

Community-Based and Participatory Action Research

Appalachian Center for Translational Research
Disparities (ACTRID)
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Community-Based Research

- Historically based on epidemiologic model:
- community as geographic identity
- Community as unit of analysis
- Community as subject

Typical Research Approach

- Develop hypotheses
- Describe intended audiences and data sources needed
- Acknowledge local cultural values and describe how they will be respected
- Develop list of researcher needs/responsibilities
- Develop list of community resources needed
- List who to approach to make initial contacts

(Firehock, 2003)

Enter a newer line of research (1990s)

- Toward participatory paradigm
- Action and emancipation as emergent foci brought to research process
- Kellogg and RWJ as examples
- Not a subtle shift...

Participatory Action Research

(Stringer, 1999)

- Utilizes empirical and interpretive processes (qualitative & quantitative components)
- Engages “subjects” as active research team participants (IRB training, data collection)
- Results in practical outcomes for life and health (diabetes, cardiac disease as focus)

Values & Assumptions of PAR Conducive to Formation of Community

- Engages human relationships
- Concerns style and manner of communication among people
- Includes those affected by research as active participants

PAR and Shifting Researcher Roles

- From expert who conducts research to facilitator/consultant
- From imposing protocol to stimulating people to uncover issues
- From results/ outcomes to essence of the work as process and how things are done
- Community members as co-researchers and experts on community
- From unilateral control to shared leadership & learning

Community Capacity and Diabetes Care: Appalachian Hispanics

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Johnson City Downtown Clinic
Keystone Clinic for Women and
Children

CDC Community Based Participatory Prevention
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Starting Where the People Are: An Example of Forming a Community Coalicion

- Invitation through churches, local gathering places, restaurants to elicit grassroots membership (11)
- ETSU nurse-managed clinics presence in community
- “the University does what it says it will do”

Early Issues

- Practical issues (how to reimburse participants, documentation issues)
- Misalignment of symbols (agendas, start times, mailings)
- Planning for representation & voice
- Balancing project evolution and structure/ support
- Personal, team, and institutional capacity building take place simultaneously

Main Learnings: Advice for What Worked

- Starting with the community's identified priority (diabetes education)
- Planning something visible (health screening at Sunday flea market)
- Rehearsing to do well
- Reflection to improve quality & process (back to back health screenings)
- Established relationships with JCDC, Keystone Clinics (personnel, referral source)
- Inviting clinic personnel to teach, co-facilitate, attend meetings

Recommendations

- Understand that early work requires speculation; planning not experientially based.
- Expect ongoing tension between project evolution and setting structure.
- Plan time/attention for communication & relationship building (meeting maintenance issues).
- Expect mixing unknowns into established public spaces or policies is potential for conflict.
- Systems ultimately are composed of people whose personal values emerge.
- Don't label your project as "different" (implies exclusion).

Overall, the ups and downs of
life shape the work
communities can
accomplish...

- Energy
- Practical circumstances
- Problems that emerge
- Accomplishments

A Community with Capacity is:

- Self organizing
- Continually learning
- Networked, with distributed intelligence
- Able to operate in real time
- Sustainable
- Able to move to higher levels of performance

Community Capacity

(Chaskin, 2001; Moore & Severn, 2002)

- ...the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain a given community. It may be operated through informal social process and /or organized effort.