

PATINA OF GLAMOUR

Forging Alliances to Investigate the Underside of the Fashion Industry

Case Study by Eric Weinberger for the Strategic Training Initiative
for the Prevention of Eating Disorders
www.hsph.harvard.edu/stripped

TEACHING NOTE by S. Bryn Austin

This teaching note provides teachers with the information and guidance needed to adopt this case in your classroom. The teaching note covers background material on the case, including synopsis, explanation of its real-world basis, teaching objectives, target audience, and a list of case materials and required readings for students. It also includes a detailed lesson plan for the teacher that is designed with a 1 hour and 50 minute session in mind. Of course teachers can modify the lesson plan to accommodate a class period of a different length. At the end of this teaching note are a written homework assignment and in-class assignment instructions. The written homework assignment should be given to students along with the required reading one week before the class session in which the case will be discussed. The instructions for the in-class assignment should be handed out to students at the start of the class period dedicated to discussion of this case.

A. Synopsis

Modeling is a glamorous and lucrative profession only for the very few. Most fashion models make little money, and often they are subject to indifferent or even abusive working conditions, putting them at elevated risk of sexual harassment and eating disorders. Globally and in the United States, more and more lawmakers are putting forward legislation to rectify some of the most egregious wrongs done to models in the fashion industry. Legislators in Columbia, a fictitious U.S. state, are the latest to join in the global movement, after the death of a teenage model with an eating disorder prompts a new law and attention to the problem.

Safiya Goplani is a physician and researcher in Hamilton, Columbia's capital, eager to investigate the new model-protections legislation: Columbia's new law and a bill introduced in the California Assembly. She has a grant to pay for the new policy evaluation research study she is planning. Goplani hopes to apply the methods of community-based participatory research (CBPR), in which everything from the original research questions to study design to data collection, interpretation, and dissemination is developed in close partnership with the most affected communities: in this case, professional models. But as Goplani and her team quickly learn, establishing priorities and shared goals requires a lot more attention to process and the partners' unique perspectives than a typical research study, where the principal investigator holds most of the decision-making power. Will Goplani and her team be able to

successfully forge a partnership with the model community and carry out the new research study? Or will their study idea meet the same disappointing fate of so many others from well-meaning but possibly ill-equipped academics before them hoping to venture into the world of CBPR?

As the story of researcher Safiya Goplani and the Hamilton model community comes to the end, the work of the students using this teaching case begins, as they take on the challenge of applying the principles and techniques of CBPR to guide the story's protagonists toward a successful launch of their new academic-community partnership. First, students will get an introduction to CBPR and the basic health and labor issues that models face through the assigned reading for the case, and they will get some practice in identifying the unique perspectives of partners through the homework assignment. Then, through role play in class, students bring to life the researchers and community members as they take their first tentative steps to establish a new partnership to evaluate the impact of Columbia's law regulating the health and safety of models. Will Goplani and her team be able to successfully forge a partnership with the model community and carry out the new research study? Or will their study idea meet the same disappointing fate of so many from well-meaning but perhaps ill-equipped academics before them, hoping to venture into the world of CBPR? The students working with this teaching case will hold the fate of Columbia's new partnership in their hands.

B. Real-World Basis

While modeling appears from the outside to be a glamorous profession, fashion models face serious occupational hazards that put their health and safety in jeopardy. A majority of models begin work as young teens, often between the ages of 13 and 16 years old, and usually end their careers when they have barely reached adulthood. Most models, especially those working as runway or fit (meaning those on whom designers fit their pieces for a runway show) models, are extremely thin, even underweight by World Health Organization standards. Yet, they are frequently pressured by their employers to lose more weight, and models can even face dismissal from jobs if they are unable to do so. Kristie Clements, a former *Vogue* editor, once said, "The ideal body shape used as a starting point for a collection [is] a female on the brink of hospitalization from starvation."

As the majority of models begin working professionally as minors, they are also at heightened risk for sexual exploitation by unscrupulous adults who prey on vulnerable children and youth. In a recent U.S. survey of professional models conducted by the Model Alliance, the nation's first and only labor organization for models, nearly 40% of models reported being pressured to have sex with someone at work. In addition, models face economic exploitation and are frequently paid only in clothing or photos or are not paid at all. Models report that they are often not informed how much they can expect to be paid for jobs, and much of the work models do, such as castings and fittings, is unpaid. As a result, very few models make the high salaries assumed to come with the modeling profession and many actually live in debt to their agencies.

