

Expanding our notions of power: A community-based participatory action research project

Hinton, Deborah King

The University of Utah, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2011. 3482818.

This qualitative study describes and analyzes the experience of Mexican immigrant women who live in the United States without government authorization and who have participated as volunteer outreach workers through a local community-based organization. Specifically, I have sought to understand their views regarding the impact that engaging civically has had on their lives. Research decisions throughout the project were informed by empowerment theory and the principles of participatory action research. Grounded theory methodology served as the framework for conducting the data analysis process. Triangulation of data sources were used to strengthen the reliability and authenticity of the data and its analysis. Participant observations, in-depth interviews of research participants, focus groups, and participant analysis offered four sources of data corroborated in the analysis process. In addition, the strategies of peer review and participant feedback were built into the research design. This grounded theory analysis of a community-based participatory action research project addressed many of the concepts discussed in the literature on empowerment theory and civic engagement, and has contributed to an area of research that was previously lacking: the impact of volunteering on lay health advisors themselves. The substantive grounded theory developed through this project furthers our consideration of notions of power, including: what is power, what does it look like, and how does it function in day-to-day lives?