

Knowledge Animation and Community-based Participatory Praxis: Engaging Diverse Communities in Research Practice from the Bottom Up

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Collaborative Research Team

- 8 community animators (cultural brokers),
- 12 (non) governmental stakeholders and service providers, and
- Over 315 community members from 6 ethno-cultural communities (i.e. African, Eastern European, Filipino, Hispanic, Chinese -Mandarin speaking) and South Asian) representing ITPs.
- Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
- Alberta Immigration & Employment



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Paper Focus & Outline

- This paper describes the use of a community animation process (CAP) to understand the lived experiences of internationally trained professionals (ITPs) (i.e. their challenges, opportunities, and prospects for labour market integration) in a Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) project in a western Canadian city of Edmonton.
- The CAP was utilized through several stages involving knowledge animation in the participant recruitment and data collection processes as a way to facilitate community dialogue about barriers and facilitators impacting ITPs' employment integration, and engage community members in providing solutions.

- Brief background of the study and context
- Briefly describe the methodology utilised (focusing on CAP and use of knowledge animation)
- Describe the process and its impact, limitations
- Some conclusions based on collective learning of the team, but also from other participants.




IMMIGRATION TO EDMONTON (ALBERTA)

Migrant Population

Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada

Table 2 Visible minority population and top three visible minority groups, selected census metropolitan areas, Canada, 2011

	Total population		Visible minority population		Top 3 Visible minority groups
	number	percentage	number	percentage	
Canada	32,852,325	6,254,755	18.1	South Asian, Chinese, Black	
Toronto	6,521,235	2,898,420	47.0	South Asian, Chinese, Black	
Montreal	3,752,475	782,325	20.3	Black, Arab, Latin American	
Vancouver	2,280,695	1,050,335	45.2	Chinese, South Asian, Filipino	
Ottawa - Gatineau	1,215,735	234,015	19.2	Black, Arab, Chinese	
Calgary	1,199,125	337,420	28.1	South Asian, Chinese, Filipino	
Edmonton	1,139,585	254,980	22.4	South Asian, Chinese, Filipino	
Winnipeg	714,630	140,770	19.7	Filipino, South Asian, Black	
Hamilton	705,175	101,500	14.3	South Asian, Black, Chinese	

Sources: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011

- In 2000 the main source countries contributing 34.4% of refugees was Africa and the Middle East (Stats Canada, 2011).
- In 2004, 38.5% of refugees were from Africa and the Middle East (Stats Canada, 2011:20).
- Out of the total number of refugees to Canada in 2004, 7.2% settled in Alberta (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004).



Sources: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004. Facts and Figures 2004: Immigration Overview – Permanent and Temporary Residents.

Government Interventions (Policy & Programmatic)

- **In Canada, 1993 changes to skilled economic immigrant selection:**
 - Increased points for academic qualifications
 - Increased share of “skilled” economic immigrants
 - More “human capital” approach to selection
- **This policy change resulted in:**
 - More rapid increase in supply of highly educated immigrants in Canada from non-historical sources
 - Increased infrastructure to facilitate employment integration through assessment and recognition of Foreign Qualifications, employment training and bridging programs, language training, etc
- **But still:**
 - How do internationally trained professionals adapt to a labour market?
 - How do they navigate the complex paths that the employment context demands?



Community-driven Project: Funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada & Alberta Employment
Underemployment within Ethno-cultural Communities in Edmonton: An Environmental Scan and Database

Mixed Methodology Design: Main Data Sources

Quantitative	Qualitative
Immigrant Skills Inventory (ISI) www.immigrantskills.ca (N=397)	Community consultation process utilizing community animators in six ethno-cultural communities (Knowledge Animation process) (N=315)
Sampling and Design: Diverse sample in terms of age, gender, country of origin, professional fields, etc	Sampling and Design: focus group using a snowball sampling process (word of mouth) to invite community members in the African, Eastern European, Filipino, Hispanic, Mandarin Speaking and South Asian communities.
Research Questions: demographics (age, gender, country of origin, immigration status, occupation-previous & current); employment experiences, barriers and facilitators to employment; recommendations .	Research Questions: employment experiences, barriers and facilitators to employment; strategies for community engagement and action, and recommendations



