

New Perspectives on Community

Vol. 7:1

Research and Evaluation

Summer 1992

Interest in new approaches to community research and evaluation is at an all-time high. In a time of decreasing finances, human services and other community interventions are increasingly being called upon to be more "accountable" and to document their efficacy. At the same time, criticism has been levelled at the nature of most conventional research in terms of its "controlling" nature and limited usefulness to human service change.

This NewsReport highlights new perspectives on community research and evaluation. The Centre has been at the forefront of the movement to utilize a *new paradigm* to community research and evaluation which includes the traditions of constructivism, qualitative research, participatory evaluation, and action research. As the content in this issue will illustrate, several themes dramatize new perspectives on community research and evaluation.

- Traditional human service interventions have focused on the person with the problem. To measure changes in the person,

research methodologies for decades have reflected the bias towards "fixing the person" or even "blaming the victim." Emerging research paradigms recognize the "*person in the environment*" and the multiple perspectives on reality that must be understood to effectively research new interventions.

- New perspectives on research and evaluation relate to emerging paradigms in health and social services which recognize the limits of large systems and institutions to resolve human problems. Promising practices in human services tend to reflect small scale, interactive community interventions. Research and evaluation strategies must take into account *the importance of non-service interventions* (such as informal support networks or individualized funding) and their relationship to individuals and systems.

- Conventional research and evaluation has been pre-occupied with measurement and prediction. New approaches recognize that "understanding" and "social change" are often the goals of community research and

evaluation, and that this requires a *qualitative, action research perspective*. In several Centre research endeavours, for example, the lived experience of research participants has been a catalyst for further analysis or action.

- Citizens and consumers are seldom involved in the design of research and evaluation. At best, they may be involved as participants or at worst as "subjects." New perspectives emphasize that the *community research and evaluation process should be "enabling" or "empowering"* and engage citizens and consumers in all aspects of the research process. Only in this way can research be liberating for citizens who have been marginalized.

Community research and evaluation is not a panacea. Its potential contribution to reshaping human services, however, lies in its capacity to illuminate process that works and to encourage reflection and renewed activity involving all sectors. With these two goals in mind, the research process increasingly becomes useful and participatory.

Project Updates

More Than Just Another Human Service New Centre Study on Independent Living Centres

Recently, the Centre has been involved in a follow-up to our national study on Independent Living Centres (ILCs) published in 1987. The ILCs are non-profit organizations controlled and run by people with disabilities. The present qualitative study of six Ontario ILCs, which includes a description and analysis of the Centres, is entitled *More Than Just Another Human Service*. As the title implies, this research found that the ILCs operate on principles of consumer control, integration, cross-disability, and full participation of people with disabilities. These principles are often not utilized in typical human services. The Centres also demonstrate the power of non-service interventions such as peer support, individual advocacy, and research and education. The Centre's 1992 report will be released this summer by the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres who funded this provincial review.

Workplaces That Work

In early 1992, the Centre initiated a new two year study on employment entitled *Work Places That Work*. This qualita-

tive research study, funded by Welfare Grants Directorate of Health and Welfare Canada, is a cross-disability study and will include a wide variety of workplaces. The purpose is to identify and then share with others, the features of integrated work settings that contribute to their success. Our interest in this work is grounded in the first two Centre studies on integrated employment, including *Supported Employment and Quality of Life*. Most research to date has focused solely on the individual with disabilities and the role of job coaches, rather than exploring the resources and supports in the workplace that are required to enhance work life, participation, and productivity.

Family Support Study Continues

Centre researchers are continuing their 14 month project with the Special Services at Home Program in Ontario (SSAH). A family support intervention, the SSAH program is unique because it provides direct funding to families, who then hire a worker to provide support for their child or respite for the family.

Our research is extremely comprehensive and includes family forums, a consumer survey, an extensive literature review, case studies, and in-depth interviews. In collaboration with

lay stakeholder groups, we are gaining extensive insights into the nature and capacity of individualized family support. The results of this research will be public by early 1993.

Empowerment: The Focus of Centre Education

During the Spring of 1992, Centre staff have been involved in ten educational events across Ontario and Canada. The extensive interest in the Centre's empowerment research, facilitated by Centre Coordinator John Lord, has been the focus of most of these educational endeavours. Centre staff have also presented at conferences, and have facilitated workshops. Other educational activities have revolved around action research and promising practices in human services.

