Tools for Community Empowerment and Participatory Research for Health Professionals and Activists (to be finalized, 2019)

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Background:
Health promotion, disease prevention and control, and community empowerment for positive change require holistic and sustainable responses to address the profound social and health inequities faced by populations across the world. With structural and social conditions, such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, regional conflicts, and inequitable distribution of resources and services; and continued health conditions, such as emerging infectious diseases, rise in chronic diseases, environmental contamination, suicides, and interpersonal violence, there is a need for better practices that engage local actors to make lasting change in their own contexts.

Health professional practitioners, students, advocates, and researchers, whether working in clinical, public health, health promotion, policy, social work, non-profits, NGOs or other settings, need the skills, strategies, and support for tackling reduction of health inequities over the long-haul. Within healthcare in particular, 85% of surveyed health providers believe that the unmet social needs of their patients lead to poor health outcomes, yet "4 in 5 physicians do not feel confident in their capacity to meet their patients’ social needs." (from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2011). A commitment, therefore, to social justice values and community empowerment skill-building requires a transformation of the educational enterprise to be hands-on, multi-disciplinary, multi-sector, and committed to co-learning from communities.

As the Brazilian educator and advocate, Paulo Freire, said “If the structure does not permit dialogue, the structure must be changed.” Through participatory activities and learning practices, we can alter traditional education structures to engage participants in continuous dialogue and reflection to confront and transform the realities of their lives and the realities of the populations they serve.

Curriculum Development

In response to these issues, representatives from the University of New Mexico Center for Participatory Research (http://cpr.unm.edu) and the non-governmental organization (NGO), AMOS Health & Hope (www.amoshealth.org) have undertaken the third edition of a multi-level course curriculum to introduce students, NGO and non-profit staff, multi-disciplinary health professionals and researchers, ministry of health and other public agency personnel, and community members, leaders, activists, and educators alike to key theories and skills for individuals and organizations to reflect and analyze their current contexts and partnerships to develop strategies for increased social inclusion, equity and health impact. (See below for the history of this curriculum).
Health Professions and Activists Education

The educational methodology for the workshop follows three levels of health professions education as outlined by the Global Independent Commission for health professions education in the 21st century:¹

1. **Informative**: Workshop participants and students learn information and skills which lead to understanding in the theory and practice of community empowerment strategies, Community based participatory research (CBPR), community-engaged research (CEnR) and Community based primary health care (CBPHC).

2. **Formative**: A focus on values such as cultural humility, service to the most vulnerable, as well as reflections upon power and privilege and trans-professional teamwork (not just doctors, nurses and formal health professionals, but also community health workers, community leaders, and non-profit staff as the teachers) contribute to the development of health professionals who can work effectively in teams.

3. **Transformative**: Development of health professionals and activists with a focus on social mission and social accountability to work towards health equity.

**Course Objectives**

- Integrate community empowerment and community participation into health action, program and research development, and collective change strategies.
- Acquire skills in using the community based participatory research (CBPR) conceptual model for broadening community engagement in planning, evaluation, and research of health and community development actions.
- Learn and apply participatory dialogue methodologies and Paulo Freire popular education pedagogy as a central foundation to facilitate community participation and empowerment.
- Support self- and collective-reflection about the roles and positions of power and privilege that different social actors play (health professionals, NGO or non-profit staff, community leaders, promotores, etc.) to foster empowerment and participatory processes.
- Share course participant reflections and experiences in the field.

Course Formats
The course can be delivered in multiple formats, with different time options. The specific choice of modules depends on settings, previous knowledge, and desired outcomes.

The modules can be adopted as a University course, or given in community settings, such as in 8-10 weekly sessions, or as a full week. Optional modules can extend the learning. The goal is for participants to engage in interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral learning, through self-reflection about their own life experiences and power relations, in-depth dialogue from new ways of listening to and with others, and translation of reflection into opportunities for collective action, with the aim of reconstructing new realities for improved community health and well-being.

There are four main components to the course:

1. **Community Empowerment**: The course is based on core community empowerment theories; discussions of power, privilege, and social determinants of health; and fostering cultural humility in all health actions. Social and community participation leading to empowerment has been a key strategy of health promotion and other health actions since the 1986 Ottawa Charter promoted community mobilization, with supportive environments and healthy public policy, as key pillars for a healthy society. Closely mirroring the Ottawa Charter, the concept of community empowerment, as people gaining control over their lives through collective action to achieve social justice and equity, is inspired by Paulo Freire’s liberatory education and writings.

2. **Tools for Community Empowerment**: Community empowerment tools are structured around Paulo Freire’s listening/dialogue/action/reflection praxis methodology. Course participants learn by practicing and experiencing participatory facilitation tools such as problem-posing codifications (ie., skits, photos, etc), identification of generative themes, and case studies that can be used by communities and their partners to trigger and facilitate effective dialogue, engage in action planning, and create strategies for change.

