The Application of Implementation Science

Implementation Science and the Social Work Grand Challenges: The Three Sciences

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Implementation Science - Defined

"Generation and application of models, conceptual frameworks, and theories that identify potential barriers and facilitators-as well as the process and outcomes-of program, practice and policy implementation(Nilsen, 2015)…"

(Gehlert et al., 2017, pp. 124-125).

Implementation Science - Defined

"…The development and application of strategies for facilitating implementation of evidence-based practices (Powell et al., 2014); and methodological innovation in the form of new experimental designs and mixed methods (Brown et al., 2016)"

(Gehlert et al., 2017, pp. 124-125).

Examples

- Strengthening social responses to environmental change – Implementing evidence-based practices for prevention and treatment of disaster-related traumatic stress
- Reduce social isolation and loneliness – Interventions using mobile and social media technologies to reweave frayed social networks and provide lifelines to vulnerable isolated individuals

Social Work Science

An "integrative" science

Brings together research and practice and requires both rigor and relevance, global and local evidence, evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence, fidelity and (cultural) adaptation

A "transrelational" science

Requires development of social relationships (partnerships) to study, mobilize, and improve social relationships

A "transformational" science

Requires transformation of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of social workers and communities they serve

Collaboration

- Partnerships with professionals in other disciplines (see Framework for planning collaborations developed by Hall & Colleagues, 2012).
- Partnerships with other social workers
- Partnerships with practitioners
- Partnerships with **communities** (Training in community-based participatory research per Gehlert, Hall & Palinkas, 2017)

Community Engagement Continuum

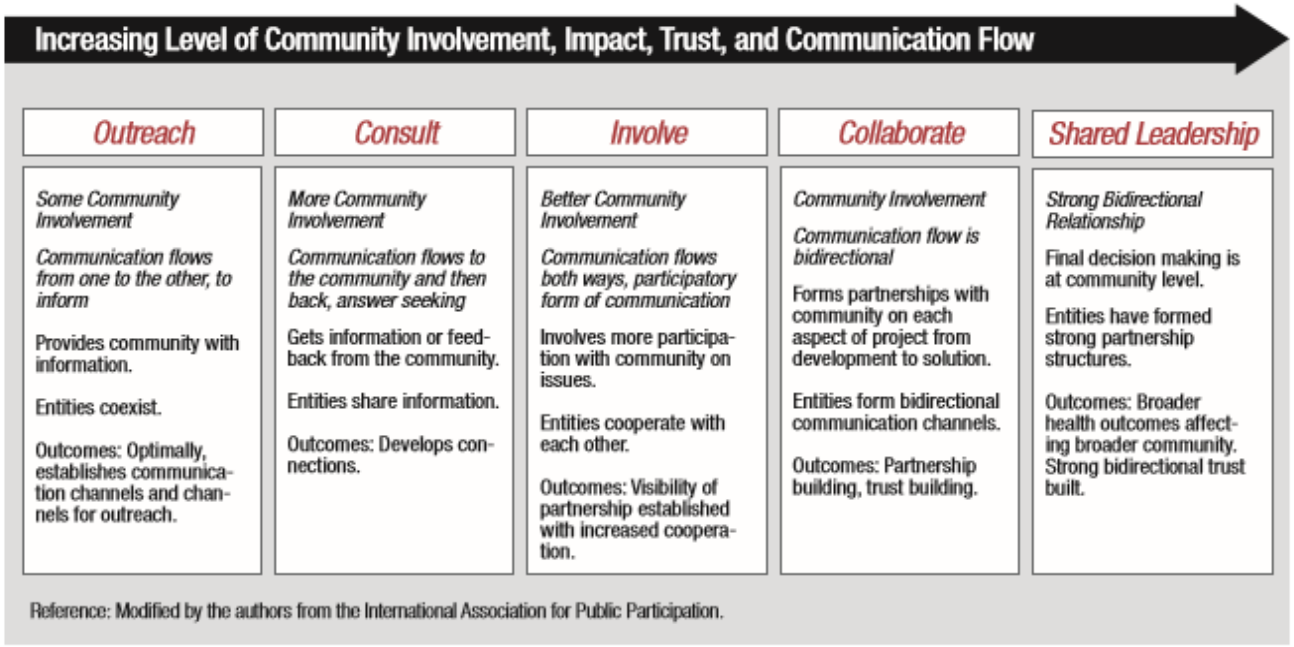

Figure 1.1. Community Engagement Continuum

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

- Not just a type of research (or evaluation) approach but also a philosophy "to empower community members to define the research questions as well as lead the inquiry process and create their own solutions for change" (Amsden & VanWynsberghe as cited in Mertens, 2009, p. 182).

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

- "To enable local people to analyze their own situation and develop the confidence to make decisions and take action to improve their circumstances" (Collins, 2005 as cited in Mertens, 2009, p. 182).

- Work requires cultural humility and continuous self-reflection (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006)

- Community-based advisory board (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006)

- Challenge or re-dress power, privilege, race and other types of discrimination; interest in giving voice to people's lived experiences (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006)

Common Methods

- Iterative group-based processes
- Non-technical and accessible
- Visual techniques (mapping, timelines)
- Photos (photo-voice, different from audio or documentary)
- Focus groups
- Semi-structured interviews

Ethical Considerations

- Ownership of data
- Dissemination of findings (timing, sharing, ownership)
- Breaches of confidentiality given so many "eyes and ears" involved.
- Imbalances of resources in which community members cannot engage as equals with funded research/evaluation team
- Who in the community can legitimately speak for the community?
- Rigor of research/evaluation design with compatibility of community norms & expectations.

(Quoted source: Royse et al., 2016, pp. 52-53)

Ethical Considerations

- Who is participating and who is not?
- What interests are being service or not served?
- If community members are participating, in which aspects are they participating and in which decisions will there be less of their participation?
- Are community members involved minimally to satisfy a grant, or are they involved throughout the process?

(Quoted source: Wallerstein & Duran, 2006, p. 314)

Discussion on Community-Based Participatory Research (or Participatory Action Research [PAR])

Partnership at various phases of the research and evaluation study (Costello, 2004; Mertens, 2009)

A. In the research/evaluation project planning stages:

1. At what point am I involving the community?
2. How is the community approached?
3. What is the benefit for the community?
4. How are the cultures and traditions of the community respected?

(Quoted source: Mertens, 2009, p. 107)

Discussion

5. How are participants recruited?
6. How and by whom are the research/evaluation questions selected?
7. How are the privacy and confidentiality of the involved individuals and communities protected?
8. What kinds of methods are being used (and how are these chosen)?
9. How is the information going to be used?

(Quoted source: Mertens, 2009, p. 107)

Discussion

B. In the data-analysis stage:

1. How is the information that is gathered going to be analyzed or interpreted?

2. What input does the community have in the analysis process?

C. At end of the research/evaluation project?

1. Is any sustainable change going to be stimulated by the research/evaluation results?

2. What are the roles of researcher/evaluator and community in determining what change looks like?

(Quoted source: Mertens, 2009, p. 107)