The impact of the fashion industry on society reaches far beyond the hazardous occupational conditions that professional models endure. The fashion industry exercises enormous influence in promulgating unrealistic standards of thinness, which not only create dangerous working

conditions for professional models but also produce pervasive pressures particularly on girls and young women to strive for extreme thinness at any cost. Studies have found that the majority of tween and teen girls in the United States define a “perfect body” based on magazine images. Decades of psychological research show that these images wreak havoc on body image in young people in their most vulnerable adolescent years and increase the risk of disordered weight and shape control behaviors and an eating disorder diagnosis.

In any other U.S. industry, particularly those with a high proportion of child laborers, unnecessarily hazardous working conditions are unacceptable, especially when they are brought into the public’s eye because of deaths (e.g., a coal mine collapse or a preventable factory accident). Indeed, this is why governments protect workers under federal, state, and municipal law. Employers do not have the right to demand employees take unneeded risks with their safety for compensation. But these unsafe conditions need not be tolerated. A range of viable legal strategies exist to marshal occupational health and safety protections and child labor protections to improve the safety of working conditions for models. Advancements in policy-relevant research and efforts to coalesce community support and political will may lead to improvements in working conditions in the fashion industry and perhaps more broadly in societal messages about thinness and beauty.

This teaching case is a fictionalized composite of real-world experiences of public health professionals and advocates who have taken the fashion industry to task to support the rights and health of models. The teaching case was developed through extensive background research and interviews with public health researchers and practitioners, CBPR specialists, and community advocates. With realistic story elements and characters, the case allows students to step into the uneasy alliance of researchers and community members striving to form a lasting and effective partnership for research and advocacy to address both the occupational health and safety concerns of fashion models and the larger societal issues caused by the industry’s promulgation of unrealistic beauty ideals, especially for girls and women. Along the way, students learn the crucial principles and techniques they will need to forge effective and sustainable CBPR partnerships.

C. Learning Objectives and Target Audience

The learning objectives of this case include several that are specific to the topic of prevention of eating disorders and other health risks faced by models working in the fashion industry and several others that support core competencies for public health education promulgated by the U.S. Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice

(http://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/Core_Public_Health_Competencies.aspx) and the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IEC; <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/ipecreport.pdf>). The learning objectives specific to prevention of eating disorders and other health risks faced by models working in the fashion industry are:

- 1) Describe the workforce typically hired to model in the fashion industry and identify aspects of their working conditions that foster self-starvation and likely increase the risk of developing an eating disorder.

- 2) Describe the ways in which working conditions for fashion models may have ramifications for body image—pressures and standards of beauty for girls and young women – and increasingly, for boys and men -- and for society at large.
- 3) Enumerate priority health and labor concerns of fashion models from their own perspective.
- 4) Demonstrate skills in techniques of CBPR by role playing as a group of academic and community partners striving to create a healthy and productive partnership to carry out a policy evaluation of a new law to protect the health and labor rights of fashion models.

The learning objectives addressing Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice and IEC core competencies are:

- 1) Incorporate diverse perspectives in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies, programs, and services that affect the health of a community (Cultural Competency #4C4 of Council on Linkages).
- 2) Engage the organization in community-based participatory research (Community Dimensions of Practice competency #5C11 of Council on Linkages).
- 3) Recognize how one’s own uniqueness, including experience level, expertise, culture, power, and hierarchy within the healthcare team, contributes to effective communication, conflict resolution, and positive interprofessional working relationships (IEC Competency Domain 3: Interprofessional Communication).
- 4) Apply leadership practices that support collaborative practices and team effectiveness (IEC Competency Domain 4: Teams and Teamwork).

The primary target audience for this teaching case is graduate students in public health, particularly in courses focused on occupational health, gender and health, adolescent and young adult health, health policy, and CBPR. The case is also suitable for graduate students in other disciplines, such as community health, labor or women’s rights, and community organizing, and for undergraduate or advanced high school students in similar courses. The teaching case may have its greatest impact when reaching students who are likely one day to work in professional roles where they are involved in occupational health and worker policy protections.

