide latitude in responses (e.g., what do you do when you have a night off work?) In semi- and unstructured interviews, open-ended questions do not restrict the content or way in which a participant might reply. However, when using open-ended questioning, probing is often necessary.

Probing involves following up an initial question with questions for clarification or expansion. In some interviews probing will be more necessary than others. This depends largely on the research participant herself, and her own style of communicating. Some people more readily provide longer, more detailed answers, while others are more “to the point” and may therefore require active probing. An example of probing for clarification follows:

Q: How would you define “good health”?  
A: Good health is feeling good about yourself, your body and mind.  
Q (probe): So you feel that “good health” is both physical and mental?  
A: Yeah.
5.3.3 FIFTEEN TIPS FOR CONDUCTING INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP INTERVIEWS

1. Include potential participants in the design of questions.
2. Videotape mock-interviews and review them to improve your technique.
3. Listen more than you speak.
4. Do not try to fill a silence. Allow the participant time to consider the questions.
5. Pose questions in straightforward, clear, and non-threatening ways.
6. Consider safety issues, this includes both physical and emotional safety (e.g., Are there threats to participants? threats to you as the researcher?).
7. Avoid questions with jargon or technical language.
8. Avoid leading questions. (For example, ask “What do you think of the program?” instead of “In what ways do you LIKE the program?”)
9. Avoid biased questions.
10. Eliminate cues that may prompt the participant to answer in a particular way.
11. At times participants may misinterpret or misunderstand your question. Be prepared to rephrase it if it does not elicit the type of information you are looking for.
12. Avoid questions that are long and/or double-barrelled (e.g., asking about more than one thing at once).
13. Use your judgment: You will not always be in a situation where persistently asking the same question is possible or acceptable. There may be a cultural consideration here: Do particular questions make participants feel uncomfortable? Could asking some participants about experiences of sexism and racism be inappropriate? Would another form of data collection other than an individual interview be appropriate?
14. Be sensitive: Participants may have parts of their lives that they do not wish to reveal. They may experience the interviewer as prying, so be sensitive to this possibility. Recognize the signs and move on to the next question.
15. For researchers who also work in the social or health service field, you will need to be conscious of your dual roles and be clear with participants about which “hat” you are wearing in every interaction with them. It is possible that you could support actions that arise immediately after an interview (e.g., providing information on a job club) that are directly related to the role you play in your community.

5.3.4 STRATEGIES FOR DOCUMENTING INTERVIEWS

Included here are descriptions of several common strategies for documenting interviews.

Tape recorder [analogue or digital]: Individual and group interviews are often tape recorded so that the content of the interview is accurately recorded. It is important to consider the comfort of the participant in being recorded. Other things to remember include managing the equipment itself (e.g., tape quality, batteries, testing equipment). It is essential to test all of your equipment, to ensure that it is positioned properly, and to reduce background noise. If you are not an experienced interviewer, practice with a friend or colleague before you conduct the research interviews. Sometimes the recording equipment can make participants very uncomfortable, and technical difficulties may distract the interviewer. It is best if the equipment is small, unobtrusive, and off to the side.

Video taping: Researchers are increasingly choosing to video tape their interviews as a video can capture non-verbal responses and group dynamics. However, video taping is more intrusive than a simple audio recording, and it has certain ethical considerations. It is worth balancing the value of video taping with the efforts required to ensure that the documentation is done in an ethical and appropriate manner.
**Note taking:** Sometimes the participant will request not to be recorded, and note taking becomes your only option. For example, in research with women from prison, participants often did not want to be recorded, but were open to being interviewed while the researchers took notes. For this group of women, running any kind of recording device can make it appear to them that the researcher is “the man” (e.g., police, guards, or other authorities), and that what they say may be used against them in some way. In a different project working with women with histories of substance misuse, one participant did not want a second taped semi-structured interview, but she was happy to just meet and talk. Fieldnotes immediately following this conversation were very helpful and replaced a second taped interview.

