Author's response to reviews

Title: Talk, Trust and Time: A Longitudinal Study Evaluating Knowledge Translation and Exchange Processes for Research on Violence Against Women

Authors:

C Nadine Wathen (nwathen@uwo.ca)
Shannon L. Sibbald (ssibbald@uwo.ca)
Susan M. Jack (jacksm@mcmaster.ca)
Harriet L. MacMillan (macmilnh@mcmaster.ca)

Version: 3 Date: 17 June 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
17 June 2011

The Editors,
Implementation Science


Thank you to all four reviewers for their helpful comments on the above-named manuscript, which we resubmit for consideration in *Implementation Science*.

We have attached a detailed document outlining our responses to each of the reviewers’ points, and indicated these changes in the text and tables using grey highlight.

Thank you again for considering this work.

Sincerely, and on behalf of my co-authors,

[Signature]

C. Nadine Wathen, PhD
Associate Professor
nwathen@uwo.ca
tel: 519.661.2111 x88480
MS: 1942465683505170
Talk, Trust and Time: A Longitudinal Study Evaluating Knowledge Translation and Exchange Processes for Research on Violence Against Women
C Nadine Wathen, Shannon L. Sibbald, Susan M. Jack and Harriet L. MacMillan

Response to Reviewers

Associate Editor’s Comments
The topic is of interest but there are some major flaws to the paper as it stands. The theoretical underpinnings of the study are not clear - it currently appears rather atheoretical, the presentation of the findings are difficult to follow and the data lacks coherence, the connection to previous research literature needs spelling out as does the importance of the findings in the context of existing knowledge about the management and screening for DV and knowledge transfer methods. The authors need to address the comments and revisions suggested by the reviews paying particular attention to Reviewer 1’s comments. Additionally, I think that the research questions need to be elaborated and clarified, and that notions such as "concurrent triangulation in a parallel mixed methods study" requires unpacking together with an explanation of how it was used in this particular study.

Description of Major revisions:

[Major revisions to the text are highlighted in grey in the manuscript.]

1) KTE Model and Approach & Manuscript Structure: we have provided more detail regarding the theoretical model on which we based our KTE approach (interaction model) and research processes generally (integrated KT) and re-structured text previously found in other sections into a more coherent section in the Introduction that also outlines the conceptual approach taken to describe the results (e.g., categories of knowledge use). Following from this, and based on the very useful advice of Reviewer 1, but also based on comments made by the other 3 reviewers, the manuscript has been structured so that the section headings, especially in the methods and results, are consistent thematically with each other (Reviewer 1), but also follow the conceptual KTE model and the research questions more closely.

2) More detail and consistent use of terms regarding methods: in response to the editorial comment above, and also to specific comments by reviewers 1, 3 and 4, the Methods section has been clarified as follows:
   - Reviewer 1’s concise description (“longitudinal cross-sectional design, applying concurrent mixed data collection methods”) was very helpful and has been applied to both the abstract and main text, for consistency
   - Data analysis techniques have been made more clear, with emphasis placed (per Reviewer 1’s comments) on describing techniques to ensure transparency and trustworthiness of, especially, the qualitative data (p 11)

3) More concise articulation of the research questions, as suggested by the Associate Editor, above, and by Reviewer 1 is found on page 6. This now also increases consistency of structure across the manuscript, related to point 1, above.
More detailed explanation of “what this study adds”:

In carefully considering the specific responses of Reviewers to the paper, we have highlighted several aspects of our work as novel and/or especially interesting and requiring further exploration. To make these more obvious, we have added some text on pp 29-30, and a new section entitled “Future Research” at the end of the Discussion (preceding Conclusions) which is a combination of text moved from earlier in the Discussion that talked about future research, along with new text regarding, especially, the issue of “sharing” as a knowledge use concept. To accommodate the new text, we have edited the Discussion to shorten it as much as possible.