D. Case Materials

The complete case study consists of the case study narrative with cast of characters, a teaching note, which includes a lesson plan, written homework assignment, and in-class activity instructions, plus one companion technical document that is available via the Internet at no cost and several required scientific articles and investigative journalism readings.

Provided Teaching Case Narrative Document:

- 1) Cover page, plus table of contents, synopsis, acknowledgments, and funding (3 pages)
- 2) Cast of characters (1 page)
- 3) Case narrative “Patina of Glamour: Models and Researchers Forge a New Alliance to Investigate the Underside of the Fashion Industry” (13 pages)
- 4) Columbia model-protections bill #3721 (1 page)

Provided Teaching Note Document: Includes overview material, lesson plan, written homework assignment, and in-class activity instructions (14 pages)

E. Required Reading for Students

- 1) Provided case study narrative document and appendix
- 2) Companion technical document: The Examining Community-Institutional Partnerships for Prevention Research Group. *Developing and sustaining community-based participatory research partnerships: A skill-building curriculum*. 2006. **READ INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3, AND 4.** (Available at no cost at: www.cbprcurriculum.info)
- 3) Scientific and investigative journalism articles:
 - Record KL, Austin SB. “Paris thin”: A call to regulate life-threatening starvation of runway models in the U.S. fashion industry. *American Journal of Public Health* 2016; 106(2): 205-206. Key teaching points from this article:
 - Fashion models, the majority of whom are teenage girls and young women, face enormous pressure to maintain extreme thinness as a condition of employment, likely increasing risk of eating disorders and health problems associated with caloric restriction and malnutrition.
 - In the United States, employers often misclassify fashion models as independent contractors rather than employees, making it more difficult for models to receive health and labor protections they would receive if treated as employees.
 - U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration should increase regulation on the fashion industry to improve protections for models.
 - Treasure JL, Wack ER, Roberts ME. Models as a high-risk group: The health implications of a size zero culture. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 2008;192(4):243-4. Key teaching points from this article:
 - The fashion industry promulgates societal standards of extreme thinness, especially for girls and women, creating a toxic media and social environment that contributes to eating disorders. In addition, employment pressures to maintain extreme thinness create coercive conditions promoting self-starvation among models.
 - Starvation during the typical ages of fashion models – adolescence and young adulthood – adversely affects growth and reproductive function and can have lasting effects on brain development.
 - Public health initiatives, including legislation, voluntary industry guidelines, and intervention programs, are needed to prevent unnecessary risks to the physical and psychological health of fashion models and to curtail the promotion of extreme thinness as a beauty ideal for girls and women.
 - Rodgers RF, McLean SA, Paxton SJ. Longitudinal relationships among internalization of the media ideal, peer social comparison, and body dissatisfaction: Implications for the Tripartite Influence Model. *Developmental Psychology* 2015; 51(5): 706-713. Key teaching points from this article:

