

CURA
Articles Published

Jacobson, N., Ochocka, J., Wise, J., Janzen, R. (2007). Inspiring knowledge mobilization through a communications policy: The case of a Community University Research Alliance. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education and Action*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Urban Health Institute.

Abstract

Taking Culture Seriously in Community Mental Health is an Ontario-based community based participatory action research project devoted to developing, pilot testing, and evaluating mental health service models grounded in the concept of “cultural empowerment.” In order to stimulate knowledge mobilization efforts among partners, to clarify expectations held by members of the diverse groups participating in the project, and to forestall confusion or conflict, the research collaborative established a policy that expressed their common understanding of communications goals and practices. This paper provides an overview of the policy development process and of the policy itself, focusing on the broad issues of principles, authorship and acknowledgment, and planning and procedures.

Key words: community-based participatory action research; knowledge mobilization; communications policy; CURA

Janzen, R., Ochocka, J., and the “Taking Culture Seriously” partners. (2007). The road toward cultural empowerment: An invitation to inclusion. *Navigating Multiculturalism, Negotiating Change*. Cambridge Scholars Press.

Abstract

This article uses mental health services as a case study to explore how Canada’s social and health institutions could better respond to Canada’s multicultural reality. The article begins with a brief reflection of Canada’s immigration and multicultural policies. Next we consider how social and health services have historically attempted to respond to Canada’s multicultural context. We present “cultural empowerment” as a guide for human service practice within multicultural societies, using mental health services as an example. The article ends by suggesting the need to refine and test the cultural empowerment model through a collaborative process of research, practice and evaluation.

Janzen, R., Ochocka, J., Jacobson, N., Maiter, S., Simich, L., Westhues, A., Fleras, A. and the "Taking Culture Seriously" Partners (submitted). Synthesizing Culture and Power in Community Mental Health: An Emerging Framework. *American Journal of Community Psychology*

Abstract

Mental health services in western English-speaking countries are struggling to respond to growing cultural and racial diversity. The overall purpose of this study was to explore, develop, pilot and evaluate how best to provide community-based mental health services and supports that are effective for people from culturally diverse backgrounds. The research initiative brought together over 40 academic, practitioner and cultural-linguistic community partners within two regions of Ontario, Canada (Toronto and Waterloo).

Using a participatory action research approach within a multi-method design, the partnership has developed an emerging framework that synthesizes the ideals of previous culture-oriented and power-oriented models. The emerging framework includes three main components: *values* that guide concrete *actions* that in turn produce desired *outcomes*. The article details key findings under each component, derived through an intensive, three-level data analysis process. Central to the emerging framework is the need for reciprocal collaboration among the mental health system and cultural-linguistic communities.

Key words: community mental health, cultural diversity, theoretical framework, participatory action research

Maiter, S., Simich, L., Jacobson, N., Wise, J. (2008). Reciprocity: An ethic for Participatory Action Research with culturally diverse communities. *Action Research*. 6(3): 305–325.

Abstract

Ethical issues have been of ongoing interest in discussions of Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR). In this paper we suggest that the notion of reciprocity – defined as an ongoing process of exchange with the aim of establishing and maintaining equality between parties--can provide a guide to the ethical practice of CBPAR. Through sharing our experiences with a CBPAR project focused on mental health services and supports in several cultural-linguistic immigrant communities in Ontario, Canada, we provide insights into our attempts at establishing reciprocal relationships with community members collaborating in the research study and discuss how these relationships contributed to ethical practice. We examine the successes and challenges with specific attention to issues of power and gain for the researched community. We begin with a

discussion of the concept of reciprocity, followed by a description of how it was put into practice in our project, and, finally, conclude with suggestions for how an ethic of reciprocity might contribute to other CBPAR projects.

Keywords: community-based participatory research, immigrant mental health, research ethics, reciprocity, community mental health, multiculturalism

Ochocka, J. Working with Diverse Communities Towards Social Change: A Community University Partnership in Canada Using Participatory Action Research Approach

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to describe a current research initiative entitled "Taking Culture Seriously in Community Mental Health" that has been a large community university partnership in Ontario, Canada. The purpose of this Community University Research Alliance (CURA) is to explore, develop, pilot and evaluate community mental health services that will be effective in multicultural Canada. The 43 partners in this CURA (ethno-linguistic communities, service providers and academics) recognize the importance of meaningful and active community involvement throughout the research process.

