Author’s response to reviews

Title: Participatory Praxis as an Imperative for Health-related Stigma Research

Authors:

Laurel Sprague (laurelsprague@icloud.com)
Rima Afifi (rema-afifi@uiowa.edu)
George Ayala (gayala@msmgf.org)
Musah Lumumba El-Nasoor (msmusah71@gmail.com)

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Dear BMC editor and reviewers,

On behalf of the authors, we appreciate the opportunity to make further enhancements and clarifications to our article. We note that only Reviewer 1 asked for further changes. The requested change, to "clearly and explicitly discuss the advantages of this approach over other commonly used approaches in one paragraph as a conclusion" has been addressed through the addition of the following language in the Conclusion, starting on line 278.

Participatory praxis has the potential to balance historical injustice, and enhance equity while achieving better health outcomes. However, health-related stigma research is frequently conducted without meaningful inclusion of those who are stigmatized in the research process. Such research risks reinforcing the prejudices that frame stigmatized people as less than full members of their communities or as problems to be solved (by others) rather than experts in their own experience and leaders in their own emancipation. Further non-participatory research into health-related stigma may utilize what are often scarce resources for research on study designs that lack internal validity and be irrelevant for meeting community needs. By contrast, participatory praxis in health-related stigma research enriches the understanding of community strengths as well as health needs and priorities and helps to balance the scales of equity. This research is designed to ensure that community, rather than individual researcher, priorities are centred in health-stigma research; that communities own the research results which they can use to advocate for better treatment; that proper attention and mitigation are provided for potential
risks that community members might face as a result of their participation in research: and that the act of engaging in research works to undo, rather than perpetuate, stigma.

In addition, we have not succeeded in obtaining permission to use the graphic for Figure 1 that we had suggested for this article. We have revised the appropriate section under Discussion, Continuum of Participation, to remove references to Figure 1.

We express our appreciation for your support and attention to this article.

Kind regards,

Laurel Sprague (on behalf of the co-author group)