When note taking is the sole mechanism for documenting an interview, the researchers should take notes as verbatim, or word for word, as possible. Ideally, this is done in the first person in order to get usable quotes. For example: Participant: “I loved my time at the health centre, I met many amazing people there and have only good things to say about the caregivers.” When note taking, it is important to clearly distinguish between commentary and the recorded dialogue. One simple method is to have two different coloured pens—one for quotations and the other for commentary. It is helpful to note secondary questions for later reference. Researchers can explain to the participant that there needs to be a “catch up” time between questions to accurately record the notes.

Inevitably, when taking notes, the information is immediately filtered through the interviewer. It can be difficult to take notes and fully focus on interviewing at the same time. In some cases, such as a highly structured interview (with one word, yes or no, answers) taking notes may be most appropriate and time-effective. However, it is appropriate and respectful in interviews for the researcher to request a pause so that she can catch up on note taking. Another option is to have two researchers present, if the participant is comfortable with this, where one researcher takes notes while the other asks the questions.

**5.3.5 SIX TIPS FOR TRANSCRIBING INTERVIEWS**

1. Researchers/transcribers should allow 4–5 hours of transcribing time per 1 hour of interview tape.
2. Transcribing machines or software are extremely helpful and time-saving.
3. Label tapes or digital files and develop a system for storing them (this is an ethical requirement at some universities).
4. Listen to the interview once fully without transcribing, especially if you were not the one conducting the interview. Record fieldnotes about your overall impressions, ideas, and so on.
5. Transcribe interviews single-spaced, leaving two lines between each speaker. Do not use any special formatting—analysis software, such as Atlas.ti, require plain formatting, so if an analysis program is used all the formatting will have to be removed.
6. Listen to the interview again while simultaneously reading the transcript. This will help catch mistakes that occurred in transcription. This step is called accuracy checking, and it is an extremely important step, regardless of who did the transcribing.

**5.4 FOCUS GROUPS, GROUP MEETINGS, OR GROUP INTERVIEWS**

Focus Groups provide specific benefits to the research process, including addressing concerns regarding researcher privilege and the sharing of power in research settings. Groups can lead more readily to action or social change because of the group discussions that occur. Thus, group interviews are often desirable for research projects that have an overt action component.

Salmon (2007) reflects that through the participants’ involvement in group interviews, they had an opportunity to share their individual experiences with others but also to reflect on the extent to which their experiences were similar to, or different from, others in the group [Salmon 2007]. She writes:
... the style used in group interviews supported the participants in building and articulating collective experiences as mothers... this method allowed the women to highlight knowledge gaps that were significant for their ability to make informed choices about their health and the health of their children... the use of group interviews shows the women standing alongside one another as mothers, actively seeking out information to protect and promote their children’s health to incorporate consciously into their mothering practice (Salmon 2007, 990).

While there are huge benefits in conducting group interviews, there are a number of drawbacks that need to be considered. “Group think” can occur; individual perspectives may be lost and participants may start to feel that it is not possible to disagree with a line of conversation. In addition, group attendance can vary, it can be difficult to keep the discussion on topic, and group interviews can feel less predictable (e.g., topics raised, and the nature of discussions depend on group configuration). One or two members of the group can dominate, and managing group process in a supportive and non-judgmental manner can be difficult. In groups the researcher has less control over confidentiality because there are several people involved in sharing stories. Participants should always be asked to maintain the confidentiality of others in attendance, and researchers and facilitators must warn participants about the limits of confidentiality agreements in group settings.

Group interviews also place big demands on the researcher. In this context the researcher has multiple roles to play, such as host, facilitator, note-taker, and time-keeper. Rarely do research methods courses taught at universities help students develop adequate facilitation and management skills to run effective group interviews. It is worth considering the skill-set required to conduct group interviews and finding the necessary materials and courses that will support learning and skill development. If it is a desired research method, when assembling a research team it is worth having a person on the team with strong facilitation skills who can conduct group interviews. Remember that group interviews can be difficult to transcribe, especially if two (or more) people are talking at once, and it can be difficult to discern who is speaking.

