# Attending to Income and Employment Equity in the Development of Stronger CBR Teams: Examples from the PROUD Study

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# Background

- One of the strengths of community-based research (CBR) is that it brings together diverse teams of people, including community members, academic researchers, and decision-makers

- With diversity also comes difference. Some CBR research has highlighted differences in access to income and employment experienced by members of CBR teams

- These circumstances have been underlined by community members, who have drawn attention to income disparities, and concerns that the role of "peers" on research teams may not lead to opportunities beyond project end

# Purpose

- In this presentation, we highlight our efforts to acknowledge and address income and employment inequities within the PROUD Study.

- Incorporating *Fraser's three-dimensional model of social justice*, we explore how responses that consider redistribution, recognition, and representation can support the development of stronger teams in community-based research environments.

# Participatory Research in Ottawa:  Understanding Drugs (PROUD)



• CBR project examining the HIV risk environment among people who use drugs in Ottawa, Ontario

• Working in partnership with the Drug User Advocacy League and a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) since May 2012

# PROUD Researchers

- CAC was brought together to contribute to all aspects of the research, including the design, data collection, analysis, and knowledge translation
- CAC composed of 9 people with lived experience with drug use, two allied frontline support workers, and two ex-officio from DUAL and the AIDS Committee of Ottawa
- Consideration was paid when selecting CAC members to ensure that the lived experiences of people facing multiple and intersecting oppressions were represented
- CAC members receive an honorarium for their work on the project, recognizing their role as expert consultants
- Research team also includes academic researchers and study coordinators
- Medical students from the University of Ottawa have been recruited to work as interviewers along with CAC

# PROUD Study



- Project runs out of PROUD Place, a space in downtown Ottawa's Byward Market
- Space rented specifically for the research project
- DUAL shares space
- Recruitment and data collection take place 4 afternoons/week
- Involvement includes participation in a one-time interviewer administered questionnaire, a point-of-care HIV test and anonymous linkages to health care records available through ICES
- Over 600 participants have been interviewed between March-September 2013
- Honoraria for CAC interviewers are given for each 4-hour shift, and are not linked to participant quotas

# Methods

- Ongoing process evaluation undertaken throughout the duration of the study drawing on ethnographic and qualitative methods, including participant observation, event logs and key informant interviews
- Twelve in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with CAC members in February 2013
- This presentation draws primarily on a series of conversations with co-investigators from PROUD
  - Conversations were recorded and transcribed
  - Lead author identified key themes and quotes, with follow up feedback from interviewees and sent these to co-authors for review and approval

# Key Themes Identified as Impacting the Dynamics of CBR

1. Money, economic privilege, and systemic poverty
2. Unclear (employment) roles

# 1. Money, Economic Privilege, and Systemic Poverty

Inequity in income and opportunities based on being a "peer" were identified as factors in sustaining systemic poverty:

*"When is a peer… is a peer always a peer? Because you used drugs for a certain amount of time, does that make you a peer forever? Does it limit you to certain jobs you can do and a certain economic class? I just… I don't really, I don't know?"*

*"Yeah, that's probably a big piece. Everyone wants a job where they can feel valued for their work and to maintain a relatively comfortable wage. Because at times it is so many other things. You know? Social life and housing and health care, everything, you know? Yeah it's bad to turn it into something monetary but there's so many more benefits. Like, if I could afford an apartment as opposed to a little room, I would be so much better at my job. If I had a medical plan where I could get some medications that work for me, as opposed to what's available… On so many different levels…"*

# 1. Money, Economic Privilege, and Systemic Poverty

For others, continued involvement in the study was linked to project outcomes and tied less to financial compensation:

*"I don't mind taking orders or anything... or taking direction, but I'd rather stay poor and have a lot of autonomy than doing a lot of things I would consider compromising and make more money.*

*"You know it went from going to....something that I might make 20 dollars from to something that I feel has really helped me"*

*"As I got more involved, I stopped caring about the money when I seen how quick things started developing and when I look to the future I see what kind of positive things could potentially come from this study"*

# 2. Unclear (Employment) Roles

Unclear roles throughout the project and an unknown duration of project activities have been expressed as causing tensions for CAC:

*"I feel like it's definitely at the forefront of everybody's like mind and how we wanna do things but I think it's really difficult because we don't have the same experience and the same, like, what are we doing, the whole way we've kind of been told what we're doing even though we're leading some of it at times, but we're still always in the background being told what we're doing"*

*"Well, first and foremost, how long it would last, you know? That's always the biggest fear to me. Is everything going to crash and burn and I'm going to be on no type of benefit and end up homeless again? It's a constant fear for me."*

# Bigger Questions

- What are the broader goals of community-based research relative to transformative social change?

- Is our aim to *prioritize* local knowledge?

- How could theory inform our approaches to income and employment equity in CBR?

# Fraser's Three-Dimensional Model of Social Justice

| Dimension | Transformative Response |
|---|---|
| Economic | Redistribution |
| Cultural | Recognition |
| Political | Representation |

# Fraser's Ideas about Justice and Parity of Participation

• According to Fraser, justice is about parity of participation, or more specifically, "Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction" (2007, p. 20).

• Focused on "who counts", the political dimension, "tells us who is included, and who is excluded, from the circle of those entitled to a just distribution and reciprocal recognition" emphasizing themes of inclusion, exclusion and misrepresentation (2007, p. 21).

• Fraser's parity of participation incorporates an analysis of structural factors and emphasizes the importance of "widespread democratization in social institutions" (Zurn, 2008, p. 150).

# Conclusion and next steps

- As PROUD evolves, our team continues to reflect on concrete steps we can take to address income and employment inequities within our project.

- Exploring methods of continued involvement of CAC during analysis and KTE phases, including financial compensation and role clarification on the project.

# References

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