

## COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH





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# COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

By

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# OUTLINE

About HIPP

Introduction to Community Based Participatory Action Research

Example of Community Based Participatory Action Research Project

# Funding Acknowledgement

Policywise for Children and Families

Women and Children's Health Research Institute

Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada

MSI Foundation

# About Health and Immigration Policies and Practices Research Program

HIPP seeks to address the decline in immigrant health in Canada by focusing on the health of the most vulnerable groups of immigrants, including those with precarious immigration status.

HIPP has been engaged in over 40 funded research projects to date with funding from national and international funding agencies



# HIPP Community Based Participatory Action Research Projects

A participatory action research project to promote the mental health of African immigrant children in Alberta: A pilot project. Women and Children's Health Research Institute Bridge Funding.

A participatory action research project to promote the mental health of African, Black and Caribbean youths in Alberta. PolicyWise for Children and Families.

Migration and precarity: From the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to permanent resident, student and undocumented migrant status. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Insight Grant

Parenting and mental health promotion practices of African immigrants in Alberta. M.S.I Foundation.

# Community Based Participatory Action Research

- Community based participatory action research focuses on a process of sequential reflection and action, carried out with and by the community rather than on them (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995).
- Iterative process of field work, reflection, planning, research and action
- Local knowledge and perspectives are not only acknowledged but form the basis for research and planning (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995).
- Participatory view of knowledge generation

# Community Based Participatory Action Research

PAR is a power-equalizing, collaborative research approach that sees community members as partners in the research process and experts on the issues of concern in their lives (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008).

This methodology is based on principles of shared leadership, collaborative decision-making, and researcher–community trust building with the end aim of creating sustainable, action-oriented research outcomes.



# **Purpose of Community Based Participatory Action Research (Young, 2006)**

To understand and improve the world by changing it

Co-creation of knowledge that is useful for the community by co-researchers

Development of a sense of community

Educate each other by negotiating meaning

Raise consciousness

Mobilize to change, generate, or evaluate practices or policies

## Major Considerations (Braum, MacDougall and Smith, 2006)

Reflects questioning about the nature of knowledge and the extent to which knowledge can represent the interests of the powerful and serve to reinforce their positions in society.

It affirms that experience can be a basis of knowing and that experiential learning can lead to a legitimate form of knowledge that influences practice

Attention to power relations

Reflexive, flexible and iterative

# Epistemological and Ontological Foundations

Originated from Lewin's work

Freire critical approach to CB-PAR

Practitioners take an explicitly political stance, focusing on empowering disenfranchised and marginalized groups to take action to transform their lives (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995)

Acknowledges multiple realities and co-construction of knowledge

# Challenges

Time

Costly

Ethical consideration

Academic versus community interest



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**Example: A Participatory Action  
Research Project to Promote the Mental  
Health of African, Black and Caribbean  
Youths in Alberta.**

# My Positionality

Why? Why? Why?

# Initial Meeting with Youths

Met with eight Black youths of the YEG Come Up Group to discuss how I can help them as a researcher

## **Youths Identified:**

- Focus on Mental Health
- Participatory Approach (rather than involvement)
- Intersectionality
- Focus on African, Black and Caribbean
- Need to Build Capacity
- Willingness to Contribute to the Project

# Writing Process

Youth leader is a co-investigator on the research project

Engagement of the youth leader in the writing process

Reflection on priorities of the youths and alignment with funding agency priorities

Challenges???



## Rationale

In Alberta in 2011, there were 25,035 individuals of Caribbean origin and 78,580 individuals of African origin. Yet there is very little research on the health of African, Black, and Caribbean youths in the province.

Evidence suggests that African, Black, and Caribbean youths have higher rates of mental health problems than the general Canadian population (Anderson et al., 2015; Fenta, Hyman, & Noh, 2004).

Despite this emerging evidence, no Canadian study, to our knowledge, has provided a basis for action that could inform African, Black, and Caribbean immigrant youths' effort to improve their mental health outcomes within the socio-cultural contexts in which they live.

