

Research in Anti-Poverty Organizing and Learning in the GTA: A Participatory Approach



Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning (APCOL)

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

Anti-Poverty Community Organizing & Learning: Goals

- contribute to local neighbourhood capacity to engage in anti-poverty work (however they define it);
 - help build links between community anti-poverty initiatives across the Greater Toronto Area;
 - build understanding of the role of community-led organizing in the broader processes of positive social, political and economic change;
 - expand the base of research/knowledge on the role of informal learning and popular education in anti-poverty work and social movement development.
-

Research exists on....

Poverty

- ▣ Indicators
- ▣ Impact
- ▣ Contributing factors
- ▣ E.g. Canada's Economic Apartheid - Galabuzzi

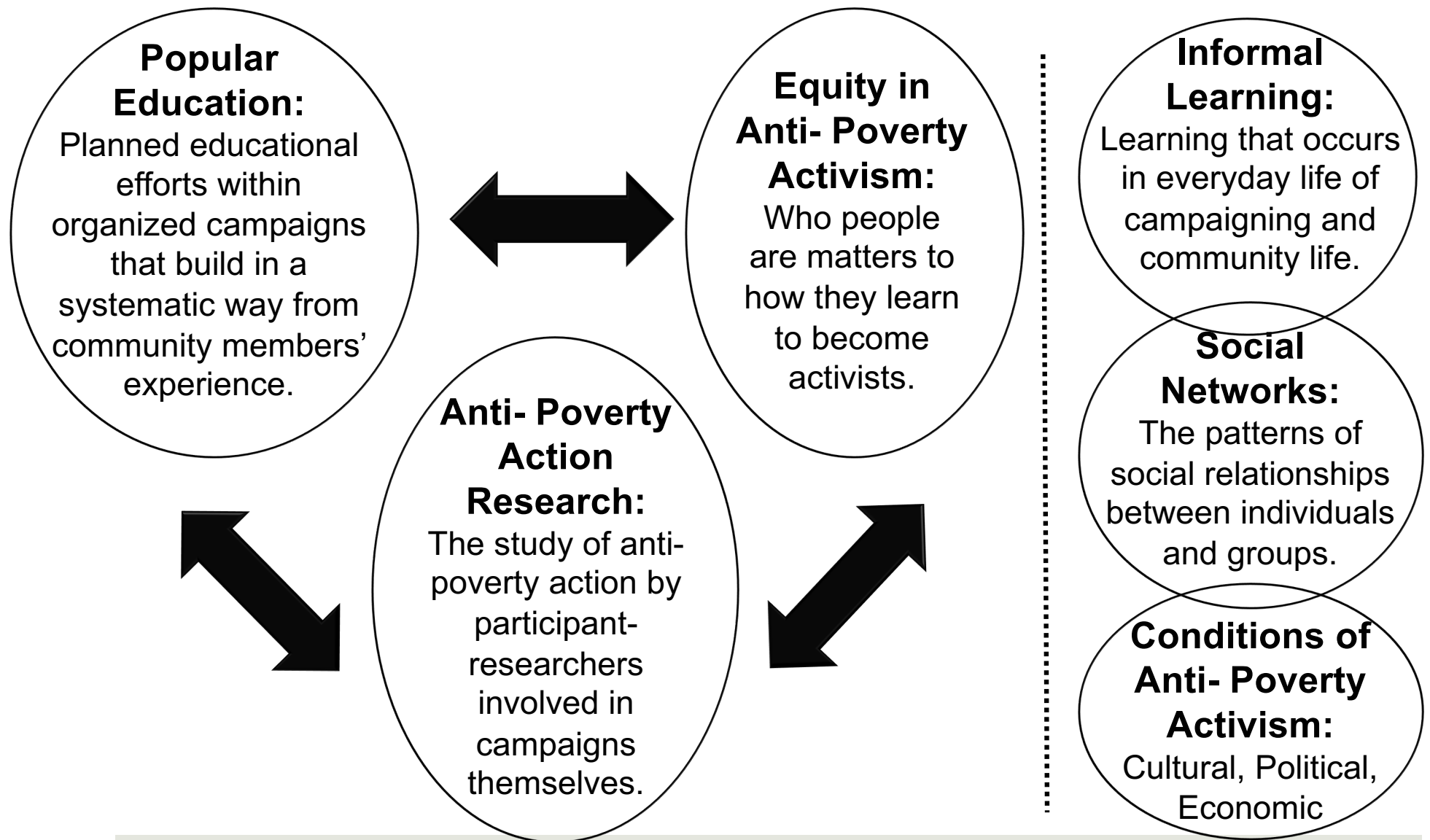
Anti-Poverty Initiatives

- ▣ Policies
 - ▣ Organizations
 - ▣ Movements
 - ▣ Strategic responses
-

Research Questions: Learning & Activism

- ... how and why do people get involved in anti-poverty organizing?
 - ... why do they stay involved?
 - ... why do they stop being involved?
 - ... why do some people never get involved in community organizing in the first place?
-

Conceptual Framework



Research Approach

Survey

- 400 surveys
- 8 neighbourhoods (50 each)
- 5 languages (Urdu, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, English)
- Conducted by Community-based Researchers