Despite all of these considerations and demands on the researcher, group interviews can generate rich responses as a result of the group process, and in some circumstances they are the better interview option. In some cultures, it may be more appropriate to conduct group interviews than individual ones. Group interviews can also be a time and cost-effective choice; the research design may not allow the time to speak to every participant individually. Robin Anderson, a researcher with the Canucks Family Education Centre in Vancouver, chose group interviews for several reasons:

When conducting research with people who did not speak English, I decided to use focus groups to maximize the time that the interpreter and facilitator were donating to the project as a partner; this also saves on translation and transcription expenses. I did it for practical reasons but the focus group participants all said how meaningful it was for them to get to know each other better in the process. I used interviews with those who were able to speak English, which allowed me to go more in-depth with each person (Robin Anderson, personal communication, 2009).

At times it can be very effective to combine individual and group interviews. Key ideas that are generated in individual interviews can be brought to the group for feedback or to stimulate discussion. Alternatively, the researcher can check with participants about the group discussion in an individual interview following the group one. Combining these methods allows the researchers to observe and be involved in group interactions, while also getting individual perspectives.
5.5 DEVELOPING A CODING FRAMEWORK

Working with your research team to develop a coding framework can be a productive way to hear different perspectives on the research project and analysis. Using the coding framework, one can search for themes in the transcripts and fieldnotes. Having a rough coding framework in place before coding begins can be a huge time-saver as well. As you begin coding, you will hone some of the codes, expand others, and add new ones. While this can be a creative and fun process, it can also be overwhelming at times. Work with the research team to get clearer on what you were asking, and what the research participants were saying.

