Building Capacity for Anti-Poverty Policy Making from the Bottom-Up

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An Overview of
the APCOL Project

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Community University Research Alliance Grant Partnerships

- ACORN Canada
- Black Action Defense Committee
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- Chinese Canadian National Council (Toronto)
- Downtown East Community Development Collective
- Food Share Toronto
- Labour Community Services, Toronto
- Make Poverty History
- National Anti-Poverty Organization
- Social Planning Toronto
- Toronto and York Region Labour Council
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- United Way Canada
- Yonge Street Mission

- George Brown College
- Ryerson University
- University of Toronto
- York University

Research Questions

1. What is the nature and effectiveness of community-based anti-poverty organizing in the GTA?

2. What is the nature and effectiveness of popular education/informal learning in supporting community-based anti-poverty organizing in the GTA?

3. How can community-based anti-poverty organizing efforts in the GTA engage with, support and learn from one another?

Building Activist Capacity to Engage in & Generate Anti-Poverty Policy in the City of Toronto

1. Adult Education & Adult Learning Research
2. Social Movement Studies Research
3. Community Development Policy Research

Table 1: Basic Sequence of Research Activity

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Case Study #1	Case Study #3	Case Study #4	Case Study #6	Case Study #8
Case Study #2	First Survey	Case Study #5	Case Study #7	Second Survey

The Experience of APCOL Case Study Work in the Community (Mount Dennis Neighborhood)

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Mt. Dennis Case Study (2011-2012)

- Focus: youth employment and local economic development

- Partnership building: SPT/ANC, YYC, C-GEN, APCOL

- Researching Local Businesses

- The WE-LED campaign (West End Local Economic Development: www.weled.ca)

- Activist Digital Story-telling (e.g. http://vimeo.com/39035535)

KGO Housing Case Study

- East Scarborough "Priority" Neighbourhood
- Case study focused on housing issues and the implementation of a local housing strategy
- Local organizations: Residents Rising and Storefront
- Diverse approaches to community activism
- "Learning in action"
- Informal discussion with activists

Capacity Building in KGO

- Trainings and workshops on poverty & local organizing strategies
- Political action: Housing consultation & MPP meetings
- Outreach & campaign development
- Existing social networks: Community Speaks & the Market
- Service delivery & Community empowerment

Considerations for Analysis

- Informal learning through *productive activity*, mediated by *use-value* as opposed to *exchange-value*

- Community organizing / activism – broader scope to explore *everyday activity*

- Motivational dimensions of collective action – a deeply human interest in overcoming alienation – as a *learning process*

My community keep me going, the people in my community keep me going they give me the strength and stuff to do what I want to do…   *- KGO04 Interview, APCOL KGO Housing Case Study*

If it wasn't for seeing what other people are going through, and what other people were dealing with then I wouldn't know. I would only know my own problems….yes I'm worried about my own problems, but …they're not only my problems. Other people are going through the same thing that I'm going through. I may not know them… Like I can't look at you and tell you what you've been through, and hearing that…there are so many different issues that need to be taken care of, but you can't do it by yourself. That's why you need groups to get together and even groups sometimes they don't work but that's why you keep pounding and you keep doing what you gotta do. That's what I feel that [APCOL] is. Get people together; find out what's going on.

                    - KGO17 Interview, APCOL KGO Case Study

We live in a crazy world where there's no time to reflect. You don't have the time to even be honest with yourself because you have bills to pay, you just have to do it to make ends meet. Because of that <u>we end up losing ourselves</u>... Listening to your emotions, another thing that has been silenced. We are intuitive and we're not encouraged <u>to really listen</u> to those. Especially listening to young people, they're going through thousands of emotions. Even in working with them, we're not aware of how to work with it. Because you've got to have a swag and look a certain way. As a frontline worker, if you get all emotional, it's not something that is normal. But when you end up opening up to that level, <u>you've connected with that young person in a whole new way</u>.