Summary of Activities

- ❑ Community process in identifying an issue (needs assessment, asset mapping)
- ❑ Designing a community-based participatory action research process for entry (environmental scan)
- ❑ Establishing a community collaborative team
- ❑ Designing the research protocols (Action research instruments, process and implementation, evaluation)
- ❑ **Facilitating a research process (data collection, synthesis, and analysis- CAP process)**
- ❑ **Member check and community engagement process (evaluation of process)**
- ❑ Dissemination for practice and policy change



Community Animation Process

Qualitative

Community consultation process utilizing community animators in six ethno-cultural communities (knowledge Animation process)
(N=315)

- The CAP was utilized during the different stages of the CBPAR not only as a way to facilitate community dialogue about issues impacting ITPs, but also as a way to engage community interventions.

Evaluation of the research strategies to collect information.
Documentation of the process and preliminary review
Development of a template for community animation and analysis of the data.

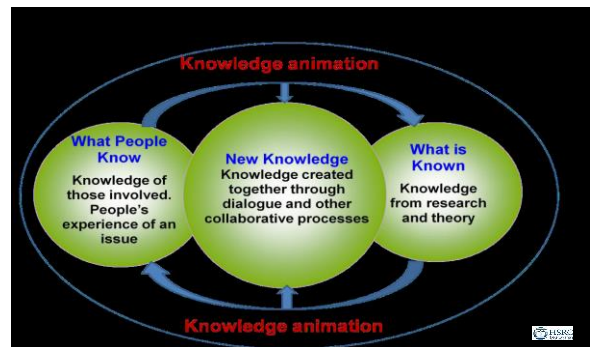


Evaluating the Community Animation Process

- Effectiveness of engagement and communication strategies in the research process
- Community engagement processes (entry).
- Legitimacy and applicability of methods and strategies facilitated (CAP, CBPAR).
- Community mobilization strategies
- Community actions as a result of the research process



Community Animation Process



Evaluation:

The Research Process: Applicability, Effectiveness, & Strategies

- The participants indicated that they are participating in this project as community members, followed by agency liaison, and others represented their ethno-cultural communities.
- Of the six animators, five indicated that the overall quality of community participation in the project was “good” to “very good”.



Strategy

“Overall the quality of all targeted community participation was satisfactorily good. But specifically African community’s quality participation, in my view, I rate Satisfactory. The reason is we did not actively and aggressively persuade members of our community to participate in the project” (Animator).



Effectiveness

"We were able to illustrate the effectiveness of the community approach to reaching the "hard to reach" – i.e. immigrant & refugee community members. Both the animation process and the tapping into the natural channels for information dissemination (ethnic media, community websites, key community "hubs" where people naturally congregate...) are processes unique to our communities. The challenges have been for some animators, they are already overburdened with other commitments and therefore unable to undertake the process in a timely fashion" (Animator).



Application

"Provided strategic leadership and coordinated the operational activity of the project with limited human and financial resources. I also joined the project mid-cycle and was able to ensure that timelines and deliverables were met" (Animator).



Engagement Process

"I have learned many things from this research process about our community engagement. I found that there are many highly educated background people, like engineers, lawyers, professors, doctors etc. but because they don't have too much information in how they can succeed in the Canadian society, they are4 forced to work in other nonprofessional fields" (Animator).



Community Engagement Process

"I learned that the community animator approach was crucial for the community engagement process and participation in this project. By having community leaders working with their own communities showed community ownership and trust. I also recognize that the advisory committee played a key role on bridging connections with other organizations to help accomplish the objectives of the project" (Animator).



Community Engagement Process cont...

“I became more familiar with the community animation process and gained an appreciation of the role of the animator in facilitating community linkages. Working with six ethno-cultural communities allowed for an exploration of a variety of community engagement strategies – it was interesting to observe the differences and similarities. I also learnt that establishing trust is fundamental to developing community partnerships” (advisory member).



