



**Taking Culture  
Seriously  
in Community  
Mental Health**



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*Centre for Research  
and Education  
in Human Services*

# Summary of Key Informant Interviews

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## Key Informant Sub-Committee

Nora Jacobson  
Elin Moorlag

Rich Janzen  
Adele Gawley

Jill Grant  
Julie Wise

Joanna Ochocka



# Who was Involved?

## 22 participants

- Multicultural leaders
- Representatives of umbrella organizations of services providers
- Consumer/survivors
- Family members
- Researchers
- Policymakers

## Semi-structured interviews

- Transcribed verbatim
- Analyzed iteratively by KI subcommittee



# How was the Problem Framed?

- **Stigma**
  - “I think there has been the whole traditional stigma around mental health, which is still pervasive. It is not always safe for people to admit that they have had a mental health...issue.”
- **Culture of the mental health system**
  - “People are not seen in the totality and they are seen as a mental health problem.”
- **A broken system**
- **Racism/ethnocentrism/”culturism”**
  - “Racism is a significant issue. Racial stereotyping, racist clinical practices, significantly impact what happens to people of colour and people from ethnic communities.”
  - “Everything gets culturalized and pathologized. So people start saying, ‘Oh, you know, let’s just find out how Muslims want to be treated when they are having a mental health crisis and...everything will be hunky dory”



# What are Proposed Solutions?

- **Intersectoral policy response**
  - Intersectoral collaboration
  - Flexible funding
  - National strategy on diversity and mental health
- **Increase accessibility and acceptability of services**
  - Train/hire a diverse workforce
  - Outreach to diverse communities
  - Broaden definitions of services/supports
  - research
- **Stigma reduction**
  - “normalize” mental health problems and use of services
- **Education**
  - Curriculum development and training
- **Challenge power/racism**
- **Focus on social determinants of health**



# How Does Change Happen?

- Community enhancement
- System conscientization
- Linkage



# What are Proposed Outcomes?

- A mental *health* system focused on social determinants of health and health promotion
- “spaces of intervention where culture and people’s identities become part and parcel of how they are seen by the medical establishment”
- A more equitable society



# What did people say?

“I really think that we need more of a community development approach to mental health and diversity....communities themselves have incredible strengths and incredible resilience and know what works well...I really think that is sort of the long term way to go, building capacity within communities to figure out what they need, how they want to do this work.”