(MTD002, Mt. Dennis Case Study)

(Il)legitimate Spaces

[S]pace may be available, but the policy of that space, and rule and regulation of space hinders people from using it. Then the other thing is the lack of legitimizing spaces that people use, but as an institution do not see those spaces as official. For instance, youth meet in a coffee place, they socialize and talk, but I can't go there to have meetings in a coffee place and decide that these decisions are kind of official, we're suppose to come to a formal place a community centre. That's where decisions are made, but... if people meet in their own homes and talk... you don't legitimize that because it's in people's homes. They have to come to a community centre for those decisions to be kind of seen as [legitimate]... (KGO14)
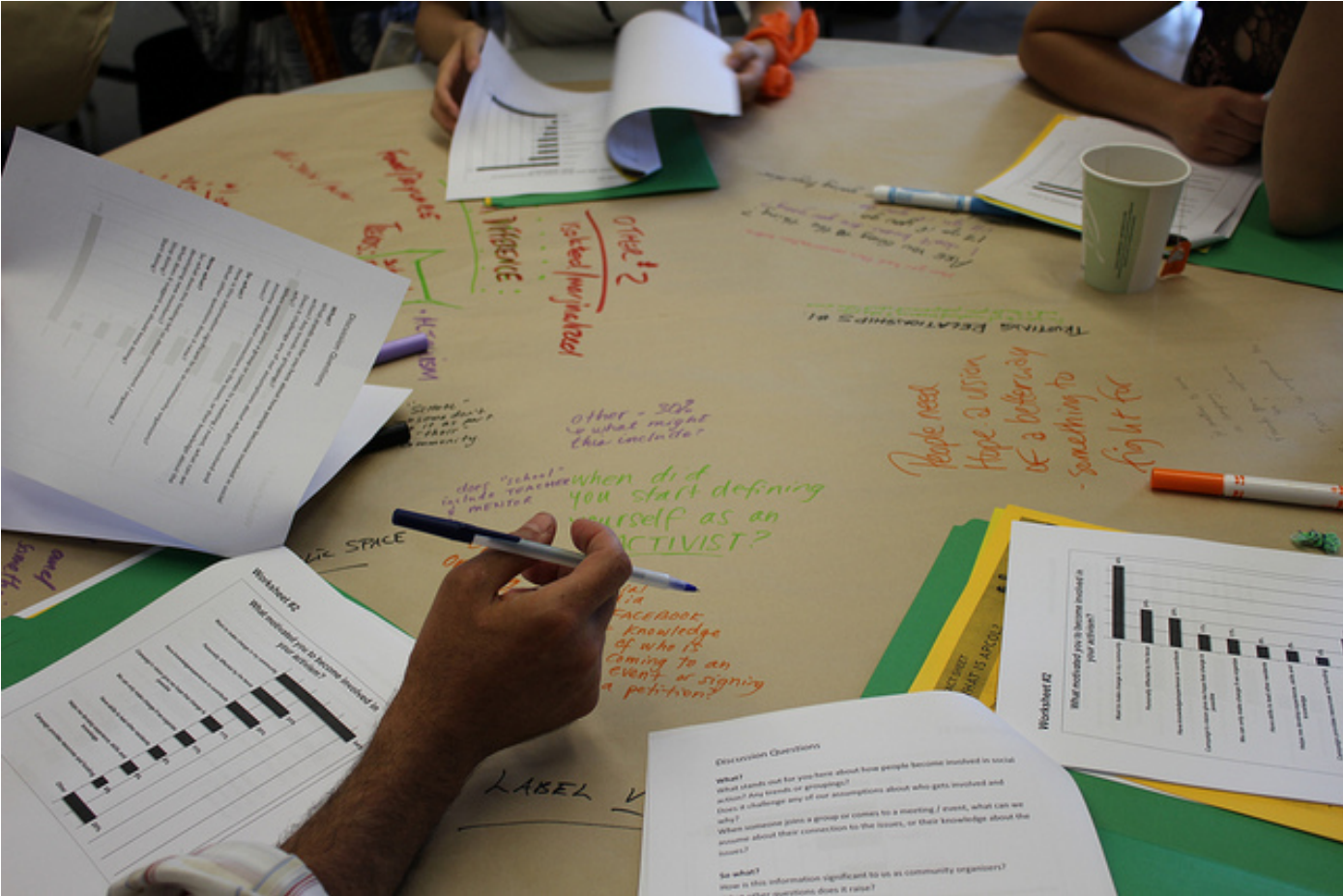
Overcoming alienation through activity

