Author's response to reviews

Title: Enabling pathways to health equity: developing a framework for implementing social capital in practice

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Author's response to reviews:

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RE: MS: 9736940418468977
Research article
‘Enabling pathways to health equity: a qualitative study of social capital in practice’
Christine Putland, Fran E Baum, Anna M Ziersch, Kathy D Arthurson and Dorota Pomagalska

Dear Editor/s,

Below is a point by point description of amendments to the manuscript in response to the reviewers’ recommended revisions. These changes are also highlighted in the text.

Reviewer 1: Jan E Ritchie

1. Table 1: Reviewer questions whether Table 1 works well enough in defining the three case studies – suggests if retain table then need more attention to layout, otherwise place material in body of text.
   • As suggested we have edited the layout of Table 1 to make it easier to read.

2. Data analysis: Suggests authors make clear that attention to rigour was also addressed by another two data analysis checks (described earlier in paragraph)
   • As suggested by reviewer we have clarified on page 15 that (1) keeping of a sound audit trail and (2) triangulation gained by member-checking with Reference Group are also related to rigour.
3. Conclusions - prime learning reviewer gained from study report was that traditional, on-the-ground, community development work if supported at higher level policy has far more potential to be sustained and effective. Suggested inclusion of a final sentence to this effect.

- We have included a less theoretical statement to this effect to replace the final sentence in order to better reach out to practitioners, as suggested by the reviewer.

4. Typo, page 10
- a space is now included between ‘2004’ and ‘and’

5. Text changes from past to present tense and back again in the early part of Results Section (page 16) paragraph starting ‘Consultation with .’
- As suggested by the reviewer for consistency the relevant text is now all in past tense i.e. so ‘is understood’ has been changed to ‘was understood’ and ‘examine’ changed to ‘examined’ etc.

Reviewer: Bertha Nhlema-Simwaka

Compulsory Revisions

1. Title: gives impression scope of paper is health equity and social capital; authors should consider changing title to better suit context that authors intended to build a framework/theory in practice based on case study analysis.
- The title has been changed as follows to clarify the focus on development of the framework within the context of a concern with social capital and health equity:
  ‘Enabling pathways to health equity: developing a framework for implementing social capital in practice’

2. Case study approach - how were the case studies selected?
- As suggested we have provided clearer inclusion/exclusion criteria for how the case studies were selected on pages 10-11.

Minor Revisions

1. Authors should provide information on whether implementers of selected case studies had (or never had) notion of social capital in mind at onset of their projects or whether projects were regarded as appropriate for this study based on authors’ judgement.
- The process of selecting case studies in collaboration with the ‘implementers’ or IPs has been explained in an expanded form on page 11 to clarify the ‘social capital’ content in the program and how it was interpreted by both IPs and researchers.

2. Equity: ‘The findings say very little about equity. Possible additional information will help’.
- Points of clarification have been added throughout (including in the abstract) to reinforce that while a concern with equity is the driving motivation behind the research into the implementation of social capital theory, the primary focus of this
paper arising out of that concern is the development of the framework.

3. ‘Authors should strengthen discussions of findings by referring to other studies. Several studies in Africa demonstrate role of social capital in community health based programmes, pathways to care seeking’.

• We appreciate the reference to the African literature but we regard the kind of programs that are the subject of this paper as tied to their policy and practice context, especially given that Australia is considered to be a developed country. We have added a note regarding the need to test the relevance of the framework in other appropriate contexts, however (see point 4. below). Furthermore, the scope and focus of this paper examining how the framework evolved in this context does not allow for a detailed discussion of the international literature in the broad field of community health programs.

4. ‘The authors should indicate knowledge gaps for future research’.

• We have included a sentence at end of the discussion (page 31) citing the need to test the framework in other appropriate contexts.

In addition, as requested we have added a sentence to the Methods Section which reads: ‘This study adheres to the RATS guidelines on qualitative research.’

Yours sincerely,
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