- Body dissatisfaction in adolescence is a strong prospective predictor of eating disorders onset and is associated with a range of other adverse outcomes, including depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, disordered eating and weight control, unhealthy weight gain, and reduced healthy weight-related behaviors such as physical activity and fruit and vegetable intake.
 - Internalization of media appearance ideals of thinness indirectly worsens body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls by contributing to elevated social appearance comparison over time, which then leads to greater body dissatisfaction.
 - In addition, internalization of media appearance ideals of thinness in adolescent girls has a direct affect over time in worsening body dissatisfaction, and, reciprocally, body dissatisfaction exacerbates unhealthy internalization of media appearance ideals over time.
- Ellis B, Hicken M. Runway injustice: How the modeling industry exploits young and vulnerable workers. (Five-part investigative journalism series: The dark side; Outrageous costs; The housing trap; Inside look; Horrifying scams. *CNN Money* May 2016. Available at no cost at: <http://money.cnn.com/2016/05/04/news/runway-injustice-modeling/>). Key teaching points from this investigative journalism series:
 - Fashion modeling is rarely lucrative for the models themselves. Only a minority earn a living wage, and agencies often deduct large fees from paychecks without financial transparency.
 - Sexual harassment of teen girls and young women working as models is commonplace, including pressure to engage in transactional sex to maintain employment or to increase profits for employers.
 - Inadequate regulation stemming from misclassification of models as independent contractors permits widespread abuses far worse than those tolerated in most other U.S. industries and puts models' health, safety, and financial solvency in jeopardy.
- Seifer SD and the Examining Community-Institutional Partnerships for Prevention Research Group. Building and sustaining community-institutional partnerships for prevention research: Findings from a national collaborative. *Journal of Urban Health* 2006; 83(6):989-1003; Available at no cost at: <https://ccph.memberclicks.net/assets/Documents/FocusAreas/juh-asphcdc.pdf>). Key teaching points from this article:
 - The meaning of *success* in community-institutional partnerships is multifaceted and varies depending on whether it is a new or established partnership, impact of the partnership's activities, and other factors.
 - Characteristics of successful partnerships include: trusting relationships; equitable processes and procedures; diverse membership; tangible benefits to all partners; balance between partnership processes, activities, and outcomes; significant community involvement in scientifically sound research; supportive organizational policies and reward structures; leadership at multiple levels; culturally competent and appropriately skilled staff and researchers; collaborative dissemination; ongoing partnership assessment, improvement, and celebration; and sustainable impact.

- There are concrete steps that partners can take to improve their likelihood of success, including building on a prior history of a positive working relationship, obtain support and involvement of both top leadership and “front line” staff, jointly create the mission, vision, and priorities for the partnership, build the capacity of all partners, and other important steps.

F. Acknowledgments and Funding

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G. Lesson Plan and Discussion Guide

Lesson Plan (1 hour 50 minutes)
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1. Case Workshop: Patina of Glamour: Models and Researchers Forge a New Alliance to Investigate the Underside of the Fashion Industry (1 hour 50 minutes)

- a) **Introduction** (10 minutes): For this class session, we will tackle a problem newly recognized in the field of occupational health and labor rights: the widespread exploitation of fashion models, including wage theft, sexual harassment, and coerced starvation as conditions of employment. We will take on this issue together in all its real-world complexity, seeing if we can take the first steps toward building a healthy and productive partnership between the local modeling community and researchers based at Colburn University in the fictitious U.S. state of Columbia. If they can successfully unite, the partners hope to carry out a policy evaluation study using principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR) to understand the effects of a new Columbia law to regulate modeling. *[INSTRUCTOR SHOULD DISTRIBUTE HAND OUT ON IN-CLASS, TASK TEAM ASSIGNMENT; SEE PAGE 13 OF THIS TEACHING NOTE FOR HAND OUT.]*

Q: Some of the readings for today's class about the fashion industry paint a picture of the industry far different from the impression of we usually get from popular media and fashion magazines. What are a few things that surprised you about what was revealed about the industry?

- What parallels do you see, if any, with other industries that employ mostly teenagers and young adults?

Q: Fashion modeling is a relatively small profession, with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimating there are only 5,800 models working in the U.S. industry. What repercussions, if any, do the health and labor concerns of models have for girls and young women – or perhaps increasingly, boys and young men -- in our society more broadly?

- a) **Task Team Assignment** (55 minutes)

- **Introduction** (5 minutes): For the next 50 minutes, we will use principles and techniques of CBPR to guide the case's partner groups to a successful start of their partnership. You will be role playing the partners so that you can fully represent their points of view and concerns. As you will remember, when the case story left off, the models' group was heading off to an adjoining room to discuss their "game plan" privately, leaving the researchers on their own to do the same. Once these private meetings are done, the two groups will rejoin. In class now, we will role play all that transpires after the case story leaves off.

Split the class into groups of three people, and then assign half of the groups of three to role play the model community members and the other half of the groups of three to role play the researchers. They must **stay in character** the whole 50 minutes of the in-class activity.

