

The Promise of Participatory Research in Scaling Up Physical Activity Interventions

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What is Participatory Research?

We use “Participatory Research” as a general term for a group of approaches that share a core inclusion philosophy and to recognise the value of engagement in the research process

What is Participatory Research?

Participatory research is broadly defined as “systematic inquiry, with the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied, for purposes of education and taking action or effecting change.”

Green, George, Daniel, Frankish, Herbert, et al., 1995

What is Participatory Research

Participants may be involved in **decision-making** around various aspects of the study; but at a minimum, they must be involved in:

- Shaping the scope and objectives of the research
- Interpreting the results
- Disseminating the findings

What is Participatory Research?

Participatory Research is **not a method** but **an approach** or guiding framework.

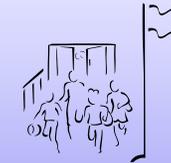
It can be used in a broad range of qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods study designs and methodologies, such as environmental appraisals, randomised controlled trials, arts-based methods (e.g., photo voice), and qualitative case studies.

Using photovoice with Aboriginal elementary students to inform the development of the physical activity component of a school health & wellness policy:

Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project

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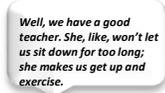
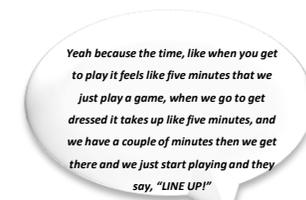


Introduction

- The Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP) is a community based participatory research organization with the goal of preventing type 2 diabetes by promoting active living, healthy eating and positive attitudes in their Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) community.
- KSDPP recently began collaborations with academic researchers on a project which sought to develop and implement a physical activity (PA) component for the existing elementary school-based health and wellness policy.
- A variety of methods were used to collect baseline data to inform the development of this PA policy, including stakeholder focus groups, PA recall surveys, a school environment survey, and this photovoice project.
- The goal of the photovoice project was to gather information on students' views and practices of PA in and around school and how to promote it to meet their needs.

Methods

- Participants: students in grades 5 & 6 from the two major local elementary schools.
- Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997): students took photographs about being active in their community, wrote captions for select photographs, and engaged in photo-elicited focus groups.
- Analysis: thematic content analysis of the focus groups transcriptions and photo captions.



Findings

Facilitators	Barriers	Recommendations
Active opportunities	Activity not offered Lack of enjoyment Competing activities	Increase activities offered Increase movement in classroom
Adequate built environment	Inadequate built environment	Changes to built environment
Adequate equipment	Inadequate equipment	Provide and take care of equipment
Facilitative rules Time allotted for recess	Restrictive rules Time constraints	School rule changes
---	Gender stereotypes	---
Favourable seasonal conditions	Unfavourable seasonal conditions	---
---	Safety issues	Changes to built environment

Conclusions

- Few studies have explored Aboriginal children's views and practices of PA. The children described a variety of ways they enjoy being active and expressed many perceived barriers and facilitators that coincide with what has been observed in other PA literature.
- Based on the children's wishes and suggestions, several policy and environment oriented recommendations for improvement of school and community PA levels were identified.
- The photovoice and other baseline results were presented to a stakeholder committee and used to create the new school-based PA policy for the upcoming 2012-2013 school year.

Reference

Wang, C. & Burris, M.A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24.

Acknowledgements



Check out more publications at WWW.KSDPP.OR



Potential Benefits of Participatory Research

Interest in Participatory Research approaches in health promotion has increased in recent decades due to their potential to:

- Eliminate health disparities and overcome gaps between research and practice
- Address social justice issues
- Improve recruitment, sustainability and the extension of programmes
- Create conditions that will facilitate people's control over health determinants

Core Principles of Participatory Research



Core Principles: Mutual Respect and Trust

- Relationship building
- Building mutual respect and trust requires time and patience and, once established, they need to be consistently nurtured



Core Principles: Capacity Building, Empowerment, and Ownership

- Capacity reflects the potential (e.g., knowledge, skills, networks) of an organization, community, or other partners to address relevant health issues
- Raising awareness of the root causes underlying health issues, which can result in a sense of ownership and mobilize people to act



