



CUSAG

The Cultural Systems Analysis Group

Community Action Anthropology

Report from a May 1, 2009 Workshop on a Multi-Sectorial Approach to Prison- Community Reentry: *Towards A University-Community Outreach Network*¹ (May 13, 2009)

On Friday, May 1, 2009, the Cultural Systems Analysis Group (CuSAG—See Appendix 1 for Glossary of Acronyms) of the Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland, College Park held a prison-to-community reentry workshop². The workshop was developed in response to a request from Washington, DC community stakeholder participants in a focus group held as part of a research contract awarded to CuSAG by Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA)³. Those focus group participants had strongly called for multi-sectorial “accountability” in responding to the problems of so many young people in their communities falling into crimes and being sent to prison at very young ages. They called for greater accountability (or responsibility) from the parents of at risk children, their schools and teachers, their neighborhoods and broader communities, service agencies, political leaders, business interests, and colleges and Universities. Since CuSAG’s research for CSOSA was on prison-to-community re-entry, the May 1, 2009 workshop was held to: (1) discuss with attending researchers, program professionals and policy makers, and representatives from public agencies and community based organizations, regarding issues faced by reentrants, their families, and communities; and (2) propose the development of a University-to-Community Health Outreach Network (UC-HON) in response to the call for greater accountability from colleges and universities.

Appendix 2 shows the workshop attendance list. Among the problems discussed that are critical to the reentrants personally were inadequate housing, education/literacy and employment problems, and broad physical and mental health issues. Also discussed were the repercussions of these unmet basic needs, as reasons for continuing substance abuse, a return to criminal behavior and incarceration. Having male reentrants present at the workshop was enlightening for all participants. The reentrants talked about issues such as the “fear” they faced as they left prison without preparation to reintegrate into society, and consequently having no idea what they were going to do, and no prospects on how they would be able to take care of themselves

¹ For more information contact CuSAG at 301-405-5462, or <http://www.cusag.umd.edu>

² This workshop was made possible through the generous co-sponsorship by the University of Maryland’s Nyumburu Cultural Center and the Community Education Group of Washington, DC.

or their families. All of these concerns were said to influence their perceived roles and identities as men. More generally, the experience of high incarceration rates within family and community in some communities have led to a demise of male figures, impacting development of strong families and communities in those areas. The cost to the wider society was briefly mentioned, but there was little time for further discussion in this 2 ½ hour workshop.

CuSAG proposed the the development of the before mentioned UC-HON as a mechanism for facilitating the transfer of CuSAG expertise in community health assessment research, project design, implementation and evaluation (See www.cusag.umd.edu/expertise.html), to recruit other scholars to offer assistance related to their skills, and to offer interested students opportunities for internships at organizations and agencies interested in these issues.

CuSAG's areas of expertise are informed by a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) model that has evolved from CuSAG's Director, Dr. Tony Whitehead's almost 40 year career as a community health ethnographer/anthropologist. This model, titled the *Cultural Ecology of Health and Change*⁴ (the CEHC) consists of four subsystems:

1. **Project Design and Implementation Planning** (The PDIP). The PDIP is primarily a *service system* and consists of methodologies for assisting organizations in the *design* of community based initiatives.
2. **Ethnographically Informed Community & Cultural Assessment Research Systems** (the EICCARS) a multi-method *research system* that analyses: (1) conditions, needs, challenges and risks within a community as they relate to a specific health or social problem (e.g., the impact of incarceration and reentry); and (2) the organizational and other assets within the community that attempt, or can be utilized to effectively address such conditions, needs, and so on.
3. **Project Implementation Programs (the PIPs)**. The PIPs is also primarily a *service system* with several programs including research and evaluation, resources development, community organizing and participation, staff monitoring, developing community and culturally appropriate materials, developing and implementing community and culturally appropriate intervention projects, and the "energizing" of community cultural systems.
4. **Ethnographic Assessment and Evaluation Systems (the EAES)**. The EAES provides a multi-method *assessment* of project or organizational goals, objectives, strategies, outcomes, and impact.

