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Participatory Action Research: Addressing Domestic Violence Using a Constructivist Framework

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A woman in Canada is killed by her spouse or partner every 6 days (Canadian Research Centre for Victims of Crime, 2016). Globally, one in three women will suffer relationship violence in their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2013). The World Health Organization considers domestic violence a health epidemic (WHO, 2013). A participatory action research (PAR) (Bergold & Thomas, 2012) project was initiated in 2011 to address this very issue. PAR is frequently used as a research methodology to address issues of inter personal violence and related health outcomes in many communities (Enriquez et al, 2012; Morris, 2016), this project differs in that the community involved was not specific to a single ethnic group but to a geographical area. Members of police, health, government, education and service providers were brought together to address this health issue. The participatory action research (PAR) project started with 12 individuals but through continuous PAR cycles has grown to a membership of over 100 people from over 50 plus organizations.

This presentation will highlight the constructivist framework and the operationalization of the concepts, Multiple Ways of Knowing (Carper, 1978), Cultural Safety & Humility (First Nations Health Authority, n.d.; Ramsden, 2002) and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) that have led to a successful PAR project. As well, the resulting recommendations and changes that have occurred within the community from the project will be outlined. Perspectives of various participants, such as police, criminal justice system personnel, service providers, educators and medical services personnel, as well as the clients of programs and services – the perpetrators of violence in relationships as well as the victims/survivors shaped this work. Participants observed certain aspects/experiences of the systems that were positive, and suggested ways that these systems could be improved.

The recurrent themes in the first PAR cycle point to various steps that can be taken in order to achieve an integrated, smooth, and efficient system that best serves the needs of those involved in the domestic abuse cycle. Key recommendations that arose from this research project include:

- The need for an increase in non-profit funding in order to facilitate new programs / expand current ones. This would include increased funding for victims' services programs (support and counselling) and children who witness abuse, and developing programs for perpetrators of violence (in particular, programs available to men who are not charged)
- Increased training opportunities
- Reducing wait lists and response times for those in need of services
- Improve the existing screening tools for assessment and education for front line staff (community service and health workers)
- Where appropriate, provision of holistic family treatment
- Provision of cultural safety training to meet the needs of Surrey's diverse communities
- Increasing collaboration with community agencies with respect to information sharing and resource links

In addition to the above steps, more transformative changes within the community would also need to happen. These include the establishment of a dedicated judicial system which would effectively shorten

the duration of court processes; the development of a community conflict resolution system for individuals in the community who do not want to or cannot report the violence; the implementation of a central resource centre or database which would act as a guiding map for the community to provide information about the community resources and systems in place and how to access them; using social media avenues to educate communities about the issue of violence against women in relationships and its prevalence in the community; and organizing networking workshops and sessions where service providers can gain information about available resources.

Another recommendation by participants was to create The Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships (NEVR), and continue with the PAR cycle. The goal of this PAR called NEVR has become to create a society where relationship violence is not accepted nor tolerated. This is a research project and a community clinical placement for nursing students.

The outcomes and actions of the process of creating and keeping this network together and the PAR cycles will be highlighted. Included in the presentation will be how students work with NEVR and some of their insights. It is hoped that participants will be able to use this process and framework to address the issue of relationship violence in their communities.

Title:

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Keywords:

Domestic Violence, Multiple Perspectives and Participatory Action Research

References:

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Abstract Summary:

The Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships began as Participatory Action Research. It has created a database of resources, devised tool kits and other original materials, lobbied governments and provided clinical nursing placements

Content Outline:

1. Introduction
 1. Definition of participatory action research (PAR)
 2. How NEVR (Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships) operates as a PAR
2. Body
 1. Main Point #1 Issue of relationship violence
 1. Supporting point #1 Definition of Relationship Violence (RV)
 1. *RV cuts across all demographics*
 2. *Needs to be approached in an intersectional, interdisciplinary and inter-agency manner*
 2. Supporting point #2 The relationship violence framework
 1. *Description of membership of the Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships Committee (NEVR)*
 2. *Foundational concepts of the framework used by NEVR*
 2. Main Point #2 Outcomes of Multiple annual PAR cycles
 1. Supporting point #1 Results of first PAR cycle
 1. *Perspectives of various NEVR participants (i.e. criminal justice system, healthcare system, services, governments, and program clients including offenders and survivors)*
 2. *Seven key recommendations from the first cycle will be presented*
 2. Supporting point #2 Results of Multiple PAR cycles
 1. *Creation of NEVR as a key recommendation of first cycle*
 2. *Synopsis of NEVR's work from 2011 - present*
 3. Main Point #3 Current PAR cycle moving forward
 1. Supporting point #1 Advocacy for a judicial system to shorten the duration of court processes
 1. *Lobbying and briefing of relevant stakeholders (including governments)*
 2. *Continued partnerships to alternative and restorative justice systems.*
 2. Supporting point #2 Ongoing maintenance of ongoing RV data base for communities
 1. *NEVR website*
 2. *Tool kits and workshops*

III. Conclusion Coming out of our silos and working together has provided learning opportunities for nursing students, services at the municipal and provincial government level. Provincial policy changes and the development of a national strategy

1. Example- Will provide opportunities to become involved in several resources including Community Champion Toolkit
2. Example- Media and curriculum

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

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Professional Experience: Balbir Gurm, RN, BSN, MA, EdD is an award winning educator in the Faculty of Health at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and, founding member and facilitator of the Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships (NEVR). Dr. Gurm is interested in how policies and culture impact organizational and societal practices and how academic knowledge is used to solve complex societal issues. Using academic knowledge from a variety of disciplines and listening to the stories of staff from across the sector, Dr. Gurm and colleagues have created a holistic framework for taking action to eliminate violence in relationships.

Author Summary: Dr. Gurm has been an invited speaker at provincial conferences and participated on the domestic violence death review panel and justice forum. She is an invited media speaker on community television and radio programs. As well, Dr. Gurm was invited to speak at universities in Thailand and Brazil about relationship violence and community action.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author

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Professor and Chair Graduate Studies
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Professional Experience: Dr. Jen Marchbank is professor and Graduate Chair Dept of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Simon Fraser University Burnaby, BC, Canada. She has been studying gender equity for over 25 years and has published numerous articles and books on the subject

Author Summary: Professor Marchbank has presented at local, national and international conferences on gender equity and sexuality. She is a member of the Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships that Dr. Gurm founded.

Third Secondary Presenting Author

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Sheila Early, BScN
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Professional Experience: Sheila is a pioneer in forensic nursing. She started the sexual assault nurse examiner program in the 1990's at her local hospital. She is the coordinator of the Forensic Health Science Program at BCIT and a member of the Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships.

Author Summary: Sheila has presented locally, nationally and internationally on how to collect forensic evidence and been a court witness for sexual assault cases. She has served as president of the International Forensic Nurses' Association.