prevention Tactics

Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention

By Dustianne North, MSW, PhD

with contributions from Megan Coulter-Bracey, MSW, and Andrea Barrera

Introduction

Environmental prevention strategies are coordinated approaches to changing or influencing community conditions, standards, institutions, structures, systems, and policies. When done well, there is substantial evidence supporting the efficacy of environmental prevention strategies for reducing alcohol and other drug (AOD) use^{1,2}. Yet despite the fact that environmental prevention efforts are fundamentally community oriented, there has been little systematic research to explore the efficacy of specific environmental prevention approaches across racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse communities. While there is increasing effort in the prevention field to evaluate prevention strategies across diverse cultural groups, this focus has largely been expressed in studies that examine direct services to youth. As more California counties begin to incorporate environmental prevention into their overall prevention approach, there is a need to understand how to implement environmental prevention strategies that are responsive to the particular strengths, challenges, and needs of diverse communities.

The goal of this Tactic is to assist professional prevention providers, grassroots citizen groups, prevention coalitions, and others who aim to change substance use and abuse patterns on a community scale by illuminating what culturally responsive selection, implementation, and evaluation of environmental AOD prevention efforts might look like. This Tactic provides suggested approaches to environmental prevention that aim to be both evidence-based and culturally responsive, offering a selection of frameworks, recommendations, and evidence-based models.

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Tactics (Tak'tiks) n. 1. a plan for promoting a desired end. 2. the art of the possible.



Methodology

This Tactic is necessarily exploratory since little is known about the efficacy of environmental prevention across diverse communities. This Tactic is informed by an extensive literature review as well as field interviews. Much of the information synthesized here comes from a review of the academic literature related to environmental prevention and culture; field publications related to cultural competence, community mobilization, and prevention strategies; and evidence-based models for environmental prevention. In addition to the literature review, six interviews were conducted in order to better understand the challenges encountered, lessons learned, and best-practices developed to implement environmental prevention across diverse communities. Expert testimony was collected from four active environmental prevention providers from different counties in California. In addition, two California technical assistance providers who are considered experts in environmental prevention, community mobilization, and community organizing were interviewed.

Environmental Prevention

Environmental prevention addresses the environmental factors (physical environment and community norms) that support the use of alcohol and other drugs. Environmental prevention specialists assist communities to identify and work to change elements in settings that contribute to unhealthy or unsafe behaviors, including substance abuse. Environmental prevention brings a specific community focus to prevention, which can complement individual strategies. While individual prevention strategies focus on behavior change, environmental prevention engages a public health approach to impact substance use on a larger scale by limiting access to substances, changing public laws, policies, and practices, and changing social norms that contribute to substance use. Typically, environmental prevention strategies aim to reduce substance use via changes in:

- Policy & Policy Enforcement
- · Access and Availability
- Community Norms
- Media Messages

When done well, environmental prevention...

- Recognizes that problems are often not found within individuals, but in the environment.
- Improves community and individual understandings about direct and second-hand problems related to AOD.
- Facilitates the empowerment of communities to solve local AOD-related problems by providing opportunities for community resident leadership.
- Makes a broad impact on large numbers of people and organizations.
- Helps communities resist irresponsible business practices and ensures that substance abuse issues are addressed in local zoning and policy decisions.
- Works across silos to address an array of issues that relate to substance use and abuse.
- Is applicable across diverse communities.

Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention

Broad agreement exists in the field of AOD prevention that culturally responsive strategies are a necessary foundation for effective program administration. The term "cultural responsiveness" refers to the capacity of an organization to respond to the particular cultural needs of those it seeks to serve. Culturally responsive

services recognize that beliefs, attitudes, norms, and expectations around health and wellness vary across cultures, and that responding to these differences is an integral part of equitable and effective service. While substance abuse problems are prevalent across populations and communities, the individual expectations, community norms, and institutional consequences attached to substance use vary from one community to another. The most effective environmental prevention efforts will begin with knowledge of the specific risk and protective factors of the community from a historical perspective, and work with the community to identify substance abuse problems to develop and implement substance abuse prevention strategies.