- Snowball method

Case Studies

- 8 case studies
- 8 neighbourhoods (Black Creek, Flemingdon Park, Weston, Mount Dennis, Regent Park, North Scarborough, East Scarborough, Central Toronto multi-neighbourhood)
- Community-initiated activist projects with research component

Four broad areas of organizing

- Housing
 - Food Security
 - Education
 - Employment
-

APCOL Partners

- Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), Black Action Defense Committee, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Chinese Canadian National Council (Toronto), Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Downtown East Community Development Collective, Labour Community Services (Toronto), Make Poverty History, National Anti-Poverty Organization, Toronto and York Region Labour Council, Toronto Community Housing Corporation, United Way Canada, Food Share.
 - University of Toronto, Ryerson, York University, George Brown College
-



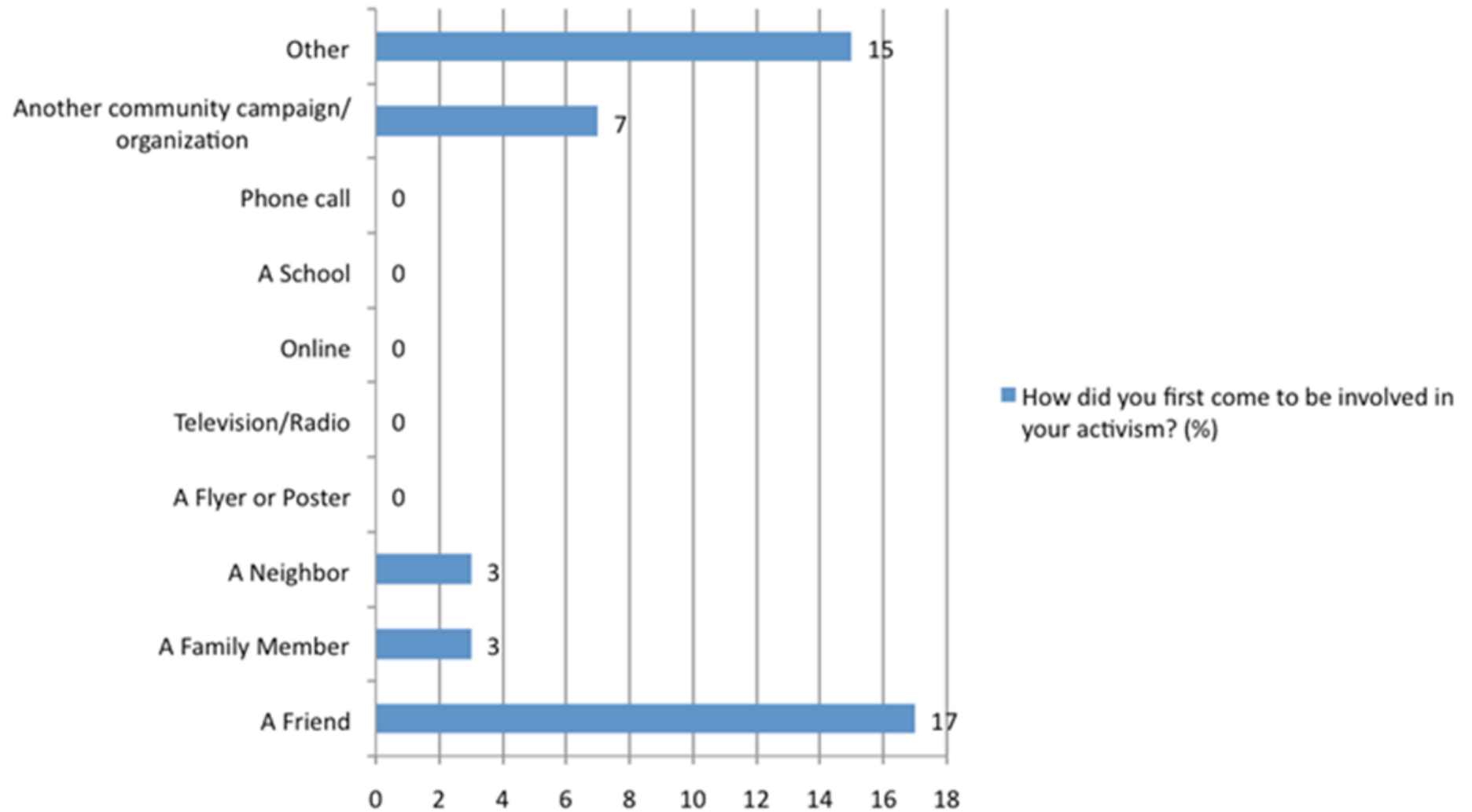
Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- At all levels of decision-making and research gathering, including survey and case study teams
 - Emphasis on popular education model of learning
 - Training for community organizers and animators focused on experiential and transformative learning
 - Informal learning between researchers and participants is evident throughout the project
 - Opportunities for bridges between community and academia enrich both research and organizing efforts
-