Reviewer 1 (Ann Catrine Eldh):

Dr Eldh clearly spent a lot of time reviewing the paper and providing constructive feedback – we very much appreciate this and hope that our inclusion of her suggestions, as described below, will improve the paper.

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. The underpinnings of the study need to be better described. The background is limited, and the audience should have the opportunity to share the theoretical framework of your study.

See above.

2. The study design may well be further illuminated. It seems that you have performed a longitudinal cross-sectional study, applying concurrent mixed methods design to collect data. Assure consistency between the design, the aim, and the research questions, and the methods throughout the manuscript. Also, the abstract should correspond to the main paper and the main paper should include all abstract information.

See above.

3. Phrasing the core sections of the manuscript should be coherent, providing guidance to the audience; i.e. the suggested goal of the project, the aim of the study, and the data methods applied should correspond, if you decide to include all in the text, followed by an explicit structure of the findings. ...

See above re: new structure and consistency across research questions, etc.

4. The intervention and the data collection suggest that aspects of participatory action research have influenced the study and yet, due to the lack of theoretical framework and extended study design, it is not evident. Further, you suggest that there were experiences from much earlier stages, as well as a priori assumptions based on your expertise in the research area informing your data collection. This process should be transparent in order for the audience to appreciate the study report (see also above no. 1 and 2).
We hope that the suggested changes re: clarity of theoretical background, structure and methods, as described above, now improve on this aspect of the paper. It should also be noted that while some of our methods are consistent with certain aspects of participatory action research (PAR), we did not explicitly use PAR as a guiding methodological approach, and hence would not claim to have done so. Hopefully what we did do is now clearer, thanks in large part to the thorough and very helpful suggestions of this reviewer.

5. The data analysis should be described comprehensively; in particular there is a need for a description of how the analysis was performed in terms of preventing bias in the qualitative analysis and assuring analysis transparency.

See above.

6. The concluding themes, “key findings”, presented in the Discussion section seem to be main findings. Thus, they should be in the Results section, with an appropriate basis for the forming of these themes (see also transparency of analysis above/issue 5).

We have tried to be more clear that in the Discussion, we are taking the key themes identified in the Results and discussing them in the context of existing literature so as to comment on whether what we found is consistent or not with what was previously known, and what new findings might advance our thinking in this area.

7. Apparently, the design applied created a possibility that the findings from the small group discussions represents one, dominant person only, which is also stated by some participants. This issue should be included, clarifying whether the discussions and/or your analysis reached saturation of the perspectives you sought to find within the study and how you have proceeded in the analysis to assure the findings depict the shared perceptions of the participants.

We think it very unlikely that this was the case for the vast majority of groups in the 2006 Workshops - it was informally reported as a concern by one person after the workshops. Evaluation data indicate that 94% of respondents felt they had the opportunity to share their opinions, and 98% found this valuable. Similarly, for the 2009 Forum, there is no indication from formal evaluations, review of transcripts, or informal feedback that this was a concern or that any participant felt they did not have the opportunity to share their reactions and opinions (98% reported they did). This has been clarified with additional text on p 16.

8. As described in the manuscript, your previous study (reference no. 20) formed the basis for the KTE findings to be disseminated through the intervention. However, there have been comments from other researchers, suggesting that your findings may be too limited for the conclusions made. Further, some of the participants in this study had objections to your findings. The manuscript would benefit from a further debate on how this issue was dealt with within your intervention, and throughout the analysis and discussion of the findings.

This is definitely a challenge of sharing knowledge in this area – much of it is contested, with definitions of core concepts such as “screening”, and what are the appropriate designs and outcomes to assess the impact of interventions, debated within and without the research.
literature. Epistemological stance, research tradition, “front-line” versus not – all of these shape people’s perceptions of what count as “evidence” and how much there needs to be before knowledge, attitudes and practices are influenced. Unfortunately, this discussion is too large for this specific paper, which is intended to focus on the KTE process, but we look forward to incorporating this perspective in a future manuscript. That said, in response to this direct request for clarification, we have added additional detail (p 27) regarding the interpretation of findings and the broader context of what is known about health care screening and response re: VAW. This also responds to a comment by the Associate Editor.

