

# THE *Community Psychologist*

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Ana Mari Cauce  
*University of Washington*

Moments after sending off my last Presidential column, it not only seemed irrelevant but trivial. Between the time when it typeset for *The Community Psychologist* and its appearance in print, Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast states, triggering a level of devastation few of us thought was possible at this time in these United States.

Community psychologists from SCRA and beyond are to be commended for their individual and collective responses. Community psychologists were involved in helping to coordinate rescue efforts,

in the mobilization of people out of New Orleans and into Houston, and in the coordinated efforts that took place in the Astrodome to provide temporary shelter and relief to those left homeless. Community psychologists were also involved in staffing helplines trying to reconnect families who had been separated during the hurricane and its aftermath, and in community fund drives throughout the country.

I spoke with Gloria Levin in that first week as she found her way into National Red Cross headquarters, trying to make sure they realized that there was a role to be played not only by psychologists with clinical skills, but by those who understood how communities worked and could be mobilized. Through a website that David Chavis helped develop, community responses to both Katrina and Rita were tracked. And many college and university-based community psychologists

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#### DISABILITIES

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# EDITORS' COLUMN

Joy S. Kaufman and Nadia L. Ward  
Co-Editors of *The Community Psychologist*

*The Consultation Center,  
The Division of Prevention & Community  
Research, Department of Psychiatry,  
Yale University School of Medicine*



Joy Kaufman (l) and Nadia Ward (r).

We held our breath as we watched an entire city become submerged by water in August of this year. Helplessly, we listened to accounts of the impact of Hurricane Katrina on a vibrant city, and watched as its historical and cultural roots, so deeply embedded in the history of our country, were seemingly washed away. With the devastation of the hurricane, lives were lost,

hundreds of thousands of families displaced, and just as many children were, and continue to be, unaccounted for. As a result of the storm, we have seen an outpouring of support from ordinary people doing extraordinary things to restore hope in the lives of families impacted by the hurricane, and to rebuild New Orleans and the other areas devastated by Katrina.

We felt compelled to cover this important event and to ask ourselves: Were we prepared to respond? What did we do to help? Were we effective in our response? We approached Brad Olson, TCP's Community Action column editor, to shape the dialogue for us. You will be pleased to hear from Joie Acosta and David Chavis as they share their insights on how the Association for the Study and Development of Community (ASDC) assisted in the response. Brad also contributes a thought provoking piece on the utility of participatory action in helping relief systems work more efficiently and effectively.

This special section also features articles that highlight the various ways in which community psychologists are engaged in community action. You will read about how our colleagues Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar and Judah Viola are engaged in community action to facilitate social

change by increasing access to healthy food to an African American community in Chicago. You will also hear Niki Harré and Pat Bullen from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, describe an innovative way of sharing narratives of community action through the timeless tradition of storytelling. Jamie De Leeuw calls our attention to the important issue of animal welfare. He urges us to become more knowledgeable about issues related to the exploitation of animals and provides practical suggestions as to how we can get involved. Four community graduate students share their experiences of teaching service learning courses in the context of the community, and the challenges and considerations this has on preparing future community psychologists. Jordan Braciszewski shares his view of what students can do to help secure our future, and Audrey Bangi, Gary Harper and colleagues from DePaul share some of their work doing HIV prevention in Kenya.

In this edition, our President, Ana Mari Cauce, reviews some of the responses of community psychologists in the aftermath of Katrina, and encourages us all to continue working towards

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S, continued from page 1

worked to develop appropriate responses to our faculty colleagues who were professionally displaced, and to students who needed a place to take classes and call home. Even in distant Seattle, the University of Washington took in close to a hundred students, and we are still working on developing effective strategies to help them transition home.

I was especially taken by Bill Berkowitz's plea on the SCRA listserv that we draw upon the unique strengths we have as community psychologists, strengths that "lie in developing and sustaining effective community structures to deliver benefits to people and to protect them from various forms of adversity." To paraphrase Bill, isn't that what community psychology is all about?

As we begin to plan for the Executive Committee's midwinter meeting in late January, I will make sure we find a time to discuss what we, as community psychologists, did well, and what we should have done better in Katrina's aftermath. How we can better capitalize on both our unique strengths and on those that come

from partnerships with others, both inside and outside psychology?

Now that the worse hurricane season in a century is over, we need to begin to ready ourselves for next season. And, hurricanes are not our only natural disasters. While I was born and bred in hurricane country, I write this column while living on a fault line, well aware that when it comes to a major earthquake in my vicinity, it isn't if, but when. Now is the time to be thinking of ways in which we, as students of communities and as community activists, can develop ways to minimize the negative effects of the next Katrinas.

As we plan for an always uncertain future, it is equally important that we take the time to consider not only the devastation that Katrina caused, but the window it provided into a devastation that was already there. In the midst of tragedy, Katrina sparked an important debate on the role of race in class in this country, a debate that is also unfolding abroad in the aftermath of the riots in France.

In this vein, community psychology also has

an important role to play in helping to better explicate, and alleviate, the harms that result from concentrated urban poverty and its relationship to ethnic and racial segregation in this country and beyond. Even before Katrina, 38% of New Orleans children lived in poverty, more than double that in the U.S. as a whole. One in five households in New Orleans did not have a car, and almost a tenth did not even have phone service. And the poor children and families in such households were not equally disbursed across New Orleans, but primarily resided in extremely poor neighborhoods like that of the Lower Ninth Ward, which, not surprisingly, existed on some of the lowest ground in the city and was hit particularly hard by the floods. It was not merely coincidental that the residents of these areas suffered the most and it is hard to imagine that one could ever mount truly effective mobilization efforts in the midst of neighborhoods that are this disconnected and distressed.

There is much work for us to do, as community researchers and practitioners, as we enter this New Year.

ensuring that the disaster plans in place in our communities are adequate and appropriate to meet the needs of our community members.

This issue also contains a number of columns. In the Book Review column, Dave Glenwick reviews *Destructive trends in mental health: The well intentioned path to harm* (Wright & Cummings, 2005) and Edward Stevens and Daryl Holtz Iselberg review Jason and Perdoux's (2004) *Havens: Stories of true community healing*. This issue also includes an introduction to a new column which will highlight the work of the Community Action Research Centers (CA-RC) and will be edited by Chris Keys, Bob Newbrough, Brad Olson and Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar.

In Cultural and Racial Affairs, Christina Ayala-Alcantar shares her experience in educating future teachers about race. Bianca Wilson, in the LGBT column, highlights some of her experiences as a participant observer within the African American lesbian community. Gloria Levin provides us with another thought provoking Living Community Psychology Column highlighting the career progression of Cécile Lardon, Assistant Professor at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. In this edition, we are also introduced to Derek Griffith and Monica Adams, the new editors of the Prevention and Promotion Column. Susana Helm discusses youth leadership in the School Intervention Column, and the Social Policy Column includes two pieces on Federal funding of the foster care system. Finally, the Regional

and Student Columns keep us up-to-date on some of the work of our colleagues.

This edition also includes the paper from the 2005 APA Convention Student Poster winners. In this paper, Tatiana Pinedo, Caitlin Mahoney, and Joseph de Rivera present their work in developing a measure of human security.

We hope that this new year is one in which we all find ways, large and small, to continue to work towards improving our local and global communities.

*Joy and Nadia*

## BOOK REVIEW

*edited by Ken Miller*

**Wright, R.H., & Cummings, N.A. (Eds.). (2005). *Destructive trends in mental health: The well-intentioned path to harm*. New York: Routledge.**

*Review By: David Glenwick  
Fordham University*

A book on psychology from a conservative perspective, edited by two psychologists usually regarded as members of the profession's establishment? To borrow a line from the old "Rocky and Bullwinkle" TV program, "You don't see that every day, Chauncey." Of further surprise to most Division 27 readers will be the lumping of community psychology with APA and clinical psychology as the three primary culprits responsible for an alleged liberal dominance of the field. *Destructive Trends in Mental Health (DTMH)* consists of 15 chapters attempting to document the effects of this purported liberal bias on research, practice, and training in psychology.

One usually doesn't rush to read material that clashes with one's worldview—it's always more comforting to gravitate toward those with whom we can nod along in unison. Indeed, reading *DTMH* does result in much teeth-gnashing, not

just because of philosophical differences but also because of its unevenness, even more so than in the typical edited volume. Several of the chapters are straight reprints of journal articles, and many chapters are buoyed by outdated references, thus rendering much of the book quite skippable. Nonetheless, attention must be paid (as Mrs. Loman said about Willy), both because *DTMH* is being widely marketed and distributed (complimentary copies have been sent to many leaders in the profession) and because there just might be something here that we can learn about ourselves. In the review, I will focus on those sections most relevant to community psychology.

Although allusions to community psychology abound throughout *DTMH*, the heart of the critique of community psychology is contained in the final two chapters, "Social Justice in Community Psychology," by Lillis, O'Donohue, Cucciari, and Lillis, and "Sociopolitical Diversity in Psychology: The Case for Pluralism," by Redding. The essence of the authors' argument is that community psychology's liberal lens has not only determined but also has limited how we analyze social problems, interpret our data, and develop interventions. Furthermore, on a more practical note, this liberal perspective has restricted our ability to connect effectively with conservative communities and to recruit prospective graduate students and faculty of a more conservative bent.

In reaction, it is tempting to merely counterpunch. With its implicit philosophy of regarding individuals as determining and being responsible for their own behavior, the volume does have a tendency to veer toward excessive victim-blaming. At its most extreme, this results in analyses that downplay crucial systemic factors. (For example, Zur's chapter on battered women largely ignores supra-individual causes of abuse and the numerous ecological factors that make it so difficult for abused women to successfully leave relationships.) However, it is perhaps more worthwhile to ask if there is something of value for community psychology in *DTMH*'s critique. First, I was most struck by Lillis et al.'s advancement of an explicitly conservative approach to community psychology. (Yes, Virginia, somewhat to my surprise, there does appear to be a conservative community psychology.) This approach emphasizes economic rights and individually focused, skill-building programs, such as tax incentives, loans, and mentoring for prospective small business owners and school vouchers to promote educational and, ultimately, economic advancement in urban children. Such an approach can be criticized for its rather limited view of social justice (e.g., what about other, noneconomic types of rights and resources for such groups as gays and the physically challenged?), its caricature of community psychology as focusing on "oppressed victims" as opposed to empowerment, and its failure to address such issues as bad public schools (since there will

be a limit on the number of parents who can be given private school vouchers). However, this model, by pointedly targeting economic and business factors, perhaps does provide a useful corrective or supplement to community psychology's tendency to underplay and only indirectly address such factors when working with low socioeconomic populations.

Second, Lillis et al. and Redding note that that how we define a problem does influence greatly our proposed solutions to that problem. Different levels of analysis (and intervention) are appropriate when asking different questions. For example, with respect to the problem of homelessness, ideally one would try to work toward its elimination (e.g., by asking why is there much homelessness and by designing interventions aimed at its reduction). However, such a goal does not render invalid the asking of such other questions as why are some people homeless and why are people affected differentially by homelessness. The importance of how we frame and analyze a problem also has been long stressed by mainstream community psychologists such as Rappaport and Seidman. However, where conservatives and liberals appear to differ is in their preferred levels of analysis and change (i.e., individual and small group versus higher-order systems).

