

Empowerment for migrant communities: Paradoxes for practitioners

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Abstract

A common aim of health and human service programmes is to improve the health status of marginalized groups. One such group is new migrants. This paper summarizes the results of a three-year study of a health and empowerment initiative undertaken with a low-income migrant community in Aotearoa/New Zealand (A/NZ), with subsequent interviews with community workers engaged with such communities in A/NZ and Canada, a country known for its open migration policies and programmes aimed at assisting new migrant communities. Subtle dynamics of identity, culture and power are demonstrated to play key roles in shaping new women migrant's empowerment experiences. The paradoxical nature of these dynamics has implications for those workers and agencies engaged in programs seeking to improve the capacities of such groups to act in empowered ways on conditions that influence their health.