For further information, you may contact:

John Lord regarding the Independent Living Centres study, Don Roth for Workplaces That Work, Mary McGeown about our Family Support Study, Deborah Evans regarding Centre Education and Andrew Taylor for Alternative Community Living.

Alternative Community Living: York Region

The York Region Alternative Community Living (ACL) program is designed to offer an alternative living situation for elderly people in need of attendant services. A small number of apartment units in a larger complex are rented to elderly people who had previously been living in institutions or the community. Attendants, called Elderly Service Workers, work out of an office in the building 24 hours a day and provide cooking, personal care, housekeeping, and other related services. The program differs from more traditional, institutional settings in two significant ways. First, tenants have control over the services they receive - they are not, for example, forced to keep to a certain schedule in order to get their baths or meals. They decide when to call for service and staff respond. Secondly, tenancy and services are negotiated separately. These principles are based on the concept of "aging in place" which is consistent with alternative community living in other fields.

Centre staff recently completed the first year of a research project on the program. Findings for year one have been encouraging. Strong leadership on the part of the program's steering committee, effective collaboration among government offices, and a commitment to "learning as we go" have meant that many residents in the first ACL building to open have experienced

increased independence and control while living there. Our findings also suggest that residents who came to the ACL building from an institutional setting have had an easier time adjusting than those who had previously been living in the community.

York region has just opened its second and third ACL buildings, so the second year of our research project will be enriched by the opportunity to compare and contrast the implementation of the program vision in different contexts. To achieve this aim, we will conduct in-depth interviews with residents and staff at all three ACL sites. To get a sense of change, we will interview tenants on at least two occasions separated by several months. We also plan to interview members of the steering committee.

As we move into the second year of our work this project, many challenges face the ACL program and our research. These opportunities for learning include responding to people's changing needs, dealing with tenant loneliness and limited social life, and negotiating effectively with other agencies and service providers who are constrained by their legislative mandates.

Health Promotion: The Grass Roots

The Association of Ontario Health Centres has recently published *Health Promotion Programmes in Community Health Centres in Ontario*. This informative book includes 154 summaries of health promotion programmes in health centres all across the province. It contains sections on programmes for children, youth, women, men, food/nutrition/weight issues, prenatal/parenting, professionals and general population. Each summary explains the reasons for starting the programme, the goals, the participants, a brief description of activities, expected outcomes, evaluation methods, what's working, and what hasn't worked.

Names, addresses and phone numbers of contact persons for each programme are included, as well as a list of all the Community Health Centres in Ontario.

Cost: \$15.00 plus
\$ 3.00 postage

Order from:
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Fax: (416) 236-0431

'... independence is not the quantity of tasks we can perform without assistance but the quality of life we can live with help.'

G. DeJong, 1979

Human Service Research: Avoiding the "Service-Oriented" Trap

Most human service researchers in North America have great faith in human services. Because these researchers and evaluators believe in improving human services, they often fail to recognize other kinds of responses or interventions that are potentially more beneficial. Typically, this research is *service-oriented* (and generally makes assessments or provides insights into a particular service), but does not weigh the possibility that other kinds of interventions may be more appropriate. These researchers often call for more and better services.

At the Centre for Research & Education, we try to avoid this "service-oriented" trap that significantly limits the scope and usefulness of most human service research. We do not assume that a human service intervention is necessarily the best or only intervention. In fact, we examine other interventions alongside human services to determine when and where each intervention is most appropriate.

In our work on the Support Clusters Project (described elsewhere in this NewsReport), for example, we have discovered that a support group of friends, family and professionals combined with education can provide very effective family support. The family may then positively shift how it functions with a member

who has repeatedly experienced labels and segregation. Similarly, our empowerment research has highlighted the importance of valued resources, social support, and participation in the personal empowerment process. Services were only seen by participants as peripheral in importance, and then only those that were personalized, interactive, and controlled by the user. In fact, *escaping from dependency on human services* was seen by most of our research participants as key to their empowerment process. Being open to the power of other interventions has enabled us to understand the positive *and* negative role of human services in the broader context of our culture.

