BRIEF REPORTS

Disrupting the Practice: Antiracist Participatory Antidotes to Combat White Supremacy Manifestations in Community-Based Participatory Research

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Though the goal of CBPR is to improve partner communities' wellbeing and eradicate disparities, the harmful effects of white supremacy and colonialism can still be present in this research approach. White Supremacy Culture Manifestations can be used as a framework to identify ways to disrupt those harmful effects. This brief article presents the specific ways in which White Supremacy Culture manifests in the field of community-based participatory research at institutions of higher education, specific strategies and principles our team employs to disrupt these manifestations, and details of this work in our ongoing healthy living participatory research projects. We share specific disruption strategies for the White Supremacy Culture manifestations of *One Right Way, Power Hoarding, Paternalism, and Worship of the Written Word*. We encourage researchers to consider these strategies for disruption when re-thinking the practice of CBPR with an anti-racist lens, especially those researchers implementing healthy living and eating research programs.

Introduction

Higher education institutions, particularly Predominantly White Institutions, often perpetuate white supremacy and colonialism in research practices (Lenette, 2022). Research methods can be extractive and exploitative of targeted communities (Gaudry, 2011; Wilmsen, 2008). In community-based participatory research (CBPR), where participation and action are central, communities collaborate closely with researchers as stakeholders (Armstrong et al., 2011; Minkler, 2005). These partnerships aim to combine knowledge and action to improve community health and address health disparities (Green et al., 1995). While created to address White Supremacy Culture (WSC) through integral and proximal relationships with surrounding communities, the CBPR field can still fall prey to similar patterns (Ross et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2018). Harmful practices such as confidentiality breaches, a lack of transparency, contradictory positions of power, and one-sided research benefits commonly emerge (Armstrong et al., 2011; Wallerstein, 1999).

In this article, we seek to present the specific ways WSC manifests in the field of CBPR, specific strategies our team employs to disrupt these manifestations, and examples of this work in our ongoing projects. Our academic research team is housed in a prevention research center at a large, research-focused, predominantly white public institution of higher learning in the American South.

Table 1. Summary of Anti-Racist Disruption Strategies to Counter Selected Manifestations of WSC.

One Right Way	*Power Hoarding and Paternalism*	*Worship of the Written Word*
Following projects that are community-led and incorporate essential community feedback	Using the Design Thinking Process	Focusing on non-academic and non-written research end products
Finding diverse methods while working with different communities over many different years	Establishing partnership agreements with community partners	Creating products showcasing project results that are accessible by and useful to community partners
Finding values in people, communities, cultures, beliefs, ideas, and interests	Incorporating partner input at every stage of the PR process	Reflecting on alternative ways of documenting ongoing conditions, activities, and interventions
Prioritizing learning about community needs and values	Undertaking and encouraging excursions to better understand partner community histories and lived experience	
Building long-term trust with community to understand better their needs, assets, and values		
Hiring and equitably compensating community partners		

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In referring to disruptions, we are speaking to the purposeful ways our team integrates anti-racist practices into our work to counter specific WSC manifestations within our research center and with our community partners. These manifestations are originally presented in Tema Okun's work (1999, 2021) though we describe their unique existence in the CBPR field. We will proceed by briefly defining each WSC manifestation on which we focus, then provide strategic recommendations and practice-based examples of how we aim to disrupt them.

Positionality Statement

In acknowledging our positionality, our team recognizes that our lived experiences and social identities, both similar to and different from our community partners, shape our research practice. For example, the lead author (EC), a Black male, lacks personal experience with food insecurity but is passionate about programs addressing nutrition environments and related health conditions of disadvantaged populations. As a team, we continuously reflect on how our identities impact our methods, interventions, and our perspectives of WSC manifestations in CBPR. Across our projects, we also seek to collaborate with community partners that help advance our practice of disruption strategies.

Selected Manifestations and Disruption Strategies in Participatory Research

One Right Way

The WSC manifestation of *One Right Way* asserts that there is a single correct approach, and once individuals adopt it, they will perceive its superiority (Okun, 1999, 2021). To challenge this, participatory researchers should consider who defines the "right way" and who is deemed "wrong." In participatory research (PR), this manifestation is evident when researchers present ideas without seeking and valuing input from their community partners.

