

The Rise of the Community-Based Participatory Research Initiative at the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences: An Historical Analysis Using the Policy Streams Model

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PURPOSE

- To develop the historical record of the policy that launched the community-based participatory research (CBPR) initiative at the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). As part of this process, to identify specific factors and events that led to the introduction of that new policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- People with an interest in advocating policies supportive of CBPR (or any other initiative) should understand the three major components of the policy process. These include (1) the three streams (the political, policy and problem streams), (2) the policy window, and (3) the role of the policy entrepreneur.
- Policy entrepreneurs, those who use their own resources to advocate a policy, need to be alert for opportunities to take advantage of open policy windows when they emerge. Such readiness will help them increase their chances of advancing their policy ideas.

HOW FINDINGS SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Observed Effects on Community/Policy
 - This analysis indicates that public awareness of a given problem coupled with changes in political leadership and/or mood exert major forces in determining whether or not a policy option captures the attention and support of policy makers. The paper provides a detailed example of how such forces converged during the mid 1990s, allowing the NIEHS to become the first of the National Institutes of Health to establish a CBPR grant program.
 - This analysis also discusses (and provides an example of) the importance of a policy entrepreneur to advocate for a particular policy when the opportunity arises.
- Knowledge Added
 - This case study shows that certain components of the policy-making process that have been observed often in the legislative arena also play a routine part as actors within other governmental organizations formulate new policies.
 - This study provides the historical record of the factors and events leading to the development of the CBPR Initiative at NIEHS. Prior to this study's publication, the academic literature had lacked this record.

Felix A. The Rise of the Community-Based Participatory Research Initiative and the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences: An Historical Analysis Using the Policy Streams Model. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships*. 2007;1:31-40. The Community Policy Brief is intended to inform community based organizations, public health policy makers, and other individuals whose primary interest is not research, but who would be interested in the application and translation of research findings for practical purposes.