

Educational Gaming and Afterschool Students' Science and Drug Prevention Knowledge and Attitudes Project Reflective Analysis

Haley Bylina

Truman State University

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an all-encompassing approach to address inequities among vulnerable populations by involving community members in the research process (Holkup 2009). Researchers work *with and for* our communities! We as researchers target needs assessed by local organizations and combine resources at all levels to achieve desired changes within a community regarding substance abuse, domestic violence, family negligence, food insecurity, and more. The methodology of CPBR is dependent on the audience but is based on inter-professionalism and community commitment (CDC). A key feature of CPBR is the focus on creating long-standing partnerships with community resources such as businesses, agencies, or local drug abuse prevention coalitions like the one in our evaluation report. Our research team has been working with our local drug prevention coalition for many years. Our drug prevention coalition's partnership and participation with us using CBPR symbolizes their interest in working together over time to decrease substance abuse in an evidence-based fashion. Data obtained through our partnership in collecting information and analyzing it using statistics allows us as researchers to evaluate the progress and efficiency of the coalition's approach.

Our community partner, the Heartland Task Force (HTF), is a coalition formed to combat the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances in a rural, Northeast Missouri county that reports a median household income of about \$37,967 (Data USA 2015). Drugs pose the most predominant threat to families living in the county and have serious implications regarding family structure and child endangerment. In order to address these issues of household support, HTF implements CBPR and recruits local community members to join the Task Force to conduct interventions and events that promote healthy social change. For example, the Mother-Son Stampede, an annual event hosted in September attended by over 500 families, is a day full of various activities that promote mother-son bonding among area families. The event is accessible to the entire community and inclusive of all ages by including activities sponsored by local businesses and organizations in the form of crafts, sports, or food. With the purpose of promoting health education, each adult guardian is given a free tote with informational pamphlets regarding youth health. Additionally, strengthening that community tie, all profits made from the event support local high schools, scholarships, and more. Another example of an impactful HTF event is the Daddy Daughter Dance that promotes the same family bonding intended by the Mother Son Stampede. Hosted annually in April, the dance features crafts, free refreshments, cookies, balloons, a photo booth, and a DJ. The event hosted over 800 participants. The HTF also implements weekly educational programming in the form of after-school lessons to youth regarding bullying and substance abuse prevention.

As we as researchers process and reflect on what we learned, we view CBPR as an attractive form of research due to its sustainability (Policylink 2012) and how it allows all parties

of the partnership to see direct results. This aids in a better understanding of the target population and promotes long-lasting relationships that continue beyond the research process (Detroit URC Board 2011). With CBPR, we feel a real sense of belonging to our community and are proud of doing our part in making improvements to the community and to address those vulnerable populations in need. With the researcher being a part of the community, they are able to adapt to the culture and environmental obstacles. We as researchers, therefore, are now coalition members and partners, we identify as townspeople in our local community, and we will continue to work with and for this and other community organizations.

By participating in this study and future CBPR studies, we will not only be improving the health of our community but we will also be developing skills that will later translate into career assets. The work we do by engaging with the community members and striving to improve the lives of the families truly embodies the mission of public health for us as Health Education majors. The work done with and for the HTF allows us to really put into practice the expectations of a public health educator. By gaining this experience, we are better equipped for any potential future careers we may pursue in the public health sector.

Reflecting on the perceptions of the other side of the partnership, we hope the coalition members are able to see the researchers as people who genuinely care about them and the community that we share. The community, hopefully, sees how it is benefiting from the implementation of the community programs and research results and will offer more support to ensure that the work continues. The support is vital for the success of community maintenance because it is not enough for us to care about the work being done to better the community - the community members themselves have to care in order to truly make it successful. Especially in this instance where we are working together for youth substance abuse prevention, we hope the younger generation sees our partnership and research efforts as enriching and helpful. Now that the study has been completed, there is sense of accomplishment as well as hope. The hope of the HTF is that through the success (or even lack of success as noted in this report) of their programs and events, the community will continue to be receptive to any new health-promoting endeavors of the HTF.

References

- Adair County, MO. (n.d.). Retrieved May 21, 2018, from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/adair-county-mo/>
- Community-Based Participatory Research Principles. (2011, January 20). Retrieved May 21, 2018, from <http://www.detroiturc.org/about-cbpr/cbpr-principles.html>
- Faridi, Z., Grunbaum, J., Sajor Gray, B., Franks, A., & Simoes, E. (2007, July). Preventing Chronic Disease: July 2007: 06_0182. Retrieved May 21, 2018, from https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/jul/06_0182.htm
- Holkup, P. A., Tripp-Reimer, T., Salois, E. M., & Weinert, C. (2004). Community-based Participatory Research An Approach to Intervention Research With a Native American

Community. Retrieved May 21, 2018, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2774214/>

Johnson Kirksville Daily Express, & Maria Johnson Kirksville Daily Express. (2017, September 29). Mother-Son Stampede brings old-fashioned fun. Retrieved May 21, 2018, from <http://www.kirksvilledailyexpress.com/news/20170929/mother-son-stampede-brings-old-fashioned-fun>

Minkler, M., Garcia, A. P., Rubin, V., & Wallerstein, N. (n.d.). Community-Based Participatory Research: A Strategy for Building Healthy Communities and Promoting Health through Policy Change. Retrieved May 21, 2018, from <http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/CBPR.pdf>