Third, Redding's chapter on sociopolitical diversity does give one pause regarding who has been left out of community psychology's "big tent" (Toro, 2005) with respect to sociopolitical beliefs. In his 2004 Division 27 presidential address, Toro (2005) appropriately called for the greater inclusion of ethnic minorities, community practitioners, international colleagues, students, and individuals from allied disciplines under the tent of community psychology. Sociopolitical diversity is a dimension not often thought of in this context but is worth considering with respect to both academia (graduate students, faculty, and curricula) and community linkages. Empowerment strikes me as one construct that should have broad appeal across the sociopolitical spectrum, encompassing a wide array of approaches and programs ranging from

competence and resource development for individuals and small groups to higher-order social systems change.

Community psychologists usually think of ourselves as being on the side of the angels, so it is rare and somewhat sobering to see our field depicted as part of the ruling class ("We have met the enemy, and he is us," as Pogo used to say). There is much that is offputting and debatable in *DTMH*. Nevertheless, reading

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**However, this model, by pointedly targeting economic and business factors, perhaps does provide a useful corrective or supplement to community psychology's tendency to underplay and only indirectly address such factors when working with low socioeconomic populations.**

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it does give rise to a set of questions worth asking: What are my sociopolitical values? In what ways (both positive and negative) do these values impact my work? Does an alternative value stance have something to offer? When I write or speak, am I doing so as a community psychologist or as a citizen-advocate? Perhaps we shouldn't rush to get that halo fitted just yet.

#### References

Toro, P.A. (2005). Community psychology: Where do we go from here? *American Journal of Community Psychology, 35*, 9-16.

**Jason, L. & Perdoux, M. (2004). *Havens: Stories of true community healing*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.**

*Review By: Edward Stevens and Daryl Holtz Isenberg*

*Havens* chronicles personal stories by people who've been helped by living in small group settings. The characters suffer from afflictions common and persistent in society. They are aided and healed while living with people of similar circumstances. *Havens* provides a good introduction to community and self-help in an easily understandable, personal style.

The authors, both professionally expert in the field, also share another trait; they both have personal experience with communal living to help heal suffering and illness. The perspective they provide through others' stories is one of

hope, helpfulness and compassion. The solutions they describe are small scale but big impact for the affected individuals.

After a brief introduction that defines and gives some historical perspective to community, the book begins a series of chapters defined by the condition shared by the characters. *Havens* covers the topics of drug and alcohol abuse, loneliness and fear with the elderly, mental illness, and chronic medical conditions. All of these encompass large population segments and poor track records of treatment.

Therein lies the magic that *Havens* documents. As Bob, a 26-year user of heroin, states, "Here is this person I don't have to expect anything from and he doesn't have to expect anything from me, and we are willing to be there for each other!" Separately, they are vulnerable individuals unlikely to escape their suffering; collectively, they succeed.

Through story after story, we hear of how living with others in small-scale situations, through mutual support and collective strength, the participants improve the quality of their lives. Unselfishness emerges, loneliness fades, character strengthens and always, as part of a larger nexus. Importantly, this success is achieved very efficiently. Great results do not require great expenditures.

The authors have chosen stories of people with varying backgrounds, helping to illustrate the breadth of the population and the strength of the message. With drug abuse occurring across all segments of society, the Oxford House becomes a focal point for people successfully transitioning to everyday society. Clearly a successful model with over 1000 in existence, Oxford House offers the most compelling evidence that these small-scale successes can be replicated.

The stories of Trudy and Myron clearly describe the loneliness and vulnerability of aging in an increasingly isolated society. Bureaucratic and impersonal organizations, driven by incomprehensible rules, create fear and uncertainty rather than comfort. Two people with disparate backgrounds, at a common point in life, find empathy and tolerance at H.O.M.E. and in themselves.

Stories of those suffering mental illness and chronic fatigue syndrome follow. The magic of community continues. *Havens* does a good job of introducing key concepts and themes. *Havens* residences, with residents in charge,

offer much more than home-like settings. In the forward Thomas More emphasizes that “shelter” goes beyond our present care for vulnerable people. He chastises our present system, “Ultimately, we as a people, will have to learn how to house, and not institutionalize, those among us who get confused and lost”.

Compared to professionally dominated shelters, what a difference in resident vitality in these *Havens*-type settings! In Jason’s (1997) extensive history of “true communities”, he traces the origins of community while *Havens* stories aptly demonstrate these values and methods.

*Havens* has enough breadth to be relevant to the larger population as a whole because it addresses common conditions that most people have had some experience with, either directly or indirectly. The book’s credibility originates from the characters themselves; they are not deluded optimists but wounded pragmatists. *Havens* suggests that numerous populations might benefit if society encouraged the development of these low-cost shelters. Today’s health care trends extend these concepts beyond housing, yet they still embrace community values. An expert in creating online communities, America Online founder and former CEO, Steve Case (Wall Street Journal, October 5, 2005) has invested \$100 million in his new company, “Revolution Health Care Group”. The company will “put patients in the center of the health system, with more choices, more convenience, more control.” Because health care consumes two trillion dollars in the US each year, the implications for Case’s investments, and those described in *Havens*, are huge.

For a community psychologist, *Havens* can be useful in many ways. It’s a terrific model for making a complex issue accessible to the general public. It demonstrates the necessity of addressing the “second-order” or environmental and social situation of those in need to make sustainable progress. The successful solutions in *Havens* are scale sensitive and somewhat fragile to human behavior, but they are also very efficient. They do not require massive amounts of talent, technology or money to make them work. Innovative thinking; focused on shared suffering; and small scale, almost prototype, solutions applied with care and discipline have led to healthier people and profound insights. Professionals can find both creative inspiration as well some practical thoughts on what seems to work well in the book.

Those wanting to learn more have access to detailed appendices and a bibliography. Overall, a delightful read that doesn’t assume prior knowledge of the topic. It can be read at a relatively fast pace while delivering a positive message...stories of real people who have successfully improved their lives and understand the preciousness of what they’ve experienced.

## References

Jason, L. A. (1997). *Building Communities: Values for a Sustainable Future*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.

# COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH CENTERS

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## CA-RC Develops a New Initiative: Network of Centers

by Christopher Keys, Bob Newbrough, Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar and Brad Olson

In the last 20 years, many community psychologists have established centers in universities and community settings around the country. In many ways these centers play a generative role like that Jim Kelly described in his comments on the role of Woods Hole in marine biology. Since 1994, Bob Newbrough has sought to infuse that generative spirit in community research centers through his initiative to create a cohort of community action research centers (CA-RC). Centers for community research have had the critical mass of resources and focus of interest necessary to launch work that has defined our field and to facilitate its forward movement.

The CA-RC Project was developed to have a small research network of sites that would carry out coordinated and collaborative research and action projects. In 1994, Bob Newbrough developed a Task Force to develop a Woods Hole for the field of community psychology. The intention was to use the Woods Hole concept to transform the university and local community by creating partnerships that engage in mutually cooperative projects that apply the best of practice, theory, research and policy to improve live and solve community problems. Since its creation, CA-RC members and sites that include Puerto Rico, Kansas and Chicago, with Vanderbilt providing the hub and recently added as a site; have engaged in several exchanges through conference presentations and panels. The Chicago

conference in 2002 was the first collaborative project of the Chicago site of the CA-RC network. The conference, co-sponsored by several institutions including APA, DePaul University, University of Illinois at Chicago and Loyola University culminated in the publishing of the first book on participatory approaches to community psychology research titled *Participatory Community Research: Theories and Methods in Action*. The book was developed based on the papers discussed at the conference.

We believe the time has come for community psychologists and other community researchers who direct or are active leaders, all interested in centers for community research and action, to come together and form a network. The network may serve several functions including exchanging ideas and resources, developing common projects, and serving as resources to one another on matters of center development, strategy, and operations. Network members identify ways to work together on research and intervention projects of common interest and to advocate jointly for federal and foundation support of new initiatives and policies. Since there is sufficient interest, we are organizing an ongoing network or other organization to facilitate support and collaboration among community research and action centers in the USA and around the globe.

During the Biennial conference in Urbana-Champaign we had initial organizing meetings for this network. About a total of 35 individuals representing centers attended one of two events: a pre conference meeting and a panel discussion. These meetings were open to all directors of community research and action centers, their designees and interested community psychologists. By “community research and action center”, we mean a recognized organization that identifies community research and action as a central element of its mission. Such centers typically include at least two community psychologists and/or other doctoral-level community researchers and two or more major, funded community research and intervention projects. The centers represented at the meetings were distinct organizational entities in themselves and/or were part of larger institute or other organization that have a significant investment in community research and action. They all focus on community psychology approaches to addressing important social issues and/or may have an interdisciplinary perspective. During these events, individuals shared information about their centers and outlined plans for an organization of centers. Participants considered ways of working together in the

future and made preparations for sharing their work at this meeting with others at a session during the conference. As a result of these meetings a Listserv was created and we are currently working with Vince Francisco to incorporate the CA-RC Network of Centers into the Community Tool Box website. The TCP will be sponsoring an ongoing column to inform members about the developments of the CA-RC network of centers. In this column we will be highlighting different centers and sharing our work. We also anticipate regular network meetings at major conferences for community psychologists. In June 2006 we hope to hold a centers network meeting at the International Community Psychology conference in Puerto Rico.

If you are interested in becoming part of the network please send an email to: Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar at [ysuarez@uic.edu](mailto:ysuarez@uic.edu), Brad Olson at [bolson@depaul.edu](mailto:bolson@depaul.edu), or Edurne Garcia at [edurne15@yahoo.com](mailto:edurne15@yahoo.com).

## CULTURAL & RACIAL AFFAIRS

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### Teaching Teachers about Race: The Musings of a Chicana Professor

*Editor's Note: The term Chicana@ is used to symbolize both the feminine and masculine forms of the word Chicano. It is also synonymous with the term Chicano/a.*

by Christina Ayala-Alcantar  
Chicana@ Studies Department  
California State University, Northridge

"I don't see color, I only see children." What message does this statement send? That there is something wrong with black or brown, that it should not be noticed? I would like to suggest that if one does not see color, then one does not really see children. Children made "invisible" in this manner become hard-pressed to see themselves worthy of notice.

- Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children*

I have the honor of teaching pre-service teachers and teacher candidates in California. At no point in my graduate career had I considered public education as the arena where I would assist in creating social change in our society. Yet, my professional life has led me to

this new endeavor. This new chapter in my life has challenged me to better understand how race impacts public education.

Teaching teachers in a Chicana@ Studies Department is a unique experience for me and students. One of the features that make it distinct is the primary role ethnicity plays in course content. Many teacher training programs attempt to address ethnicity through a pluralistic orientation that does not adequately address how race and ethnicity influence the learning process and life experiences of students of color. A pluralistic orientation provides a superficial understanding of ethnicity such as appreciating differences, celebrating holidays, and eating ethnic foods. In contrast, in Chicana@ Studies race and ethnicity is used as the primary lens to understand how culture permeates every aspect of students' lives, and shapes the way they think, feel, and act. Moreover, it challenges student teachers to move out of their comfort zone as we use the lens of race and ethnicity to understand the complexity of public education and the inherent contradictions that exist in the educational system that guarantee not all students will have equal access to an education and the American dream.

Most students enroll in my courses because they fulfill a diversity requirement (e.g., Equity and Diversity in Schools, Chicana@ Child), which is necessary for them to complete their program. Some of the students believe these courses are "politically correct" courses that they simply need to suffer through. Others are not exactly sure what to expect. And still others are afraid because my department has been stereotyped as militant. You can only imagine the energy and attitude many of the students have on the first day of class.