MEETING AGENDA

- **FOR THE FIRST 20 MINUTES** within your group of three, select a facilitator to keep your discussion on track with the agenda and a note taker and discuss the following points:
 - **Learning Exchange Questions (4 minutes only):**
 - **FOR MODEL GROUPS:** Brainstorm responses to the following questions: **a)** How would you succinctly describe your “community”? **b)** What challenges does your community face? **c)** What are your highest hopes and your worst fears for the planned research study to evaluate the effects of the new Columbia law regulating the modeling industry?
 - **FOR RESEARCHER GROUPS:** Brainstorm responses to the following questions: **a)** What drew you to CBPR? **b)** How do you see social-justice concerns figuring into your research? **c)** Why do you think it is important to evaluate the effects of Columbia’s new law regulating modeling and how do you think the research will benefit models?
 - **Partnership Process Questions for Each Group (8 minutes only):** As you look forward to your meeting with the community-university partnership, what are some of your expectations and assumptions about: **a)** how the leadership of the partnership will be structured? **b)** what decision-making procedures you will follow and for which types of decisions? **c)** what process you will put in place to resolve conflicts or differences in perspectives on important decisions?
 - **Research Study Description for Each Group (8 minutes only):** **a)** Write a one-sentence study description for your planned policy evaluation study of the effects of the new Columbia law regulating modeling; **b)** Write a one-sentence project goal.
 - **FOR THE NEXT 30 MINUTES**, create groups of six by joining each model community group with a researcher group. Now you can begin your full partnership meeting. Select a pair of co-facilitators (one each from the model group and researcher group) to keep your discussion on track with the agenda and a note taker and discuss the points below. *Stay in character through this process:*
 - **For the first 10 minutes**, introduce yourselves briefly, then each constituency group should share its learning exchange summary.
 - **For the next 10 minutes**, discuss your partnership process expectations and assumptions and do your best to come to agreement on the procedures that will guide your partnership.
 - **For the last 10 minutes**, discuss your ideas for study description and goal and do your best to come to agreement.
- b) Reconvene for Class Discussion (30 minutes)
- **Groups Report Back (15 minutes):** Each team of six (joining researchers and community members) report back to the larger group (but no longer in character) on how your independent curriculum review board meeting went.
 - **Q:** How did your characters get along with each other? What kinds of things surprised you during the discussions?
 - **Q:** What types of risks or threats for each partner group came to light during the discussions? What did each group potentially have to lose by joining the partnership or if things did not go well?

- **Q:** What process expectations and assumptions did you generate? Which did you agree on after discussion? [*WRITE AGREED-UPON EXPECTATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS ON THE BOARD – NOTE HOW MANY OF THEM, IF ANY, OVERLAP ACROSS GROUPS OF SIX.*]
 - **Q:** What ideas for study description and goal did you generate? Which did you agree on after discussion? [*WRITE AGREED-UPON STUDY DESCRIPTION AND GOAL ON THE BOARD – NOTE HOW MANY OF THEM, IF ANY, OVERLAP ACROSS GROUPS OF SIX.*]
 - **Discuss and Compare Agreed-Upon Ideas From Groups (15 minutes):** Now reviewing all the agreed-upon ideas generated and written on the board from each of the groups, let's discuss how they compare.
 - **Q:** Which of the generated ideas do you think are most viable and balanced or equitable for the different partner groups?
 - Which do you think are most likely to help build a healthy and productive partnership?
 - Which do you think might lead to problems for the partnership down the road?
 - **Q:** If you were Maribeth Gold, the consultant helping the partners come together, what would be your recommendation for next steps to keep them moving forward on the right track?
 - **Q:** The approach of CBPR was developed especially in the context of academic-based researchers working with communities of color and economically and politically marginalized communities experiencing multiple adversities, often including poverty, violence victimization, structural racism, and more. Now that you've spent the last hour role playing CBPR in the fashion model health and rights context, do you think CBPR methods are a good fit? Why or why not?
- c) In-Class Free Write (15 minutes)
- Have students take out a piece of paper they can turn in at end of class, put their names on the paper, and write their response to the following question (5 minutes):
 - Imagine yourself in Safiya Goplani's shoes or in a similar position. You want to do a research study that you believe will help a community you care very much about.
 - What community do you want to work with? Which of the techniques of CBPR can you easily see yourself trying to use with the community? How do you think the community will perceive your efforts? Which of the CBPR techniques do you think you would NOT want to use and why?
 - Discuss Free Write responses together (10 minutes)
 - **Q:** What community did you imagine working with?
 - **Q:** What CBPR technique could you easily see yourself trying? How did you imagine the community would receive your efforts?
 - **Q:** Which of the CBPR techniques would you NOT want to work with and why? What do you think would make those techniques more viable to use?