9. Please provide the number of participants (n) consistently throughout the Results section when it comes to the quantitative data.

Addressed – also see more detail below (Reviewer 3, #2).

10. A more concise text would improve the paper. In particular, consider decreasing and/or additional ways to present the intervention process in the Methods section, as well as reducing lengthy quotes, excluding aspects not appropriate for the understanding of the categories.

We have reduced text where possible in the Methods; for example, duplication of the description of question content has been removed and the section “Other KTE activities” has been moved to Additional file 2. In addition, longer quotes were shortened if it did not impact the main message conveyed, and the number of sub-headings reduced.

Reviewer 2 (Joyce Wilkinson):  

1. I found it difficult to track [the research phases] and even with tables, it was complex to trace this longitudinal study and the different data sets. My recommendation would be to ask the authors to consider a major revision which takes another approach to presentation of findings.

We believe that this comment is addressed in the revisions, especially in relation to structure, described above.

2. Say something more about the ‘what this paper adds’ aspects to make its contribution to the science much clearer.

See above.

Reviewer 3 (Neale Smith):

We thank Dr Smith for his thoughtful and thorough review. His comments will improve the paper substantially.

General Comments

1) I wonder if there is any substantive meaning to the terms “Workshop” and “Forum” in respect of the Phase I and II KTE strategies. It seems clear from the text that the specific processes used
at the Phase II Forum were developed in part on the basis of evaluation comments received from
the Phase I workshops. Beyond this however, it is not clear to me if the authors see ‘workshop’
and ‘forum’ as meaningfully distinct mechanisms of KTE, or if they are simply different terms
used at different times for what is, in essence, the same KTE strategy in terms of its underlying
theory-of-action. Also, page 15: the authors indicate that the Forum process was changed from
that used in the earlier workshops based on evaluation responses from “a small number” of
participants. I would wonder how larger this small # is, and in particular why that perspective
was deemed to be sufficiently important as to require the re-design of processes?

The primary distinction between the two types of event was size: the 3 workshops were smaller
(with between 17 and 42 people) and a half-day in length, while the Forum was much larger
(with over 100 people in total) and a full day. They followed similar processes but, as indicated,
what we learned from the earlier meetings informed our process in the latter one, especially
cutting down on us talking and allowing more time for participants to talk/react/engage. Text
has been added on p 16 to help clarify re: the reviewer’s latter point.

2) In Results section, beginning page 12, I accept and agree with the authors’ rationale for
combining quantitative survey results with qualitative data from the follow-up interviews. I think
this can be an effective form of triangulation. However, I was a bit puzzled with inconsistencies
in the way that quantitative %ages were reported. In some cases (e.g., page 13, line 1) the authors
give a single number – “90% of participants”. Elsewhere, they separate replies as either
Workshop or Forum (e.g., middle of page 15). It isn’t clear to me why results are sometimes in
one form and sometimes the other. Are the authors using any rule or rationale for when they dis-
aggregate the results?

The general rationale was that when the results were equivalent, they were reported together; if
different, they were disaggregated - to avoid potential confusion, we have disaggregated all such
results, reporting the percentage for each group.

3) While, as above, I suggest that the paper is strengthened by using an established
categorization of use – instrumental, conceptual, symbolic – I don’t find it clear how the authors
distinguish ‘sharing’ of research from ‘use’ of research’. Some other prominent work in the
research utilization field (e.g., Landry, Amara, Lamari, Research Policy, 2001) include
transmission or sharing as one of the stages of a utilization construct. The authors might want to
comment a bit further on their definition and use of these terms.