I also have feelings of apprehension and fear on the first day of class. How receptive are students going to be? Are they going to be willing to listen to what I have to share regarding the readings, course content and requirements? How are they going to perceive me? What stereotypes am I going to fulfill or challenge? In what ways am I going to stereotype them? Will I be able to work through my prejudices? How are we going to work through all of our attitudes and beliefs in order to discuss racism at a personal and institutional level?

I believe it is critical for student teachers to become aware of their own personal prejudices so as to better understand how these beliefs impact their teaching, interactions and expectations of students. Through trial and error, I finally came to the realization that in order for us as a class to truly examine race at a personal level, I had to be honest and upfront with my students regarding my own prejudices. Every semester I share with my students how I struggle to overcome the prejudices I learned from my family. For instance, my father always told me not to trust white people because they were only looking out for themselves and given the opportunity they would betray me. Of course, this is further complicated when I become an adult and read about the different ways that whites have harmed people of color throughout the world. This information simply reinforced what my father had already taught me. Given these prior experiences, I share with my students how I have to make a conscious effort not to negatively stereotype all white people, particularly my students. By sharing and acknowledging my own biases, I start to create an environment where students can begin to examine their own beliefs and how these beliefs will influence their teaching.

I must share that this personal examination is a difficult process because many of my students do not want to admit they are prejudiced. Many of the student teachers I work with endorse a colorblind perspective. They state they simply see children, not color. Thus, they are not racist or prejudice, but caring individuals and good

teachers. However, by ignoring the color of their students' skin, they purposely choose to pay no heed to students' lives and silence their students' experiences. For

example, many times student teachers are not considerate of the experience of immigrant students in their classrooms because of this colorblind perspective. Their primary concern is teaching the child English without any regard to the emotional loss of leaving family and friends nor the culture shock students may be experiencing in a new country. They may also ignore the different barriers students might be experiencing in acquiring a new language and adjusting to life in the United States. While at the surface a colorblind perspective seems supportive of all students, in actuality, it is quite harmful because it marginalizes and silences the experiences of students of color whose lives are influenced by their race and ethnicity.

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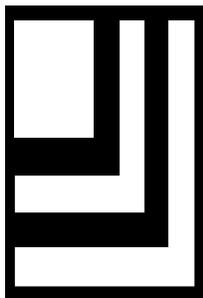
# LESBIAN/GAY/BISEXUAL/ TRANSGENDER

The examination of educational practices through the lens of race also provides students with a completely different understanding of public education as an institution. We spend half of the semester examining and discussing educational practices such as meritocracy, tracking, curriculum, and language acquisition to better comprehend how the structure of education is racist. For example, meritocracy is a practice that all students take for granted and do not question because it is the only reward system they are familiar with in education. Meritocracy in education is a reward system that is founded on the principles of Social Darwinism - survival of the fittest (Darder, 1991). That is, only students considered the fittest will obtain A's and flourish in school. Those that are unfit will be left behind to fend for themselves. We spend a considerable amount of time discussing which students will be labeled as "fittest" and at whose expense. This notion is quite shocking to many students because they truly believe that education is accessible to all students and a way for many to move away from poverty.

Teaching these courses is challenging, but I am grateful to be part of an institution that recognizes and values my department's contribution in training student teachers. I truly believe that I am making a difference in our society by teaching this group of students. I know that many students leave my courses full of critical knowledge and skills that will allow them to advocate for change in education. I am honored to be their professor and look forward to our collaborative efforts to improve public education for all.

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## Establishing and Maintaining Credibility as a Participant Observer of Sexual Behaviors in My Sexual Community

by Bianca Wilson  
*University of California, San Francisco*

I recently completed my dissertation project that explored the ways African American lesbians conceptualize sex and sexuality. In the tradition of other studies of sexual culture, I used a multi-method qualitative ethnographic design that included focus groups, individual interviews and participant observations. As a Black lesbian-identified woman, negotiating my researcher and community member statuses were challenging in the process of conducting all three methods of data collection. Within community research, we discuss processes such as obtaining access to settings through key leaders or well-connected members in order to establish credibility. We also talk about the importance of developing rapport within interview settings. I relied heavily on my training as a community psychologist to develop recruitment procedures and navigate the conduct of the group and individual interviews. Yet, the specific strategies I used to establish and maintain credibility as a *community member researcher* within the observational setting were "learned on the job."

### Observational Setting

Participant observation is a strategic method of data collection that "puts you where the action is" (Bernard, 2002, p. 324) and "allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In an effort to triangulate data on Black lesbian sexual culture obtained through group and individual interviews, I chose to observe weekly open mic nights at a local pub that was hosted and attended primarily by Black lesbian and bisexual women. An open mic is an artistic event designed to allow scheduled and non-scheduled performers, primarily poets, to express themselves. The open mic nights were an ideal setting to observe how this community thought and felt about sex and sexuality because I was able to assess the extent to which sexuality was a topic of community art and I was able to observe how women interacted with one another in a purely social, rather than research, environment. Though productive

fieldwork often takes a relatively long time (i.e., 1 year or more), Bernard (2002) suggested that highly focused participant observation research within one's own culture may take less time (several weeks or months). I formally observed the open mic for 3 months and 2 weeks, totaling ten observations.

The pub where these open mics were held is considered the only juke joint left in Chicago. It's small and cozy, fitting about 70 people. The first night I attended, I arrived early and found a table near the right wall where I could see the stage but remained slightly hidden from the main flows of traffic into the club. My goal was to be inconspicuous and to have enough privacy to take notes. The DJ was playing the best of old school steppin' music and contemporary R&B. Despite my efforts to seclude myself, several women chose to sit at my table so they could grab a seat before the open mic began. I brought paper and pens with me to take notes, but ended up using one of the table fliers that they distributed to write on so I looked less obvious. Though I did not intend to announce that I was there to conduct research when I walked through the door, I recognized that I was not there in the role of the complete participant, which is often associated with higher levels of deception (Bernard, 2002; see also, Seal, Bloom, & Somlai, 2000 and Angrosino & Perez, 2000, for examples on managing varying levels of deception in different settings).

### Negotiating Credibility

As mentioned above, being part of the community is often noted as a strength in conducting community research and participant observations. I feel that my previous community activism and Black lesbian identity were strengths in this setting. However, my community membership also posed a challenge in the process of establishing credibility while also attempting to remain inconspicuous. The first couple of weeks were difficult because several people explicitly expressed to me and indirectly suggested that they were surprised or suspicious of my presence. One reason for the surprise, which I inferred from several comments made to me, was that people thought it was odd that I was there every week when I had never come to these open mic events before. I explained my study to several people because I did not want to be dishonest and pretend that I randomly decided to begin spending every Tuesday night out just because I liked smoky bars and poetry. The responses to my study ranged from interest to suspicion. Indicating suspicion, one woman stopped me while I was taking notes and asked what I was doing. I told her that I was doing a study on how Black lesbians think about sex and I was

# LIVING COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

by Gloria Levin  
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“Living Community Psychology” highlights a community psychologist through an in-depth interview that is intended to depict both personal and professional aspects of the featured individual. The column’s purpose is to offer insights into community psychology as it is *lived* by its diverse practitioners. In this issue of *The Community Psychologist*, we continue exploring the globalization of community psychology, here featuring a German-born community psychologist.

Featuring: Cécile Lardon, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor,  
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c.lardon@uaf.edu



Cécile Lardon

Born in Heidelberg in 1962 and raised in West Berlin, Cécile Lardon calls herself a “second Post-War generation German,” her parents having been born during World War II (the first Post-War generation). Those born earlier were

burdened with guilt for the Nazi regime, but her generation “had some pride in being German and worked very hard to make it a good place to live.” Everybody surrounding her, especially her parents, were politically active, and liberal political values were instilled in her. Even as liberal activism slowed down a bit in the late 1970s, German university students were still very active. “We were the last wave of political activists. After us, things calmed down.”

Having a feminist mother, she grew up in Berlin’s women’s movement, participating in many feminist demonstrations. In high school, she studied labor movements: “I went straight from the Beatles to labor movements!”

A cultural awakening resulted from her participating in a Youth for Understanding cultural exchange, living with a family in northern Michigan when she was 15-16 years old. “I wore my Army jacket with a big peace sign on the back – in rural Michigan.” But her host family was politically moderate and especially tolerant, understanding that students coming from Europe at the time were likely to

taking notes on things the poets said. This lady lifted one of her eyebrows and nodded her head slowly, as if to say “sure you are” or “that is a lame pick up line.” I am not sure what she thought I was actually doing, but it was clear that my attempts to blend in and establish trust were not fully successful.

Some people expressed curiosity at my presence because they know me and know that I have a lover. For the first few weeks, several people asked me where my partner was and would then giggle or smirk when I said she was at home. By the mischievous look in their smirks I inferred that they were thinking that we were having problems or I was out looking to cheat or get wild. Because I did not want people in the setting to begin viewing me as a liar, I was really concerned that I might create the appearance that I was an adulterer who used sex research as a “cover” and as a way to talk to women. On the fourth week of observations, I asked my wife to join me at the open mic night. People said they were glad to see her and asked her about my work. Though she only came with me one more time during the official term of the study, the suspicious smirks stopped. For those venue participants that noticed my presence every week, my partner’s appearance at the club seemed to validate that I was there to genuinely study sexual beliefs and behavior in the community, not participate in them.

Another factor that contributed to my ability to maintain credibility in the setting, both as a faithful partner and as a typical venue participant, was that I began to hang out with someone I knew from my community activism work. This woman was better known than I was in this circle of folk who attended the open mics. I have always liked her so sitting with her was not a proactive strategy for blending into the setting. But nonetheless, hanging with her created the appearance that my visits were social which directed less attention to my note taking. It is important to note that this friend is femme-identified and the fact that we both look traditionally feminine probably made it possible for my socializing to appear innocent. As my study findings eventually illustrated, many African American lesbians in Chicago adhere to strict lesbian gender codes in which studs (more traditionally masculine women) only date femmes (more traditionally feminine women), and friendships void of sexual tension are not likely to occur across these gender labels. Hence, because we are both femme women, others in the setting likely assumed that we were not sexually involved and it was just a “girls night out.”

In addition to strategies that served the purpose of establishing my credibility as a researcher in

my community, I also employed strategies aimed at maintaining my role as community member. For example, once the official observations were over, I occasionally attended the open mic nights until I moved to California. I felt strongly that after women who knew I was there conducting a study, it would be in poor taste to just disappear after so many women gave their words and energy to my project. For women who did not know I was there conducting a study, my sudden absence and abandonment of the arts in the Black lesbian and bisexual women’s community would have also seemed rude. On my last visit, I got on stage and read a sexual poem written by wife. Many women in the crowd were hollering and clapping because I was “a nerd” in the community, not “an artist.” A few women expressed appreciation for my trying to fully participate in the setting that I had been observing for months.

After completing the project, it struck me that I had never considered the possibility of bringing my wife to work with me, hanging out with someone of a specific lesbian gender role, or reading poetry as strategies to conducting scientific research. Yet, these three actions I took, whether purposively or passively, appeared to assist me in establishing credibility as a researcher while maintaining credibility as a community member. I do not think I’d advocate these strategies as entries in a community psychology textbook, but they definitely made it possible for me to conduct my ethnographic research on Black lesbian sexual life and culture.