3. **Community-based participatory research (CBPR)**: CBPR is a collaborative approach of research-in-action that incorporates data and the creation of knowledge through equitably involving all partners in the process, recognizing the unique strengths that each brings. Starting from community priorities, CBPR, known alternatively as community engaged research (CEnR), or Participatory Action Research, integrates academic evidence-based and local community knowledge to support knowledge democracy and collaborative creation of effective programs and healthy public policies to achieve social change. The CBPR model provides health professionals and community health workers with a framework for both planning and evaluation of community-engaged and partnered practice.

4. **Community Based Participatory Program Evaluation**: In these modules, participants will choose specific health issues and programs to create a road-map for both measuring success and making mid-course changes with partners. In planning for these outcomes, course participants will understand how to organize a project or program using results based accountability, establish indicators to measure community empowerment and health impact, and evaluate projects with stakeholders.

**HISTORY OF CURRICULUM:**
The development of this curriculum was an initiative from the Center for Participatory Research at the University of New Mexico, in collaboration with the Health Promotion Unit of the Pan
American Health Organization (PAHO). Health promotion professionals from the Americas (identified in the acknowledgements) met in the city of Santa Fe (New Mexico-USA) in July of 1999, with the intention of jointly creating an interactive curriculum in empowerment, participation, and health promotion. This ten-day meeting was coordinated by Drs. Nina Wallerstein (University of New Mexico) and Maria Teresa Cerqueira (PAHO/WHO).

In May of 2005, the University of Sao Paulo’s Faculty of Public Health, with help from PAHO, hosted the first full five-day workshop to pilot-test the designed curriculum. This Sao Paulo workshop was facilitated by Nina Wallerstein, Marta Lucia Gutierrez (Javeriana University - Colombia) and Mario Gonzales Sobera (Uruguay). The pilot had 35 participants, half from Brazil and half from other Ibero-American countries, including: Peru, Mexico, Uruguay, Colombia, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina and Spain. The result of this collective work from numerous professionals from different countries and by the primary authors led to the 2nd edition of the curriculum (Wallerstein, Gutierrez, Sobera, 2008). Workshops and University courses, using all or part of the curriculum, have been held throughout the Americas, including Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, etc.

This third edition (Wallerstein and Chanchien-Parajon, with assistance from Mendes and Hinshaw, 2018) is incorporating new material in Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as the core grounding for social participation and empowerment (alternatively called: participatory research, action research, participatory health research, participatory action research, investigación acción participativa, and pesquisa ação participativa, among other terms, used throughout the world). This CBPR participatory methodology has been used for research projects, as well as for community based participatory program evaluation and participatory evaluation of health actions, leading to the additional term, community based participatory approach (CBPA).

The need for training in empowerment and community participation approaches has been reinforced with the rapid expansion of: the global healthy cities and communities movement; the recognition that community voice and power are critical for social change; the increasing demands for knowledge democracy, and community participation in research, program development, and evaluation; and the need to address social and structural conditions through political and policy activism, from the local to the transnational scale. This course has been developed to revolutionize the way communities, individuals, and organizations work together. We are all part of various systems that link us, allow us to interact, and create policies that will act upon us. By constructing an environment where power and skills are shared, diverse voices have a chance to dialogue and work together to improve health and social equity world-wide.

We encourage everyone to use and adapt any of these materials, to add your own, and to keep growing the body of work that supports a more equitable and healthier society globally.

The third edition of this curriculum including trainings and consultation, will be available in Spring, 2019. Currently, the second edition is available for download: https://cpr.unm.edu/curricula--classes/empowerment-curriculum.html

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Curriculum Logistics:

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OPTIONAL MODULES:
- Cultural Humility/ Power and Privilege
- Results Based Accountability for Program Evaluation: Performance Measures
- Alliances and Barriers: Deepening Awareness of Discrimination
- Conflict Management
- Social Communication
- Guide to Developing Freire-based Empowerment Workshops

**Option 1**: Introduction to Community Empowerment and CBPR: 4 hours (1 half-day)

**Option 2**: Basic Tools for Community Empowerment and CBPR: 12 hours (1.5 to 2 days)

**Option 3**: Applying Tools in Practice: Community Empowerment and CBPR: 40 hours (4- 5 days)
Comprehensive **Facilitator Guides** for each module include objectives, facilitator notes for each activity, handouts, and recommendations for reading for the eight core modules. Each individual module is also accompanied by two powerpoints (one that contains more academic content for University use if preferred), and handouts for interactive learning and sharing. Each module has overarching learning objectives and activities to inspire dialogue, reflection, and actions.

The Facilitator Guides include:

**Overarching Learning Objectives divided into three modalities:**
- **Head:** Knowledge and information covered
- **Heart:** Emotional connections and affective learnings from the dialogue
- **Feet:** Individual and Collective actions that can be taken as a result of reflections

**Duration and materials needed for each activity**

**Facilitator Notes:**
- Why this activity
- Instructions for participants

**Evaluation or Reflection Questions**

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