We define culturally responsive environmental prevention activities as those which:

- Effectively address a community's unique history, strengths, challenges, and cultural diversity.
- Build sustained and powerful citizen-driven coalitions and practices aimed at the prevention of AOD abuse and other risk behaviors.
- Integrates community assessments and community-defined priorities, interventions, and involvement.

Importance of Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention

Although environmental strategies are designed to affect community level change, providers should use caution before assuming that environmental prevention strategies shown to be effective in one community context are necessarily appropriate for another community context. Environmental prevention efforts that don't attend to broader needs and challenges of specific communities, especially marginalized communities, may undermine the efficacy of prevention efforts. If the demographics and cultural norms of a community are not considered and existing leaders of a given community are not included in the planning and implementation process, prevention strategies may be less relevant to community members, and consequently less well supported and less successful.

Every community has a culture, and cultural responsiveness should always be a first principle of substance abuse prevention. While substance abuse is a public health issue, its consequences are also embedded within systems of inequality, including

institutional racism and poverty. Attention to issues of race, class, and immigration status are especially critical to the success of environmental prevention efforts. These realities may effect the appropriateness of some strategies, even if these strategies have been proven effective in other neighborhoods. For example:

- Policy strategies that depend on increased law enforcement activities may not be welcomed in neighborhoods with strained relationships with the police, including those with high numbers of undocumented residents fearful of deportation.
- Strategies to change the availability of alcohol through zoning reform may also limit economic expansion and subsequently be less popular in communities with high levels of poverty.
- Media messages that rely heavily on internet or Smartphone access have limited reach where such access is not the norm.

Building Foundations for Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention

Implementing culturally responsive environmental prevention may require a subtle but significant rethinking of existing approaches. When working for community-level change, approaches should be designed for the community and implemented with the community. The prevention providers interviewed for this Tactic, as well as the literature on best-practices in environmental prevention, agree that involving community residents in the development and implementation of their own prevention efforts is critical to successful environmental prevention. Culturally responsive environmental prevention efforts, then, are both *responsive to* and *driven by* the members of the communities targeted.

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Community Trials Intervention to Reduce High Risk Drinking is a multi-component environmental prevention model. It is one of the few SAMHSA- registered, evidence-based programs that has been successfully translated and adapted for various ethnic groups. It has produced significant results, including:

- Decreased alcohol sales to youth
- Increased enforcement of DUI laws
- Implementation and enforcement of RBS policies
- Adoption of policies limiting the dense placement of retail alcohol establishments
- Increased coverage of alcohol-related issues in local news media
- · Decreased in binge drinking
- · Decreased in drinking and driving
- Decreased in assaults³

Developing Culturally Responsive Prevention Strategies

Developing culturally responsive environmental prevention includes both organizational self-assessment and strategic planning to ensure meaningful community input. The assessment process can help environmental prevention providers identify their current capacity to implement culturally responsive strategies, especially in terms of community engagement. The self-assessment process can help determine the degree to which community residents, stakeholders, and leaders are currently engaged or still need to be engaged. The self assessment process can also help ensure that strategic planning follows culturally responsive principles in program design, implementation, and evaluation.

CLAS Standards

The Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Service (CLAS) standards were developed by the U.S.

Office of Minority Health for use in the healthcare field. These standards call for effective, equitable, understandable, and respectful quality of care and services; culturally responsive governance, leadership, and workforce practices; appropriate communication and language assistance; and engagement, continuous improvement, and accountability of practices. Subsequent to their release at the national level, the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) supported a diverse group of representative stakeholders through the California

Community Alliance for CLAS (CA-CLAS) to develop CLAS guidelines specifically for use by the California AOD field. The guidelines were published along with a checklist intended to help AOD providers assess their capacity to provide culturally responsive services. These checklists, which can be found in the CLAS California Standards 2012 guidelines, can help environmental prevention providers evaluate their existing knowledge of their community, the strength of their community partnerships, and the degree to which their staffing and materials meet the needs of diverse communities.

