

## Podcast Interview Transcript

Lee Bone, Jamie Zoellner, Demetric Warren

In each volume of *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action*, the editors select one article for our Beyond the Manuscript, podcast interview with the authors. Beyond the Manuscript provides authors with the opportunity to tell listeners what they would want to know about the project beyond what went into the final manuscript. Beyond the Manuscript podcasts are available for download on the journal's website ([http://www.press-dev.jhu.edu/journals/progress\\_in\\_community\\_health\\_partnerships/multimedia.html](http://www.press-dev.jhu.edu/journals/progress_in_community_health_partnerships/multimedia.html)). This Beyond the Manuscript podcast is with Jamie Zoellner, Assistant Professor of Nutrition and Food Systems at the University of Southern Mississippi, lead author of *Fit for Life Steps, Results of a Community Walking Intervention in the Rural Mississippi Delta*, and Demetric Warren, staff member of the *Hollandale Lower Mississippi Delta Nutrition Intervention Research Initiation*, who contributed to the study project. Lee Bone, Associate Editor, and Associate Professor at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, conducted the interview. The following is an edited transcript of the Beyond the Manuscript podcast.

*Lee Bone:*

Thank all of you for taking the time to conduct this interview. We're interested in learning more about the Partnership and the steps that you have, or are taking to continue this Partnership and the research. We would like to give you the opportunity to discuss anything you may have wanted to include in the manuscript but didn't have the opportunity because of word limitations.

So, in this paper you indicate, as many do, that CBPR takes a lot of time, and that that is obviously a frequent observation. We want to know more about that and so we'd like to pose some questions to you. Our ultimate goal is to better understand how we might be more efficient, if that's a proper word, in our partnership research.

*Jamie Zoellner:*

I think that's a really good question as far as the whole efficiency issue. I'm not sure that the whole CBPR process really can or should be rushed. I think truly in any situation where you're trying to build a relationship it takes a while for those partners involved to really connect, and to understand if they want to be a part of that partnership. It did take up a lot of time to nurture the relationship, and to build the trust, and yet it was at least two years in that process just with this particular intervention. I think some of the things to consider are that in our particular situation the people that were a part of our community panel were volunteers. So we had to be cautious about how much of their time to request in preparing for meetings, and concerning other obligations they had outside of their commitment to our partnership.

For the researchers, as well, this was one of many projects that they had going on. So I think trying to balance all of that was a challenge and did run into some efficiency issues with trying to get the project to move along a little more quickly. I can say that now that we've gone through this first intervention, we feel much more optimistic about the timelines for our future interventions. So, we're hoping to take what we've learned and just move forward with it much more quickly now that that relationship has been formed.

- Lee Bone:* So given the complexity of building these partnerships and the demands on people and being sensitive to those, what kinds of ways did people prepare themselves for meetings, and get people on the committee to deliver on tasks? Did you have a chairperson, for example?
- Jamie Zoellner:* Demetric was really a part of practically every one of those meetings. Demetric, do you want to answer that question?
- Demetric Warren:* Sure. The meetings that we conducted with the partnership that we formed were with the university and the community. We set up different committees to handle different aspects of the intervention. Also, with the chairpersons and other persons put in charge of the committees, the job was primarily to oversee the functions of their specific task that they had. Then what we would do is either meet weekly or biweekly via conference call, or meet in person to go over any obstacle we faced or anything that came up unexpectedly. What we would do is sit down in meetings or conference calls and handle everything. So there were small committees, formed to handle any task that we had that was coming up either before the intervention or during intervention.
- Lee Bone:* So can you tell us a little bit about what were the most time-consuming activities related to engaging and sustaining the partnership?
- Demetric Warren:* Well, some of the most time-consuming activities definitely were with the Fit for Life Steps program; the most time consuming was the data collection. We did it every three months, and in the data collection, we used community people. We trained community people to ask their permission and get lots of data from community people. So we did that every three months, and we had to schedule people to come in to get their data recorded. So we had to schedule them along a two- or three-week period. So that was the most time consuming of course. It got to be routine because we did it every three months. But as far as the intervention itself, beside the data collection part, everything went well.
- Lee Bone:* So, in terms of the work that the partnership actually did, what seemed to be the most time-consuming phase of this research?
- Demetric Warren:* Well, it was the planning part, definitely. Getting the many procedures done, making sure that everything was in line before we could actually get started with the intervention. Definitely getting the main procedures, because we had to go by strict guidelines in order to get it done.
- Jamie Zoellner:* I think too that this whole issue doesn't really come across well in the manuscript. That the intervention as we discussed in the manuscript was really only a small piece of what was going on in Hollandale. The community committee functioned on so many other capacities that we, in this manuscript, just tried to capture this particular intervention. So, there were lots of other things going on as well. I think if Demetric and I are a little bit confused at points, it's because we're having maybe problems thinking more globally as far as the partnership versus this particular intervention.
- Lee Bone:* So you had a larger partnership and some parts of it functioned for this particular study?
- Jamie Zoellner:* Well, there were definitely some committees that were formed to carry off particular aspects of this intervention.
- Lee Bone:* So how did those groups work together? Were there any issues? There are political issues whenever you bring groups together.

*Jamie Zoellner:*

Yes, absolutely. To say that there were no issues would not be a very correct statement. I think you're right. Any time you have a multidisciplinary team—and in this situation, people from the community and the research partners and the government partners, even though we feel like we're on the same page, and working toward the same goal—everybody is bringing their own agenda to the table. And really wanting to highlight what they see as the most important aspect of this particular intervention. So, yes there were issues and they had some bearing on the efficiencies. Overall, looking back, I think we're very proud of working through those issues. I feel like through this intervention we were definitely able to build the confidence of the entire partnership knowing that we successfully developed, implemented, and analyzed this particular intervention.