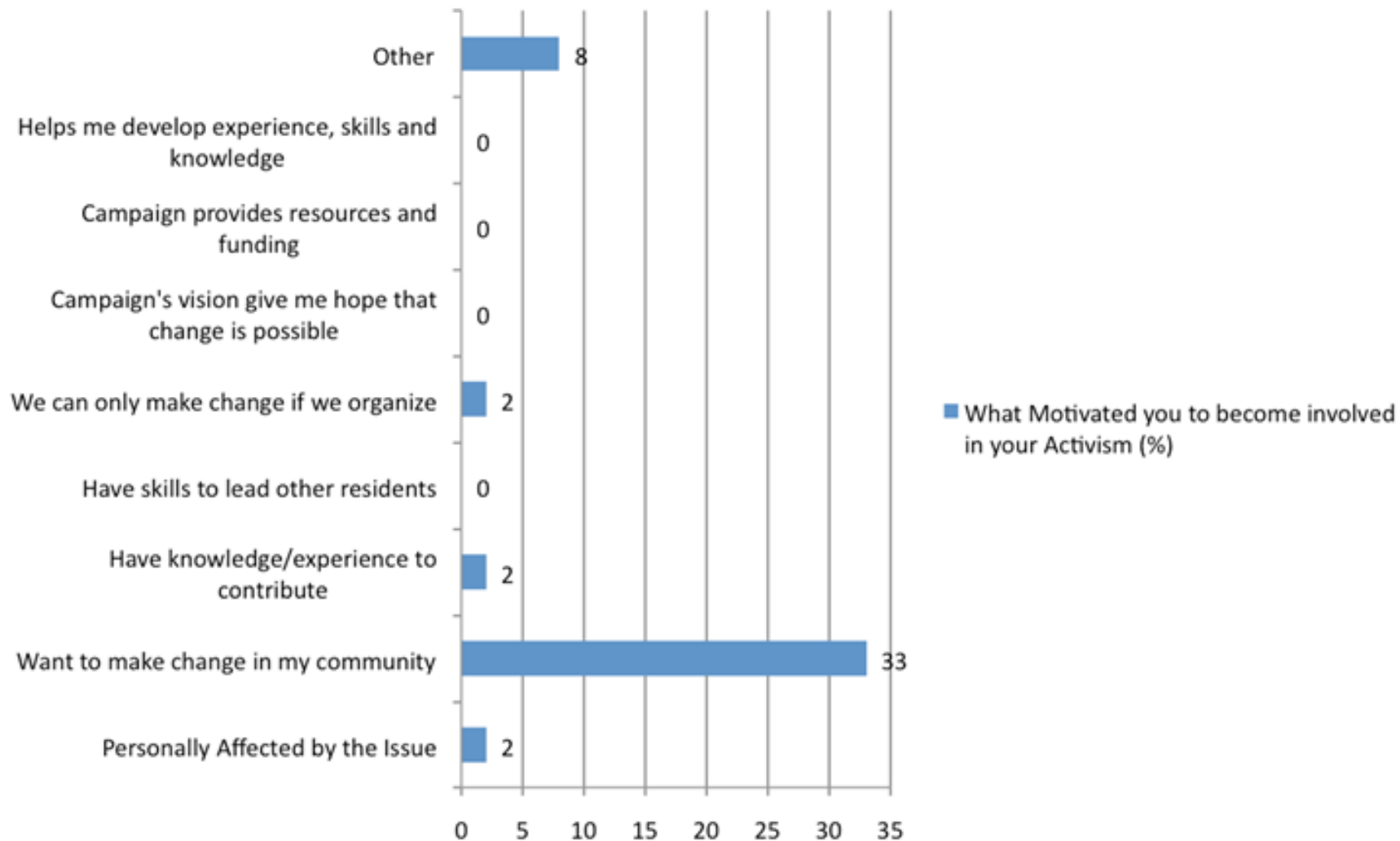
APCOL City-wide Anti-Poverty Survey



Activists: How did you first come to be involved in your activism? (%)



Activists: What Motivated you to become involved in your Activism (%)



APCOL Case Studies



Theme Area (Year)	Case Study	Coordinating Community Organization Co-Leads
Housing (Year 1)	Case 1: KGO Community Housing Campaign	Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
Health/Nutrition (Year 1)	Case 2: Multi-Neighborhood Health/Nutrition Campaign	Food Share Toronto
Good Jobs (Year 2)	Case 3: St. Jamestown Pre-Apprenticeship Initiative	George Brown College
Housing (Year 3)	Case 4: Weston Neighbourhood Housing Campaign	Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)
Education & Economy (Year 3)	Case 7: Mount Dennis Neighbourhood Youth Campaign	Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
Good Jobs (Year 4)	Case 5: Multi-Neighborhood Living Wage Campaign	Toronto and York Region Labour Council
Education & Economy (Year 4)	Case 6: Regent Park Neighbourhood 'First Generation' Educational Completion Initiative	Downtown East Community Coalition & George Brown College
Health/Nutrition (Year 5)	Case 8: Black Creek Neighbourhood Health/Nutrition Campaign	York University Community Outreach Centre

Community-University Partnership

- Developing the research project together
 - Steering Committee (e.g. FoodShare, Labour Council, CORD, CCNC and more)
 - Survey Committee (e.g. CCPA, ACORN...)
 - Case Studies and Trustee Organizations (e.g. SPT...)
 - Neighborhood-based Residents (Survey and Case Study work)
 - Collaborative Data Analysis
-

Participation Action Research as Community based research

Advantages of CBR:

- ❑ Community initiative is central