Strategic Prevention Framework

The importance of attending to culturally specific needs is the reason that cultural competence is at the heart of SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF). In this five-step planning framework, cultural competence is intended to act as a guiding principle for the development of strategic prevention plans. The Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) has developed an excellent *Cultural Primer* for prevention coalitions which offers a variety of insights and strategies for incorporating cultural competence into the SPF process, including community-driven planning, implementation, and evaluation.



California requires every county to develop an AOD prevention plan utilizing the SPF to ensure that prevention efforts reflect best-practices that are culturally responsive. The Cultural Primer can help guide the SPF development process to

reflect cultural responsiveness as a cross-cutting principle. For coalitions or other environmental prevention providers, these plans may also be good sources of data. Because successful environmental prevention efforts are informed by knowledge of the community, ongoing access to community-level data is essential. Achieving community-level data may require disaggregating the data beyond that which is presented in county prevention plans, but these data can provide a context for community-level work.

Approaches to Community Driven Prevention

Interview respondents emphasized the importance of community empowerment, and a focus on building personal, social, and political power among those most affected by substance abuse issues and whose voices are often left out of public debate on the subject. Interviewees noted that prevention efforts that are driven by professional prevention providers may alienate everyday residents and informal community leaders. Additionally, interview subjects noted that if these efforts are not aligned with community needs and do not represent community priorities, they are less likely to be sustainable.

<u>Community Mobilization and Community Organizing</u>

The limited literature on culturally responsive environmental prevention emphasizes the use of community mobilization and community organizing approaches. These approaches have in common an orientation toward services that are tailored to the specific needs of a community or group, and highlight the empowerment of community residents to act for change on their own behalf. The approaches also share a focus on meeting the needs of communities and groups who experience high economic challenges, various forms of structural oppression, and high levels of diversity.

CADCA notes that "Community mobilization [and organizing], when done comprehensively, is a culturally competent process. Mobilizing takes you to areas of the community where substance abuse issues are occurring to talk to those who are most impacted. Engaging in knock and talks in neighborhoods where open-air drug markets are flourishing will naturally bring you into contact with people from all walks of life. In this context, soliciting diverse opinions will happen as a natural part of the outreach process."

Community mobilization is typically driven by subject experts who bring specific, predefined issues and proposed solutions to the community for "buy in." A mobilization approach is best suited to specific, short-term campaigns responding to a widely identified problem through a generally supported solution. Community organizing approaches do not begin with problems or solutions predetermined by prevention professionals. Instead, an organizing process begins with one-on-one, often door-to-door, listening campaigns that yield insights into problems that community members care about, and the individual and personal ways in which they are affected by them. Community organizing may be thought of as a 'bottom-up' process, whereas community mobilizing may be seen as a 'top-down' process.5

Many environmental prevention campaigns use a community mobilizing model. A community organizing approach can complement existing efforts by increasing the level of resident involvement in the process and build a lasting base of resident experts invested in continued substance abuse prevention activities⁶. When elements of a longer-term community organizing approach are added to existing community mobilization efforts, prevention activities may be more effective in fostering empowerment among residents, and may do a better job of ensuring that campaigns are responsive to the issues that residents care about most. CADCA has presented a Power People manual which includes a step-by-step prevention model for a blended mobilization-organizing approach to prevention efforts, as shown in the diagram below.



Taking such an approach may also support sustainability, as an organized and bonded group of residents, providers, and allies may be more likely to remain in place for future efforts. Community organizers build lasting personal relationships with community residents and support ongoing relationships between residents. Actions determined with citizen leadership can be not only evaluated, but also reflected upon and celebrated, so that new efforts can be formulated with lessons learned and relationships deepened.

Recommendations for Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention

A synthesis of extant research coupled with field interviews has identified six strategies to support culturally responsive environmental prevention. When available, specific evidence-based models are referenced to assist you in implementing the recommended strategies.