Example: Coding Framework from “Women’s Employability and Health” Project

| ACTION | Any reference to action / activism / initiating a change  
| — Arising from involvement in the project  
| — Taken collectively and discussed in the interviews / focus groups (though not directly related to involvement)  
| — An individual or group who has a VISION for how things may be different / changed; or how a group or individuals could hypothetically take action  
| ACTION – AGENCY | Any reference to the participant’s agency [presence or absence]; to the ability to plan, shape, or determine one’s life at the personal and political level including everyday and strategic practices.  
| — e.g. practices of getting by [personal/everyday, such as volunteering at a food bank to increase access to food resources]; practices of getting out of the house [e.g. securing childcare]; everyday resistance [e.g. lobbying a member of parliament], etc.  
| CAREGIVING | Any reference to taking on / having imposed a caregiving role  
| — of a parent, parent-in-law, friend, or other relative  
| — of children  
| — includes references to the IMPACT of caregiving on participants’ lives – financially, opportunities (work, education), health [mental, physical or spiritual]  
| COMMUNITY | Any broad reference to the community (as participant defines it). Includes references to the impact, effect, or importance of a particular geographic locale, in relation to daily life routines; also, a sense of place and qualities of place. This may include expressions of identity in space and place.  
| — characteristics / social demographics  
| — policies / politics  
| — environment  
| — safety  
| COMMUNITY – BARRIERS | References to barriers imposed by ”the community”  
| — services, organizations, or individuals  
| — lack of opportunities – work or education  
| — few options for childcare  
| COMMUNITY-SUPPORTS | References to supports offered by ”the community”  
| — services, organizations or individuals  
| — examples of programs that have been helpful  
| — strategies for accessing supports  
| — public transportation  
<p>| — references to friends who are supportive |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISABILITY</th>
<th>References to any experience with a disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— on the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— supports accessed or barriers experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>Any reference to past education, seeking education, the need for education, or endeavours related to education such as training, job clubs, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>Any reference to paid employment; discussions around employment and work (such as wanting to find employment, looking for [or not] employment, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— general comments about past/present paid employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— discussions of why she is/is not looking for employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— employment aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— employment opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— work conditions &amp; wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— shifts and transitions in local or provincial economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* this codes DOES NOT include criminalized employment – see code “employment – criminalized”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT – BARRIERS</td>
<td>Specific examples of barriers encountered with past and current paid employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— sexism, racism, homophobia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— no childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— difficulties with transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— education and re-training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— physical or mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT – CRIMINALIZED</td>
<td>Specific examples of paid work that is “criminalized”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— not claimed or done ‘under the table’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— contributes to “underground economy” – drug trade, sex trade, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT-TYPES</td>
<td>Direct references to a specific kind of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— sector specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— oil patch, factory, piece-work (tree-planting), trucking, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— includes VOLUNTEER work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— context specific - rural and urban and remote and resource-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— demographic specific - “women’s” work [house-cleaning, caring for children]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td>Any reference to “family of origin”, or current ”family” as defined by the participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— upbringing, parents, siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— references to “broken homes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— understandings of current or past family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— family norms and expectations – boundaries, roles (gender or cultural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— family supports or lack of supports – both positive and negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* this code DOES NOT include violence experienced in the family context – see code “VIOLENCE”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY – CHILDREN</td>
<td>Any direct reference to children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— ages, genders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— challenges, joys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAMILY – PARTNER</td>
<td>Any direct reference to spouse [as defined by the participant]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— financial supports offered [or not] by the spouse [whether in context of being together, separated or divorced]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— emotional supports offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— expectations and understandings of role as “wife” and “husband” / “women” and “men”, or of gender, within the immediate household [e.g. “my husband refuses to clean the toilets”, etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—references to common-law partners [including same sex partners]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEALTH</strong></td>
<td>Any reference to how the participant “thinks about” or understands her health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— visions for health or healthy family / community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— the importance of good health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— definitions of health – physical, mental, spiritual, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— comments about participant’s own health [e.g. “I am healthy because I exercise…”] OR “I could be healthier if I stopped smoking…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HEALTH – BARRIERS</strong></th>
<th>Specific examples of things, people, etc. that compromise health, or that prevent participant from ‘working at’ her health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— lack of services or resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— financial barriers [e.g. inability to buy prescriptions, access physiotherapy, etc]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— local environment [e.g. pollution, few walking trails, no local swimming pool, etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— lack of “social supports” that could enable the pursuit of health [e.g. partner does not see value of buying organic food, etc.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **HEALTH – EMPLOYMENT** | Direct references to how health and employment are related, affect one another, or are connected |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HEALTH – SUPPORTS</strong></th>
<th>Specific examples of things that help support participants’ health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— supportive partner, family, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— resources, services, organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— local amenities that are directly related to enhancing health [i.e. distinguish from COMMUNITY]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>IDENTITY</strong></th>
<th>Any reference to the ways participants construct their own [or their children or family’s] identities and the ways other people construct their identity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— e.g. “I’m the oldest child so I’ve always been looking after everyone.” OR “Do you identify as South Asian / Aboriginal?” if you want to call me that.”; ”I’m a strong person, I can survive most things.”; “My father always told me that I’m the smart one.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>IMMIGRATION</strong></th>
<th>All references to the experiences, challenges, and benefits of immigration.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— challenges include language, prejudice, discrimination, or anything presented as challenging/difficult.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **POLICY** | Any reference to government policy, at the local, provincial or federal level. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>POVERTY</strong></th>
<th>All references to living in material deprivation, scarcity, not being able to make ends meet.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— includes having to make choices [e.g. feeding children versus paying bills]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— includes references to social exclusion related to the inability to fully participate in society/community as perceived/expressed by the participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— includes a sense of “no choice” in life – helplessness, hopelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— includes all references to “the system” – welfare, income assistance, disability, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RESEARCH PROCESS</strong></th>
<th>Any reference to the research project, the research process, hopes &amp; dreams, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— includes consent and confidentiality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **RESEARCH PROCESS – ROLES** | Any specific reference to the researchers’ roles, how they manage their multiple “locations” in the field [as researcher, social worker, community activist, etc.] and decisions they make as a result of these locations. |
SEX/RACISM

Any DIRECT reference to sexism, racism, or any other “ism” (e.g. homophobia) as expressed by the participant
— e.g. “my boss was a male chauvinist pig”; “the policies at the welfare office are totally racist”; “that guy is anti-woman, and when he found out I was a lesbian, he fired me” etc.
— the comments must be DIRECT and not inferred by the coder/researcher