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be liberal activists. From this experience, she “learned that an urban lifestyle is not the only way to live. I also gained a better understanding of different nations’ cultural differences.” Her other cross-cultural experience as a teen was her travels into East Germany. Although she didn’t know many East Germans, she did visit East Berlin frequently, and contact with East Berliners increased just before the Wall came down. She describes interactions with East Berliners at that time: “What made us stick out more than our clothes were our attitudes of entitlement and privilege. Our certainty and confidence put off the East Germans. We were louder, more outspoken.”

When she entered the Free University of Berlin, one of two main universities in the city, her major was American Studies with psychology and sociology minors (although she changed majors frequently). While she reveled in the university’s lack of structure, she was unfocused as a student. “It’s great for people who know exactly what they want to do, but not so good for people who tend to wander in their interests. It’s very tempting to never find your path.” Students did not register for courses, for example. “You just showed up for courses, and if you completed all the requirements, then you got a certificate. And you have to collect these certificates to be able to take the comprehensive exams.” Popular classes accommodated as many people as could fit in the classroom. “We used to sit on radiators or on the floor.” If a student wanted to take ten classes, it was totally up to him/her, and did not cost anything. Another example of the lack of structure? The only two requirements in one psychology department were statistics and Marx.

After 3 years of college in Berlin, she moved to the American Midwest. Although she would lose the bulk of the credits she had earned in Germany, she decided to stay in Chicago to complete her undergraduate education. Cécile held various jobs to support herself and entered college at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). However, she was still very naive to the American university system, with its many rules and deadlines. She reflects on the differences between Central European and American societies: “The European perception of the U.S. was of anarchy, to the detriment of less-privileged people. Whereas Americans perceived Central European societies as overly dominated by government, too regulated, structured and suffocating. Europeans do have external structure, but within that, you’re much freer to move around. We have a very different experience of how authority and structure regulate your life,” she claims. Unsettled by the educational system, Cécile dropped out of

UIC in the first semester but later entered DePaul University with a psychology major and a new resolution to complete her studies. She was transformed from being a casual student to earning high honors, once she realized that “if I wanted to do this, I’d have to accept the system.”

At DePaul, she was influenced by a feminist professor, Midge Wilson, and also by Len Jason. “Lenny gave an introductory lecture for a psychology class. He argued passionately about how psychoanalytic traditions were wrong, wrong, wrong. I had been trained in a very psychoanalytic tradition and got in an argument with him.” A few months later, she interviewed for a research assistant job. Needless to say, it was for Len’s research project. He both remembered and hired her. She worked on Len’s School Transitions Project for three years until she entered graduate school. At some point, she could even admit that “behaviorism wasn’t all bad.”

Community psychology’s political, cultural and systemic orientations appealed to her long-standing interest in organizations and in social action. Also, she loved the process of doing research. “Lenny is really good at giving students a task and then letting them do it so they could learn. I had considerable responsibility for a set of data that we had collected for the School Transitions Project. There, I learned to read the scientific literature and to write for an academic audience. I also learned how to articulate my interests and point of view.”

Encouraged by Len to go to another university for her graduate studies, she remained in Chicago, entering UIC again but now as a focused graduate student. She was drawn to UIC by Jim Kelly’s community leadership research. “I find myself now going back to those roots in many ways. Jim provided a very strong foundation intellectually.” However, her master’s took 4 years to finish, partly due to the demands of the research job, which involved a slow pace for collecting community-based data. After that, Chris Keys supervised her dissertation research on organizational culture and nurtured her interest in organizational research. In all, nine years were spent in graduate school, for her master’s and Ph.D. degrees. In part, this was explained by Cécile’s health status.

About halfway through graduate school, Cécile became ill with an as-yet undiagnosed (but likely stress-related) illness. “I was at a point of complete exhaustion. I had no energy; I could not concentrate.” She realizes that some of the stress was self-imposed—“I was taking courses

I didn’t need to take and completed much of the coursework for, essentially, three graduate programs—social, clinical and community/organizational psychology.” Eventually, she learned to protect her health and reserve her energy more. “It’s still with me; I have no backup energy.”

As she approached the end of her graduate school marathon, she saw an advertisement for a job in Alaska “with an application deadline four days later.” Although she was seeking to move to a non-urban environment for health reasons, she now admits she wasn’t serious about the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) job at first (“too far north, even for me”) and considered her application to be mainly a trial run for her job search. However, after talking with Kelly Hazel – a community psychologist then on UAF’s faculty – and after visiting Fairbanks for an interview, she was hooked. “By the time I left, I wanted to be there so bad. Much to my surprise, they offered me the job. I defended my dissertation on a Tuesday and the next Saturday, I was on a plane to Alaska.”

Cécile is delighted with her decision. Kelly introduced her to a wide circle of friends and to life in Fairbanks, “a real frontier town” in Alaska’s interior, with a population of 30,000-60,000 (“depending on how you count”). Cécile lives in a rural and lively community, Ester (population: 1500), five miles outside of Fairbanks. “I’ve never felt so connected to a community. I sit on Ester’s community association board and have strong personal and political ties now. Because it’s a hodgepodge, most people in the Fairbanks area aren’t into status differences, even within the university. Friendships are made across age, gender and occupational boundaries.” While Cécile is an active hiker and cross country skier, she is ever mindful of the need to manage her stress level, diet and sleep.

Supportive senior women from across UAF also took Cécile under their wings. “I felt like I was integrated into a community that cares about what happened to me, that wanted me to do well and to be happy and healthy.” How many assistant professors could say that about their initial welcome and continue to feel that way six years later?!

There were only 3 other faculty in the psychology department, and one more was hired at the same time as her. The department — a very close knit, very caring department — was “just awakening, regenerating, reinventing itself. It was a great opportunity with all these creative, excited, passionate people.” From the beginning, she was a full-fledged department member, starting with a collective effort to

reorganize the undergraduate program. At that time, the department had a masters program in community psychology, focused on training general practitioners who could go to a rural community and provide individual counseling, but also who could think systemically, conducting program evaluations and needs assessments and developing prevention programs. About half of the students were distance students, including many Native students. Her contact with these students gave her the opportunity to get to know Native cultures. The department has grown from five to nine faculty, with another three hires planned over the next three years. However, the number of applications for faculty jobs has drastically dropped. She concedes that UAF is recruiting from a very small pool—people interested in going to Alaska to work in rural settings and with indigenous people.

Early on, Cécile was brought into the development of the Center for Alaska Native Health Research, eventually funded by an NIH COBRE grant (Center for Biomedical Research Excellence), focused on obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease in this population. Starting as a collaborating investigator, she soon became the principal investigator on one of the Center's three projects. The expectation for COBRE grants is that the investigators would gain sufficient experience to eventually compete for independent funding. There is no expectation that the research findings will be generalizable to the entire Native populations of Alaska, because the cultural groups are so different.

The Center employed a joint data collection effort, used by all three projects, in seven communities – six villages and a regional hub city. Cécile heads the cultural/behavioral study that examines how cultural/behavioral factors relate to physical outcomes. Her focus is on translational issues, attempting to make the research results useful through community based health promotion.

Her project is “very, very intense, with two staff members in one village plus a team of around ten volunteers; another staff member in Anchorage; and a student and a junior faculty member in Fairbanks.” During the academic

year, she is in the field about one week per month. This involves flying on very small planes, shouldering a backpack, bringing her own food, sleeping on the school's floor, “having no privacy, heating whatever you can in the microwave for lunch, and maybe having a shower but maybe not. I bring everything with me except a tent and a stove.”

The village she is studying and where she is conducting health promotion has about 380 people. It was selected because the tribal council administration was open to the idea, the village seemed to have strong community leadership, and she identified someone in the village who was able to provide critical assistance. Also,

the community had once had a wellness team, indicating it had a prior history with a similar effort.

From these experiences in Alaska, as well as her prior experience in Germany and Chicago, Cécile is convinced that community psychologists have to really understand the communities in which they work, not only in terms of their ethnic and local culture, but also in terms of their economic reality. “There are so many things we have to understand about how communities operate that are not part of psychological training usually. I can no longer conceive of doing research that does not have direct application for the people who participate in it.”

Cécile is increasingly adamant that community psychologists have to play a very different role than before. “We can be facilitators, even mentors, but we cannot be the do-ers any more. It's absolutely imperative that the community people are making the decisions and implementing them. Our job is to make sure they have the materials, access and training they need, and that it's disseminated to other communities.” In graduate school, when she worked on empowerment and citizen participation, she first learned how difficult true collaboration can be. Despite “a lot of talk about power differences and different roles, I often felt a disconnect between what we said we wanted to do, and what actually happened.” This is, she has learned, magnified in Native communities, where there is a history of colonialism. “I saw more and more not only how we were perceived by the community but also how we were perpetuating that impression.

Despite our best efforts, we were not doing anything different.” Cécile has always been committed to helping communities get to the point (of competence) where they can do what they need to do. “To me, it's about the process. It's their decision if they want to get skinny. That's not my decision. I can provide the information for them to make that choice, but in the end, it's their decision.”

## PREVENTION & PROMOTION

*At the last SCRA Conference, Monica Adams and I were elected co-chairs of the Prevention and Promotion Interest Group and editors of this column. We would like to thank Rich Wolitski for his leadership and service as the previous chair of the interest group and past editor of the column. We are honored to serve the interest group, SCRA, and the field in this capacity and look forward to working with you. We are particularly interested in working with members of the Prevention and Promotion interest group to reflect on and reconsider: What would you like to get out of the group? What would you like the group to do? And how can we make the group most beneficial to its members? We would also like to find a way to support one another and share information between publications of this column. One idea is to collectively explore a particularly relevant article, news story, or question. Perhaps we could establish a bi-monthly conference call, a low-volume listserv, or post these items to the larger SCRA Listserv? What ideas do you have?*

*We hope you will consider contributing to this column, either by writing a future column or by sharing an idea you would like to see discussed or addressed. This column is a place to share personal reflections on the field, a unique experience you may have had in prevention and promotion, a critique of some aspect of prevention science or health (including mental health) and wellness promotion, or simply a reflection on the field of community psychology. Since there is not an official and updated list of members of the Prevention and Promotion Interest Group, please contact Monica (MADAMS8@depaul.edu) or me (derekmg@umich.edu) to indicate your interest in this group and whether you consider yourself to be a member. Monica and I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Derek Griffith  
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(phone calls preferred)]*

## Northeast Region

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and Shannon Gwin Mitchell  
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The Northeast region is gearing up for the SCRA program at the Eastern Psychological Association conference to be held at the Wyndham Inner Harbor Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland on Friday, March 17, 2006.

We have an exciting program planned. Our keynote address will be given by Andrea Solarz. Dr. Solarz, a past president of SCRA, has an extensive career focused on public policy work at the state and national levels; she has worked in Congress, for think tanks, for a national professional association, and now as a consultant. She will discuss her different work experiences, how her training in community psychology has enhanced her ability to work in those settings and influenced her work products, the skills that have been particularly useful, and different ways that community psychology perspectives can be brought to bear.

In addition, the program will include two symposia and a paper session. The symposia are entitled, "Youth Organizing and Public School Reform: Impacts, Challenges & Successes," presented by Seema Shah and colleagues from the Institute for Education & Social Policy at New York University and "Exploring Ethnicity: Experiences, Processes, and Outcomes," presented by Mariano Sto. Domingo and colleagues from the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Shawn Utsey, of Virginia Commonwealth University, Lynette Jacobs-Priebe of Vanderbilt University, and Jonette O'Kelley Miller of the Robert Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University will participate in the Paper session entitled, "Contextual Considerations in Community Psychology." The session will feature issues related to cultural factors in predicting quality of life in African Americans, the role of feminist values in community psychology, and the impact of stereotypes in social service discourse on clients and communities of color.