The service-oriented trap experienced by researchers is a reflection of the service-dominated health and social policy industry. In this deeply ingrained service perspective, "needs" are generally translated into service responses, with little or no consideration of alternative interventions. The suspicions about cash subsidy programs or individualized funding reflects the limits of most human service thinking. As another illustra-

tion, participation in community life is often seen by service providers as "not possible" for many consumers. Examples such as these serve to further enhance the service sector as the only logical and worthy intervention.

We are critical of human services because they often keep people dependent and powerless.

"Being open to the power of other interventions has enabled us to understand the positive and negative role of human services in the broader context of our culture."

As researchers, we are open to understanding and describing services that are personalized and that contribute to empowerment and quality of life. Perhaps more importantly, we remain open to the possibility that non-service interventions such as income supplements, support networks, and community development will often contribute more directly to empowerment and quality of life. If researchers and those in charge of social policy started from these assumptions, research and evaluation would have the potential to have much greater impact on the future of human services and other social interventions.

John Lord
Centre Coordinator

Research and Action: A Conscious Relationship?

The relationship between research and action has long been a subject of debate and discussion among researchers. By "action" I mean any attempt to bring about practical change in our community or in peoples' lives. For researchers, this may include anything from informing policy or lobbying for social change to acting as an expert witness at a trial or helping to implement a human service program. In these kinds of situations, we as researchers are often forced to confront difficult issues and speak directly about the practical implications of our work.

There are many opinions about how researchers should be involved in action arising from their work. The most traditional view is that research is a process of gathering facts in an objective scientific way for others to interpret as they will. The researcher, from this perspective, should strive to be an impartial, objective observer. While this position may reflect the reality of research in physics, it doesn't apply as well to the social sciences. When a researcher is dealing with people and issues in a social context, research findings have social implications, whether the researcher admits it or not.

A case in point is the work of Phillipe Rushton, who argues

that races differ in intelligence and evolutionary level. Rushton claimed that he was simply presenting the facts as observed, and refused to be drawn into discussions about the political and social implications of his research. Nonetheless, his research led to "action" in the form of public protests and debates, television and newspaper coverage, and appearances by Rushton on talk shows.

Research into social issues is inherently tied to social action - in fact the research itself is a form of social action. Rushton's case illustrates this point. Although he claimed to be an objective scientist, his work motivated others to action of various kinds, and he himself was eventually discovered to have ties to a funding agency which promotes racist policies (the "Heritage

"Research into social issues is inherently tied to social action - in fact the research itself is a form of social action."

Foundation"). What is particularly disturbing about Rushton's example is that he was able to take action (i.e. promote his racist ideas) without having to answer for doing so, because people tended to accept the idea that his research was an objective, impartial analysis of facts. The research process can be used to instigate social change in underhanded, deceptive ways.

As another example of this problem, think of the way re-

search is used by politicians and others responsible for taking action. Often, a study is commissioned on a particular issue as a way of putting off any real change in policy or expenditure of funds. Remember the standard response of a politician who doesn't want to answer a difficult question - "We've got a subcommittee studying that issue very carefully".

How, then, can people interested in taking action in our communities best make research work for them? It is clear that research always has practical implications on some level, despite what academics say. However, it is often misused as an action tool and just as often misunderstood.

At the Centre, we have attempted to design our research projects in such a way that they can contribute to action strategies in positive, useful, and active ways. The list of "principles which guide community research and evaluation," which is also part of this NewsReport, gives a sense of what our brand of research is like. Here I would like to highlight a few more qualities of our research that we feel make it well suited to contribute to action.

We strive to be aware of our own ideals and biases, and to be honest about them to those we work with. For example, we are committed to the concept of community integration, we be-

lieve in the value of qualitative research, and we try, in any research context, to highlight the voices of those who have not been listened to in the past. While we also make every effort to be thorough and rigorous in our reporting, and to describe the perspectives of all involved, we try to be open about our ideals. This openness leads us to connect with others who have similar feelings about what kinds of action they would like to take in their communities, and consequently we become partners not only in the gathering and analysis of information, but also in working towards the fulfilment of a larger vision. We also believe that sharing our values and beliefs allows readers of our reports to place what we say in a more complete context. As I said earlier, all researchers have their biases - most just keep them secret! While we certainly don't feel we have uncovered and addressed all our hidden assumptions, this kind of insight is something we are always working towards.