Overall

- CAP was an effectiveness method for community engagement and community animators/cultural brokers played a significant role in knowledge animation and mobilisation process (communication strategies).
- The CAP process was anchored within action research (CBPAR) paradigm, which proved to be a legitimate method to engage
- The process was easily applicable and the strategies adopted were responsive to community needs and issues
- Community mobilization strategies (post data collection) did not yield desired outcomes due to time constraints and commitment, but actions that emerged were impactful to spark a community mobilisation process.

Key Barriers in the Community Engagement Process

- Time constrain and time commitment
- Knowledge Translation/Transfer
- Research Fatigue- Too much research –some action, uncaptured impact at the material level.
- Getting people together to discuss research findings (member check) was not as robust as the data collection process



Limitations for Action

“Originally, we have conceived this “research process” as a participatory action research, which required timely action taken during the process. Yet, we didn’t have the resources (financial and human resource) to actually do it. This has caused a sense of lack of responsiveness or lack of momentum on the part of the animators and community participants” (Animator)



Key Learnings in CAP

- **On a practical level, the community animation process assisted the research team to:**

- ❑ document rich information about the level and range of issues and lived experiences of ITPs (underemployment, labor force participation, barriers, facilitators etc)
- ❑ document the process of community engagement, detailing both the process and progress of entry and engagement with diverse constituencies,
- ❑ gain insight in terms of assessing needs of ITPs to improve policy and practice interventions for labor market integration, and
- ❑ critically learn the “how” of community-based participatory action information gathering with an intention to inform policy
- ❑ engage communities through a research process grounded in community empowerment.



Key Learnings in CAP cont...

Cultural brokers as knowledge animators

- ❑ Cultural brokering is the act of linking or mediating between different cultural groups (Jezewski, 1993).
- ❑ A cultural broker is an individual who acts as an intermediary between two or more cultural groups, bridging differences of language, faith, politics, and customs (Szasz, 1994).
- ❑ Paraprofessionals, settlement workers, bilingual co-workers, and diversity liaisons who are members of ethnocultural communities are all examples of cultural brokers (Owen & English, 2005; Yohani, 2013).
- ❑ Collaboration between cultural brokers and community practitioners is recognized as potentially empowering for engagement (Raval, 2005) and a potential solution to delivery challenges (Laurence et al., 2003; Singh, McKay, & Singh, 1999).
- ❑ Potential benefits: increased dialogue and learning, increased effectiveness of culturally-sensitive services, and improved communication between health service providers and migrant communities.



Summary of Observations about the CAP

- ❑ CAP allows communities to reflect upon and deliberately create a sense of reality, purpose and meaning, often generating new knowledge that will enhance practice.
- ❑ Through the animation process we were able to stimulate desired action learning possibilities.
- ❑ The research collaborative team and participants alike were able to learn and use ideas generated through engagement to create their own useful knowledge and solutions.
- ❑ CAP is an effective strategy for engagement in facilitating inter-sectoral dialogues and collaborations across a variety of key stakeholders in a mixed method study investigating the experiences of internationally trained professionals (ITPs).



Lessons Learned

- ❑ Utilizing community animators (cultural brokers) as resources in framing the different stages of the research process from initial discussion about funding to data collection to data analysis and final to the dissemination. This enables community animators to act as conduits from the initial project development phase, providing the necessary cultural scripts beyond the researchers reach for the community.
- ❑ Disseminating research information requires a humility effect on the part of researchers to communicate research finding in reachable ways. Thus, during member check forums information could have been presented using simple formats that a diverse audience could capture. This facilitates a process in which the community can engage in non-threatening dialogue with the research/implementation team;
- ❑ Planning of community forums/consultation included that the research team and community animators use diverse methods responsive to their respective communities to recruit participants (for both the quantitative survey and focus groups).



Lessons Learned cont....

- Tracking such micro level strategies requires highly intensive planning from the research team. At times, establishing a similar strategy was challenging, given the diversity in engagement methods adopted by community animators.
- Tracking culturally embedded engagement processes must be captured on a regular basis so that we don't limit the possibility to learn from communities.
- The animation process stimulated individuals to become aware and conscious of the issues while they regard themselves as principal actors in carving solutions.
- Community animation proved to be a good strategy for entry into the community.
- This permits the information gathering process to create opportunities for co-learning among all participants.



THANK YOU...
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