Our Poster Session will include work conducted with ethnic minorities, adolescents, and individuals experiencing economic hardship and poverty, and larger communities. Specific topics include: practices that mediate neighborhood change and displacement, engagement in a home visitation program, the relationship between acculturation and juvenile delinquency, and partner reactions to adolescent pregnancy.

Our third year coordinator is Cindy A. Crusto from The Consultation Center, Yale University. The second year coordinator is Tiffany Townsend from Pennsylvania State University. The first year coordinator is Shannon Gwin Mitchell from Johns Hopkins.

## Southeast Region

*Joseph Berryhill (jberryhill@unca.edu),  
Sherry L. Hamby (sherry.hamby@unc.edu),  
and Elaine Clanton Harpine  
(elaine@usca.edu)*

The University of South Carolina (USC) hosted the Southeast Eco Conference from October 7-9. With a theme of "Social and Cultural Dimensions of Health," the conference attracted more than 70 participants a variety of institutions, including Georgia State, North Carolina Central, George Mason and Vanderbilt universities, as well as Spelman College, the University of South Carolina, and Universities of North Carolina at Charlotte and at Asheville.

The conference featured a keynote address from Bruce Rapkin, who used a "Community Eye for the Medical Guy" theme to explore connections between community psychology and cancer research.

Graduate students and undergrads presented on topics ranging from incorporating filmmaking into community psychology to factors that promote healthy development in elementary school children. The conference's wrap-up was a town meeting devoted to exploring ways that community psychologists could become involved to help the communities and people affected by Hurricane Katrina.

To cut conference costs, promote community, and honor the NAACP boycott of South Carolina tourism, USC students and faculty hosted visitors to Columbia. Many thanks to the students and faculty who worked hard to put together a conference that combined serious scholarship with a chance to have fun and make connections.

Elaine Clanton Harpine, 1st year southeast coordinator, is putting together a community

psychology symposium to represent our region at APA. The title of the symposium is "Using Community-based Prevention Programs to Promote School-based Mental Health." She is collaborating with Keri Weed and Audrey Skrupskelis. Sherry Hamby attended the End Violence Against Women conference in Baltimore, MD in October, and presented on community-based obstacles to intervention for American Indian victims of sexual assault. She passed out membership flyers for SCRA at the conference.

## Midwest Region

*Bernadette Sanchez (bsanchez@depaul.edu),  
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and Debra M. Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni  
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Many exciting proposals are being reviewed in the Midwest for the SCRA program at the Midwestern Psychological Association's 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Spring, 2006. We received proposals on a variety of topics related to developing university-community partnerships, the future direction of community psychology, and research methodology issues. There are also proposals on a variety of populations, including Latina women, people with disabilities, juvenile detainees, stigmatized groups, and cross-cultural or international populations. Steven Pokorny and Susan Harding-Torres have been working hard in getting the proposals reviewed and planning the program. We look forward to an exciting day on May 5, 2006 in Chicago, Illinois!

## West Region

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Elizabeth Thomas (ethomas@uwb.edu)*

The 1<sup>st</sup> Pacific Northwest Community Psychology Conference will be held on April 7, 2006 in Portland, Oregon at Portland State University. Further details and a call for presentations are forthcoming, but please hold the date. Contact Elizabeth Thomas (ethomas@uwb.edu) or Eric Mankowski (mankowskie@pdx.edu) for additional information.



## Youth Leadership in School-Community Interventions: A Lesson in Community Resources

by Susana Helm (*shelm@hawaii.edu*), SIIG Co-Chair

### Introduction

Community psychologists contribute to school interventions in many ways. For the International Conference of Community Psychology to be held in Puerto Rico next summer, as the co-chairs of the SCRA School Intervention Interest Group, Jane Shepard and I have organized a SIIG presentation on the variety of ways in which community psychologists work with schools in multicultural, cross-cultural, and international contexts.

### A Community Psychologist facilitates School-Community Partnerships

In planning ahead for next summer, I have been reflecting on my own activities as a community psychologist working in formal educational settings, both as an employee of a school system and also in partnership with schools. For several years I co-facilitated school-community-university partnerships in urban Honolulu. One partnership was neighborhood-based: located in two geographically distinct communities, and in collaboration with two separate K-12 school complexes, six non-profit organizations, and one university. The second was a spin-off, targeted intervention based in one of the above high schools, and connected to four semi-distinct geographic neighborhoods, one community organization, and three local universities.

In facilitating the partnerships, my main contribution as a community psychologist was in translating what was defined as a community problem into community assets linked to school and educational resources. A school-community reputed for youth gang violence and drug dealing was in the process of taking charge of itself through grass-roots leadership and staffing in voluntary and employee-based community organizations. As is often customary, the majority of the resident leaders and staff were adults (and I was one of them), but the identified problem was the kids. Rather than simply target the kids, we identified youth leaders who explained what they wanted for themselves and their peers at home, school, and in the neighborhood. The partnership included a continuum of activities and support

that was inclusive of youth, regardless of their gang-affiliation or the extent to which they attended school. This adult-youth alliance represented an important shift in thinking about “the problem”: by using a youth-centered ecological framework, we were able to locate untapped talent and resources that connected, rather than marginalized, the neighborhood, the schools, families, and that stretched to several universities. In the activity in which I participated, the youth leaders also guided program development, implementation, evaluation, and scaling up.

### Our Neighborhood and School-Community Intervention

Neighborhood boys and girls had easy access to gang-related activities, violence, drugs, and other health risk activity settings. The school-community wanted to make it easier for kids to participate in healthy and developmentally appropriate activities than it was for them to become involved in the risky behavior settings. The community also wanted the activities located in the neighborhood, such that the increase in the variety of healthy activities for kids would also improve overall neighborhood safety. Another important element identified in the discussions was the need to be inclusive, rather than exclude kids who often become marginalized because they cannot meet stringent attendance or academic criteria. The activity in which I was involved started rather informally, and as interest and participation exceeded our staffing capacity, the youth leaders organized: they institutionalized their activity, they tapped their schools and the local university for additional resources, and they shifted my role from participant-leader to include facilitator.

### Youth Leaders Organize to access School-Community Resources

The youth leaders enrolled in the school-to-work program at the high school, and earned credit for the time they committed to community leadership. For some of the students earning these elective credits represented a reintegration into formal education. Together, with a number of community agencies and undergraduates studying developmental and community psychology, we designed a training curriculum for leaders in our organization that emphasized the use of social science methods for organizational development. At one point the school administration was considering our curriculum for social science credit, but it was not possible at the time due to major restructuring in the Department of Education. However, we were able to expand to another school-community and replicated our curriculum in another set of public housing neighborhoods and community agencies. In

addition, this youth-led grass roots organization was one of the catalysts for establishing the school-based intervention designed to help their peers at risk for school failure.

To promote intersubjectivity we held weekly staff meetings, during which all of the leaders from the middle school, high school, and college met to discuss progress toward outcomes. We spent nearly as much time implementing our activity in the neighborhoods as we did reflecting on what we had done and where we were going. Creating this kind of intersubjectivity was the foundation of our success; it was fun, and we always shared good food. In addition to the regular weekly meetings, we also had large kick-off events and culminating celebrations a few times each year. During one of our celebrations we were reexamining our operational definitions of resources and outcomes. The youth leaders felt that they were no longer only part of the informal network of children and youth who participated in our activity. They explained that they were more than informal acquaintances because they had recognizable leadership responsibilities in their respective neighborhoods that went above and beyond the official role they had in our after school program. They shared stories in which other kids sought them for guidance with issues as innocuous as help with homework, to food and shelter when their parents did not come home or when they were locked out, to protection from bullies or gang-affiliated youth, to advice on how to get their family members help. On the other hand, they did not feel their role fit the existing operational definition of formal network (i.e. experts, paid professionals). Rather they felt they bridged the gap between informal and formal. One of the 16 year old leaders coined the term “semi-formal” to capture the meaning, and they went on to explain that they “stood” for their friends, family, and neighborhood. In other words they were advocates, in addition to providing many other resources.

### Reflections on Community Psychology, Ecological Frameworks, and Resources and Relationships

My experience in these school-community interventions shaped my thinking as a community psychologist as much as being a community psychologist shaped my contributions. First and foremost, it reinforced the importance of recognizing an organization, setting, or system based on its resources, especially when the dominant narrative locates the problem in marginalized individuals. Working in school-community interventions with youth leaders deepened my understanding of the ecological paradigm, concepts, and

principles for interventions, particularly Kelly's concepts of cycling resources and adaptation (Levine and Perkins, 1997).

Cycling resources refers to the idea that ecological interventions must be viewed as resource distribution exchanges. The principle of cycling resources highlights the need to understand how a community cycles its own existing resources through its own mechanisms prior to implementing any intervention. The implication for community research and action is that an initial step requires in-depth study of the environment and naturally occurring events, particularly with respect to resource distribution and exchange. The principle of "adaptation" takes into consideration the ways in which resource availability, access, and distribution facilitates and/or constrains health and well-being. The idea that populations adapt to their environment involves the notions of "niche" and "niche breadth". Niche refers to the habitats within which organisms can survive, and niche breadth refers to the variety of niches a particular population can access. A population with narrow niche breadth is forced to adapt to the limited resources available, accessible, and distributed within it. A more expansive niche breadth would require fewer adaptations, and less stress on a population's health and well-being. Levine & Perkins (1997) point out that expanding a population's niche breadth is a goal of many advocacy groups. Expanding niche breadth essentially is about ensuring civil rights and human rights, and highlights the importance of recognizing diversity in social problems and solutions. Our youth leaders' activities both, within the organizational structure and beyond in their semi-formal lives at school and in the neighborhoods exemplified this principle.

Given the ecological paradigm, specific resources that are exchanged within specific types of relationships in school-community activities can be explored in depth and from a variety of viewpoints. I entered these partnerships with a basic framework for assessing resources and relationships in school-community activities. From activity setting theory (O'Donnell, Sharp, and Wilson, 1993) the following resources are highlighted: time, funds, physical environment, symbols, people, and positions. From social support literature the following resources have been demonstrated to improve quality of life: appraisal or positive feedback, information, instrumental helping, emotional support and love, and social participation (Fryxell & Helm, 1993). From the social network literature, both formal and informal relationships have been demonstrated to improve well being (Fryxell & Helm, 1993). To this list of social support

network factors, the youth leaders and I added advocacy as a resource and semi-formal relationships as an essential type of relationship in community action.

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## SOCIAL POLICY

### Beyond the Maintenance of Foster Care Funding: How Can the Federal Government Get More Bang for its Buck?

by Lily T. Alpert and Preston A. Britner,  
*University of Connecticut*

In his paper on the proposed cap on federal foster care funding, Fowler and Toro (this issue) note that the U.S. government's rationale behind the cap is based on its complaint that states fail to provide high quality foster care services — despite their receipt of federal financial support toward that end. In other words, because the government is not seeing the desired results, the administration wants to limit its support for state foster care programs. Fowler correctly points out that limiting that support is not going to improve quality any faster. Like a good community psychologist, he recommends that we collaborate and advocate for the preservation of this very important funding. We agree with his argument, and we would like to take this opportunity to consider other possible federal options and the potential role of community psychologists.