In moving forward with CuSAG offer of technical assistance to organizations through the proposed UC-HON structure, CuSAG is open to requests from *individual* organizations and agencies. However, because of the small size of our staff, *we prefer to work with multiple organizations simultaneously*, by first offering *project planning workshops* that are informed by the CEHC's PDIP system, where CuSAG will help *multiple* organizations develop project designs with clear paths between goals and objectives, strategies and tasks for achieving these goals and objectives, project personnel assignments of strategies and tasks, and timelines for

⁴ For more information on the CEHC, go to: www.cusag.umd.edu/programs/cehc/.

achieving goals, objectives, strategies, and tasks⁵. Moreover, because of our commitment towards a multi-sectorial approach to provide technical assistance to organizations that join the network, we find it worthwhile to work with more than one organization within any local area, with particular emphasis given to organizations that focus on different community needs (e.g., housing, jobs, physical or mental health care, substance abuse treatment, etc.). This allows us to help organizations respond to a range of human and community needs which are frequently interrelated and therefore demand a holistic comprehensive approach.

The May 1, 2009 workshop closed with CuSAG promising to try to find funding for a longer conference/workshop in May of 2010. At this second, of which CuSAG is planning as an annual event, not only will a number of researchers, practitioners, and policy makers involved in re-entry issues be invited to give papers, but there will also be a PDIP project planning workshop for organizational representatives attending the conference/workshop. In addition to our search for conference/workshop funding, CuSAG will also be pursuing three years of funding to not only assist organizations with project planning (the PDIP), but also to fund a small number of organizations (about 10) with the application of the other CEHC systems to their other project components: (1) the EICCARS, which focuses on community needs, assets, and cultural assessment research (the EICCARS methodologies); (2) The PIPs, which focuses on project implementation; and (3) the EAES which focuses on project evaluation. In this way the CEHC systems will be tested and developed for ongoing application to UC-HON activities.

CuSAG is also attempting to secure at least three years of funding to further enhance its capacities to carry out UC-HON technical assistance, and community research and training activities. These include: (1) the establishment of CuSAG's proposed training programs integrating research, training, and technical assistance; (2) the completion of CEHC printed and online CEHC Tools to facilitate person-to-person and distance research, training, and technical assistance; and (3) the establishment of a UC-HON Data Management, Analysis, Presentation, and Publication Unit. While we consider all three of these UC-HON goals to be important, we would like to say a little more about the first item, i.e., training. A primary goal of the proposed UC-HON is to transfer skills and knowledge from the university to communities in addressing a range of health and social problems. Some transfers will be made through collaboration between university faculty and staff, and community based organizations and agencies on projects of mutual interests. However, such transfers will also be made through students taking CEHC and other related courses in participating universities, particularly courses with service components. At the same time CuSAG is designing 1-3 day workshops and conferences, and short courses (3-6 weeks) for both degree and non-degree (including community persons) participants that focus on the various methodologies of the CEHC.

⁵ Some professionals refer to the product of this project planning process as *logic models* (See . www.innonet.org/client_docs/File/logic_model_workbook.pdf, or www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf).

Appendix 1: Glossary of Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organization
CEHC	Cultural Ecology of Health and Change
CuSAG	Cultural Systems Analysis Group , a anthropologically based unit at the University of Maryland College Park
EAES	Ethnographic Assessment & Evaluation Systems , the CEHC system of evaluation programs
EICCARS	Ethnographically Informed Community & Cultural Assessments Research Systems , the CEHC system of community & cultural systems research
PCD	Project Culture Development
PDIP	The CEHC System in Project Design and Implementation Plan
PIPs	The CEHC System of Project Implementation Programs
UC-HON	University-to-Community Health Outreach Network

Appendix 2---Participants in the May 1, 2009 UC-HON Workshop

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