Thank you for pointing this out. Based on a review of the existing literature regarding where
“sharing” fits, conceptually, as a utilization activity, and in discussing this issue with colleagues
with expertise in KTE, it seems that this issue is not well-understood; therefore, we have added
more on this in the Discussion, citing some emerging concepts and approaches to KTE (e.g.,
communities of practice, social capital, etc.), where this might fit. This is therefore now framed
as a potentially new and interesting finding requiring further research (and addresses, in part,
the question of “what this adds”. as expressed by Reviewers 1 and 2) [see description above re:
“what this study adds” and new text in Discussion].
4) In terms of the Discussion, I am not entirely convinced by the authors’ use of the idea of “trust”. At bottom of page 25, for instance, they recap opposition they encountered to the research messages. The paper is clear that such opposition apparently derives from disconnect between the research message and participants’ experience or deeply-held beliefs. However, I’m not convinced that this opposition is necessarily best described or explained in a framework of trust between research and policy-maker. (I also thought it was interesting that the grounds for opposition are expressed here, p. 25, in quite positivist terms, such as generalizability, while in the respondents’ own terms earlier at p. 19, their opposition is phrased more as relying upon an alternative to traditional understandings of evidence. The authors might find this worth exploring further.)

Among those participants expressing “resistance” to the results, several did use explicit critique of the research methods, in particular the notion of how generalizable the sample was (e.g., some indicated that an English-speaking only sample was not representative, nor was one who could self-complete research forms), that the research setting and protocols are artificial (extra training and resources), and that our findings would therefore not generalize to the ‘real world’ outside of research. This has been outlined in the examples given on page 26.

As for the issue of “trust”, since we did not explicitly ask whether participants “trusted” us more or less at different time points, the reviewer’s point is well-taken. However, there were a number of indicators of relationship development – of them getting to meet us, talk to us and know us over time – articulated by participants that are markers of trust (or at least credibility) that are worthy of note, and consistent with emerging literature on the importance of researcher-research user relationships in the KTE process. We have tempered the text and also added this as a “future research” item.

Specific Comments
These are questions which occurred to me in reading the manuscript, which I trust the authors to assess and respond to (if they deem necessary) in the next iteration of this paper.

• Page 6: the number of participants in the Workshops is not stated in the text. I gather from page 29 and Table 1 that n=82, but it would be nice to have this number in the main text
• Page 6: the authors refer to a Workshop evaluation survey as occurring “immediately post-workshop”. On page 9 – referring to the Forum – they use the term “exit survey”. I find the latter term more clearly indicates the condition in which the evaluation tool is administered. If the conditions are in fact similar, I would recommend use of this term at pg 6 also.
• Page 7: what is the total number of follow-up phone interviews conducted with Workshop participants?

For the above 3 points – we added Ns to each activity when first mentioned in the methods – this was the more concise way to do this, and more detail is provided in Additional File 2.

• Page 7: it may be worth noting in the text that the link www.VAWCommunity.ca is no longer active - DONE
• Page 9: The authors note that Forum follow-up survey was sent to those who gave permission to be contacted. Since this was not noted for the previous Workshops, I presume the caveat was not in place during Phase I. The authors should then comment somewhere
upon what proportion of attendees gave this permission. To what degree, if any, do they think this introduced a bias into the findings?

We only contacted P’s who gave permission for follow-up in both phases – this has been clarified for the workshops on page 8. – it may well be that those who consented to be interviewed further felt strongly one way or the other about the results or process; however, the strength of the multiple-methods and triangulation is that we heard what we feel is a true range of responses – whether in the groups or later.

- Page 11: in re. Ethics approval, it is not clear to me what being “provided a waiver” by the McMaster U REB means. Does it mean the project was ‘fasttracked’ because of minimal risk to participants (which I take to be most likely), or that the project was exempted from meeting the typical requirements—and if so, how is this justified? - CLARIFIED