# Research Questions

- What are the mental health needs of African, Black, and Caribbean youths in Alberta?
- What are the barriers to access to and use of mental health services for African, Black, and Caribbean youths in Alberta?
- What are culturally relevant and effective approaches to increasing access to and uptake of mental health supports by African, Black and Caribbean youths in Alberta?
- What potential exists to mobilize African, Black, and Caribbean youths to improve mental health outcomes and/or to build resilience and capitalize on their agency?

# Theoretical Framework

We used a combination of intersectionality theory and postcolonial theory

In creating a safe and supportive environment and in encouraging meaningful participation, we acknowledge the different histories and impacts of social, economic, and political marginalization experienced by African, Caribbean, and Black communities (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990).

Providing spaces for critical reflection and community engagement to allow youths to understand the forces that influence their lives, articulate their experiences, and recognize their capacity for creating change (Freire, 1970).

We make explicit our commitment to providing a space for youths to use their voices and to recognizing simultaneously their strengths and capacity for resilience as well as the oppressive structures and narratives that hinder agency.

# Method

Phase 1: Interview with 30 Black youths age 16 to 30 years

Phase 2: Series of four conversation cafes with 99 youths

- Conversation cafes are an open forum for stimulating dialogue on relevant societal issues
- There are small group breakout sessions and we also held larger groups sessions with guest speakers on mental health

## Advisory Committee

- 10 youths participated as advisory committee members
- 7 of these youths worked were paid as research assistants during the project
- Advisory committee members were all female or non binary, reflecting the composition of the YEG Come Up Group
- Advisory committee members met three times throughout the research process. Sub-teams of members met with the graduate research assistant and lead researcher an additional 6 times. The youths also met with each other additional times

# Initial Plans for Advisory Committee Role

- Advise on data collection procedures, including delivery of conversation cafes;
- Facilitate participant recruitment;
- Contribute to data analysis;
- Advise on knowledge translation and dissemination;
- Recommend strategies to increase usefulness of research findings;

# Advisory Committee Members Paid as Research Assistants to:

- Interview some participants
- Organize and leading conversation cafes
- Develop initial conversation café guide
- Facilitate participant recruitment
- Analyze data
- Co-author reports and publications

# Capacity Building

- Four hour training on qualitative research, research ethics and participatory action research
- Completion of TCPS 2 research ethics module
- A couple attend a one day training on use of qualitative software
- Close mentorship by two senior doctoral student
- At least one meeting with project lead before each conversation cafe
- Provide examples
- Capitalize on strengths
- Patience and encouragement



## Success

- Recruited more participants for conversation café than we planned
- Rich data about Black youth mental health
- Youths lead and delivered delivered the results to stakeholders
- A capacity building and learning experience for youths
- Data and future projects to address youth mental health

# Sample Conversation Café Guide

Your parents are a few of many immigrants who have escaped civil war, persecution and other traumatic events. You notice signs of PTSD in one of your parents and whenever you try to hint at it, they are in denial. How would you approach them about this? How would you wish they'd respond?

You decide that you do not want to attend university, but wish to pursue a different career (art, music, entrepreneurship) how do you think your parents will react? How comfortable are you sharing this with your parents?

Your child comes home from school and tell you that they wish they had lighter skin. How would you respond to your child and why do you think they might feel this way?

You approach your parents and try to explain to them that you are depressed. They tell you that you have food, clothes and a house to live in and have no reason to be depressed. How does this make you feel and why do you think they respond this way?

It has been two years since you and your family immigrated to Canada. Before leaving to attend a cultural event, your child tells you they do not want to go because they do not claim your culture/ethnicity anymore. Where might your child's feelings rise from? How do you respond?

You are worried that your sibling may be contemplating suicide and when you tell your parents, they tell you that they are probably just experiencing stress and to pray for them. How do you respond to this?

## Dissemination

- Choice of dissemination strategy
- Engagement
- Capacity building
- Authorship

# Challenges

- Power relations
- Time
- Flexibility
- Reconciling gaps between academic priorities and community priorities
- Funding
- Confidentiality and Data security



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