 - ❑ from subject to participant status
 - ❑ Capacity building
 - ❑ Collaboration
 - ❑ Varied research methods
 - ❑ Action outcomes
 - ❑ Ethical practices
 - ❑ Community relevance
-

Kingston Galloway – Orton Park

- 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
-

Omar: With ten million dollars where would poverty be? I feel like if you do that it might create construction jobs: Lots of big buildings and things. But then this neighbourhood would be just some other downtown then. So, I think: What do we really want? We want to live in peace. In the right place where, I dunno... Some nature, some people, and some simple things.

Alice: Yeah simple things! That's what I want. [For instance] I like our market. Our Festival Market. It's green. You see the kids playing. You watch the seniors just sit and gather. That's what it is for me when I think of anti-poverty... Like me for instance, I do volunteer work around the neighbourhood. And I can't seem to say no. I like doing it... But I'm living on a month on what I used to make in a week. And I've been successful at it for six years, seven years. It's wearing me down... But then again I can't see me getting too burnt out with this because I love it. I feed off it... For me, it's when my friend went through a tough thing this week. I say, "Call me. If you need to talk, just call me". And that's where [anti-poverty] starts... I think a problem shared is a problem cut in half. It doesn't solve the problem, but at least you can get to where the action is!

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
-



www.apcol.ca



Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning (APCOL)

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