END CASE DISCUSSION

PATINA OF GLAMOUR

Forging Alliances to Investigate the Underside of the Fashion Industry

WRITTEN HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT: Preparing for a Healthy & Productive CBPR Partnership

Due: At start of class session

Length: 4 pages (List of citations should appear on separate page beyond the 4 required pages)

Format: Typewritten double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins

For our upcoming class, your readings cover community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles and techniques. A recurring theme in these readings is the need to build trust between community and institutional partners and to gain a deep understanding of the partners' perspectives, priorities, and needs. Challenges to CBPR range from the seemingly small, such as lack of a common vernacular across partner groups, to the overwhelming, such as historical disregard of the rights of community members and blatant exploitation by researchers. But when trust is earned and procedures and processes are in place to correct – or at least reduce – imbalances in power and access to resources, CBPR partnerships can be highly functional and productive, benefitting both the community and scientific research.

Your assignment for our next class will be to prepare a background brief on the situation at hand by answering the questions below, which are designed to help you gain a greater understanding of the partners' varying perspectives, priorities, and needs. In our class time together, you will draw on these new insights to help our partner groups from Colburn University and the fashion model community come together for a constructive meeting to begin to build both a healthy CBPR partnership and a scientifically sound plan for their policy evaluation study of the effects of the new Columbia law regulating modeling.

Your Written Assignment

Your assignment is to write a four-page paper that addresses all of the questions and concerns below relative to the characters in the case narrative and the research and partnership dilemmas they face.

Make sure you answer every question below and not just some of them:

- 1) Based on the case narrative, who would you say makes up the community of interest? The "community of interest" is where community partners would come from for the CBPR partnership.
- 2) How does the research agenda (as has been loosely sketched in the case narrative) to conduct a policy evaluation of the new Columbia law regulating modeling appear to address social and/or economic inequities? What might be social justice implications of the research?
- 3) What are **three** ways that the Colburn University researchers may benefit from proceeding with conducting the study based on principles of CBPR?
- 4) What are **three** ways that the community-based participants from the fashion model community may benefit from proceeding with conducting the study based on principles of CBPR?
- 5) Are there any constituencies that were not mentioned in the case narrative but you think should also be around the table? If you answered yes, explain what constituency you think should also be

invited to the table and give a brief rationale. If you answered no, explain why you think all the relevant constituencies are already represented.

- 6) What are **three** reasons why community-based participants from the fashion model community might be reluctant to trust the Colburn University researchers?
- 7) What are **three** reasons why the Colburn University researchers might have reservations about trusting the community-based participants to collaborate on the study they hope to conduct?
- 8) Given the issues of trust that you just identified in questions 6 and 7, what are some ways you recommend the group address these issues at the beginning of their partnership?
- 9) If you were a CBPR consultant invited to participate in the first meeting of the new partnership, what advice would you give to help them get started on the right foot toward building a healthy and productive partnership?

Your grade on this assignment will be based on clarity and thoughtful application of principles and techniques of CBPR to support your responses to the questions above. Your paper must integrate and specifically refer to principles and techniques of CBPR described in the assigned readings on CBPR for today's class (the companion technical document "Developing and sustaining community-based participatory research partnerships: A skill-building curriculum" and the article by Seifer) or other CBPR methodological or theoretical articles or books you identify in the literature.

In addition, your paper must include citations about the work and health experiences of models in the fashion industry, either from readings assigned for class or other scientific or journalistic sources you identify. You must include at least three references in your paper in addition to citing, "*Developing and sustaining community-based participatory research partnerships: A skill-building curriculum.*" Your list of citations should appear on a separate page beyond the four required pages for this assignment.

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PATINA OF GLAMOUR

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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Meeting of Your CBPR Partnership

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Have fun!

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