To disrupt this, participatory researchers can embrace community-led projects that prioritize essential community feedback. These projects involve first building the long-term, reciprocal and trusting relationships essential for any such partnerships, and then conducting feedback-oriented focus groups, and hiring staff directly from partner communities. By incorporating direct community input and leveraging staff members' deep connections, participatory projects are rooted in the lived experiences of the engaged population. This inclusive foundation, rooted in trust, encourages unconventional project design and diverse engagement within the participatory process, thereby challenging the notion of a single correct approach.

Researchers can further disrupt this WSC manifestation by hiring and equitably compensating community partners so that they can fully engage in all aspects of the research process. Our team has done this in two ways: 1) by contracting with individual community partners as consultants; and 2) by hiring community partners as staff members. Staff members hired from the communities with which academics partner have been called "boundary crossers," individuals who straddle the institution and community organizations, and can help bridge structural gaps in community health networks (Kilpatrick et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2018). We describe the roles of the boundary crossers on our team throughout this paper.

Many of our counter strategies to disrupt the *One Right Way* manifestation originate from the community members we have hired. For example, during an initial partnership meeting, the academic partner (De Marco) provided a presentation of what the research project would provide to the community, a practice she has established in her work. One of our boundary-crossing staff members (Kearney), who began as a key community partner, suggested the joint creation of a document to describe what each partner would bring to the project (ex. labor, land, meeting space, knowledge of data collection methods) and what each partner would get out of the project (ex. publications, data, supplies, new knowledge). The utility of this document is in its creation, which requires a two-way dialogue at the beginning of a partnership. This bidirectional exchange of information led to a better understanding of the

project from both sides and the sharing of ideas regarding the work plan. This new protocol would not have been implemented without the input of this "boundary crosser" staff member.

Power Hoarding and Paternalism

Power Hoarding refers to the limitation of decision-making power to a specific group, such as academic researchers, which restricts the involvement of community partners. This manifestation is closely linked to *Paternalism*, where researchers control both decision-making and program activities, excluding community partners. Both manifestations marginalize one set of partners, diminish their contributions, and view community input as a challenge to researcher leadership and expertise.

To address this, we prioritize integrating community partners throughout the research process. This includes using community circle processes (Study Circles Resource Center, 2001), providing regular updates at community board meetings, and involving community advisory boards to evaluate intervention success. These collaborative efforts recognize that neither researchers nor community partners possess all the necessary tools, but together, we can create meaningful participatory research projects. These strategies align with Okun's antidotes, dispelling power perceptions, valuing stakeholder contributions, and including the most affected populations in decision-making (Okun, 1999, 2021).

To disrupt these two WSC manifestations, we adhere to and encourage several disruption strategies. Firstly, we intentionally employ human-centered design methods to center participants with lived experiences throughout the intervention development process (Chen et al., 2023; FFORC Team, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d). Human-centered design methods prioritize those most affected by the focal issue—in our case SNAP recipients—in intervention development. We have previously employed human-centered design methods such as group brainstorming, dot voting and card sorting, and methods for engaged intervention development (Chen et al., 2023). We also utilize co-creation sessions, during which each participant is encouraged to provide feedback on how the proposed intervention should be modified to level the power dynamics between stakeholders. During these exercises, group norms can also be established that reinforce each stakeholder's expertise and unique additions to the project.

Secondly, to combat *Power Hoarding* and *Paternalism*, we develop community partnership agreements that clearly define each partner's contributions and the process of the partnership. These agreements, seen as guidelines rather than contracts, help balance power and decision-making. They specify the academic partner's responsibilities, including funding details, invoicing, and available support resources, as well as the community partner's responsibilities, such as participant recruitment, intervention implementation, and data collection assistance. Both parties sign such a document and keep it on hand as a guide to refer to throughout the year. Our community partners

have voiced appreciation for this simple step of clarifying the give-and-take in writing, so they know exactly what to expect from us, and what's expected of them.

Thirdly, we disrupt *Paternalism* by engaging in purposeful racial equity field trips to learn about our community partners' history, assets, and ongoing experiences. While we know we cannot truly become natively fluent in the cultures of our community partners, as Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) note, we seek a deep understanding. Previous trips have included visits to Princeville, NC, established by freed, formerly enslaved African Americans in 1885; the Franklinton Center at Bricks, a former plantation turned social justice retreat center; Historic Stagville, a significant plantation site; and Greensboro's International Civil Rights Center and Museum. These trips are most impactful when community members inspire, accompany, and even lead them.