VIOLENCE

Any reference to violence, abuse, or sexual abuse, past or present
— family of origin – parents, foster parents, siblings
— partner
— work place
— “historical sexual abuse”

Adapted from Colleen Reid’s 2006 “Women’s Employability and Health Project”

5.6 STAGES OF ANALYSIS

Step 1. Descriptively code the data
The first level, or stage, of analysis is coding the data. This stage involves providing chunks of text with a category or theme. The text can be coded descriptively or according to the interview question[s]. For example, if the researchers used a structured interviewing format, it may be desirable to analyze how all participants answered each individual question. If the interviews were semi-structured or unstructured, it is much more difficult to code in this way. In these instances the researcher will code descriptively around a given theme or topic, for example, the researcher could code about how each participant defined a key concept.
Step 2. Make connections between codes
The second stage of coding moves towards a structural level analysis. This means making connections between codes or categories, and finding trends or patterns in the data. For instance, it may arise that a sub-group of participants (e.g., women older than 50) answered one particular question similarly, or shared a similar experience with a community service. Or, the researchers may find that one theme (e.g., childcare) is always discussed in relation to another theme (e.g., level of income). These connections may point to key findings or outcomes of the research.

Step 3. Test codes and connections
At this stage of analysis the researcher searches through the data in an effort to challenge emergent understandings and relationships. In other words, the researcher must look for instances where the codes and the connections established between them do not hold true. If negative instances of the patterns are found, they cannot be discounted and must be taken into consideration so that the analysis or findings are not over- or under-stated. Contradictions to developing patterns may help illustrate the complexity of the research question being asked.

Step 4. Search for alternative explanations
This last stage of analysis involves critically examining and challenging the very patterns that seem so apparent, and searching for all plausible explanations for these data and the linkages among them. In CBR it is desirable to include a diversity of perspectives (e.g., participants, community partners, service providers) in this stage of the process.

5.7 MOVING FROM CODING AND ANALYSIS TO WRITING
To facilitate moving from the coding and analysis stage of the research to writing, we have developed this step-by-step guide for you to work through. Although writing style and approach can vary tremendously by individual, the following steps are intended to help you transition more comfortably into the writing stage of the research. (The original framework for these steps was created by Pamela Ponic).

Step 1. Create a structure
After coding all of the data, the first step in writing involves drafting a tentative table of contents or outline. A table of contents or outline is a useful guide for organizing thoughts and ideas. It can help you see where everything fits and facilitate staying focused on specific arguments for specific sections of the final report. This outline should be based on the code list and the research questions. Like all stages of CBR, this outline will likely change during the writing process.

Step 2. Retrieve quotations
Once the report is outlined, gather all the quotations for each code and insert them into the relevant sections of the developing document. The mechanics of this process will depend on whether a qualitative data analysis program (e.g., NVivo or Atlas.ti) is being used. For directions about how to do this with an analysis program, consult materials and websites about the specific program.

Step 3. Identify sub-themes within codes
Read through the quotations and look for sub-themes within the quotations. For example, if a large code was entitled “caregiving” it may be useful to look for sub-themes within this code that appear to be relevant, including things like: who was doing the caregiving, challenges associated with caregiving, or consequences of the caregiving situation.

These sub-themes can then be used to further outline the structure of that section in the report, and shape what you will say about caregiving in the report.
Step 4. Verify sub-themes
Once sub-themes are established, in order to get a sense of the credibility and dependability of the findings, create tables to double-check which participants spoke about each sub-theme. The table below is an example of an analysis of sub-themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>SUBTHEMES</th>
<th>Number of participants who identified this element (n=14)</th>
<th>Participants who identified this element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“CAREGIVING”</td>
<td>Description of caregiving roles</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>name of each participant (pseudonym)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges of caregiving</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consequences of caregiving</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflections on ethic of care</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intention of this step is to find some similarities and differences across the participants’ situations and responses. In general, it is simplest to write about experiences that are relatively consistent amongst participants first, and to then tackle points of divergence and difference. Divergences and differences need to be clearly exposed and made sense of in the report.

Questions to consider throughout the writing include: Does the description truly represent what was found? Is it true? Can the description or analysis be depended upon? Are research participants able to see their experience in the description and analysis?