Such participation can lead to a greater understanding and willingness on the part of stakeholders to support and implement needed changes. Equally critical is a commitment to knowledge mobilization. Multiple avenues were planned to inform stakeholders of research findings in an ongoing way, in an attempt to move knowledge produced from research into active use within society.

This article begins by describing the CURA partnership, structure and a collaborative process of research, practice and evaluation. Next we present participatory action research approach (PAR) as theoretical framework for collaborative research. The article ends with the mechanisms to engage diverse communities, practitioners/service providers and universities to collaborate on a research study and with the reflections on how values of PAR enable community members to be equal and active research partners.

Ochocka, J. & Janzen R. (2007). Blending commitment, passion and structure: Engaging cultural linguistic communities in collaborative research. In A. Williamson & R. DeSouza (Eds.), *Researching with Communities: Grounded perspectives on engaging communities in research*. Wairua Press. Waitakere City, New Zealand.

Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of a five-year research study in progress called *Taking Culture Seriously in Community Mental Health*, is a collaboration between community and academia conducted in two sites in Ontario, Canada. Canada is one of the world's leading immigrant and refugee receiving societies and Ontario the leading destination of most newcomers. The resulting cultural diversity presents challenges and opportunities for the mental health care system and for cultural linguistic communities in Canada. This presented research initiative brings together leading academics, clinical and community practitioners and cultural-linguistic communities to explore, develop, pilot and evaluate mental health services and supports that are culturally effective for the multicultural Canada.

The purpose of this chapter is to use this research initiative as a case study to demonstrate the theoretical and practical considerations of cultural linguistic community engagement in collaborative research. First we present four interrelated components of this research initiative embedded in Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach: research, training, knowledge mobilization and evaluation. Next we illustrate seven concrete mechanisms of community engagement as a means of implementing the Participatory Action Research approach. We assert that the commitment to a value-driven approach to research, together with a mutually agreed upon structure to implement the mechanisms of engagement, form a comprehensive framework that respects cultural linguistic communities in collaborative research. We find that community engagement is not simply an effort at the start. It is an ongoing process that is constantly evaluated by communities. The chapter ends with critical reflections on community engagement.

Simich, L., Maiter, S., Moorlag, E. & Ochocka, J. (2008). 'Taking Culture Seriously': Ethno linguistic community perspectives on mental health. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*.

Abstract

Ethnolinguistic communities are underserved by mental health systems in immigrant-receiving, multicultural societies, but their perspectives are seldom elicited in mental health research or reform. This article helps fill this gap by presenting community perspectives on concepts of mental

health, mental illness and mental health experiences from research with five ethnolinguistic communities (Latin American, Mandarin-speaking Chinese, Polish, Punjabi Sikh and Somali) in Ontario, Canada. The data were collected from 21 focus groups as part of a large-scale, participatory action research project called *Taking Culture Seriously in Community Mental Health*. The analysis focuses on how mental health and mental illnesses are described, how mental health care is experienced and what recommendations community members provide to improve the mental health system. Study findings illustrate the importance of the social context of immigration and settlement in conceptualizing mental health and mental distress. We conclude that systemic changes are needed to formulate collaborative, community-based strategies for mental health promotion and interventions.

Keywords: Culture, community, mental health, immigrants, participatory action research

Westhues, A., Ochocka, J., Jacobson, N., Simich, L., Maiter, S., Janzen, R., Fleras, A. (in press). Developing theory from complexity: Reflections on a collaborative mixed method Participatory Action Research study. *Qualitative Health Research*.

Abstract

Research studies are increasingly complex: they draw on multiple methods to gather data, generate both qualitative and quantitative data, and frequently represent the perspectives of more than one stakeholder. The teams that generate them are increasingly multidisciplinary. A commitment to engage community members in the research process often adds a further layer of complexity. How to approach a synthesizing analysis of these multiple and varied data sources with a large research team requires considerable reflection and dialogue. In this paper, we outline the strategies used by one multidisciplinary team committed to a PAR approach and engaged in a mixed method program of research to synthesize the findings from 4 subprojects into a conceptual framework that could guide practice in community mental health organizations. We also summarize factors that hold promise for increasing productivity when managing complex research projects.