

Background

Dr. James R. Cook is Professor of Psychology at UNC Charlotte, where he teaches courses in Community Interventions, Community Psychology, Applied Research Design and Program Evaluation. He also coordinates the Community Psychology graduate programs and the undergraduate Community Psychology Learning Community. He is the recipient of many grants from funding agencies, including the National Institute of Mental Health, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Office of Human Development Services, and the Institute of Educational Sciences. He received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Indiana University.

Research

Dr. Cook's area of research is community psychology, which focuses on changing systems and settings to better meet the needs of individuals and families. He explains, "With a strong emphasis on community-based participatory research (CBPR), my faculty and student colleagues and I work with community groups as partners. We work together to develop research questions, collect data, and use the knowledge gained to improve the community." Some of his current partnerships (with Ryan Kilmer) include: evaluation of family support programs within both mental health and child protective services (CPS); pilot efforts to improve social workers' ability to identify and meet the mental health needs of youth in CPS; evaluating efforts to increase school readiness and skills for young children; and developing capacity of early childhood programs to collect, manage and use data to improve services. "Through working with these programs to evaluate their impact, we help them improve their ability to help children and families." Recent articles by Dr. Cook include using evaluation to effect social change, screening for mental health challenges in child welfare systems, the ecology of families experiencing homelessness, and universities' roles in building communities and strengthening democracy.