Step 5. Organize quotes within the report document
Once the themes and sub-themes have been organized and form a coherent picture of the overall research findings, re-read the quotations that were assigned to each code, and highlight the quotations that best illustrate the sub-themes.

At this point the highlighted quotations can be inserted into the relevant sections of text, and organized in a way that makes sense to the overall outline of the document. What results from this process is a list of quotations that provide the starting point for writing up each section.

Typically there are more quotations available than are required to make the point of each individual section. You do not need to include them all, remember that it is your job to summarize and discuss the results more generally. As a guideline, often only three to four quotations are required to illustrate one sub-theme.

Selecting which quotations to include may require another round of decision-making:

- Which quotations make the point in the strongest manner?
- Does one quotation better capture the nuances of this argument?
- Which quotations capture the sentiments or experiences of several participants?
- Is the number of quotes used per participant balanced? (Try to avoid using too many quotations from one particularly articulate participant).
- Does one quotation help transition or link to the next point in the argument or report?
Step 6. Write about the quotation
Once you have a series of quotations sitting in the outlined document, begin writing. This can be the most challenging and rewarding aspect of the entire research process. Remember to distinguish between what you want to say about the research findings and what you can say about the findings.

It may be easiest to begin by writing descriptively—what was said about a particular theme and its sub-themes? Essentially, the participant speaks for herself through the quote, and then the writer offers the conclusions drawn by the researcher(s). For example: “When Anne was asked about employment when her children were young, she explained the difficulties in obtaining affordable childcare. She said: ‘insert selected quotation.’ Her response illustrates that minimum wage does not afford women the luxury of paying for childcare.”

At this stage of writing, think about writing a rough first draft, rather than the finished product. This will help with the flow of writing. It will be necessary to return to this rough first draft to fine-tune the content, move some sections, and re-evaluate the overall importance or weight of some themes and sub-themes. At a later stage you may want to return to each section and begin to deepen the analysis. Expanding on the example provided above, it could be desirable to, for example, further discuss the problems of minimum wage in the current socioeconomic environment and the gendered nature of childcare.

Step 7. Test and Edit
The final stage to go through is to test and edit the findings. Bernard (2000) suggests that we examine the “effects” that may play out in the analysis. In this context “effects” means impact or influence; for instance, time effects means the impact of time on the participant’s reflections. To test the findings for accuracy and rigor, the following effects should be considered:

→ **Time effects:** memory, change in participants’ perspectives over time, change in researchers’ skills/techniques over time, emergent analysis informing questioning and perspective.

→ **Response effects:** the political orientation and other biases of the researcher can have a substantial effect on what she hears, and what she reports that the respondents have said.

→ **Deferece effect:** a research participant says what she thinks the researcher wants to know or hear.

→ **Expectancy effect:** researchers getting the results they expect to get because they have helped shape the response through their expectations.

→ **Distortion effect:** a researcher sees what she wants to see, even when it’s not there.

Adapted from Bernard 2000

Alternative explanations *always* exist; the researcher must search for, identify, and describe them, and then demonstrate how the explanation offered is the most plausible of all.
## 5.8 Building Inclusion Throughout the CBR Process

