

Community Capacity Dimensions Influencing Success of Local Initiatives: The Importance of Reflexivity

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Presenter Disclosures

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The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose.

What is it about some communities that makes them successful in addressing local issues, while others struggle with the same issues for years?

Community Capacity

- "...the characteristics of communities that affect their ability to identify, mobilize, and address social and public health problems" (Goodman et al., 1998, p. 259)
 - "...the interaction of human capital, organization resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community" (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 7)
 - "...a set of dynamic community traits, resources, and associational patterns that can be brought to bear for community building and community health improvement" (Wendel et al., 2009, p. 285)
- Emergent property—exists at the community level
 - Important in addressing issues, but unclear exactly HOW it works

Dimensions of Capacity



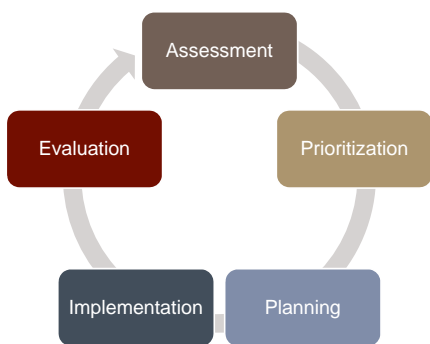
Project Context: PACE

- Core research project of Center for Community Health Development, a Prevention Research Center
- Four rural communities
- Regional partnership comprised of volunteers from all four communities; technical assistance from CCHD
- History of CBPR projects together

Project Background: PACE

- Key issue: Obesity
- Locally identified priority: Access to opportunities for recreational physical activity
- Community health development approach with two key outcomes:
 - Increased access to PA
 - Increased community capacity

Community Health Development



Multiple Case Study Design

- Mixed-method multiple comparative case study design (Yin, 2008) focused on community capacity related to addressing a specific health topic (obesity)
- Evidence
 - Process documentation
 - Archival documents
 - Direct observations
 - Participant observations
- Independent coding of evidence
 - High inter-rater reliability
 - Discrepancies among coders discussed and resolved

Four Communities, Four Solutions

- Leon County
 - Focus: Families with children
 - Limitations: Geography, cost, facilities
 - Solution: Promote geocaching through intercity competition
- Burleson County
 - Focus: Whole community
 - Limitations: Competing agendas, interests, limited leadership capacity
 - Solution: Count something they had already completed

Four Communities, Four Solutions

- Madison County
 - Focus: Low-income families
 - Limitations: Geography, cost, facilities
 - Solution: Partner with community center to complete walking trail with exercise stations
- Grimes County
 - Focus: Older adults
 - Limitations: Transportation, cost, sustainability
 - Solution: Offer exercise classes to older adults in senior centers

Defining Success

- At the community level, success was defined as having met the objective of their local project
 - Activities implemented and sustainable
 - Potential for expansion or replication
 - Satisfaction of the partners involved with the process

Method

- Comparative Qualitative Analysis
 - Evidence related to each dimension of community capacity
 - Documentation of each community's process; movement between elements of the process not linear
 - Outcome of each community's process
- Post hoc analysis: how communities dealt with failure when it happened
- Examination of necessary and sufficient factors in community success

Findings: Factors Influencing Success

- Positive effect
 - Civic participation
 - Knowledge, skills, and resources
 - Quality of leadership and leadership development
- Necessary but not sufficient
 - Community history and values
 - Mechanisms and structures for community dialogue
 - Social relationships and networks
- Determining factor
 - **Reflexivity**

The Role of Reflexivity

- Communities as units of identity, practice, and solution
- Community level of analysis
- How do communities learn?
- What's the difference between communities that fail and communities that succeed after having failed?
- *Culture of learning* is important – can this be cultivated?

Acknowledgment

The research presented was supported by the Center for Community Health Development under Cooperative Agreement number 1U48DP001924 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Any findings presented are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the CDC.



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