GSA Webinar Series
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How to Gain Entry and Work With Older Adults in Culturally Grounded and Respectful Approaches

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Webinar Speakers

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Quick Audience Poll
Gaining entry & working with older adults in culturally grounded & respectful approaches

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Webinar: June 27, 2015
Presentation Outline

• History of research with Alaska Natives
• What is CBPR?
• Tribal approval process for research in Alaska
• Gaining entry into tribal communities
• Lessons learned
• Recommendations
• Conclusions
Personal Background

• Aleut (Alaska Native)
• Commercial fishing background
• Pivotal role of family and Elders:
  – Great grandparents, late Paul and Anna Chukan
  – Grandparents, late Gordon and Anisha McCormick
  – Elders in village of Naknek
Native Americans Are Living Longer

• Elders are living longer and healthier lives AND tend to have more chronic illnesses
  – Require extensive health care services and supports
• Elders live in extended family environments
• Elders are held in high regard by family and community
• Elders are honored and cared for by family and community
Elder’s History

• Orphanage

• Boarding school
  – Kill the Indian, save the white man
  – Forbidden to speak Native language, cut hair, disconnect from family, physical abuse

• Raised by extended family or foster parents
  – Family illnesses, death, relocation

• TB sanitarium
Beliefs that Affect Conversation with Elders

• Spirituality
• Food
• Community
• Music
• Preparations of goods, foods, services
Communication Strategies

• Make eye contact
• Handshakes
• Information by word of mouth
• Pay attention to nonverbal/indirect communication
• Listen for indirect requests
• Withdrawal – sign of disapproval
• Humor
What Is CBPR?

• Community-Based Participatory Research
  – A research approach conducted as an equal partnership between community members, organizational representatives, and researchers (Israel et al., 2010; Mohatt et al., 2004)


Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

• Core principles:
  – Being collaborative and participatory
  – Co-learning and empowering process
  – Achieving a balance between research and action
  – Acknowledging community as a unit of identity
  – Building on strengths and resources within community
  – Facilitating a collaborative, equitable partnership
  – Co-learning in all phases of the research

(Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Israel et al., 2005)
CBPR Methodology

• CBPR approach: established relationships with tribal councils in communities willing to participate in study

• Work with communities to set travel dates when community members are available
  – Pay attention to traditional activities, subsistence calendar

• With permission, reach out to Elders to confirm visit date and preferred times
CBPR Methodology

• Conduct in-depth interviews with Elders in a location of their choice (personal home, tribal council offices, and so on)
• Share gift with Elders as a token of appreciation (Native foods, smoked fish)
• Ensure elders are comfortable, take breaks, break interview into two segments and visit the next day
Gatekeepers

• It is important to work with the community to determine “gatekeepers”
  – Community members, Elders, and leaders with knowledge of community, have a role in the community, and willing to assist with development and execution of the study

• Spend time in the community
  – Attend local events, sports activities, school events, visit with local Elders
Approval Process

• Approvals were sought and obtained prior to the initial start of the project
• Once project was discussed with University and community researchers, each participating community was visited to introduce project team, solicit input, and receive approvals
Approval Process, cont’d

• After data collected, authors sought input and approvals from community on:
  – Data interpretation
  – Data dissemination
  – Dissemination products – format

• Results were returned to communities – community presentations

• Final report presented to tribal councils

• Next steps determined

• Maintain communication beyond life of project
The Path to Healing

• Awareness
• Acknowledgement of fear
• Education
• Acceptance
• Understanding
• Compassion
• Forgiveness

• We need to highlight the strengths and resources existing in tribal communities
• Individuals, families, and communities possess unique strengths and talents to support Elders and persons with disabilities
Lessons Learned

1. Listen to the needs of the community
2. Researchers must work in a flexible, iterative, fashion
   – This work cannot be rushed!
3. Local culture and knowledge must be respected and integrated into the research
4. Establishing trusting relationships is crucial
5. Research must respect and reinforce sovereignty and self-determination
Lessons Learned, cont’d

6. Take the time and be patient, build relationships, and spend time in the communities
   – The community, region, and its members support the project and feel they are representative of their community

7. Incorporate their culture, knowledge, values, and experiences into the project

8. Tribal councils and gatekeepers are key to a successful project

9. Do not be afraid to make mistakes or say/do the wrong thing—just learn from it and keep coming back
Most Important Lesson

• Research with tribal communities is about: **Building, maintaining, and respecting relationships**

• Using a CBPR approach builds trusting and lasting relationships with Elders and communities
Recommendations

• Ensure tribal communities are supportive and invested in the project
  – Ensure they feel that they are contributing members of the project in all phases: design, implementation, and dissemination

• Develop relationships with the communities

• Keep your promises

• It is your responsibility to ensure the community is respected and protected
Recommendations, cont’d

• Develop and maintain relationships with the tribal councils in each community
  – Seek their input, ideas, advice, as well as changes throughout the life of the project

“Programs work best if they are both culturally relevant and developed with major community, or local, input” (Middlebrook et al., 2001)

Recommendations

• Work closely with communities and tribal councils until they are comfortable with the project
• Include local knowledge, cultural values, and experiences when designing and implementing a research study
• Work with a local bilingual speaker to develop research documents
• Important to have a broad range of community collaborators
  – Elders, Native leaders, community members
Conclusions

• CBPR with tribal communities in Alaska is a very rewarding approach to research
  – Lasting relationships with Elders and communities
  – We respect and trust each other
  – Communities reach out to us to conduct new projects
• Findings would not be reflective of the Elders and communities if we did not involve the community
Conclusions

• CBPR empowers communities and individuals to take an active role in research as well as teaches them skills to do their own research

• CBPR results in:
  – Addressing the community’s priorities.
  – Giving them ownership and voice in the research process
Thank you for your time!

Questions? Discussion
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