Throughout the Primer references have been made to the Working Groups at the WHRN Summer Institute’s CBR workshop [May 2, 2008]. The Working Groups assembled around stages of research, each group was provided with a list of questions about that stage. The more nuanced questions that have appeared throughout this Primer reflect the deep conversations that these groups had about their topics. Following are some of the prompting questions that we offered them to begin their discussions. We often use this table to inspire conversation at the CBR workshops we hold across British Columbia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Research</th>
<th>Questions to Inspire Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Shaping the Research Question | - How will research questions be decided upon and who sees them as being relevant?  
- What issues are central to the everyday experience of the girls and women who may participate in this project?  
- What is the political and social climate for the work? What is possible?  
- Who do I need as part of the team to help shape the question?  
- How does gender, class, race or other power relations affect these issues?  
- Has anyone tried to answer this question before? Where would I find the information?  |
| Partnerships            | - Who needs to be at the table from the outset?  
- Are there “strategic” partnerships that will help in the long run? (e.g., funding, KT, action)  
- What kinds of expertise do I need on the team throughout the research process? What do I need help with?  
- How do we choose to name the relationships with the research “partners”?  
- What relationships do I need to be aware of? (e.g., not treading on toes?!)  
- What needs to be in place to enable all partners to be meaningfully involved?  
- What processes can be set in place to ensure respectful acknowledgment of differences while encouraging all research partners to build relationships and work across differences? |
| Recruiting Participants | - What are the necessary considerations when recruiting from this population group?  
- Who is involved, and how did they become involved?  
- Who is NOT present or represented?  
- Is attention being given to barriers to participation?  
- In what ways have I accounted for diversity? What might it look like to sample with sex, gender and other forms of diversity in mind?  
- How will I work with the particular challenges that may arise with this population group? (e.g., attrition, being triggered?) |
| Research Methods        | - Which methods will help us address our research question?  
- What kinds of methods are most appropriate for the population we are working with? What kinds of challenges may arise in working with our participants? How does gender, class, race or other power relations affect these issues?  
- Who will work with us to uncover, interpret and analyze these issues collectively?  
- How will the voices and experiences of our research participants be heard in relation to broader structural conditions?  
- What opportunities will girls and women have to participate in all phases of research?  
- Within the context of this project, what complex factors might be included in an intersectional analysis? |
| Action                  | - Who owns the research? How will it be produced, communicated and acted upon?  
- What levels and kinds of action have been documented during the project?  
- How will the results be communicated locally, to policy makers and in the academic community? What kinds of reception or resistance might be expected in each arena?  
- Has the evaluation of action been undertaken by the group? If so, in what way has the project been expanded, refined or altered?  
- What are the intended and unintended consequences of the research? |

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**REID, BRIEF, LEDREW**
REFERENCES


Better Science with Sex and Gender provides pragmatic suggestions for how to successfully employ a sex- and gender-based analysis (SGBA) in health research. Specifically, it defines sex and gender, outlines some designs for operationalizing SGBA in health research, and offers numerous illustrations of already-generated knowledge that uses an SGBA approach. This primer is a broad, comprehensive guide that applies to all areas of health research, including the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) four pillars of health research — biomedical, clinical, health systems, and social and cultural dimensions of health — as well as areas of health policy. (Free to download from www.whrn.ca)

Why Girls’ and Women’s Health Matters aims to clarify the concepts in the health determinants framework (HDF) and to examine its usefulness in understanding the health of a unique population group — girls and women — who face disadvantage due to structural inequities (i.e., differences among societal groups that are avoidable and unfair) that limit their access to, and control over, material and symbolic resources, and over their bodies and lives. Compared to males, females utilize health-care services more frequently. Because their social positions vary by socioeconomic position, ethnicity, race, and migrant status, some girls and women are especially vulnerable to social disparities and deserve special consideration. Health, which we define as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, is created and lived by people within the setting of their everyday lives — where they learn, work, play, and love (World Health Organization, 1986), and their health outcomes can all be seen as fundamentally gendered. This is evident by the fact there are not only significant gender differences in morbidity and mortality worldwide but also in how health-related risks are diagnosed and treated. (Free to download from www.whrn.ca)

Intersectionality: Moving Women’s Health Research and Policy Forward includes the following:
- an overview of intersectionality including challenges and advantages of this approach;
- a discussion of the key assumptions of intersectionality;
- a comparison and contrast of an intersectional approach, a gender- or sex-based approach, a health determinants approach, community-based research, and Indigenous approaches;
- a discussion of the need for an intersectional approach in gender and women’s health research;
- a discussion of how to integrate an intersectional approach into health research;
- a discussion of how to integrate an intersectional approach into health policy-making;
- examples of the application of an intersectional framework to three health issues. (Free to download from www.whrn.ca)

The Source/La Source is a bilingual directory designed to assist researchers, policy makers, health planners, and students identify and access sources of health data for women and girls in British Columbia, Manitoba, as well as national data sources. The directory includes an introductory gender based analysis for each topic. (www.womenshealthdata.ca)