*Lee Bone:*

So when you think about the intervention itself, and developing the strategies, what would you say to another rural community if they wanted to replicate those, the formation and the work of the partnership as well as the intervention?

*Jamie Zoellner:*

Well, I personally feel like as far as the partnership itself, that involving the community, the researchers, and the government partners from the very beginning as well as involving them in every phase of developing and implementing the intervention is so important. I don't think that you could leave any of those partners out at any given time. So I think that that would be one piece of advice. I personally think for the intervention itself, one of the things that I would really like to highlight is that we did give people in the community multiple opportunities to be involved. It wasn't just that we were recruiting people to be participants in a walking club. We were also training coaches from the community. We were also training data collectors so that people could find different things and different ways to become involved. So I definitely think that for another community wanting to do a similar intervention that would be one of the biggest messages I would give. Demetric, what are your thoughts on that one?

*Demetric Warren:*

Well definitely just to highlight what you said, make sure that all the partners are involved when you bring ideas to the table or you're in a research meeting. Also, with the intervention itself to make sure that it's as conducive to the community as possible. That all issues are ironed out in the meeting when it's presented to the community members and understand what the purpose and the goals of any intervention that is being done. And also, that they are brought in and have a voice in what is said, because if the community feels like they don't have a voice then they, themselves will kind of shy away from or they won't participate at all.

With the intervention, we gave the community a voice. We trained them, in the training sessions that we did. We gave them a voice. We allowed them to present to us their issues and to ask for their thoughts on activities and healthy nutrition and what we did, we went back, and we got enough information to give them. So there's definitely a partnership with the university that they come to the table and make sure all kinks and things are ironed out before giving to the community and also to give the community a voice. But the community had a say-so, and was well received.

*Lee Bone:*

So can you give us a concrete example of where there were some differences in opinion about how the intervention or the planning process needed to take place, and how did you resolve that and still retain those committee members, and those partners as part of this whole research effort?

*Demetric Warren:*

Well, in the planning phase again you're going to have differences. I can say, looking back when we were in the planning phase, and there were differences on when to start, and how long the

intervention would last. With the data collected, who would handle it? You stay in the meetings long enough to find out the answers to these questions. But then you realize that the longer you're sitting here there's nothing being done. So you have to come to some type of agreement. Everybody has to come to some type of agreement and move forward. So, I think one of the biggest issues was how long the intervention would last, and it lasted a year. So it got to the point where everybody came to the table saying listen, as long as we're sitting here, pondering this question there is no intervention being done. And the community is waiting. So let us come in with a decision. Make a decision and combine ideas with people.

*Lee Bone:* That sounds very positive. Do you think that the walking trail and the people walking are still continuing? Is this intervention still continuing?

*Demetric Warren:* It is from the standpoint of an intervention. No we're not collecting any data or anything, but the sustainability part is that people are still using the walking trail. We have a young lady, who was in our Fit for Life program a year ago, now she's lost 100 pounds. We have another guy in the community who lost 75 pounds by using the walking trail. So the sustainability part definitely does work because there are people who are continuously using the walking trail and losing weight.

*Lee Bone:* That's absolutely terrific. In concluding, I'm wondering if there are any other thoughts that you would like to tell us about this whole project, and how you're going forward with additional research. Any kinds of limitations of the manuscript or such that you don't get a chance to tell the whole story?

*Jamie Zoellner:* I would just like to highlight the issue, and the struggle that we had through this process of research versus outreach. We're there in the community and we want to do these things, and we struggled with is it okay to carry forward with these activities knowing they're outreach activities, but knowing that there's not this scientific rigor there to support some of the things that we're doing. It's a struggle because you do run into some contamination issues from the research perspective, but also as Demetric said the community doesn't see the backside of all of the steps that need to be taken to conduct the research. So we've struggled and I think that we've come a long way in coming to a negotiation and understanding that there is that fine line between what we need to do research wise and what the community wants as far as education outreach and learning more about nutrition and physical activity. That would be the biggest thing that I feel like I wasn't able to address completely in the manuscript.

The only other piece related specifically to the intervention was that in the manuscript we were only able to talk about outcome data, but we also had nutrition and education sessions. Both of those things were a great success. We hope to be able to share those pieces of our intervention at a later time.

*Lee Bone:* Well, thank you! This is very helpful for us, and for the journal. Demetric, did you have any more you wanted to say?

*Demetric Warren:* Well, I just wanted to agree with what Jamie just said, with research versus outreach that definitely is an issue that will continue to be faced because the community really doesn't understand research. The outreach aspect is more geared toward reaching out to the community. So when in terms of research versus outreach, research takes a little bit longer to get put in place. You had the main procedure where the guidelines would be USDA/ARS [United States Department of Agriculture/

Agricultural Research Service] that have to be followed. There's so much has to be done in order for the research to be accepted. But outreach, it doesn't take as long and that's why the community is really geared toward outreach better. With the research that has to be done because that is what the USDA/ARS requires research take place. So I think one of the good things about it is that we did come to the table. What we could do is that some of the things we could put in the category of research. It's best for the community that we get it straight, then give it to them, and implement them in programs that we have. But that definitely will continue to be one of the toughest tests—is it research or outreach? ■