

A SECOND SPECIAL ISSUE OF RESEARCH ON MENTAL HEALTH CLUBHOUSES

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Editor

This second special issue on Fountain House mental health clubhouses completes our offerings on this well established form of collectivity that has many self-help/mutual aid features. The research in these two issues has shown extensive similarity across Clubhouses in different countries as well as diversity in various welfare and cultural contexts. The similarity is partly due to the 36 international standards and the training of staff and members in these standards that define the model and which provide the opportunity for a specific Clubhouse to be named as such (see www.iccd.org). The diversity stems from the cultural interpretation of standards as well as restraining factors of the welfare context and civil society within specific countries.

Magnus Karlsson, Guest Editor of these special issues, invited Thomas Craig, a senior psychiatrist familiar with the Clubhouse research from the UK to review the articles for the special issue, situate the Clubhouse as a social intervention to mitigate the effects of mental illness, and comment on how the research in these articles extends our knowledge on Clubhouses. Thomas Craig's article titled "Expanding knowledge of peer-based mental health organizations: The experience of Clubhouse" is the lead article in this issue. His article and three others comprise this special issue on Clubhouses. Kimiko Tanaka reports the results of her qualitative look at how peer support is manifested for members through their participation in the work-ordered day in one Clubhouse in New York City. Francesca Pernice-Duca and her colleagues accomplish two aims: first, they show how the recently popularized concept of *recovery* from mental illness (defined in a consensus statement through a U.S.

government agency) maps onto the values and activities of the ideal-typical Clubhouse. Second, since Clubhouses evolved experientially and independently of social science theory, there is concern of how the practices and activities fit with social science theories of individual change; two well established social psychological theories (Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of individual development and Bandura's social and cognitive learning theory) are applied to the ideal-typical Clubhouse and shown to be useful in articulating mechanisms of change they employ.

The final article in the special issue by Frank Wang and Yu-Hui Lu of Taiwan tell social science stories of two fascinating variations on Clubhouses that evolved in one societal context—Taiwan. One Clubhouse follows the 36 international standards and is a certified Clubhouse. The second is also faithful to Clubhouse ideals but also to Chinese cultural values on the family and to the family-oriented basis of mental health care that historically comprised the welfare system in Taiwan society—this latter version is unacceptable to the international certifying body of Clubhouses as it violates some of the 36 standards. However, it dramatically raises the issue of how rigid standards developed from a Western perspective at a certain point in time can limit and restrict the evolution of a valuable model as conditions change and interpretations vary in different cultural contexts.

In the first of the special Clubhouse issues I expressed concern that Fountain House clubhouses have been studied and reported in different literatures than Consumer-Run organizations (CROs) or User-Led Organizations as they were not seen to have enough in common for comparison (Borkman, 2013). A major goal of these special Clubhouse issues, therefore, was to be a bridge between the two literatures by showing that many aspects of mutual aid characterize the Clubhouse model as well as the CRO models. The evidence produced in the research in these special issues of the *Journal* (7(1) and this current issue, 2013) show that the inner workings of the Clubhouse model create settings of self-help and mutual aid analogous to those of CROs and User-led organizations although the specific activities and mechanisms differ by which they are achieved. A sense of belonging, a feeling of mattering as a unique individual to others, and believing one has social support with a sense of reciprocity in giving and receiving are core elements of mutual aid and are seen in Clubhouses (Conrad-Garrissi & Pernice-Duca, 2013). Extensive peer support can be and is generated from the work-ordered day, among other Clubhouse activities (Tanaka, 2013) and in various cultural contexts (Matsui & Meeuwisse, 2013; Wang & Lu, 2013). Further, Mandiberg and Edwards (2013) extended the prevailing conceptualizations by suggesting that the inner dynamics of the model can develop a collective identity that mitigates some of the negative impact of stigma and discrimination just as research has shown that strong racial/ethnic identity can reduce the mental health impact of racial/ethnic discrimination.

While the inner workings of the Clubhouse are similar to those of CROs and User-led organizations, the outward organizational structure differs as Clubhouses

are hybrids with professional and businessmen at the top governance levels. However, the Clubhouse standards usually restrain the power and influence of the top governing level from interfering in the inner workings, but external factors can interfere (see Larratta, 2013). Given that CROs themselves are subject to control and manipulation by persons with mental ill health statuses who are not committed to principles of mutual aid and self-help, it is foolhardy to assume that because CROs are ideally owned and controlled by persons with mental ill health statuses, that they then operate on the basis of mutual aid principles. It is always an empirical question: the model is an idea; the empirical case is the reality. Hopefully, future research will examine CROs and Clubhouses together instead of the current silos of two research literatures.

Cultural differences are also a major theme in the last two articles of the issue which are separate from the special Clubhouse issue. Racial and ethnic minorities do not participate in mainstream self-help groups as extensively as majority statuses in reported research—the reasons are not clear (Humphreys & Woods, 1994; Kessler, Michelson, & Zhao, 1997). Do ethnic/racial minority persons fail to attend a self-help group in the first place or attend but attenuate their participation after a short time? Are they more likely to attend and to stay in a group that is racially and ethnically like themselves? What are the differences in values and type of support that individuals find useful in participating in groups that are ethnically/racially similar to themselves? Jaime Corvin and colleagues from the University of South Florida studied these issues in breast cancer self-help groups: two for Latina women, two for African-American women, and two for European women. With a two phase research agenda, they intensively interviewed women in each group; from the results of the analysis constructed a questionnaire about the elements of the group that were supportive to the individual; then administered the questionnaire to participants in the same groups a year or so later; used an anthropological technique Cultural Consensus Analysis to identify how similar or different the items of support were across groups. They concluded: “In conclusion, our study supports the position that ethnically identified support groups are successful in attracting and retaining culturally distinct populations because members perceive the group as providing holistic peer support, that is knowledge, experience and encouragement from others who share not only the problem condition but also a socio-cultural background and life experiences that enable a special bonding.” (Corvin, Coreil, Nupp, & Dyer, 2013, p. 212). Interestingly, the role of the family in the group was much more important to Latina groups than to African-Americans or European-Americans similar to its significance in Chinese Taiwanese Clubhouses.

The last article by Tomofumi Oka looks at the historical development of self-help groups in Japan within its cultural context and considers current issues of confusion on the part of government and professionals between the role of member-owned self-help groups or professionally-led support groups and some of the complexities of online support groups within Japanese

cultural interpretations. Tomofumi is a contributor to a chapter on self-help groups for an international encyclopedia on voluntarism that is being developed and kindly borrowed from some of his writings to developed this material. Finally, a book review of a UK description of self-help groups in a local area by Carol Munn-Giddings from the UK rounds out this issue.

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