The Survey/Le Sondage is a database that links women’s health practitioners, policy and program developers, regional health authorities, and women’s groups to grey literature documents on women’s health for British Columbia, Manitoba, as well as national and international documents. (www.womenshealthdata.ca)

The Synthesis/La Synthèse is a bilingual resource centre where health planners, policy makers, and researchers can access synthesis papers or reviews on a variety of women’s health topics. The Synthesis includes reports, briefs, position papers, and fact sheets on critical health issues. (www.womenshealthdata.ca)

The Women’s Health Research Network is one of eight Health of Population Networks supported and funded by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (www.msfhr.org).
AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Producing Our Common Ground was a collaborative effort with input from a wide range of people, including academics, students, community based researchers, community service providers, and people with experience as research participants. The Primer evolved through ongoing dialogue between the co-authors, who all approached its development from different perspectives and experiences. As co-authors, we feel that our efforts to bridge these different perspectives enabled us to create an accessible Primer intended for use by a broad and varied audience.

Colleen Reid: I am a Research Director for the Women’s Health Research Network. I earned an interdisciplinary PhD from the University of British Columbia (UBC) in the areas of health promotion research, women’s studies, and education. My doctoral dissertation, The Wounds of Exclusion: Poverty, Women’s Health, and Social Justice (2004, Left Coast Press), was a feminist action research project with women who had a low income; it examined the relationship between exclusion, poverty, and women’s health. In my postdoctoral research at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health I conducted a province-wide action research project with four diverse communities that explored the relationship between women’s employability (i.e., women’s relationship to the formal and informal economies) and health. I have devoted my research career to studying gender and health, and community based research methodologies, and have engaged in intersectional analyses in my attempts to better understand the social determinants of women’s health. I have published in the areas of women’s health, intersectionality, qualitative methodologies, and community based research. Our Common Ground has been an idea in the making for several years. It represents an attempt to bring much of what I have written to a more diverse and grassroots readership. I am tremendously grateful for Elana and Robin’s contributions, including their willingness to question my assumptions and to force greater clarity in writing, language, and tone.

Elana Brief: I am a Research Director for the Women’s Health Research Network. All of my formal academic training has been in physics. I earned a PhD in physics from the University of British Columbia (UBC) for my work in medical imaging. For my doctoral research I developed techniques to use Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machines to non-invasively acquire chemical information from the brain (i.e., perform a “bloodless biopsy”) in living patients and volunteers. During my three postdoctoral fellowships, I concentrated on human lung, fabricated skin, and helium nuclei. In short, my research has considered parts of things—whether they be people or atoms. Working on Our Common Ground has inspired me to question the assumptions I had brought to conducting research. Without knowing it, I had “othered” participants and perpetuated a narrow view of what could come of the results of research. I am honoured to be an author of this publication with Colleen and Robin. During the writing and development process I felt both challenged and heard. Although it is written for an audience concentrating on Community Based Research, I feel Our Common Ground can be inspiring reading for any researcher, physicists among them. It is a story of the power and promise of research to transform “subjects” into participants, to direct our attention to content and process, and ultimately to effect social change.

Robin LeDrew: I am a social worker in the rural social service agency Whitevalley Community Resource Centre. My work includes advocacy, program development, counselling and support. Working with women in this community for fifteen years, I have been and continue to be constantly confronted by poverty, family violence, disability, stress, and a variety of other health issues. Participating in community based research (e.g., the Women’s Health and Employability Research Project) and contributing to Our Common Ground has helped me step back from the frontline work and see the broader, more conceptual issues and questions. It has also helped me focus on the strengths of my community and the women who live here. Colleen has fostered my thirst for knowledge, opened doors for further education that I thought closed when I graduated, and encouraged me to share my thinking in a variety of ways. I very much appreciate the opportunities I have gained through my involvement with the Women’s Health Research Network.
Each copy of Our Common Ground cost $20 to print. In the spirit of this publication, please consider making a $20 donation to an organization in your community that works to improve the lives of girls and women.