Current services are both expensive and unsuccessful. Many programs and child welfare

systems lack: a focus on prevention or empowerment at the family or community level; an understanding of culture and community; and, the training, resources, or objectivity for systemic intervention and evaluation. Community psychologists would appear to have much to offer in these regards.

For what shall we advocate? Certainly, a primary goal is to argue that federal support remains unrestricted. But our argument will be stronger if, simultaneous to our request for money, we present the government with ideas on how it can ensure that its money is spent wisely. We must therefore brainstorm: What plan can the government implement that allows it to (a) provide funding under the match system and (b) promote and reward best practices and accountability procedures occurring within individual states? The answer probably involves the government playing a more active role in the administration of foster care.

Perhaps the answer includes the government developing creative forms of oversight and incentives for states that develop innovative programming and document successful outcomes. The government already oversees state programs in various areas. Examples can be found in federally appointed monitors for state departments of children and families, and the oversight of schools growing out of federal education policy. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 provides an example of federal incentives; under this law, states receive additional money for increasing their annual adoptions from foster care. In short, the strategies of oversight and incentives are not new. The challenge, of course, will be to design such oversight in a way that still allows states to spend money and implement programs according to their particular needs. It must be clear that the government's goal is not to strip the states of power, but rather to help states achieve levels of quality that are essential for every state, to disseminate models that "work," and to assist states with appropriate modification, implementation, and evaluation.

How should the government communicate that message? How can it demand accountability from states without threatening states' authority to administer foster care? This is where we must step in as researchers. Over the years, social scientists from a variety of fields (e.g., social work, psychology, family studies) have painstakingly worked toward developing best practices for working with families in care. [See Alpert and Britner (2005) for one specific example, from our own work, of a family-focused casework training program and its evaluation.] We must communicate to lawmakers why best practices are, indeed, the "best" (i.e., that they

work most of the time for a relatively large group of people). We must also emphasize that best practices do not always constitute pre-packaged curricula in which caseworkers read to parents verbatim from the manual. Best practices are templates, or sets of themes and principles, that states and agencies can adopt and to which their particular casework programs can be molded. If best practices are incorporated more explicitly into federal legislation, states could be brought in line to produce higher quality programs.

Will states take offense to such monitoring? This question calls on policymakers to think critically about the *utility* of states' jurisdiction. Yes, each state's foster care population will have somewhat different needs. And yes, states should be able to use funding flexibly. But at the same time, low quality foster care is a crisis affecting the entire nation. There are some things that the federal government can mandate that would benefit families in all states. For example, imagine how different service delivery would be nationally if the federal law created a list of commonly implemented reunification-focused services and told states that their local child protection offices needed to house at least 50% of the services in a single building/location to increase access to community members. Might communication improve between social workers and service providers? Might parents have one-stop access to higher quality services and complete them faster?

It is time for more community psychologists to take an interest in foster care, which has long been the exclusive domain of social work. Community psychology's methods and contextual approaches should prove a useful complement to services as usual.

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*Preston A. Britner, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Human Development in the School of Family Studies at the University of Connecticut. He is the Editor of The Journal of Primary Prevention and also SCRA's Social Policy Chair for 2005-2006. [Britner@uconn.edu]*

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## Foster Care: Problems with Proposed Changes in Federal Funding

*by Patrick J. Fowler and Paul A. Toro, Wayne State University*

The Bush Administration has proposed changes to federal funding of the foster care system. These suggested changes jeopardize the well-being of an already at-risk population of children. This paper explains the functioning of children in foster care, current funding policy, and the proposed changes, as well as how changes will worsen the already precarious position of foster youth in the U.S.

Essentially, the Bush Administration proposes to cap federal spending on foster care at current levels. In exchange, states are promised more flexibility to decide how and where foster care funds can be spent. These proposed changes are problematic because current funding levels already fail to meet the needs of foster youth. Additionally, under the new plan, states will be exempt from existing guidelines aimed to safeguard youth in foster care.

### Current Funding Policy and Proposed Changes

Foster care services are funded through an uncapped entitlement program. States are guaranteed that every dollar they spend on foster care services is matched by a proportionate amount from the federal government. The more states put in, the more they get from the federal government. No limit exists on how much states may garner. Some states put in more money than others. States receive as much as \$33,091 (Alaska) and as little as \$4,155 (Tennessee) per eligible child (ASPE, 2005).

Overall, the federal government spends approximately \$5 billion per year on foster care services through this match system. Unfortunately, states still cannot afford to provide adequate services for youth. Most states use other funding sources, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds, to cover the costs of foster care. No states have enough dollars to expand services to meet all the needs of foster youth.

The Bush administration has proposed

changes to this funding system for the third consecutive year. It argues that the match system is too cumbersome and complicated, and that no relationship has been found between federal spending on foster care and the quality of services provided by states. That is, states that receive a lot of money from the federal government fail to provide higher quality services to children.

To solve these problems, the Bush administration concludes that federal foster care spending should be capped at current levels. Under this proposal, states would receive five years of funding based on current state rates. The suggested rationale for this proposal is that doing so would eliminate complicated reimbursement processes. In addition, states would receive more flexibility on how to spend funds and would be able to spend money in a way that best fits each state's needs.

### Problems with Proposed Changes

The proposed changes are problematic for two reasons. First, capping already insufficient funding will allow fewer services to be provided as the foster care population continues to rise. On any given day, more than 542,000 children reside in foster care in the United States—a number that has risen every year since the 1980s (DHHS, 2003). Currently, foster kids fail to receive adequate screening and treatment. For example, an estimated 50 to 75 percent of foster youth report some type of psychiatric problems (Burns et al., 2004), whereas only 25 to 50 percent of youth receive some form of mental health services (Leslie,

**On any given day, more than 542,000 children reside in foster care in the United States—a number that has risen every year since the 1980s (DHHS, 2003). Currently, foster kids fail to receive adequate screening and treatment.**

Hurlburt, Landsverk, Barth, & Slymen, 2004). In addition, follow-up studies of former foster youth as young adults show nearly fifty percent experience homelessness, one-third end up spend time in jail, less than forty percent receive high school diplomas, and most continue to live below the federal poverty line (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001; Fowler et al., 2005).

Deficiencies in services will worsen as inflation and increased caseloads diminish dollars. The money "saved" in these cuts will be spent in lost productivity, incarceration costs, and indigent care costs. Also, appropriations for other capped programs have been cut in the past, leaving states with even less resources to deal with growing needs for services. For

example, appropriations for the SSBG were cut by 59 percent and funding has been frozen at that level since 1998.

Second, the removal of spending safeguards in exchange for spending flexibility puts foster children at risk. Essentially, it will be up to states to monitor how money is spent on foster kids. Although we hope that states will do right by their children, there exists no guarantee. Given the fiscal crises states face, legislatures across the country will face tough decisions on how to use money. Child welfare would be better protected if the safeguards remained in place.

### Role of Community Psychology

Advocates and researchers must collaborate to protect and improve the welfare of children and adolescents in foster care. Advocates must ensure that funding exists to better serve foster youth, and researchers need to develop better screening and treatment programs. The following provides specific recommendations for community psychology as it serves both functions.

- Lobby to reject the Bush administration's attempts to cut funding for foster care and other social services, such as Medicaid and early childhood prevention programs that serve children.
- Propose legislation to increase spending on foster care services, Medicaid, and early intervention programs.
- Create better systems to screen and assess the mental health of foster children. Such services should be standardized and occur more frequently, given the extremely high rates of problems among foster youth.
- Develop treatment and prevention programs that target the multiple needs of children in foster care. Especially important are prevention programs for 3-to 5-year-olds in foster care, as well as transitional services for adolescents who age out of the system and no longer qualify for services.
- Advocate that Medicaid coverage be extended to cover adolescents as they transition out of the foster care system at age 18 years.
- Lobby that Medicaid reimbursement rates for mental health professionals working with the foster care population be increased in order to promote access to treatment.

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Paul A. Toro, Ph.D., is a Professor of Psychology at Wayne State University.

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## STUDENT ISSUES

by Carrie E. Hanlin and Mike Armstrong

### Call for Papers - Spring Issue of *The Community Student*

Please consider writing a paper for *The Community Student (TCS)*! *TCS* is published twice a year and features articles written by students about their experiences, research and insights in relation to psychology as a whole, and community psychology in particular. We encourage you to email us articles for the **Spring 2006** edition of *The Community Student*. The deadline for paper submissions is **February 15, 2006**. *The Community Student* is a great way to share your insights and experiences with other SCRA members. It's also a great way to add a publication to your curriculum vitae! Articles should be between two and four pages long, single-spaced, and can be submitted electronically to Carrie Hanlin at [carrie.e.hanlin@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:carrie.e.hanlin@vanderbilt.edu). Please contact Carrie for additional information.

### Seeking Nominations for Incoming Student Representative

The time has once again come to elect an incoming *SCRA student representative*. Student representatives serve on the executive committee and provide student voice to decisions made within SCRA. In addition, serving as student rep is also a fun and rewarding learning experience. Student representatives serve 2-year, overlapping terms (starting at the APA convention in August). If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else for the incoming student rep position, or have additional questions, please contact Mike Armstrong by email, [marmstrong4@student.gsu.edu](mailto:marmstrong4@student.gsu.edu) by **April 15, 2006**. The only criterion for serving as a student rep is that you must be a graduate student for the length of your two-year term. Nominees will be asked to prepare a one-page statement on why they are interested in the position, what topics or issues related to student representation in SCRA concern them, and what (if any) prior leadership or representative service they have held, such as serving in student government. In early June, all student members of SCRA will be sent an electronic election ballot and instructions on how to cast their vote online. If you suspect that the email address that's on record with SCRA is outdated, please notify Mike so that your ballot doesn't bounce back.

### 2005 Southeastern Eco Conference Report

Mike attended the 2005 Southeastern Eco

## Summary of Deadlines for Student Opportunities

Grant/Opportunity	2006 Deadline
<i>The Community Student</i> , Spring '06	February 15th
SCRA Student Rep. Nominations	April 15 <sup>th</sup>
Reviewers for SCRA Student Research Grant	May 13 <sup>th</sup>
SCRA Student Research Grant	July 1st

Conference at the University of South Carolina, and was able to host a student discussion about student concerns for SCRA and the field of Community Psychology (CP). The SCRA Student Reps along with the SCRA Executive Committee will do their best to address the recommendations in the coming year. Such recommendations from students include:

- Increase the profile of CP and SCRA in the American Psychological Association and in individual university communities.
  - Create more CP classes at the undergraduate level to increase awareness of CP.
  - Improve mechanisms to better equip grad students to promote CP in their respective communities.
- Increase awareness of non-academic

employment opportunities for community psychologists.

- Strengthen links between the practice and research of CP with SCRA's founding vision and ideals.
- Develop a hotline or email "dropbox" to make a complaint about not receiving publications.
- Consider an "Emergency Task Force" for immediate disaster needs that includes graduate students in order to respond in a timely and collaborative manner.

We hope this forum will be a prelude to regular feedback sessions and opportunities to have student voices heard. If you attended the session and have anything to add or change, please let either Mike or Carrie know.