- Page 11, Results: I accept and agree with the argument that each of the evaluation samples must be taken as separate due to the fact that respondents self-select. The authors note that there may be overlap among participants. However, I’d like to know in particular somewhat more about the possible degree of overlap between Phase I and Phase II. That is, to what extent was the list of those invited to participate in Phase II the same as the participants invited in Phase I? Were any deliberate efforts made by the researchers to include (or exclude) Phase I participants in second Phase? Have they any data to indicate the degree of overlap among these participants (Workshops and Forum)? –I take from the authors attempt to claim (bottom pg 11) that change in responses to ‘aware of VAW Research Pgm …’ between Phase I and II may be due to exposure to KTE activities, that there is overlap in the 2 groups. That said, I wondered if the next sentence (those ‘not aware of the program’, which proportion grew from 15 to 22%) may potentially have contradicted their claim. In short, I think the claim at bottom of page 11 about effects of exposure to KTE activities is altogether too speculative to be convincing.

We have calculated the “overlap” between the samples and present these on page 12 with some explanation – i.e., while few of the same people actually attended both events, many of the same people (and organizations) were invited to both and therefore, we argue, had a growing awareness of the research, across time, as indicated in small part by the growth in “those aware of the program”.

- Page 12: the authors indicate that “Analysis of the content of the reactions, and their implications for VAW policy and practice, are excluded” from analysis here. Why so?

There is a lot of content and the nature of these responses is more specific to the VAW field than to what we want to report here – KTE processes among this stakeholder community. There will be another manuscript exploring those responses and their implications for research and KTE in VAW.

- Pages 12-13: I’m afraid I don’t quite see how the initial qualitative themes presented here – “meet and discuss research with the researchers” and “making a personal connection” – differ from one another? Furthermore, in terms of the evidence presented, I’m not sure that that the evidence presented (quotes) really shows that the KTE strategies employed in this
research contributed to the formation of “relationships” between researchers and decision makers, in any meaningful sense of the word “relationship”. This follows through to the Discussion section, page 25, where again I am not convinced that the paper has really illustrated instances in which researchers and practitioners have formed either ‘personal’ or ‘highly interactive’ relationships which persist over time.

We’ve revised the text to show that these are related, not separate concepts, and, as described above, have also added information about the concept of “trust” and relationships to clarify and address this reviewer’s concerns.

- Page 14: the final paragraph starts with reference to a “third important experience” but it is not clear what the first 2 were—if I were to judge on the basis of the bolded text, three points were made previously and this should then be the fourth - CLARIFIED
- Top of page 16: this discusses changes made to the Forum process from the workshops. The text and quote focus upon ‘mixing stakeholders’—the implication seems to be that this was not done in Phase I workshop discussions. Is that in fact the case? - CLARIFIED
- Page 16: While most figures from the workshop and forum evaluations are reported as % of respondents, n’s (73, 36) are reported here. Why only here? – FIXED (see above)
- Page 17, bottom: the authors claim that there is “greater” sharing among Forum than workshop participants. The meaning of this claim needs to be more clearly explained, given the immediately previous comment that a smaller proportion of Forum (79%) than Workshop (88%) participants actually reported any sharing at all. – CLARIFIED
- Page 18: I presume that the coding of qualitative interview responses to categories such as conceptual or symbolic use was at the discretion of the researchers, and that the interviews themselves did not prompt respondents to use these specific terms? - YES
- Page 20: Could the survey data about sharing of knowledge which is reported here also be included in Table 4? - ADDED
- Page 20: I don’t suppose the authors can assess the impact of sharing broken down by the groups with whom information is shared (as per Table 4)? – CORRECT; CELL SIZES ARE TOO SMALL TO MAKE THIS MEANINGFUL
- Page 20, bottom: It isn’t clear to me which of the 3 responses (positive, negative, mixed) the write-in comment included here are meant to be illustrations of - CLARIFIED
- Page 21: authors note that one Workshop participant found the impact of use to be negative—it would be interesting to me to know in what way use is seen as having negative results, though I recognize this is a very small bit of data – AGREE – AN INTERESTING THING TO EXPLORE FURTHER, QUALITATIVELY
- Page 22, last paragraph: it is not clear to me if the results here are drawing on any data other than the Forum follow-up survey? – THESE COMMENTS ARE ALL FROM THE FORUM FOLLOW-UP SURVEY, AS INDICATED
- Page 23: Authors refer here to “26 respondents” to the Forum follow up survey. I’m confused by this, since all the other info in the text and tables suggests that there were only 21 replies to this survey. – DATA FROM THE WORKSHOP WAS ERRONEOUSLY INCLUDED AND MIS-LABELLED HERE – WE’VE REMOVED THAT AND INCLUDED THE RELEVANT DATA FROM THE FORUM.
- Page 25: Authors suggest that ‘appreciation of respectful engagement’ was “expressed most strongly by those who identified with the frontline”. While this is believable, I don’t recall
the paper putting forward any evidence that demonstrated this to be the case. – THERE WERE QUOTES TO THIS EFFECT; ONE HAS BEEN LEFT IN (P 15)