We also work to make our research process one which involves the research participants as fully as possible. One approach is to form a steering committee which includes representatives of all involved groups right from the beginning of the research process. These groups are not simply presented with a pre-packaged report which they must decide how to integrate into an action plan. Practical implications, data interpretation, educational and lobbying opportunities, and other forms of action

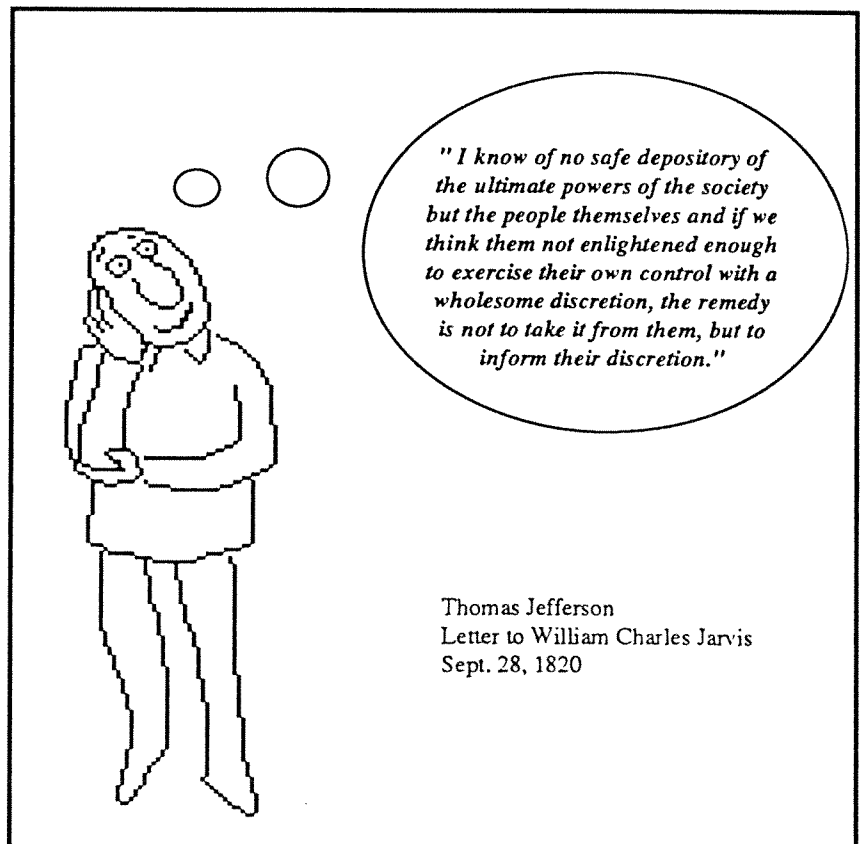
are constant topics of discussion throughout the research process.

In our research, we try to consider action as part of the research process itself, rather than something which takes place after research is complete. Research happens within a community context, and is shaped by that context as it, in turn, helps to shape the future of the community. As examples, research goals and designs are often developed with the research participants and we strive to be flexible and inductive in our gathering of information. As new trends emerge, we adjust our strategy to study them, with the input and endorsement of key involved groups.

When I began as a researcher at the Centre, the writing up of final reports was frustrating. I used to feel that I was

only telling the research participants things they already knew. Eventually I realized that what produced this feeling was also what made Centre research unusual and effective. If I was writing up things participants already knew, then it meant we had succeeded in getting true involvement in the research process. I realized that I was not a traditional researcher, keeping control over all information and disseminating it on my own terms when I was ready to. I was more like a facilitator, writing up a synthesis or summary of a process. The process was the key in many ways, and the final report was just a record of this process. The participants, and the researchers, had learned as they went along, and had already begun to take further action by the time the report was issued.

Andrew Taylor
Centre Researcher



" I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their own control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion."