- 'Guerrilla gardening'

  "They're proud of what they did. They have a sense...They're empowered, they did it. And I mean they're planting them in the fall, they don't get their reward till the spring" (KGO10)

City-Wide Anti-Poverty Activism Surveying & the APCOL CDA Process

Collaborative Data Analysis

APCOL Survey

- 485 respondents
- 8 neighbourhoods, 5 languages
- Interviews conducted by community researchers
- Interviewees: current (39%) , past (25%), non-participants (36%) in community anti-poverty initiatives
- Convenience sampling

Community Based Research

1. problem formulation
2. data collection
3. **data analysis**
4. reporting of results
5. action planning

Why Collaborative Data Analysis?

- Enhances the relevance, usefulness, and use of the research data by all partners involved
- Creates theory that is grounded in social experience, and creates better informed/more effective practice (guided by such theories)
- Re-constructs roles of researcher and 'subject'; potentially building trust through co-generation of knowledge
- Strengthens community capacity (reading, analyzing, generating research)
- Provides some funds and work opportunities for community partners

from Israel et al. *Review of Community-based Research: Assessing Partnership Approaches to Improve Public Health*

CDA Process

Day one:

- Overview of CBR and CDA
- Anti-oppression training and CDA

Day two:

- Data Analysis training (reading data, stats vocab, research significance & claims, cross-tabs)

Days three & four:

- From stats to story – neighbourhood group work, speed data-ing, etc.

Day five

- Now what? Making use of results
- Survey & process analysis / evaluation
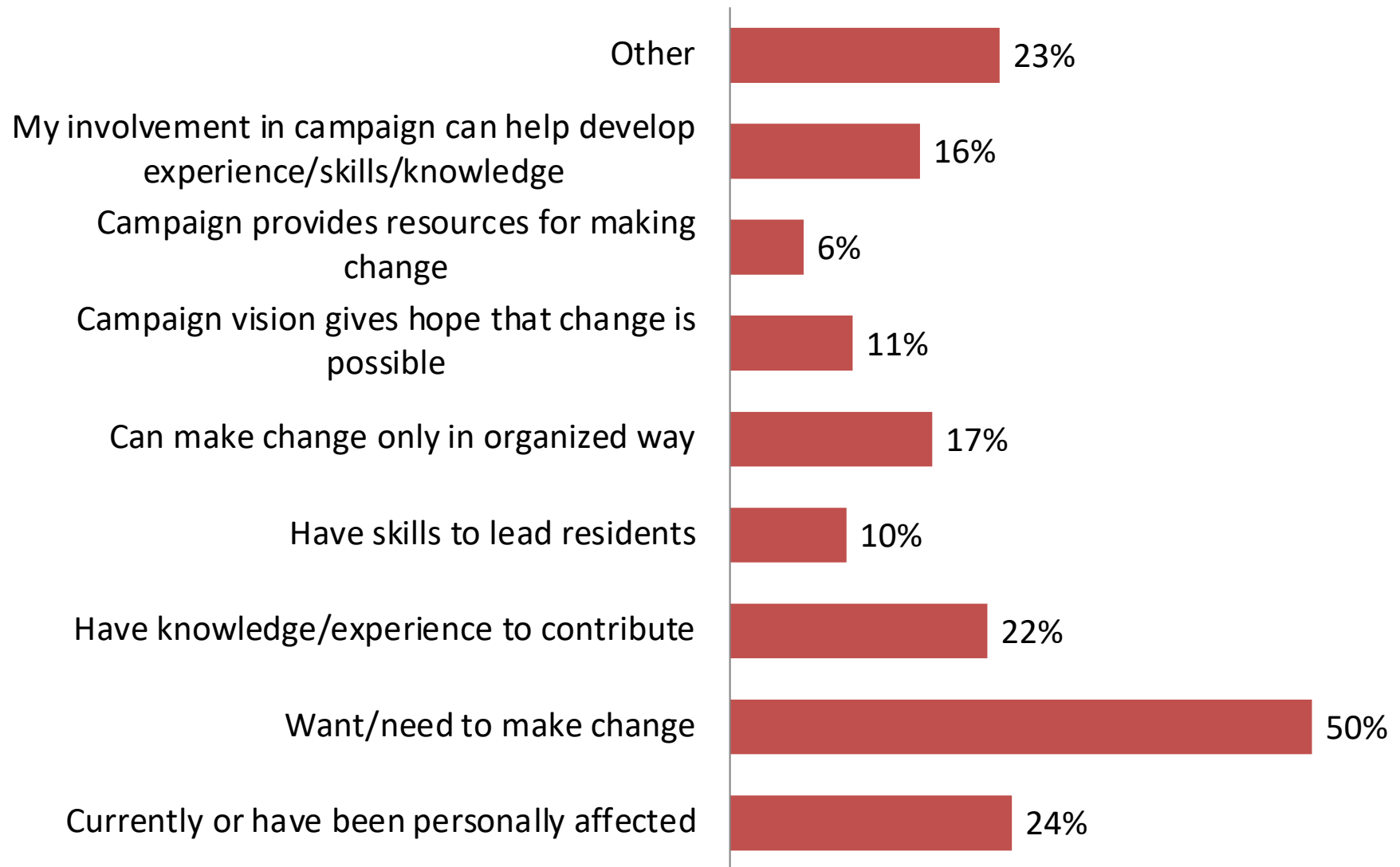
Key questions

