**Developing Youth Capacity for Community-Based Research: Evaluation Results from the Sarasota Youth Initiative**

Kelli McCormack Brown, Ph.D., CHES,
Carol A. Bryant, Ph.D., Danielle Landis, Ph.D.,
Melinda S. Forthofer, Ph.D.,
Robert J. McDermott, Ph.D., &
Susan Calkins, BS

**Community-Based Prevention Marketing Project**

- Community organization principles and prevention marketing
- Sarasota County, Florida
- Smoking and alcohol initiation among middle school age youth

**Involving Youth**

- Important to ensure validity of qualitative data
- We had some reservations about using youth as researchers
- Community members’ experience and the literature suggested youth could be partners in collaborative research (Harper & Carver, 1999)

**Training**

- Youth training different than adult training
  - cognition and conceptualization
  - attention span
  - energy level
- 60-page curriculum guidebook
- two-day training
Training Elements

- 10 training elements (Landis et al., 1999)
  1. Looking through a kaleidoscope
  2. You can't win if you don't play
  3. Student, teach thyself
  4. Using the right side of the brain
  5. Let's give a round of applause

Training elements, cont.

- 6. There's no "I" in team
- 7. Be all that you can be
- 8. Déjà vu all over again
- 9. See, speak and do
- 10. I think I can, I think I can

Youth Training: Lessons Learned

- 4 primary lessons learned (Landis et al., 1999)
  1. Be flexible
  2. Begin at the beginning
  3. Practice makes perfect
  4. Believe

Evaluation of Youth Researchers

- Youth perceptions of their ability to moderate focus groups and conduct in-depth interviews
- Staff ratings of youth effectiveness in moderating focus groups
Youth Perceptions
- Following the youth training, the youth completed the *Interviewer Efficacy Evaluation*
- Assessed their perceived ability to conduct interviews

Interviewer Efficacy Evaluation
- Level of confidence before and after training
  - Doing indepth interviews
  - Listening skills
  - Non-biased response skills
  - Probing skills
  - Taping and note taking skills

Youth Moderator Evaluation by Staff
- Two sections:
  - Moderator evaluation
    - Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent (1-5)
    - Average score
  - Structure of group discussion
    - Yes, No (1,0)
    - Average score

Moderator Evaluation
- Preparation for the group
- Manner with FG participants
- Effectiveness in handling group influence
Preparation for the group

- 4 variables
  - Understands the background & subject matter of the project
  - Understands the research objectives
  - Has the topic guide memorized
  - Was ready before the group assembled

In general, the moderator's understanding of the background and subject manner was rated as very good.

- Average score: 4.03

Manner with FG participants

13 variables

- Relaxed & friendly
- Stimulates group interaction
- Generates enthusiasm & involvement
- Listens
- Displays warmth & empathy
- Nonjudgmental
- Neutral body language & facial
- Probes w/o leading
- Conveys incomplete understanding
- Sensitive to group disclosure
- Blends in, but controls
- Improvises when necessary
- Flexible

Very good to excellent on being relaxed and friendly, being nonjudgmental, probing without leading, displaying neutral body language and facial expressions

- Good to excellent in blending in while maintaining control
- Average score: 3.87
Effectiveness in handling group influence
- 6 variables
  - Discourages simultaneous talking
  - Retains group spontaneity
  - Discourages irrelevant conversation
  - Permits individual differences of opinion
  - Brings shy group members into the discussion
  - Controls dominant group members

Very good to excellent on discouraging simultaneous talking & permitting individual differences of opinion
- Good to very good in discouraging irrelevant conversation, bringing shy group members into discussion & controlling dominant members
- Average score: 3.63

Structure of Group Discussion
- Moderator's opening
- Warm-up
- Body of the group discussion
- Closure
- Post-group evaluation issues

Moderator's Opening
- 8 variables
  - Puts respondents at ease
  - Explained group’s purpose
  - Encouraged conflicting opinions
  - Established moderator neutrality
  - Established openness
  - Group rules
  - Began developing rapport
  - Smooth transition into next phase
Moderator's Opening

- In general they were able to put the respondents' at ease, establish openness, give group "rules," develop rapport, & provide smooth transition to next phase
- Average score: .9

Warm-up

- 9 variables
  - Established rapport
  - Obtained necessary background info.
  - Began stimulating group interaction
  - Gave all members a chance to speak
  - Decreased speech anxiety
  - Established a "safe place"
  - Enabled others to get to know one another
  - Stayed within time limits
  - Smooth transition to next phase
- Average score: .84

Warm-up

- Moderators were able to establish rapport with FG members, give all respondents an opportunity to speak, establish the group as a “safe place,” stay within time limits, and provide a smooth transition to next phase
- Average score: .84

Body of the Group Discussion

- 8 variables
  - Moved from general to specific
  - Did not disclose key issues too soon
  - Obtained a depth of responses for key issues
  - Obtained members’ true feelings
  - Linked info. into a whole
  - Exhibited appropriate facilitating and controlling behavior
  - Smooth transition to next phase
Body of the Group Discussion

- Moderators were able to move from the general to the specific, obtain members’ true feelings about topics, and exhibited appropriate facilitating and controlling behavior
- Some difficulty with obtaining a depth of responses to key issues
- Average score: .88

Closure

- 6 variables
  - Identified key themes
  - Summarized key ideas
  - Revealed strength of attitudes
  - Consolidated group feelings
  - Identified individual differences of opinion
  - Gathered all respondent comments

Closure

- Performed by co-moderator
- They were able to identify key themes and summarize key ideas
- Difficulty with revealing strength of attitudes and identifying individual differences of opinion
- Average score: .82

Post-group evaluation issues

- 2 variables
  - Is substantial amount of post-group analysis necessary to separate true respondent feelings from those expressed due to moderator demands?
  - Was this group conducted so that it can be evaluated across a series of groups, or will differences cloud the evaluation?
Post-group evaluation issues
- Youth were successful in conducting the FGs so that substantial biases were not introduced to confound individual group findings allowing findings from each group to be combined and evaluated as a whole
- Average score: .50

Conclusion
- Based on the Interviewer Training Efficacy Evaluation and the Youth Moderator Evaluation by staff
  - Youth can be viable partners in community-based action/participatory research