Collaborative research methods to elevate the voices of youth, adult caregivers and providers in child and family-focused studies

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Example of U.S. Collaborators

- McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research
- NYU Silver School of Social Work
- CCSI (Coordinated Care Services Inc.)
- IDEAS
- U (University logo)
- NIH (National Institute of Mental Health)
- ICL (Institute for Community Living)
- The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies, Inc.
- Families Together of New York State
- NYAPR/S (New York Association for People with Roberts Syndrome)
- CTAC (Clinic Technical Assistance Center)
- The Clinic Technical Assistance Center
  
  Efficient Practices. Effective Care.
Example of Global Collaborators
Collaborative interdisciplinary research teams
Collaborative interdisciplinary research teams
The 17-year Odyssey:  
Research to Practice Gap

Meslin et al (2013) refers to this gap as the ‘valley of death’


Bridging the “not so small” Gap
between the evidence, consumers, providers, service organizations, systems, policy makers
Collaboration is a Necessary Foundation for Children’s Mental Health Services Research

Program of child mental health services research is based on core assumptions: Collaboration with consumers (youth, parents, providers, and communities) lead to services and prevention programs that potentially are:

- acceptable to consumers
- relevant to consumer’s context, specific needs and core values
- potentially effective when…
- implemented in “real world” settings by naturally existing providers and resources (sustainable)
How are these collaborations created?

Collaborative Guiding Principles

• Developing a set of shared, prevention focused goals
• Sharing decision making and power
• Recognizing the skills and expertise associated with university training and consumer/community experience
• Creating ongoing opportunities for communication
• Developing trust
Foundation of collaborative efforts (see Hatch et al., 1993)

- **Goals**: Shared; equal investment
- **Power**: Fairly distributed
- **Skills**: Community experience valued
- **Communication**: Open/ opportunities to resolve conflict
- **Trust**: Belief in the good faith of partners; room for mistakes

- Researcher driven
- Researcher retains
- Research skills primary
- One-way/Unbalanced
- Continual suspicion
Examples of collaborative research procedures and methods

- **Focus groups**
  (+) identification of pressing community/family needs
  (+) definition of acceptable research projects or service innovations

- **Community Advisors or Advisory Board**
  (+) provides ongoing input regarding various stages of research process

- **Community partners as paid staff**
  (+) collaboration regarding implementation of project
  (+) access to researchers to provide guidance as obstacles encountered

- **Collaboration across entire project**
  (+) co-creation
  (+) co-implementation
  (+) co-evaluation
  (+) co-dissemination
Collaboration across the research process

Study Aims
- Defined collaboratively
- OR
- Advice sought
- OR
- Researcher defined

Design & sampling
- Decision made jointly
- OR
- Researcher educates on methods/advice sought
- OR
- Methods predetermined

Measurement
- Defined within partnership
- OR
- Advice sought
- OR
- Researcher defined

Procedures
- Shared responsibility (e.g. community to recruit, research staff to collect data)
- OR
- Designed with input
- OR
- Designed by researchers

Implementation
- Projects are co-directed
- OR
- Researchers train community members as co-facilitators
- OR
- Research staff hired

Evaluation
- Plans co-created/questions of both community & researchers answered
- OR
- Community assists in interpretation of results
- OR
- Researchers analyze data

Dissemination
- Members of partnership define outlets
- OR
- Community fulfills co-author & co-presenter roles
- OR
- Researchers present at conferences & publish
A Model of Development of Collaborative Partnerships

- Development of Trust
- Information Exchange
- Shared Decision Making
- Leadership Development
- Transfer of Ownership
Participatory action research methods

• Provides direct benefit to participants either through direct intervention or by using the results to inform action for change

• Intensive and ongoing participation and influence of community members in building knowledge (Israel et al., 1998)
  – Community development is an important goal
  – Project builds on strengths of community
  – Involvement of all members in each phase of the project
  – Project provides direct benefit to community partners
  – Promotion of a process that actively addresses social inequalities
  – Opportunities for feedback
  – Commitment to addressing health problems from an ecological perspective
  – Disseminating findings and knowledge gained to all partners
Creating and maintaining high-performing collaborative research teams (Cheruvelil et al.)

- Science of team science
- Diverse members committed to common outcomes
- Attention to interpersonal skills of team members
  - Social sensitivity
  - Emotional engagement
Characteristics of team members

1. Diversity
   - Ethnicity, gender, culture
   - Career stage
   - Past collaborations with other team members
   - Mode (eg specialist, generalist)
   - Types of disciplines and number of individuals in each
   - Points of view

2. Interpersonal skills
   - Social sensitivity
     - Empathy
     - Honesty
     - Clarity
     - Integrity
     - Accountability

3. Emotional engagement
   - Excitement about research goals
   - Personal commitment to team members
   - Trust

4. Team communication
   - Evenness of talking and listening; lack of dominance
   - Equal interaction among members in communication, body language, and tone

Interactions within the team

3. Team functioning
   - Creativity
   - Idea generation
   - Problem solving
   - Conflict resolution
   - Establishing team norms

4. Team communication

Research outcomes of teams

- Generate and publish transformative knowledge
- Create new high-performing collaborative research teams
- Translate research into sound management, conservation, and policy
- Create innovative training and education (students, staff)
- Engage effectively with the public
Creating and maintaining high-performing collaborative research teams

- Interdependence of team members
- Effective communication
- Problem solving
- Creativity space
Team building & assessment

- Teamwork exercises
- Informal team outings
- Building trusting relationships
- Shared research goals
- Establish standards of behaviors

- Reinforcing social bonds
- Lower the barriers to collaboration
- Navigating team conflict
- Time management
Outcome-focused manuscripts to date

- The findings on short-term impact (end of the intervention) have been published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*

- Paper on long-term findings (6-months following end of intervention) is in press at the *Journal of Adolescent Health* (South-to-South special issue)

- Paper on mental health outcomes of children and caregivers is under review at the *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*