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Participatory action research: Addressing domestic violence using a constructivist framework

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A woman in Canada is killed by her spouse or partner every 4 days. Globally, 1 in three women will suffer relationship violence in their lifetime. The World Health Organization considers domestic violence a health epidemic. A participatory action research project was initiated in 2011 to address this very issue. Members of police, health, government, education and service providers were brought together to address this health issue. The participatory action research project started with 12 individuals but through continuous PAR cycles has grown to a membership of over 100 people from over 50 plus organizations.

This presentation will highlight the constructivist framework and the operationalization of the concepts (Multiple Ways of Knowing, Cultural Safety, and Appreciative Inquiry) that have led to a successful PAR project. As well, the resulting recommendations and changes that have occurred within the community from the project will be outlined. Perspectives of various participants, such as police, criminal justice system personnel, service providers, educators and medical services personnel, as well as the clients of programs and services – the perpetrators of violence in relationships as well as the victims/survivors shaped this work. Participants observed certain aspects/experiences of the systems that were positive, and suggested ways that these systems could be improved.

The major recommendation by participants was to create, The Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships (NEVR), and continue with the PAR cycle. The goal of this PAR called NEVR has become to create a society where relationship violence is not accepted nor tolerated. This is a research project and a community clinical placement for nursing students.

The process of creating and keeping this network together and the PAR cycles will be highlighted. It is hoped that participants will be able to use this process and framework to address the issue of relationship violence in their communities.

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