Worship of the Written Word

The *Worship of the Written Word* manifestation is characterized by the erasure of the wide range of communication methods that individuals may use and the strict prioritization of written information. Stemming from the academy's strong emphasis on publishing, this manifestation has resulted in unethical practices and diminished research quality, with institutions often relying on peer-reviewed publication metrics to judge competency to the exclusion of other communication methods (Rawat & Meena, 2014).

To disrupt this manifestation, PR practitioners can explore alternative methods such as audio-visual products and community engagement events to document ongoing work. It is important to consider when written academic dissemination may be replaced by other forms of reporting and researchers should feel encouraged to creatively record and reflect on their findings alongside the expertise of partner communities.

Our team focuses on non-traditional research products and how individuals inside and outside our organizations access information. For many of our community partners, academic articles are not the ideal mode of information delivery. Though it is important to recognize the potential of academic writing, our team seeks disruption by recognizing the need for and designing projects that plan for the use of non-academic dissemination products. These include a number of non-academic products that adapt to the needs and preferences of our partners (Chauvenet et al., 2022; Sadeghzadeh et al., 2022).

One pertinent example of this practice is our Community Forums. At the suggestion of one of our boundary-crosser staff members, instead of sharing a written report with each community, we held community forums in each of our six partner counties. These forums were held to present the activities and findings of our community-based studies and ask for feedback on what was found. Individuals were asked if the findings rang true, why specific results might have been found, and what we should do next together. While we did not specifically ask how participants felt about these gatherings, we did gauge

satisfaction by the level of participation. Each forum had at least ten community members in attendance and the discussion around our programming and other issues facing each community was lively and engaged.

Other dissemination tools we have used to disrupt the *Worship of the Written Word* include showcase brochures, storytelling programs, and project spotlight videos. In support of our community garden programs, brochures were designed to present key project data and to support our partners in garnering more garden support. The brochures highlighted the history and achievements of each of our garden partners, complete with illustrative photos, memorable quotes, and their contact information.

Within the scope of a storytelling program, we are collecting and sharing the oral histories of individuals central to one of our partner community's histories by collaborating with a university occupational therapy lab and a community-based organization. The project grew from a desire for community members to share their stories in a way that represented them as individuals and benefited their community. This use of storytelling, rooted in community, allowed for another avenue aside from the "written word" to share the process and findings of our partnered work. In fact, the culminating product was a set of audio files paired with artifacts, such as photos, displayed during an oral history exhibit at the community organization. Attendees could select from various people's audio stories to learn more about a specific place, event, or person. These stories have also been shared with the community's younger generations. An important determining success factor of the storytelling program was that one of our boundary-crosser staff members coordinated directly with the community partner. This pre-existing relationship and trust that was built allowed both the research team and community collaborators to be equally invested in this alternate way of sharing.

Finally, in a video, we showcased partners' achievements, highlighting how PR partnerships benefit communities and amplify their needs. The Road Paving Success Video tells the story of a predominately Black neighborhood, home to one of our partners, where racial discrimination restricted access to a paved road section. Through community collaboration, the entire road was paved, and the video highlights the process they followed and celebrates their success. The video is owned by the community, and they decide how to use it to tell their story. For example, this community recently had the opportunity to share their video during a meeting where policy makers, city planners, and commissioners met with community leaders to plan the installation of a mini park. The video was the highlight of the meeting, becoming a tool for collective community planning.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Conducting research, even when employing community-based participatory methodology, can be fraught with racist and colonizing practices. We use Tema Okun's definition of WSC as a framework to identify and disrupt these practices. We described strategies to disrupt four different manifestations of WSC in the PR field and presented details on how to carry out these

strategies in [Table 1]. This paper aims to serve as an adaptable, anti-racist resource for other practitioners in the participatory public health research field to disrupt WSC manifestations. Like many participatory researchers passionate about racial and social equity, we are invested in continuing to share resources and improve upon our anti-racist research practices. It is important to become aware of WSC manifestations in PR practices and how practitioners may perpetuate them so that issues can be addressed. Following this awareness, actions must be taken to disrupt these harmful practices. Other PR organizations should feel encouraged to incorporate these anti-racist practices as a means to disrupt WSC in their own work.

We acknowledge that it is easy to slip back into conventional methods of research and that we must work to be vigilant in our practices while also learning new ways to build in anti-racist practices. The next steps that our team will take include incorporating the use of asset-based language (Mancoske, 2011), ethical storytelling (Voices of Witness: Amplifying Unheard Voices, n.d.), and participatory grantmaking (Harden et al., 2021) into our research processes, as we strive to continuously improve and integrate principles of equity into our PR research practice.

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