Strategy 1: Actively Acknowledge Diversity, Difference, and Issues of Oppression

Environmental prevention efforts should begin with knowledge of the racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, economic, and political characteristics of the community within which they intend to work. Demographic and community data will also help environmental prevention providers gain a foundational understanding of the specific strengths and challenges in individual communities. For example, neighborhoods with a high percentage of residents who have been in their current homes for more than five years are strengthened by this stability, which in turn represents an opportunity for environmental prevention providers to foster increased community cohesion. Providers working in neighborhoods with high numbers of public transportation users will want to make certain that transportation challenges do not limit opportunities for meaningful community participation in meetings and events. These data should guide the planning and capacity building stages of environmental prevention development. Suggestions for ways to access these data can be found in the Resources section of this Tactic.

Working successfully with diverse communities also requires acknowledging that issues of racism, poverty, and other forms of structural oppression affect community members differentially. Norms,

expectations, and beliefs about how best to prevent substance abuse are shaped by the social, economic, and historical context of community residents. Environmental prevention efforts should recognize that some groups have historically been subjected to violence, abuse, and disrespect from civil and penal institutions. These experiences may affect perceptions of law enforcement and local government, which may be not be seen by some community residents as supportive bodies. Be respectful of these perspectives when working on issues of access and enforcement by ensuring that decisions to increase government authority are supported across diverse sectors of the community and that meaningful alternatives are proposed.

Strategy 2: Respect the Individuals, Communities, and Cultures With Whom You Interact

Many environmental prevention approaches strive to reduce substance abuse by changing community norms. Understanding the particular norms around substance use in a given community requires working without judgments and assumptions. This can be difficult, since all people harbor conscious or unconscious biases which lead to assumptions about others. The practice of cultural humility and two-way learning can help prevention providers identify biases and enact their commitment to culturally responsive services.

Cultural Humility

An important step towards cultural responsiveness is developing an awareness of difference and privilege. The practice of cultural humility can help environmental prevention providers build respectful and productive relationships with diverse communities. A working definition of cultural humility includes three factors: 1) a commitment to self evaluation in order to understand personal privilege and bias; 2) a desire to correct power imbalances; and 3) a commitment to working with people who advocate on behalf of others.8 A cultural humility approach is particularly important for prevention efforts initiated by providers who differ demographically from the community of service, especially if they are racially and economically privileged.

Two-Way Learning

Two-way learning supports building relationships based on mutual respect and equal responsibility. In

this model, both community residents and prevention professionals bring specific skills, knowledge, and expertise to the problem of substance abuse; the emphasis is on the ability of each to learn from the other. For example, prevention professionals may have expertise in accessing and analyzing substance use data, while residents are best situated to prioritize the substance abuse problems within their community and to identify idiosyncratic risk factors. In a two-way learning situation, prevention professionals and community residents treat each other as equally qualified experts and approach collaboration as an experience in mutual learning.

Strategy 3: Build Citizen-Driven, Rather Than Provider-Driven, Approaches

Residents from all sectors should be included in environmental prevention efforts, especially those most affected by substance abuse issues in your community. This can be achieved by collaborating with all types of community organizations, especially those who serve or are led by diverse populations. Special efforts should be made to include youth, who are the primary consumers of prevention services.

The Drug Free Communities (DFC) Program

recommends "12 Community Sectors" as a basis for inclusion: youth, parents, business community, media, schools, youth-serving organizations, law enforcement agencies, religious or fraternal organizations, civic and volunteer groups, healthcare professionals, state and local and/or tribal government agencies with expertise in the field of substance abuse, and other organizations involved in reducing substance abuse.

<u>Professional and Community Collaboration</u>

Prevention professionals should support environmental prevention campaigns that reflect the priorities of the community. Prevention providers bring important knowledge and skills to an environmental prevention campaign. For example, collecting disaggregated community-level data is an important contribution to this process¹⁰, as is the knowledge of multiple best-practice environmental prevention strategies. Community members and community leaders should play leading roles in identifying the specific substance abuse problems that the campaign will address.