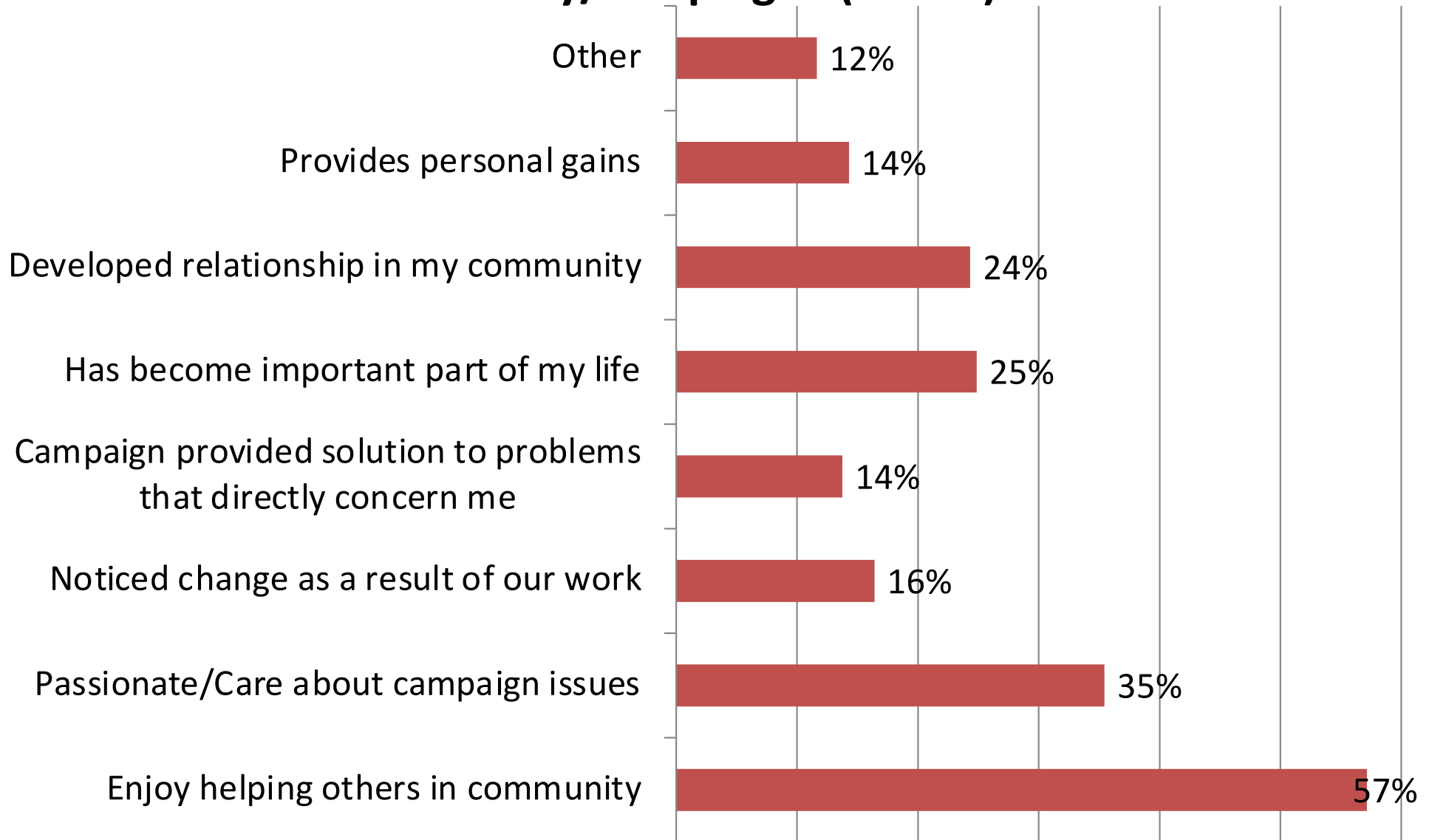**WHAT** do you think the findings show? Any trends?

