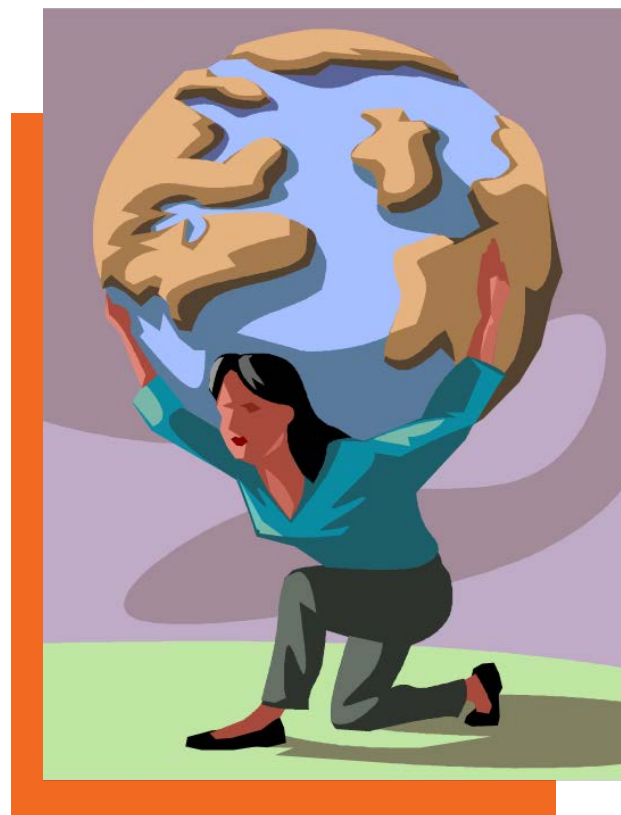


How research can advance women's and girls' equality-- ending gender-based violence (GBV)

Linda M. Williams, Ph.D.
Senior Research Scientist
Co-Director, Justice and Gender-Based Violence
Research initiative
Wellesley Centers for Women

Panel Presentation: The Power of Data: How Women-
and Gender-Focused Research Organizations Can
Advance SDG 5

Commission on the Status of Women
Church Center
United Nations, NY, NY
Wednesday, March 16, 2016





If we want to use research to advance women and girls' equality and to stop GBV there is a need for a *Politically Conscious Collaborative Agenda*

- Studying GBV is as much ethical, political, and personal as it is academic.
- Collaboration must be understood in the context of power differentials researcher-practitioner-activist-survivor.
 - Power analysis is not just a statistic.
 - “Drive-by” research has been experienced by many in the field.
- Must examine and question the politics of the process of knowledge production.
 - What are the questions that need answers?
 - Who gets to choose which questions to ask?
 - How do we go about finding the answers?
 - How good is the research at answering the important questions?

Linda Williams – Keys to this approach

- Understand the socio-political context of VAW as GBV– **gender based violence**
- Understand the intersectionality of gender, race, socio-economic status and VAW
- Incorporate the voices of survivors into the research agenda
- Develop methodologies that put the voices of women at the center of the work
- Conduct research settings that link activism & research (not to be confused with activist research that seeks to prove a particular hypothesis).
- Make it a goal to secure funds to support the time of all involved in the collaboration
- Take responsibility for integrating findings into policy and planning next steps for research or practice.



To explain further– Politically conscious collaborative research:

- A clear understanding of research questions comes from the field, not based on what the outside researchers think the issues are. Talk about and establish a shared vision and goals for a joint project, and come up with specific scientific and research-to-practice and/or research-to-policy goals.
- Learn how to create and be a gatherer of knowledge.
- Although the questions come from the field the answers are not predetermined and must come from rigorous research. There should be careful and systematic documentation-- this means using quantitative data as well as qualitative approaches and may include documentation in the style of testimony.
- Researchers must be comfortable with hearing the stories/ the accounts of women's lives.

If we are to do this work we must name the problem, hear the voices of women, understand the politics of the act of doing research:

Kevorkian: *GBV as Femicide—a study of women in Palestine*

“...one day, when I was 13 ... we were in the field, he asked me to lay down on a piece of carton so that he could rape me and I, in turn, should watch the road and tell him if someone is coming ... I did that...for 3 more years. YesI wanted to scream and ask for help...but...I knew that I would lie to my self if I believed that someone would help. I needed to stop the pain...the pain that painted all my life...but I was scared that I will be killed...no actually I was continuously killed by him ...I was a walking dead that everybody thought I am alive.....I am dead from the inside”

Williams and Banyard study of women survivors in the U.S.

You feel so bad / you feel so guilty about the thing. Y’know, an’ you don’t feel as though you have any power ‘cause you can’t say, “no,” they don’t respect “no.” <um hm> ... it’s just like...gettin’ stripped...they strip you. <right> Y’know, so almost like / it’s like your... your whole soul is naked, y’know?

Williams and colleagues: research on advocates' experiences with research-- Perception of Barriers to VAW Research—Focus group findings

- Lack of trust between victims/service providers and the research community.
- Need for practitioners to be actively involved in the very foundation of research.
- Negative experiences resulted primarily from what practitioners perceived as a degree of remoteness, or even arrogance, on the part of the researchers.
- Practitioners' positive experiences in research where the goals were clear and mutually established; **victim safety and possible reactions were given the utmost consideration**; and victim service providers were kept informed and involved throughout the process.

The Core Elements of Collaboration

- Open Communication.
- Mutual Trust.
- Mutual Respect.
- Shared Leadership and Vision.
- Researchers and Practitioners share “common ground.”
- Collaboration means more than just cooperation between the people “in charge.”

Collaboration, “an unnatural act between non-consenting adults.”

Jocelyn Elders



Advocating Politically Progressive/ Liberating Methodologies

- Offer innovative methods of inquiry—
 - Students take photos of places in the school where they feel unsafe.
 - Use of the “Dialogue Tent”
 - Look at women’s narratives and women’s voices as reflected in such narratives.



Can we involve children in primary research? To collect information directly from people/ community/ other youth?

- asserts their right to participate
- challenges the status quo in terms of what children can contribute and accomplish
- challenges existing notions of children’s capacities and vulnerabilities

Williams' research on commercial sexual exploitation of youth

See: www.wcwonline.org/images/pdf/williams-pathways-finalreport.pdf

Collaborations with homeless, runaway and sexually exploited youth to incorporate their perspectives into:

- the research design;
- protocols to promote safety and enhance youth participation; and
- development of policy initiatives for youth protection and justice.

A few caveats before we dash into this...

- Promoting the involvement of the community and of youth in research and in formulating practice and policy recommendations requires not only professional training and support but also a willingness of researchers and program managers to expand their repertoire of collaborative skills.
- Implementing an approach to attain justice for sexually exploited youth (or those subjected to GBV) requires more than moral outrage.

Summary suggestions for researcher-practitioner collaborations:

- Identify new problems, directions and solutions in efforts to eliminate violence against women.
- Enhance initiatives that provide community education and public awareness.
- Strengthen victim services by targeting populations in the greatest need of intervention and support.
- Strengthen efforts to educate allied professionals about violence against women.
- Strengthen efforts to attract and raise critically needed funding (provides a significant tool for grant writing.)

For more information:

Linda M. Williams, Ph.D., Senior Research Scientist
Justice and Gender Based Violence Research Initiative

Wellesley Centers for Women

Wellesley College

Wellesley, MA 02481

linda.williams@wellesley.edu

www.wcwonline.org/JGBVR

