

# Community of Practice Discussion Summary



Topic: Participatory Methods in Community-Based Research: a case study using critical feminist pedagogical analysis

November's Community of Practice explored the topic of participatory methods in community-based research, with guest speaker María Gangotena, PhD, St. Francis Xavier University.

Here's a summary of what CoP participants shared in response to: 1) assessing the efficacy and impact of participatory methodologies; 2) meaningful community engagement/capacity bridging using participatory models; and 3) factors that shape the success of community facilitators.

## How do you assess the efficacy and impact of participatory methodologies?

### 1. Collaboratively decide on desired changes

Prior to the beginning of a research project, involve community members and other key stakeholders to provide clarity on the desired changes the community wants to see at the end of the study.

### 2. Measure community well-being and active participation

Researchers should measure, in an ongoing way, both community well-being and community participation, including a community sense of ownership and control over the research processes as well as community outcomes at the project's outset.

### 3. Co-design research tools that are culturally responsive

Researchers should co-design research tools that are culturally responsive and that bridge capacities among the academic and community research team members.

### 4. Use qualitative methods

Qualitative methods can capture the subtle and cumulative impact of participatory methodologies.

### 5. Acknowledge positionality to account for biases

Acknowledge the positionality and the intersectionality of researchers and others participating in the research processes to understand potential biases and subtle differences in meanings or expressions.

## What are important considerations when using participatory models to achieve meaningful community engagement and capacity bridging?

### 1 Building long-term relationships

Relationship building cannot be an afterthought and should be established before calls for research proposals. The community should be involved from the very beginning in all aspects of the research.

### 2 Respecting the capacities of the community

Community facilitators and participants come to the project with expertise, including in the community and lived experience. Academic researchers, community facilitators and participants can all build on each other's strengths.

### 3 Empowering peer researchers to conduct research

Training community researchers with lived experience to conduct research, helps build trust among community members and enhance the authenticity of knowledge.

### 4 Continuously collaborating and adapting to community needs

Regularly checking-in and adapting methodologies based on the context and community needs.

### 5 Considering Artistic Methods

Artistic methods, such as drawing, photovoice, and digital storytelling, can be helpful methods when dealing with sensitive topics.

## What factors shape the success of community facilitators in their role?

**1 Community stewardship of the research project:** Community buy-in is crucial and the community facilitator's role in the research is central to making the project a success.

**2 Community facilitators as co-researchers:** The community facilitator is considered a co-researcher who aids in seeing the community through their lenses. They offer a better understanding of the community and context, going beyond transcripts and addressing personal biases that academic researchers might have.

**3 The qualities and skillsets of community facilitator(s):** Some qualities and skillsets that can lead to effective community facilitators include: clear and effective communication, active listening, cultural competence, empathy, adaptability, facilitation skills, relationship building, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills.

**4 Instilling inclusivity and trustworthiness:** The community facilitator is a link and respected member of the community and is able to use community language to ensure community members feel 'inside the research', helping to instill trustworthiness.

**5 Upholding rigour by bridging capacities:** Community facilitators come to the table with invaluable expertise in the community and are core members of the research team. Opportunities for training to strengthen research skills can help bridge capacities and help achieve research rigour.

**6 Compensation and accountability to the community:** It is critical to compensate community researchers fairly and timely, not only financially, but also in recognizing their contributions to the research. It is also essential to report back to research participants and the community about the data and findings and how it can be used to make an impact.

**7 Succession planning:** Considerations should be made for succession planning in order to maintain relationships and trust with the community through the duration of the project, in case of turnover.

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