Thomas Jefferson
Letter to William Charles Jarvis
Sept. 28, 1820

Action Research and Social Intervention: The Support Clusters Project

The Support Clusters Project is a 30 month demonstration and research project, funded under the Health Innovation Fund, Ontario. This project is designed to work with families of people with multiple, complex disabilities. Such individuals often receive a label of "dual diagnosis" to signify they have both a developmental disability and a form of psychiatric illness.

Rather than seek to "fix the person" as traditional forms of intervention often attempt, the goal of the Support Clusters Project is to change the social context around the person with complex disabilities. The first activity is to identify and build a support network or "cluster" of people. The second activity is for the cluster to get involved in educational or learning activities.

Evaluation of the Project

Our goals as a research team are twofold. First, to value and support the experience and knowledge of all participants in the project (e.g., families and cluster members). That means we must be able to understand and share many perspectives, showing common and contradictory patterns and themes. We accomplish this through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, participant observations of support cluster meetings, and focus groups. Our second goal for the research is to help all of the stakeholders such

as families, project staff and the steering committee shape the nature of the intervention. This is accomplished through a constant feedback and discussion process.

Integrating Research and Intervention

The project is designed in three stages of eight clusters. As the first round of eight clusters is ending their formal participation in the project, the second round begins and so on into the third for a total of 24 clusters. In addition to regular feedback sessions, this three-staged model provides excellent opportunities to share information and explore at length ways to adapt both the intervention and research. This change process is outlined below.

As a research team we designed an initial approach to the research that would capture experiences of participants prior to the project, then during the project activities, and as outcomes related to the project. The results are then shared with the steering committee and other participants. We then followed up such feedback sessions with project staff to integrate the intervention and research processes.

The result of this process overall is that the intervention evolves, based on participants' input and other research findings, so that new or slightly modified activities occur in the

next round of clusters. Simultaneously to these intervention changes, our methods are evaluated and altered if necessary. In the tradition of action research, as the intervention progresses, we are able to deepen our understanding of different aspects of the project, so that at a certain point we need not collect data that is redundant, but rather are able to focus on new developments.

Key Dimensions of Community Research and Intervention

As the team continues to learn through our experiences in this project, we are faced with several key struggles in our action approach.

1. What does supported participation mean in a research context?

Community-based associations, self-help and other organizations all deal with the tension between supporting the participation of their members and not overburdening them. As an issue of control, participants in community research must be supported to make choices about their level of involvement in research. One way we challenge ourselves is by recognizing that the research process may do one of two things: it may facilitate participants' sense of control and ownership; or it may undermine participants' understanding of their experiences, rejecting their expertise. Issues we continue to struggle with include:

- Do we provide an open invitation to participate or do we subtly coerce?
- Are we responsive to participants' input about the research process?
- Are we using methods that capture and support the views of participants?

2. *Whose data is it anyway?*

Citizen ownership in community development initiatives also applies to action research efforts that attempt to include participants as valued members of the process. Participants in community research are not "subjects". As we struggle to ensure the research process and outcome has meaning for participants, the theme of control emerges in practical ways:

- Involving participants in designing and contributing both to the research and the report writing.
- Including and supporting people in presenting their own story.

3. *Focus on magnification and avoid the dangers of replication.*

Based on a new way of knowing and understanding the world, the underlying assumptions of action research is that each person's experience is based on a set of social constructions unique to her or himself. The goal of action research is to understand and magnify how participant's perceptions are constructed and how such constructions may build and change through social interventions. Thus action research should help demonstration projects focus on maximizing learning by continuing to be innovative, rather

than becoming focused on replication.

- Integrating research and intervention is all about a willingness and commitment to "learning as we go".

4. *The researcher provides a link between the intervention and theory.*

The researcher is a theory builder, integrating project experiences and theory to share with others. In contrast to conven-

tional research relationships, different areas of strength need to be recognized and supported, however. Thus,

- Researchers and citizens can collaborate in designing new interventions.
- The background and access to information researchers bring to settings can create a role to support the social change efforts of citizens.

Don Roth,
Centre Researcher

A New Publication
From

Centre for Research and Education
in Human Services
Kitchener, Ontario

Lives in Transition:
The Process of Personal Empowerment

by
John Lord

.....

This in-depth, qualitative research study focuses on people who have experienced powerlessness in their lives and whose stories reveal the ongoing struggles towards empowerment in community life.