SO WHAT: What does the data mean and why is this important? Any questions the findings raise?

WHAT'S NEXT: How do these findings lead you to action?

What motivated you to join the current anti-poverty community activity/campaign? (n=189)

Category	Percentage
Other	23%
My involvement in campaign can help develop experience/skills/knowledge	16%
Campaign provides resources for making change	6%
Campaign vision gives hope that change is possible	11%
Can make change only in organized way	17%
Have skills to lead residents	10%
Have knowledge/experience to contribute	22%
Want/need to make change	50%
Currently or have been personally affected	24%

Why have you chosen to stay involved in the current activity/campaign? (n=189)

Category	Percentage
Other	12%
Provides personal gains	14%
Developed relationship in my community	24%
Has become important part of my life	25%
Campaign provided solution to problems that directly concern me	14%
Noticed change as a result of our work	16%
Passionate/Care about campaign issues	35%
Enjoy helping others in community	57%

CBR – Partnership Issues

Challenges

- Lack of trust and respect
- Inequitable distribution of power and control
- Conflicts over funding
- Conflicts re: different emphasis on task or process
- Time-consuming process
- Representation & definition of community

Facilitating Factors

- Jointly developed operating norms
- Identification of common goals/objectives
- Democratic leadership
- Involvement of support staff/team
- Researcher roles, skills and competencies
- Prior history of good working relationships
- Identification of key community members
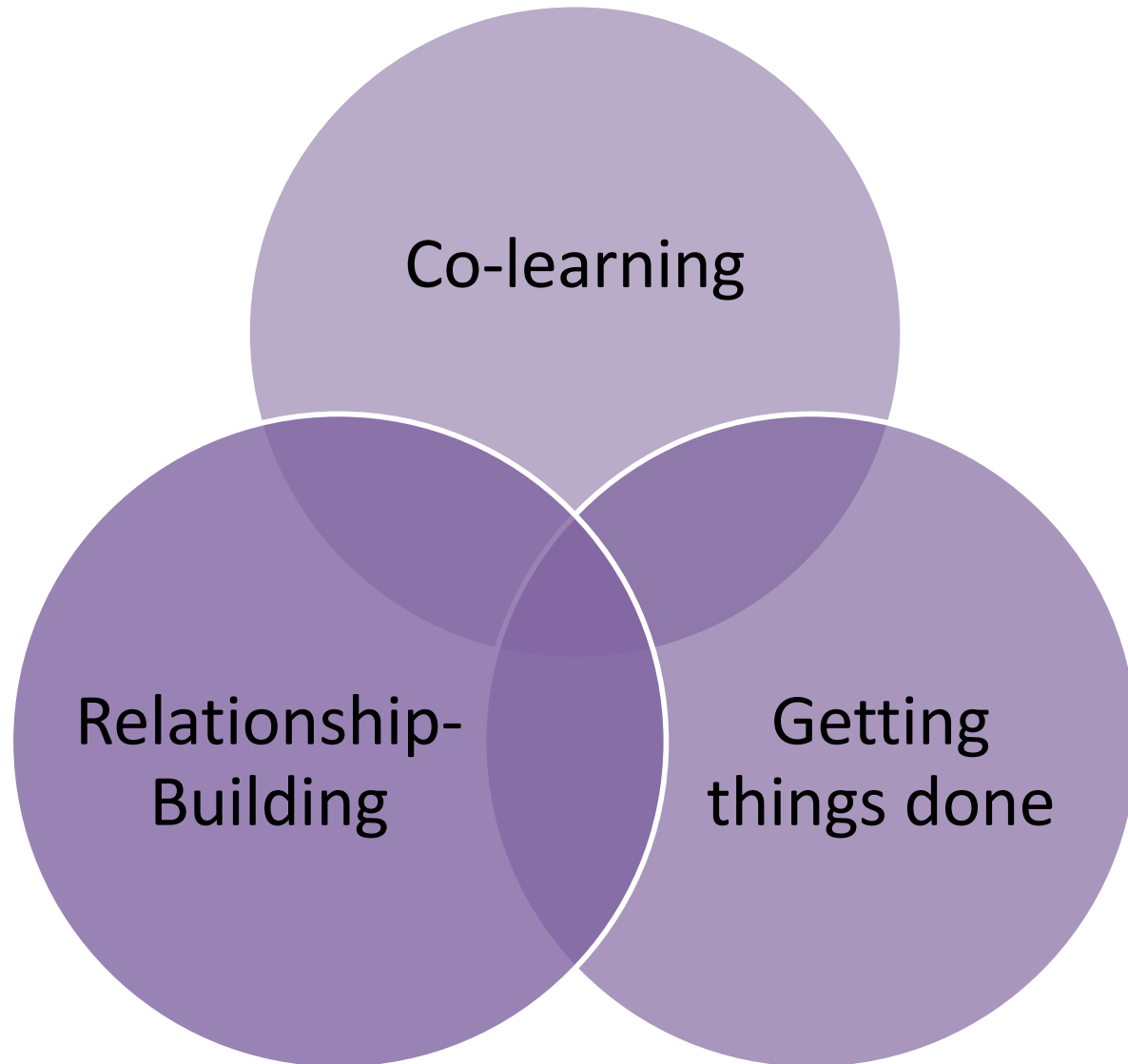
CBR – Methodological Issues

Challenges

- Questions of scientific quality of research
- Proving intervention success
- Inability to fully specify all aspects of research up-front
- Seeking balance between research and action
- Time demands
- Interpreting and integrating data from multiple sources

Facilitating Factors

- Methodological flexibility and different criteria for judging quality
- Involvement of community members in research activities
- conduct community assessment/diagnosis
- Development of jointly agreed upon research principles
- Conduct educational forums and training opportunities
- Involve partners in the publishing process
- Create interdisciplinary research teams

APCOL CDA Process

Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning (APCOL)

A participatory action study co-led by university and community-based researchers

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