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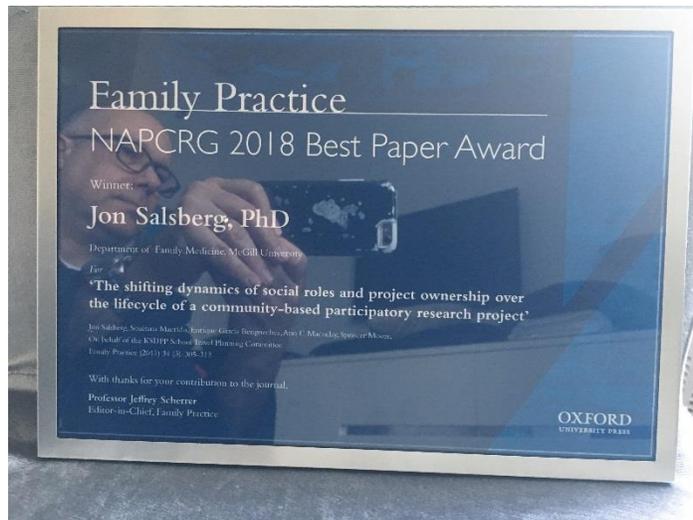
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Health Service research

The shifting dynamics of social roles and project ownership over the lifecycle of a community-based participatory research project

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Travel Planning Committee[†]



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Qualitative Research

Engagement strategies that foster community self-determination in participatory research: Insider ownership through outsider championship

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Core Principles: Accountability and Sustainability

- Academic and non-academic partners share responsibility to each other and their funders to ensure their project will achieve the intended objectives
- Sustainability involves maintaining the partnership's capacity, resources, and research outcomes



Criteria for Assessing Participatory Research Studies

Table 1. Fundamental criteria for a research study to be considered participatory (adapted from Mercer et al., 2008)

Participants and the nature of their involvement	Shaping the purpose and scope of the research	Research implementation and context	Nature of the research outcomes
Adequately described participants to assess their representation	The research question is developed (refined) through a collaborative process between researchers and participants	The knowledge and experience of participants is applied in the implementation	Commitment of all participants to the action following the research (acquired learning)
Address the barriers to participation by participants	The project provides mutual learning among participants and researchers	Know the participants' viewpoints in terms of the issues studied	Opportunity to participate in dissemination of project findings to other participants and researchers

Criticisms to Physical Activity Intervention Research

- Imbalance between focus on **internal validity** and **external validity** in physical activity intervention studies
- Reduced relevance, generalization and applicability of research in “real-world” circumstances
- Physical activity interventions rarely sustained or **integrated into existing structures or systems**

Hallal et al., 2012; Reis et al., 2016

Identifying the Value of Participatory Research in Physical Activity Promotion

Table 2. The value of using PR and main challenges of this approach in PA promotion

Research Phases and Added Value of PR	Challenges of PR in PA Promotion		
<i>Phase 2: Research implementation and context</i>	Mutual Respect and Trust	Capacity-building, Empowerment and Ownership	Accountability and Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improving quality of the research, with different designs and methodologies (9). -Increasing the recruitment and retaining rates (58,59) -Reducing information bias (60). -Reducing the error of measuring questions that are not culturally aligned (31). -Improving the results of research with implementation contexts (27,46). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Integrating the research into the system that the intervention aims to benefit from (46,61). -Considering the notion of participants' experience (9). -Creating decision-making atmosphere that supports diversity and permits the expression of different opinions (9). -Achieving effective leadership, strong synergies and facilities in the type of communication (9). -Considering that it is a complex process, that it requires time and patience (22,62). -Improving implementation with neutral and respected coordinators and mediators, a consensus decision rule and continuous participation (34). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Getting all partners to be good listeners, flexible in terms of objectives, open to learning and doing things, and to recognise and respect the experience of each other (55). -Facilitating development and monitoring of intermediate results in capacity development, empowerment and ownership (9,27). -Reinforcing strategies aimed at creating a sense of community and belonging among the community agents about the process (7,63). -Promoting cooperative planning and the existence and occurrence of events to capture the wealth of processes and actors engaged in cooperative planning (34) -Highlighting that the commitment of the stakeholders can be carried out with a variety of configurations and may be a highly adaptable process (8,64). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engaging community stakeholders in the development and implementation of programmes, for significant impact on appropriation and sustainability (8,64). -Improving sustainability of alliances and created strategies (32).

