Changing Health Determinants in a University Campus Community: Action Research and Student/Non-Student Partnerships


**Introduction**

A Healthy Community Development study

- **Purpose:** to improve health of the community by changing health determinants (e.g., physical, social, environmental, organizational)
- **Objectives:**
  - Build student and non-student partnerships to create, renew and sustain health-promoting change, taking into account diverse perspectives.
  - Identify health related experiences of specific student population subgroups (i.e., Aboriginal, Student Athletes, International, LGBTQ, and Graduate students).
  - Assess factors which support or jeopardize health-promoting change.

**Community-based Participatory Action Research**

- Mobilize community members/researchers to work collaboratively
- Knowledge from research activities is translated into actions
- A cyclical and iterative process

**Youth-Adult Partnership**

- When adults and youth work in full partnership on issues facing youth or programs/policies affecting youth

**VOICE Methodological Framework**

- PhotoVoice
  - A photographic technique student co-researchers used to capture their health related experiences
  - Health interests/themes were generated through group critique and integrated into survey
- Community Dialogue Survey - Open-ended questions, ranked question (from photographic data), and demographic questions
  - Establish priority interests from health interests/themes
  - Process: student co-researchers survey with laptops, paper, iPads, and online questionnaire
- Focus Groups/Talking Circles
  - Used to explore the experiences of student population subgroups
- Policy Assessment
- Environmental Assessment

**Methods**

**Settings-based Health Promotion Strategies** (from WHO)

- Health promoting University
- Healthy communities
- Health and ecosystem

**Results**

- PhotoVoice
  - Identified 19 health interests
- Community Dialogue Sample
  - N=3256; 30% of campus population (8300 students and 900 faculty and staff at UBCO)
  - Adequately reflective of campus population in terms of gender and time on campus

**Discussion**

- Identify Interests
  - Priority interests have been identified, results are currently being disseminated to the campus population (e.g., forums, classroom/boardroom presentations, media), and diverse perspectives are being explored with focus groups/talking circles.

- Reflect & Partner
  - Need to fully understand the priority interests and why each exists.
  - Mobilize existing resources and identify who on campus is currently working on a particular priority interest already.

- Plan & Act
  - Determine what can be improved on campus (i.e., what is unhealthy about UBCO) and what should be maintained and developed further (i.e., what is healthy about UBCO).
  - Action groups (i.e., co-researchers in partnership with campus partners) explore issues, and design and take actions.

- Reflect, Renew, & Sustain
  - Ensure that changes are positive and sustainable for the future of UBCO.
  - Importance of the study: The student “voice” is heard, community members are engaged and empowered to take action to improve their community, and a sense of equality among students and non-students is generated.

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