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Principles Which Guide Community Research and Evaluation

Centre for Research and Education in Human Services

1. Research and evaluation should do no harm to the participants, staff, users, and others. Researchers must accept responsibility for guarding against harm which the research may produce (iatrogenic effects), even when there are good intentions.
2. There are multiple perspectives about programs, services, and other interventions. Providing opportunities for these multiple constructions of reality to emerge and then capturing their meaning is an important part of the research and evaluation process. Depending on the purpose of the research, the consumer perspective may be either central, the only reality presented, or understood in context with other people's constructions of reality.
3. The cultural assumptions held by researchers and participants will have an impact on the research and evaluation process and findings. Typically, these assumptions remain unexplored, yet play a significant role. Along with all forms of inquiry, action-research is value-laden.
4. Citizens who have a stake in the process and outcomes of the research should be directly involved in the entire research and evaluation process. Depending on the purpose of the research, citizens or consumers may direct the research or work collaboratively with researchers and service providers. However, researchers and others attempting to support participation must not overtax or pressure participants.
5. Listening to the citizen who is affected by an intervention is central to understanding. And listening is more than hearing - it may mean "being with", "walking with" and "getting to know" the lived experience of the person and her or his environment. Sensitive, prolonged engagement with research participants helps ensure that the research is "enabling," not "controlling".
6. Interventions are best understood in context; thus, useful community research is never just about a person or a personality, but considers the "person in her/his environment", recognizing the power of the environment. It also recognizes that person and environment systems are in some ways impossible to tease apart - that we must attempt to understand whole systems.
7. There are a variety of interventions that may enhance empowerment and quality of life; human service interventions must be considered as only one of these, and not necessarily the most useful. Thus, through "action-oriented" research, the role of other interventions such as community involvement and organizations/networks, along with features of the political and social environment (i.e., money and culture), can be considered alongside the service intervention.
8. Power is inherent in many types of relationships. Researchers must be extremely careful to negotiate roles with participants on an equal basis. Also, when the context makes it impossible to interact on an equal basis, we should be sensitive to the implications of this for the research process and findings. We must also be sensitive to power relations among different stakeholders.
9. The fundamental criterion for making decisions about research tools (designs, questions, interpretations) is "usefulness". At each step in the research design and implementation process, researchers must anticipate and explore with participants the practical uses of the knowledge they wish to discover.
10. Self-reflection may be the most useful tool researchers can apply in any research context. Do the best you can today, celebrate and build on your strengths for tomorrow.

Book Review: *Fourth Generation Evaluation*

Yvonna Lincoln & Egon Guba, Sage Publications, 1989

Reviewed by : Ron Labonté

Although the term "evaluation" is used in the book's title, it is considered by the authors as only one form of "disciplined inquiry," two other forms being research and policy analysis. "Fourth generation" is derived from the authors' characterization of evaluation as having passed through four discrete stages: the first concerned with measurement, the second with description, the third with judgment, and the fourth (the topic of their book) with negotiated meanings. The process of *Fourth Generation Evaluation* is characterized as being fully participatory, based on consensual decision-making amongst interested persons, often called stakeholders.

The authors identify three elements that are critical in the process of focusing stakeholders within the setting of inquiry (CC&I):

Claims: what a stakeholder considers favourable (the positive outcomes)

Concerns: what a stakeholder considers unfavourable (the negative outcomes)

Issues: any state of affairs of interest to the stakeholder related to the inquiry.

Four broad phases to the evaluation process are outlined:

1. Stakeholders are identified and their CCIs are solicited.
2. Stakeholders' CCIs are shared with each other through a struc-

tured group discussion process convened by the evaluator.

3. CCIs for which there is no immediate stakeholder consensus on "meaning" or importance become "organizers" or focal points of further inquiry/research.

4. Negotiations go around the circle of stakeholders until there is consensus, or an agreement to manage different views effectively.

The final product is a "text," a statement of best-agreement of truth-for-this-situation that all stakeholders can live with. The text must meet certain rigorous criteria. For example, it must fit the categories of data provided by the stakeholders and be perceived as credible by them. Also, the text must be relevant and important to the area of inquiry. Finally, it must be modifiable, that is, the text may have a last word, but is not considered as the last word.