## SCRA Executive Committee Mid-Winter Meeting

Every 6 months, the SCRA executive committee meets to discuss and decide on pivotal issues for our organization. Both student representatives have full voting rights, and are able to bring important ideas that affect the student membership to the table. At the end of January in 2006, we will be meeting in Seattle. If you have any ideas, concerns, or suggestions that you'd like the executive committee to hear, or if you'd simply like to know more about the proceedings of this body, please email either of us, Mike or Carrie, at any time of the year. The executive committee highly values and is improved by student input. By the Spring 2006 TCP issue, we will publish our notes from the Mid-Winter Meeting.

## First International Community Psychology Conference, 2006 – Puerto Rico

We're very excited and looking forward to the first international conference for Community Psychology. The theme of the 2006 conference is *Shared Agendas for Diversity*. It will take place June 8-10, 2006, at the University of Puerto Rico, San Juan Puerto Rico. The organizing committee has decided to extend the deadline for abstract submission to January 15,

## Call for Grant Reviewers 2006 SCRA Student Research Grant

We are seeking three student members of SCRA to serve on the grant review board for the SCRA student research grant. The SCRA student research grant is presented by the Society for Community Research and Action to supplement the financial needs of students' independent research projects. The goal of the SCRA Student Research Grant is to provide pre-dissertation level students an opportunity to devote themselves to a period of intensive research without additional employment obligations. Students serving as grant reviewers will be asked to review grants during the months of July and August, 2006 (with an award deadline of September 1st, 2006).

### Criteria for Becoming a Student Grant Reviewer

The following criteria must be met in order for a student to be eligible to become a student grant reviewer:

- Must be a student member of SCRA
- Must have obtained a Master's degree, or have completed two years' worth of graduate work, by May, 2006
- Must be available to review grant applications during the period of July and August, 2006

### To Submit an Application to Become a Student Grant Reviewer

Application packets for becoming a student grant reviewer should contain 3 copies of each of the following:

- A cover page stating the applicant's name, mailing address, phone number, fax number, and email address
- A letter of support from the applicant's academic mentor, department chair, or supervisor (if housed in a non-academic setting) stating the applicant's standing in their university, college, or apprenticeship
- A one-page statement of interest

Please send grant reviewer applications by **May 13, 2006** to:  
Mike Armstrong, [marmstrong4@gsu.edu](mailto:marmstrong4@gsu.edu)

Applications for grant reviewers will be reviewed by a committee comprised of the two current SCRA student representatives and one past SCRA student representative. Applicants will be notified of the status of their application by **June 15, 2006**.

2006. You may submit your abstract earlier by e-mail at [cipcad2006@gmail.com](mailto:cipcad2006@gmail.com) or wait until the web page is functional at its original address, [www.cipcad2006.org](http://www.cipcad2006.org). Information for registration can also be found there.

### SCRA Graduate Student Research Grant

Please be on the look-out for the upcoming student research grant Call For Proposals! The grant is specifically devoted to supporting pre-dissertation or thesis research in under-funded areas of community psychology. Based on feedback from previous years, the application process as well as the award size are currently under revision. Once we have the new information, we'll put the call out over our listserv and on the website (see below for instructions on both). Applications for the award will be due by **July 1, 2006**. If you have any early questions, please contact Carrie at [carrie.e.hanlin@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:carrie.e.hanlin@vanderbilt.edu).

### Proposal Summary from 2005 Student Research Grant Winner-Patrick Fowler

The proposed SCRA Special Issues Student Research Grant will examine the experiences of youth who have aged out of foster care. Specifically, quantitative and qualitative methods will be used to identify risk and protective factors in foster youths' transition to adulthood. The study addresses the lack of research on former foster youth. Findings will inform the development of effective, statewide interventions for foster youth aging out of care.

### Call for Student Research Grant Reviewers

Since we will soon be seeking applications for the *Graduate Student Research Grant*, we will need individuals to review grant applications. We are looking for two students to review and rate applications. *Students who submit a grant application are not eligible to serve as reviewers*. Please see the formal call for reviewers in this issue of the TCP. The amount of work will depend on both the number of applications received, as well as the number of interested reviewers. The deadline for submission is **May 13, 2006**. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Armstrong, [marmstrong4@student.gsu.edu](mailto:marmstrong4@student.gsu.edu).

### Students of Color Interest Group: Leader Needed

Since the Students of Color Interest Group met at the Biennial in '03, plans have been in the works to survey students of color in SCRA and/or community psych programs about their experiences, challenges, successes, and resources. In addition, students were contacted through the listservs and Fall 2003 Community Psychologist newsletter to help devise the survey. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on how various community and

clinical/community programs support and address issues related to students of color, including how departments provide resources and address the needs of students of color.

Although some progress on the survey has been made and a small group of students have committed to working on this project, we have been in the process of searching for a leader for the interest group itself to drive this project, and have been unsuccessful. If any student member of SCRA is interested in taking the lead with this group, please contact Mike Armstrong by email, [marmstrong4@student.gsu.edu](mailto:marmstrong4@student.gsu.edu). Responsibilities might include but are not limited to: maintaining the group; organizing the effort to gather information about our diverse student body; submitting survey results; working with the Executive Committee and/or other governing bodies to address stated needs.

We believe this group to be just as important and necessary now for SCRA as it was in 2003. We hope that there is someone in our membership with the passion and willingness to do this job.

### Log on to the SCRA Student Discussion Board!

The SCRA Student Area is a new forum for finding important information and connecting with other students. We've just begun to create this space, and need guidance from our student membership. Please log on to the forum and join the discussion – tell us what you want to see for students: <http://www.scra27.org/membersonly.html>. This is also a great place to post common problems, questions, announcements, and celebrations of student milestones!

### Sign on to the SCRA Student Listserv!

The SCRA student listserv is a forum to increase discussion and collaboration among students involved and interested in community psychology. It is also a great place to get information relevant to students, such as upcoming funding opportunities and job announcements. To subscribe to the listserv, send the following message to [listserv@lists.apa.org](mailto:listserv@lists.apa.org).

SUBSCRIBE S-SCRA-L@lists.apa.org <first name> <last name>

Messages can be posted to the listserv at: [S-SCRA-L@lists.apa.org](mailto:S-SCRA-L@lists.apa.org). If you have any questions or need help signing on to the listserv, please contact Omar at [oguessous@comcast.net](mailto:oguessous@comcast.net).

### College Women's Reflections on Career and Family Decisions

*Noemi Enchautegui-de-Jesús, Julie Fitt, Ashley Goldstein, Deon Gordon, and Naoko Hashimoto  
Syracuse University*

#### Noemi Enchautegui-de-Jesús

Have you noticed how the topic of balancing work and personal life can get us, women, talking passionately? It invokes so many emotions, often frustration at the sheer difficulty of being able to do it all successfully. From the custodian in the office hallway to the executive in the corner office, women in different occupations are challenged to juggle work and family aspirations and responsibilities.

For over a year, I have had the pleasure of working with four undergraduate research assistants in the Work and Family Research Project. Through it, we have learned about culturally and economically diverse women's struggles, rewards, and hopes around work and family issues. As a research team, we talk about the challenges that research participants face, but until now, it had not become apparent in our conversations the extent to which the undergraduate students themselves are already juggling work and family considerations that impact their well-being.

This issue of the TCP Women's Column gives voice to these four students, four women about to graduate college in the next few months. They find themselves at a crossroads. It is a time when they are carefully considering both personal and career options and aspirations; for their present career/academic decisions are bound to impact their family choices in the future.

As women in their senior year, they are dealing with the stress and anxiety not only of GREs and graduate school applications, but also of thinking about how their choices and timing will impact their personal life goals and aspirations. The dreaded biological clock inevitably shows its face in the conversation, but this is not the only issue. In the following paragraphs, they reflect on the prescriptions of womanhood, the meanings of identity, the significance of self-determination and choice, and the angst of knowing that in a society not ready to help women be all that they can and want to be, timing of their choices is critical.

How many more generations would it take for

this to be an issue of the past, when both women and men will be able to face their work and family futures and think of possibility, not of compromise?

### **Julie Fitt**

I remember the day that my mother decided to sacrifice everything and go back to school to pursue a Master's degree. As soon as we were told, my sister and I looked suspiciously across the dinner table at each other and, then, together, we instantly turned to mom and asked why. Our facial expressions probably revealed everything we felt then: confusion, distrust, and concern.

"But what about us?" asked my sister, 9 years old then, and myself, 12. "Who's gonna take care of us?" For as long as I can remember, it has just been my mother, my sister, and me. My mother worked full-time at Wegman's supermarket for nearly seven years to support us, struggling just to make ends meet. She raised us alone, and every action, consideration, and feeling she had revolved around me and my sister. Little did I know then how much her decision to return to school would shape me as I entered adulthood.

It's a decision that all women today will inevitably face: do I pursue a family or a career? Or both? And for single mothers, this decision can be even more challenging: many single mothers lack the resources to even make such a choice. Although it may seem as a disadvantage to many, coming from a single-mother upbringing has given me the wherewithal to be in charge of my direction in life. My only role-model growing up was a strong-minded superwoman, who spent most of her parenthood physically exerting herself for eight hours a day at a grocery store, and then mentally and emotionally exerting herself at night classes for five years, including summers when my sister and I weren't in school. Through it all, she always managed to pack us a well-balanced, nutritionally-sound lunch, cook dinner for us after school, and eat with us as a family, every single day. I don't recall her complaining in front of us or breaking down, and I still wonder how such things were possible.

That is how womanhood was defined for me growing up—and for that, I am luckier than many. It took me a while to be able to appreciate all that she did for herself and for us, and I know that if I can demonstrate to my own children even a fraction of the hard work and success that my mother did for us, then I will be a successful parent. Knowing that success as a working single mother of two is possible has instilled in me a set of values of which I am

proud. Because of this, my sense of womanhood is multifaceted and extremely complex.

To be a woman is to be independent, strong and powerful because women face a unique set of difficult choices that often involve family and career. I know that being successful in each realm simultaneously is possible, but not without determination and sacrifices. I plan on upholding my conception of a woman in myself in the years to come. I am not afraid to take on a challenge and I take myself very seriously. I will set out to conquer graduate school by earning my doctorate, and I will eventually start a family. I am also not afraid to be a single mother, because even though my children may grow up wondering what they are missing out on as did I, they will eventually come to realize that they really missed out on nothing at all.

### **Ashley Goldstein**

I never thought I would actually go to college to begin with, so the idea of graduating is amusing. I was that student in High School who received excellent grades, but stuck my head in the sand when it came to the future. I never wanted to talk about college or life after high school. The idea of leaving home was absurdly unrealistic. I had no idea what to expect or even how to imagine myself in a foreign place. I had so many hopes and goals for who I wanted to be, but they were all masked with denial and trepidation. My parents always pushed me to do the best that I could. They worked hard their entire lives to give my sister and me all the chances that they never had. They wanted more for us than they had growing up in small apartments in Brooklyn. Given that both my parents graduated from Brooklyn College and, then, NYU, education had always been one of the most important aspects of my family. So I prevailed, pushed forward, with both parents on either shoulder or my younger sister on my heels, and plunged into college.

Now, almost four years later, here I am with most of college behind me, and I wonder where the time went. I have spent these last years growing and changing into the woman I am today, but I'm not exactly sure who that is. College is supposed to be an environment where a person, especially a woman, should find herself, find out who she is, and find what she wants to do with the rest of her life. But I'm not sure about that yet. There should be some sort of time extension on figuring out the rest of your life.