Pattern matches for **importance** and **feasibility** of scalability factors for physical activity interventions (Reis et al., 2016)

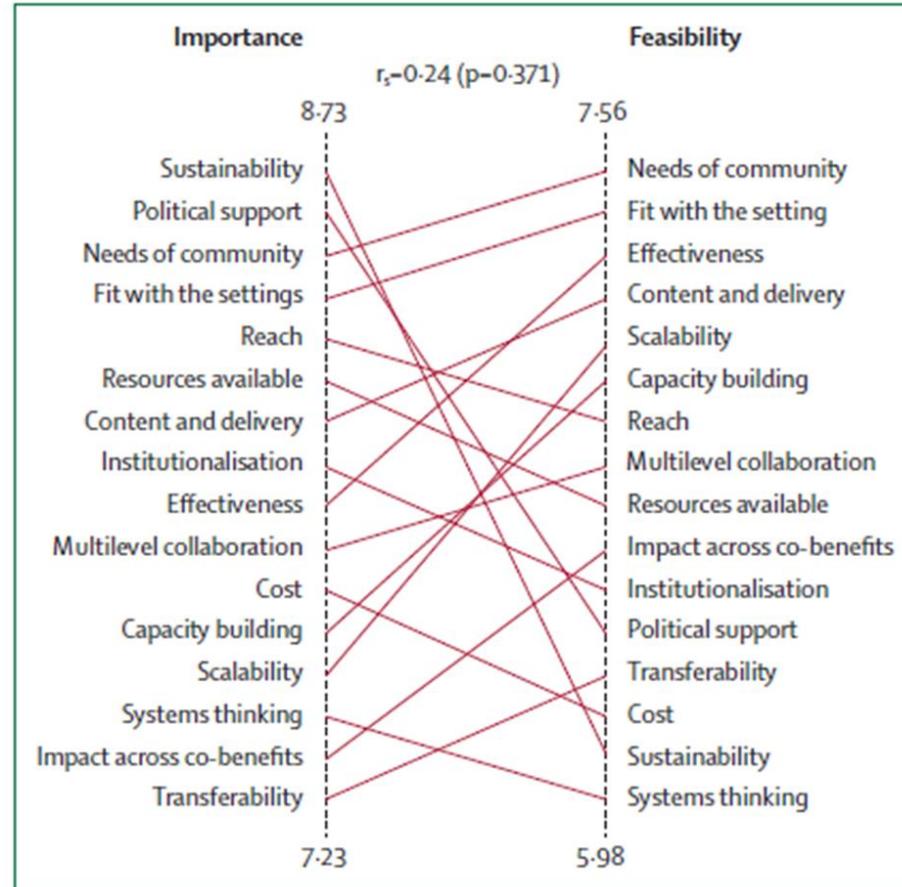
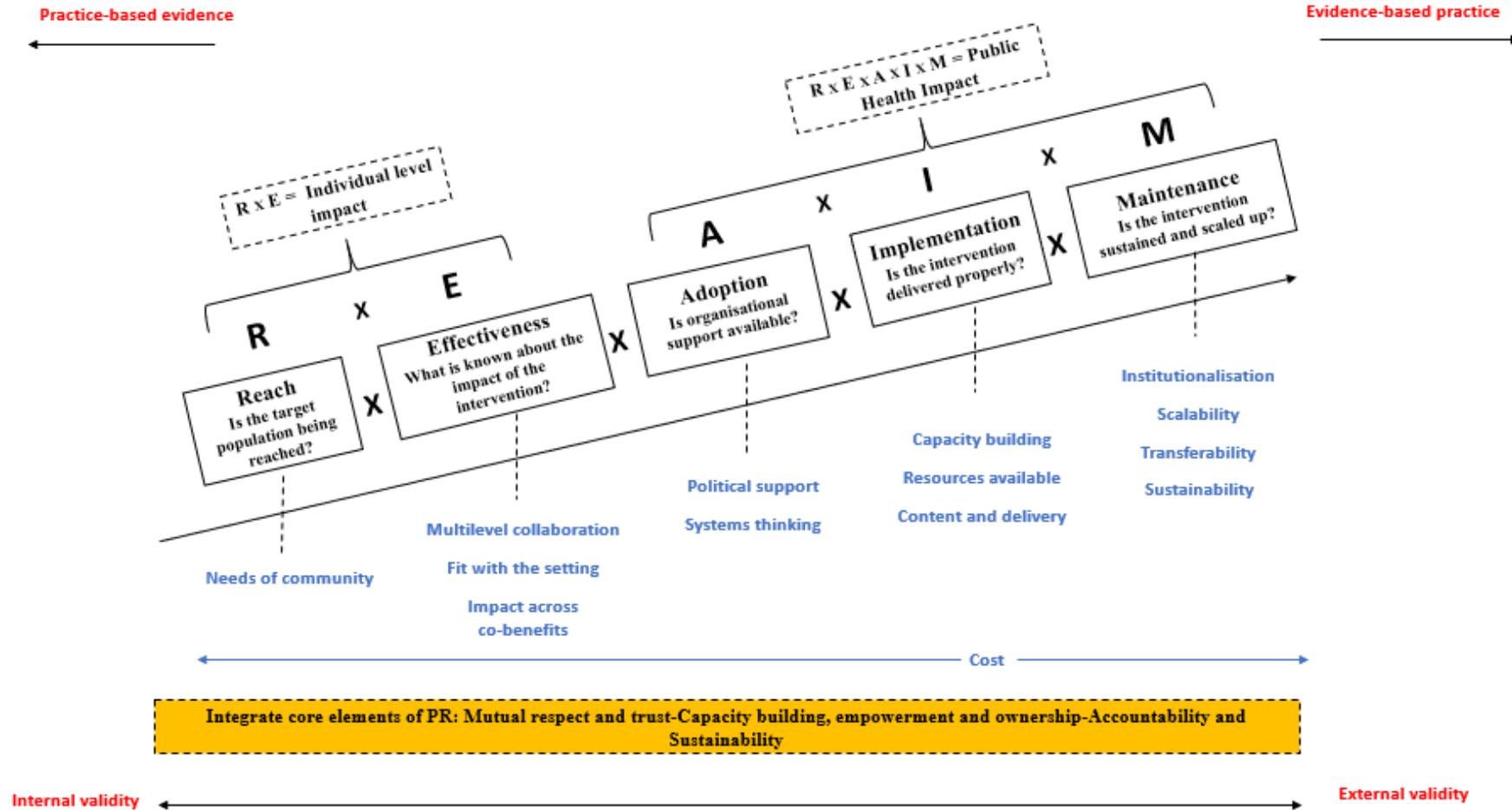


Figure 1. Framework for scaling-up of physical activity interventions, integrating key scalability factors and core participatory research elements (adapted from Glasgow, et al., 1999; and Reis et al., 2016)



Additional Considerations

- Participatory research can be a useful way of integrating the translation of knowledge into practice by identifying and engaging with knowledge users throughout the research process
- The participatory approach helps assure that the 'evidence' in evidence-based programming is derived from the context where it needs to be applied; thus increasing external validity and, ultimately, sustainability

Additional Considerations

When interventions that have been developed through a process consistent with the principles of participatory research are scaled up, we must be mindful of where **the new locus of ownership and control** will lie, or else risk losing the mechanism of sustainability created through the original participatory process.

Additional Considerations

Using participatory research may generate disagreements among the stakeholders during the decision-making processes. These disagreements may, sometimes, have negative consequences for the research process; but if resolved, they can lead to stronger partnerships and positive results for subsequent research and programmes.

Policy Implications

Identify, Involve and engage meaningfully with end users throughout the research process