The method of inquiry itself (described in considerable detail in the book) entails 6 conditions that all stakeholders must accept, including a willingness to: share power, change, reconsider value positions, and commit time and energy. The role of the evaluator in facilitating this somewhat idealistic process is strikingly similar to that of a community developer or a midwife who must work with ambiguity, a loss of "top

down" control, while recognizing that universally applicable solutions may not exist. What many readers may find exciting is the proximity of Lincoln's and Guba's thinking to that of "development", and to theories of inter-organizational collaboration such as Barbara Gray's 1989 book, *Collaborating* (Jossey-Bass). What some readers might find frustrating is the book's relative silence on power theories or political analyses which participatory action research (a close knit to fourth generation) brings to its inquiries.

An important element of fourth generation evaluation is its rejection of the positivist concept of causality (the "conventional" paradigm of inquiry, as Lincoln and Guba call it), replacing it with a "constructivist" way of thinking which suggests:

- judgments are based on circumstances and values; the inquirer must consciously ask, "What is the most plausible explanation given my purpose?"
- a web of interactions may never occur exactly again; thus explanations are unique
- explanations are at best here and now snapshots implying neither control or predictability.

Overall, two thumbs up. Three thumbs up if you read it with some friends and help each other through the ensuing thought-aches.



NewsReport Notes

Inequities in Mental Health Considered Alarming

Governments, consumer groups and mental health associations are becoming alarmed at the inequities in the mental health system. Although these inequities have existed for decades, they have become more pronounced with the recent publication of some significant research and descriptions of the problems. The information that is now available includes insights such as:

- In Ontario, it costs over \$90 000 per year to keep a person in a psychiatric hospital.

- In British Columbia, it costs more than \$250 per day to keep a person at Riverview Psychiatric Hospital but the province provides only \$23 per day for supportive independent housing in the community.

- The research literature consistently estimates that psychiatric hospital beds can be reduced by two-thirds when comprehensive community supports are available.

Translating effective research and program innovation into action, however, is extremely difficult in the mental health system and most other jurisdictions. Attempts at change are being made in some areas of the country. In British Colum-

bia, for example, \$50 million new monies has recently been allocated to community mental health and a portion of this money will support consumer initiatives and family programs. Riverview will remain a psychiatric hospital but will also be significantly down-sized within the next few years. In general, though, most governments in Canada talk about "reallocation" of resources from the formal services sector and institutions to community supports but to date little action has occurred on this front.

Two resources that are important background pieces for understanding the issues of inequity in mental health and the possibility of reallocating resources in an effective manner include *Unbalanced: Mental Health Policy in Ontario, 1930-1989*, by Harvey G. Simmons (Thompson Educational Publishing, 1990) and a recent Canadian Mental Health Association national office publication entitled *Community Reinvestment: Towards Rebalancing Canada's Mental Health System* (written by Eric Macnaughton, now a Centre Staffperson, 1991).

Understanding Youth: It Starts With Listening

The theme of our last Centre NewsReport, *It Starts With*

Listening, applies with any individual or group and no less so with children and youth. In this culture, where we often devalue children, it is refreshing to read a report which highlights ways to listen to young people and develop goals for the development of youth policy. *Bridging the Gap*, a recent report of the Canadian Mental Health Association (National Office, 1992) highlights five major areas upon which youth policy needs to be based. These areas, based on extensive collaboration with young people, include respect, caring, opportunities for participation, choices and responsibility, and security.

Interestingly, when the adults who designed this project first were involved with the youth, they had their own set of principles which were different than the youth. And yet these adults listened and worked with the youth to design an important set of principles for youth policy. What is so interesting about these principles is the fact that they could apply to the development of any social policy which is going to be oriented towards empowerment and enhancement of citizenship. If human services could be based on these policies and these principles, think about the possibilities!

For more information and resources concerning action research, please contact Deborah at the Centre, 519-741-1318.

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The Centre, established in 1982, is an independent, non-profit Canadian organization. The Centre works with researchers, educators, advocates, service providers and service consumers to create an understanding of human service policies and practices which affect citizens who have been disadvantaged in our society.

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