As an example of the way this collaboration may work, consider a policy campaign to reduce underage drinking. There are many policy approaches to the problem of underage drinking: policies may target the ways in which alcohol is sold, the places in which it is consumed, or the laws that address its misuse. Prevention professionals can contribute their knowledge of policies that address each of these domains, but the decision about which domain to target and the strategies used to address it should come from the community, not the professional prevention providers. This approach helps ensure that prevention strategies do not conflict with values, norms, and traditions of community members, and so will not dissuade community participation.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

Meaningful community partnerships are not easy to create and maintain. CBPR is a research-based strategy for supporting community participation in all stages of SPF planning and CBPR is an increasingly common strategy for community empowerment which can be used to build sustainable environmental prevention campaigns. CBPR aims to empower the voices of community residents in research and policy debates by teaching research skills to targeted community members. This is achieved with the support of researcher-organizers as technical assistants and political educators. Under this model, community leaders who conduct research also define issues to address, select, plan, implement, and evaluate.

Evidence-Based CBPR Models

- Tribal participation approach: culturally centered for American Indian/Alaskan Native tribes¹¹
- Youth Action Research for Prevention (YARP): a SAMSHA-registered, evidence-based, youth-driven, multilevel, youth empowerment model¹²
- Photovoice/Digital Stories: creative and visual approaches to CBPR¹³

Strategy 4: Recognize Differing and Competing Views, and Help to Negotiate Arrangements that Consider and Benefit the Targeted Community

Providers and experts agreed that it is critical that environmental prevention professionals recognize and gain a familiarity with differing views and needs among community members. Culturally diverse residents, educators, parents, youth, local merchants, police, local



officials, people with substance use disorders, court-involved families, and prevention providers may have different understandings, perspectives, and priorities with regard to substance abuse problems. As community members and stakeholders, each of these groups should be encouraged to share their opinion.

Environmental prevention campaigns can support a dialogue that is sensitive to and respectful of multiple local views on substance abuse, especially opposing views. The role of the prevention professional is to negotiate compromise by establishing common ground. This means encouraging opponents to listen to one another, and to treat each other's views as valid. At the same time, the providers and organizers interviewed for this Tactic emphasized how crucial it is that providers not be afraid of conflict. It is important to challenge false beliefs that may undermine prevention goals.

Ultimately, effective environmental prevention strategies must engage various community constituents to negotiate their differences and develop thoughtful and well-planned partnerships and collaborative efforts. The goal is to seek solutions that bring the greatest benefit, and the least negative impact, to all. It is important to remember that the prevention effort may be the only cohesive voice in the community that specifically advocates for prevention. This means professionals should be willing to stand with residents against powerful interests who have no stake in community life, against negative community influences, and even against well-meaning funders and other power-holders who may sometimes misunderstand community needs.

Strategy 5: Work Across Silos Toward the Holistic Wellness of Communities

Substance abuse issues affect and are affected by a host of other social problems. Poverty, crime, unemployment, weak schools, and lack of access to resources are risk factors for substance use, and prevention efforts should support attempts to address these larger issues. These risk factors condition both the trajectory and consequences of substance use. Multiple risk factors increase the likelihood that occasional use will increase in frequency and dosage, making the trajectory between use and abuse occur more guickly. Neighborhoods with high crime rates are typically under heightened police surveillance, leading to higher rates of police contact. Under-resourced schools may lack early intervention programs to support youth who are indicated to be at risk. Environmental prevention campaigns should work collaboratively across sectors to develop interventions that work across these domains and also build on specific local strengths.

Some recent ventures in youth prevention have been lauded for their complex, multilevel efforts. PROSPER, or **PRO**moting **S**chool-community-university **P**artnerships to **E**nhance **R**esilience, is an evidence-based model for prevention, involving stakeholders and power-brokers at multiple levels.¹⁴

Strategy 6: Be Strong Facilitators and Organizers

There was strong agreement among providers that the efficacy of environmental prevention activities often lies in the skills and attentiveness of facilitators. Prevention professionals must have strong facilitation and organizing skills in order to bring community voices into the public debate. These skills include appropriate language skills, the ability to create and maintain partnerships that are demographically representative of the community, and a working knowledge of community norms and expectations.