- Page 29: Authors claim that declining follow up response is linked to seniority in decision making role – while again I think this is not unreasonable, the paper has not presented any evidence which demonstrates this claim - DELETED

- Page 39, Table One – Workshops are described here as day-long, while in the main text (page 6) they are described as half-day - FIXED

- Page 40, Table One, footnotes – Acronym CIHR is missing from note, while IPV seems not to appear anywhere in this table – TABLE HAS BEEN SIMPLIFIED AND FOOTNOTES FIXED

- Page 42, Table Three: check bottom row. Should footnotes 2-5 in fact be #3-6? - FIXED

- Page 43, Table Four: Row 2—I don’t understand the reference to “2 missing” here, in context of other info in table? – 2 OF THE 21 WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS QUESTION, SO THE % IS BASED ON THOSE 19 WHO DID RESPOND – CHANGED THE WORDING SLIGHTLY TO BE MORE CLEAR

Reviewer 4 (Janet Curran)

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Description of process for developing key messages in Phase I is not consistent between Table 1 and Pg 6 of text.

Corrected

2. Key Message development was identified one of the strategies used for KTE. These messages were foundations for both the workshop and forum. Understanding how these messages were developed and describing the process for reaching consensus on messages was not well described. Issues related to this were mentioned toward the end of the paper (p 29) but difficult to place in context without prior description.

We have added considerable detail to Additional file 1 (including some of the process details previously in Additional file 2) to better describe the process. We have indicated that more detail, protocols and tools can be obtained from us.

3. Was workshop ½ day, as described on Page 6 or day long as described in Table 1. Length of workshop is important to clarify considering differences in feedback on both strategies.

Fixed – see also above.

4. It is not clear how stakeholders were identified for invitation or how much overlap (invited/attended) there was between the workshop and forum.

Clarified – see also above.

5. Given the sample size, it is important to be transparent when reporting percentages you might also provide the ratio (ie. p 13 para 1 and P. 17, para 2).
Clarified – see also above.

6. It is not clear how you evaluated the trustworthiness of your data.

Clarified – see also above.

Discretionary Revisions
1. Was there a particular framework or theory, which guided design of your KTE strategy and evaluation (survey items/interview guide)? Can you make the rationale for choice of strategy explicit?

See above.

2. Research question 2. (What factors influence uptake, sharing and use?) could be further developed in the discussion. For example, we know that organizational context can influence research use. You hosted a range of stakeholders from different organizational settings, can you comment on how different factors may have influenced different stakeholder groups? How might you address the tension between the messages and the expressed values and beliefs held by some stakeholders?

We believe that some of our revisions have addressed this, or at least touched on it as important for further research. Given the small cell sizes, it’s difficult to say anything meaningful about reactions by stakeholder type.

3. Mixed methods designs have many benefits, but one of the challenges is managing the large volume of data. It feels like there are a few loose ends. A matrix or table identifying the key findings and exemplars from the data the different data sources might help the reader follow your data triangulation description.

Since this is framed as minor, we have not added such a table at this time. If it is deemed essential by the Associate Editor, we will attempt to produce it. Thanks.