

2010 CCPRC Annual Meeting
Workshop Session B1
October 21, 2010, 2:30 p.m.

Methodological Issues in Studies with Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Families

Description

This breakout session, using a roundtable format, provided an opportunity for CCPRC members to share lessons learned related to the study of diverse families. Methodological issues in studying linguistically and culturally diverse families were identified as well as successful strategies for addressing these issues.

Facilitators

Dina Castro, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Eva Marie Shivers, Indigo Cultural Center, Inc.

Presenters

Helen Ward, University of Southern Maine
Kay Sanders, Whittier College

Scribe

Laura Martinez, Finance Project

1. Documents in Session Folder: None

2. Summary of Presentation: Round Table Discussion

- **Overview:** The focus of this round table discussion was to encourage conversation about doing research on/with diverse populations (economically, culturally, ethnic, etc). What are the challenges and limitations in doing research with diverse populations?
- **Design Issues.** Presenters and roundtable participants commented on challenges and limitations they have faced in conducting research with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. They also offered approaches they have employed or encountered for overcoming these challenges.
 - Participatory research methods: members of the community being studied are collaborators, partners, or participate in defining aspects of a research project. At the very least, researchers sit down with members of the community to shape the research methods utilized. Participatory research is a promising approach to doing research with diverse populations, especially populations that are not well-represented in the existing research on a topic. One way to start is with a community agency, determining what they want – what are their goals? It is important to meet with them and ask how they feel change is made. In addition, focus groups are a valuable method for gathering perspectives of community members and identifying shared goals, beliefs, and practices related to the topics of concern to the research project.
 - In designing research, it has often been important to meet with State leaders who work with similar populations, including multiple small cultural groups/segments.

- It is important to find appropriate measures for specific groups. Often, research projects are challenged when trying to study special populations such as immigrants who have not been the focus of past research on a topic.
 - It can be hard to think about who to include in a sample and why.
 - One of the first steps is answering “Why are we doing this study?” There is no single approach; in each study you need to be clear why you are doing the study and what are you trying to get out of it. As with any study, but especially when dealing with diversity, you really have to assess your assumptions (e.g. Chinese families tend to have higher levels of education).
 - Country of origin, generational differences, and cultural differences can sometimes be controlled for through sampling design or statistically; however, large studies don’t always allow you to look at other social nuances because important constructs such as generational status are not measured.
- **Recruitment**
 - In studies of culturally and linguistically diverse families, design and recruitment issues sometimes blend together. Language barriers can be an issue, and sometimes you can make too many caveats. You need to figure out the best way to reach people. In order to study a population, it is very important to get feedback from that group and make sure questions make sense and are meaningful to respondents, instead of jumping into the process prematurely. Without knowing a culture, you can misinterpret responses.
 - Who we want to recruit is an issue, but how we communicate with sub-population groups also needs to be addressed. At the recruitment level, things don’t always go as planned. How can we better monitor this?
 - It is helpful to look at cultural organizations within the community. It’s important to learn how to establish legitimacy about approaching people on the street and providing a venue for comments and questions prior to a focus group or study.
 - It may be useful to examine how cultures collide and possible cross-references between cultures.
 - Groups are often very diverse within “studied” groupings. It is useful to have someone familiar with the group help explain the study. Allow sufficient time to recruit people, including explaining the purpose of the study and creating a critical mass (e.g. get one family’s buy-in, and then get them to recruit their friends/neighbors).
 - Sometimes data collectors are not as reliable as those already working locally with the population. In a research study in Arizona, the research team trained local program facilitators to get data from family, friend, and neighbor providers.
 - One challenge has been getting people to participate. For example, in Chicago many Spanish speaking families screen their phone calls and refuse to answer calls from numbers they don’t recognize.
 - In collecting data, there can be doubt regarding the actual information being collected. We really need to push the envelope to collect the data you want.
 - The IRB protocol process can also pose challenges. For example, it’s important to make sure data collection requirements such as the availability of English and Spanish language materials can be shared with the Board. IRB consent forms tend to

- be very long, and often parents do not read through them. One solution is the availability of a brochure for parents that can be provided along with the long, required consent form, which needs to be signed.
- Are there good strategies for maximizing turn-out?
 - One solution is for researchers to really embed themselves in the community.
 - Another strategy is to provide transportation for participants, or to offer a group incentive such as dinner. Focus groups in partnership with a community organization that provides food before or after the focus group, etc. can be a good strategy.
 - Cash/gift incentives can also be useful.
 - **Data Collection**
 - Piloting measures may be a good step before moving to the larger study, but sometimes instruments are misleading. Translation can be a barrier in collecting data. For example, in Oregon during a focus group that was been lead by a translator, many participants wanted to answer in English, thus substantive information was lost. At other times, translated focus groups were exhausting, and translators were not robust in their translations.
 - Crossing cultural bridges, and being different from those you are trying to study, can be a challenge in itself. Even people who speak the same language may not be members of the same culture. Without always finding a similar/related individual to work with specific groups, we should recruit researchers and train them to be culturally sensitive with personalities that are attractive to other ethnicities. We should always think twice about assumptions, including education and class differences.
 - When conducting a study, one researcher recruited a researcher with the same ethnicity, but noticed that personality was a barrier. They were most successful using researchers with great personalities.
 - **Summary**
 - This round table focused on the challenges of designing, recruiting and collecting data on culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The presenters and participants engaged in an on-going conversation regarding the challenges and solutions they experienced in working with diverse groups. Together the group examined the underlined assumptions and strategies in conducting research on diverse population.
- 3. Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants**
- The key issues discussed related to issues of design, recruitment and data collection when working with culturally and linguistically diverse families.
 - A potential research direction is building the capacity to work with organizations to improve outreach to families. How can you nurture paraprofessionals and researchers to want to outreach and study diverse populations? One solution is to recruit and encourage people of color to work in the field. The group shared that there are natural challenges/barriers in conducting research when there are language and cultural differences between the studied population and the researcher.

- One suggested policy implication is institutionalizing the practice of researching and working with diverse populations, and finding methods that build trust and cross cultural bridges between diverse populations and researchers. We need to find ways to share strategies and experiences that will help all researchers.
- An implication for policy makers and CCDF is the need to create an on-going work group.