Skillful facilitation can prevent some voices at the table from dominating others, and mediate sometimes contentious situations. Organizing skills allow campaign conveners to build positive one-on-one relationships with community residents and build consensus around prevention priorities, approaches, and evaluation strategies from within the community. Yet, providers also pointed out that strong facilitators cannot be seen as a substitute for strong resident-based voices in the community. Ultimately, the goal of strong facilitation and organization is to let community members lead through the creation of sustainable community networks dedicated to substance abuse prevention.

Summary: Culturally Responsive Environmental Prevention

Cultural responsiveness is critical to effective and equitable environmental prevention, and should be integrated into the selection, development, implementation, and evaluation of environmental prevention campaigns. As defined in this Tactic, culturally responsive environmental prevention campaigns are responsive to and driven by the communities served, and make central a commitment to diversity. They are waged in the context of inclusive and citizen-driven prevention strategies.

More data is needed to determine whether many existing evidence-based environmental prevention frameworks and models may lend themselves to efficacy across diverse communities. However, this Tactic has presented six essential strategies to support the development of culturally responsive environmental prevention campaigns. The implementation of these strategies, and greater awareness of the centrality of cultural considerations to community engagement, can help change those elements in communities that promote unhealthy or unsafe behaviors, and help build environments that support healthier choices and habits among individuals and families.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Online Tools and Resources

Community Prevention Initiative- Environmental Prevention

http://www.ca-cpi.org/docs/Publications/TARP/TARP EnvironmentalProtection.pdf

Lessons from Prevention Research

http://wweb.uta.edu/projects/sswtech/sapvc/resources/lessons from prevention research.htm

CADCA- People Power: Mobilizing Communities for Policy Change

http://www.cadca.org/files/resources/CommunityMobilization-FINAL-07-22-12.pdf

Community Readiness: Research to Practice

http://collectiveactionlab.com/sites/default/files/Edwards et al 2000 Community Readiness.pdf

Community-Level Demographics: Search by city, county, or zip code to find key demographic information

http://www.city-data.com/ http://www.zipskinny.com/

http://www.ca-cpi.org/resources/community_indicators_2010.php

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Enhanced National Standards 2013

http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services California Standards 2012

http://allianceforclas.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CA-AOD-CLAS-Standards-and-Recommendations-7.pdf

Cultural Competence Primer: Incorporating Cultural Competence into Your Comprehensive Plan http://www.cadca.org/files/resources/Cultural_Competence-09-2010.pdf

Designing for diversity: Incorporating cultural competence in prevention programs for urban youth http://www.csuprofessionaldevelopment.com/images/pdfs/DesigningForDiversity.pdf

Cultural Competence as part of SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework

http://captus.samhsa.gov/prevention-practice/strategic-prevention-framework/cultural competence

Drug Free Communities (DFC) Program: 12 Coalition Sectors http://www.samhsa.gov/grants/2012/SP-12-001.pdf (pg. 9)

Drug Free Communities Support Program

http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/Drug-Free-Communities-Support-Program

Scholarly Articles

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Evidence-Based Models

SAMSHA-Approved Evidence-Based Environmental Prevention Models

- Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA)
 http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=41
- Community Trials Intervention To Reduce High-Risk Drinking http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=9
- Creating Lasting Family Connections Fatherhood Program: Family Reintegration (CLFCFP) http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=324_
- Lead & Seed http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=335

PROSPER Partnerships

- Official Website <u>http://www.prosper.ppsi.iastate.edu/</u>
- Spoth, R., Greenberg, M., Bierman, K., & Redmond, C. (2004). PROSPER community–university partnership model for public education systems: Capacity-building for evidence-based, competence-building prevention. *Prevention Science*, 5(1), 31-39.

Communities That Care

- Official website http://www.communitiesthatcare.net/
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- CTC Factsheet by Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development: http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/factSheet.
 php?pid=9a3e61b6bcc8abec08f195526c3132d5a4a98cc0

Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF)

 SAMHSA website http://www.samhsa.gov/spf

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

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- ⁵ Ibid.
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Authors: Dustianne North, MSW, PhD with contributions from Megan Coulter-Bracey, MSW, and Andrea Barrera

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