Society today deems it necessary to have a college degree and beyond, in order to succeed in the career of your choice. As a woman, I have struggled to balance that with the overpowering message that is also projected

into our community—to marry and have children. There must be some balance or an extra four arms or four years that could be allotted to women in order to carry out all of her hopes and dreams—not just one section of them. As a college woman about to graduate, I am faced with all of these choices and decisions. My expectations are extremely high, and will hopefully allow me to fulfill my hopes and goals of a bright future. Now all I have to do is narrow them down and figure out how to accomplish them all (easier said than done).

So, just like in high school, I have to decide the fate of my future, in a matter of months. Except this time, my head is out of the sand, or out of the snow, for location's sake (Syracuse, NY). I am taking an active role in creating a future that I want to exist in, however that does not mean that I'm not anxious about it. But, if there is one thing that leaving home and going to college has taught me, is that nothing is certain, everything you really want you need to work for, and the future is always just around the corner. We all learn from experiences and college is just another bump on that steady path to the future. When looking back upon these past four years, I can only hope that the struggles and barricades that I have broken down for myself will have paved a smooth road towards a secure existence. I may not know exactly where I am going, but I do know where I'm from and what I have gone through to be who I am today. And for me, that's the first step in the right direction.

Choosing between a career and having a family is a very big issue. Although I believe that women shouldn't have to choose between the two, it is important to set priorities and realize individually which path to take at what time. Timing is everything and hopefully, I will eventually have my cake and eat it too.

### **Deon Gordon**

Whenever I talk about my family I like to say that, "I come from a family of superwomen." Women who not only have jobs/careers, but who also take care of all domestic duties as well. Women who immigrated to North America from Jamaica, West Indies and were determined to make a living for themselves and their families. Women who have set such a high example of self-motivation for me that I have come to believe that no task is ever too difficult or taxing, as long as you have the right attitude to complete it.

It is with this self-motivated attitude that I attack all challenges before me and with which I plan to tackle my newest task at hand, "life after college." My only problem is that I feel completely unprepared because on one hand, I have always been encouraged by my family to

pursue my education, but on the other hand, they never warned me about the decisions that I would have to face later on in life. Graduate school or marriage and children? Or both? Or neither? No matter which direction I choose, I feel like some piece of happiness will somehow elude me. And a small part of me feels betrayed; why didn't they tell me? I know that my mother, aunts and grandmother must have gone through similar situations, so why wasn't I warned in order to prepare myself?

Perhaps it was my fault for not picking up on the subtle hints of "grown-up" discourse as a child: "No man wants a woman who can't cook." Never mind a college degree, or having exceptional educational merits. If she can't cook, what is she worth as a woman? Or maybe it was my fault for not putting two and two together and understanding that the women in my family did everything, they cooked, they cleaned, they worked and cared for children. They were in fact, "superwomen" and as a woman that is what will be expected of me.

But who defines what it means to be a woman? Who created the criteria for womanhood? The way I see it, if I don't fit into the socially constructed guidelines of womanhood because I temporarily put my education before marriage or children, then there is something wrong with those guidelines and not me. My definition of womanhood is about choice; not being forced to choose, but understanding that we as women have options. The option to get married right

after college, the option to obtain my doctoral degree before any thoughts of children, the option to seek a partner who is willing to put *his* career on hold so that *we* can start a family. My choice is yet to be determined, but thankfully I am aware that they exist.

#### **Naoko Hashimoto**

Whenever a letter was sent home from school, my mother would tell me to read it and then explain to her the contents in Japanese. My mother's language barrier never deterred her from being a good mother and wife, but nobody else in the family fully acknowledged it as a big problem until she became ill. She was dually oppressed as a woman and as a minority with a language barrier. Society tells her that she is a failure if she cannot fulfill her role as a homemaker; Japanese culture also tells her to keep our personal matters private and does not encourage seeking outside sources for help.

My mother's sacrifice twenty-one years earlier to leave Japan with my father was surely one of the hardest decisions she has had to make. She arrived in a foreign country where she did not know the language or have any friends. Frustrations built up and were unheard for years, but she kept them to herself because she did not want to fail her children or husband. Her words, "I'm sorry, but I can't take it anymore," were very strong and upsetting to hear. My mother was diagnosed with depression, struggled to find a counselor who could speak Japanese, and understand her

position of being under the pressure of two cultures. Despite her situation, she felt that my happiness would be a symbol of her success as a mother. I, as a daughter, appreciated her sacrifices and the hardship she has endured to ensure me a privileged life.

Having grown up with a strong woman in my life has provided me with the support and encouragement to push myself to have an accomplished life. One of my goals is to become a great parent like my own mother. The second goal is to become a counseling psychologist and conduct research on multicultural issues, thus, giving back to people like my mother and others who are being silenced. However, I am mindful of the hurdles society presents me; the pressure to choose either the home or workplace.

Upon the completion of my doctorate in multicultural counseling psychology, I will be in my late twenties. I will have the worry and pressure of finding and maintaining a job, but also of finding a potential partner to settle down with at an optimal age for bearing healthy children. At times, this position is agonizing. To straddle two cultures is confusing enough and to have a language barrier is stressful, but the additional oppression of being a woman is daunting. While achieving the challenging goals I have set for myself may seem unfeasible, having had a role model who has overcome something tougher, I believe I can do it.

## **SPECIAL FEATURE**

# **The Collective Self and Community Action**

## **Introduction**

*by Brad Olson*

There are times when I bring up the topic of community action and people say, "I know what community action is, at least I think I know what it is, what is it? At least how are we defining it here?" It is of course important to continually better define what community action is exactly, but it is also sufficient to say that it can range simply from a single small act of helping to a large sweeping collective movement. Of course it most consistently lies somewhere in between.

Community action can include the concepts of empowerment and change, and it should always involve a strengths-based approach, particularly to biased and ill-conceived policies and oppression. Community action is similarly

consistent in its focus on increasing social justice and reducing such injustices. Within our academic field, the common type of community action is targeted at mental health or other health systems and structures that are needlessly disparate.

Among the disciplines related to community psychology, community action owes a debt generally to the study of social history. Community research, and community action specifically, must, for instance, better understand the thoughts and meaning behind a Rosa Parks or Saul Alinsky. Any study of community action must also involve substantial social psychological components. It must continually strive to better understand the negative human cognitions surrounding stigma and prejudice, as does social psychology, but equally investigate the

positive human motivations found in helping behaviors.

The science of community action has one of its most direct precursors in the minority influence literature. For decades, the primary paradigm in the science of social influence solely emphasized the ability of the numerical majority to influence a numerical minority. Such work is exemplified in Solomon Asch's famous experiments. The majority, as the experiment goes, provides inaccurate opinions to a lone participant, getting that participant to shift to her or his opinion, at least publicly, and at least within the laboratory setting.

Moscovici challenged this majority-based paradigm with a series of experiments that eventually formed the minority influence literature. This new paradigm showed that, in

certain contexts, the numerical minority could precipitate belief change in the majority. Classic films like *12 Angry Men* and *Shindler's List* accurately illustrate these processes in an ecologically valid and intuitive way. Yet it is the community component in community action that provides the difference—the ethics, the real world application, and the hope for more beneficial real-world interventions derived from scientific principles.

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**While community action is also intrinsically connected to the psychology of motivation, it would be too simplistic to think it is simply a science of motivating others to act for some social gain.**

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While community action is also intrinsically connected to the psychology of motivation, it would be too simplistic to think it is simply a science of motivating others to act for some social gain. There are so many ethical implications to the attempt to externally change others whether for an ostensibly or objectively good cause. One distinguishing component of community action therefore is that it must always be about the supposed interventionist as much as it is about the attempt to motivate anyone else. Even once we begin to effect action in ourselves, the process of community action still only remains partly about helping to foster future action in others. A more proximal goal is for the interventionist to simply become one more valuable resource within a larger group or community. The interventionist therefore focuses first on her or his own self-directed intervention. Second, the interventionist simply becomes one more community member engaged in community action. If that behavior increases action through modeling or some other means, one need only to continue utilizing one's skills toward oneself as a single part of a larger community. There is probably much more to it than that, but in my opinion it is the only way to begin.

Each of the following articles in this special section addresses many of the above topics, including looking foremost internally when one is engaged in the behavior and cognition of community action. Those in the *Community Field* are often asking others to work on a particular issue, but they are always equally working to understand their own role and strengthen the ethical weight of their community actions.

The first two essays, one from Nashville (and kind of from Waterloo, Canada) and the other from Auckland both discuss internet communication in the service of community

action. The first prepares us with a set of limitations and cautions, and then, in the tradition of community action, provides concrete and strategic guidelines for subsequent action-based steps and strategies.

The second essay provides a community action exemplar, asking us to go to a specific website that is designed to use narratives to mutually work toward a type of shared collective

action. As should be noted, this action is intended less as an external stimulus designed to get the rest of us to act, as an internal attempt of the designers to create their own action—this aim just happens to be best served when it is involved in a mutual connection with others who have similar goals. This distinction seems quite minor but is in fact deceptively consequential.

Also of interest is that both of these internet-related, international essays grew at least partly from the combined communication across the following groups: Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR), Psychologists Acting with Conscience Together (PsyACT), SCRA's Community Action Interest Group, and Everyday Activists. Working together of course is the best form of community action. If people come together electronically or in-person it becomes evident that shared narratives do have a natural power to precipitate community action.

The following three essays are written solely by students, individually or collectively. The first two target student forms of community action but provide equally relevant information to all of us. The third targets all of us, and may not be easy to hear for all of us, but will nevertheless be worth hearing, and likely be appreciated once it is heard. The essays focus on undergraduate awareness of the community field, service learning, and animal rights, respectfully. All of these essays illustrate this topic of looking inside oneself as well as outside in the effort to facilitate community action.

Engagement in community action within oneself or in conjunction with others often begins with a strong emotional experience that can oftentimes be drowned by even the briefest cognition of helplessness. When the thought and sense of helplessness is overcome, often the most challenging and complex actions take place. The following and final four essays—in

response to healthcare in Africa, malnutrition in American cities, and Katrina—provide particularly fine examples of community action in process. I'd say more, but they all speak especially well for themselves, and I've already probably said too much. I do want to say that I hope in reading them, you will gain a better understanding of this small sub-area of the *Community Field*. Most importantly, I hope the essays continue to inspire us to engage in even more future community action. I will always need such inspiration. If you do too, and find it here, that is all the better. Community action is nice that way. If you can just sufficiently focus on yourself, if I, if these authors, if all of us just sufficiently focus on ourselves, others will act in succession. Again, that's not the whole story, but the first and most important lesson I've learned up till now.

To emphasize the point, the community intervention is found first within us—that's where its single motivational and ethical source lies. The rest of the work, that involving the community, is not easy, but once we take care of ourselves, we can be assured that the largest obstacle, and the one that we are most responsible for, has already been overcome. It sounds so individualistic, but therein lies the paradox of community action.

## Online Activism

*by Scot D. Evans*

As community psychologists, we are concerned with action; we want to help change things. It is not a stretch for us to participate in community organizing efforts, attend rallies and marches, speak out at policy hearings, and generally get our hands dirty as community activists. More and more, however, we are turning to the web as a way to act on issues that concern us. The requests for help come via email at a rapid-fire pace and websites aimed at social change are everywhere. The point and click solution lets us take action on many issues without leaving our comfy chairs.

However, online activism faces many challenges. First among them is the fact that the very people who would most benefit from the information sharing and networking—the poor and dispossessed of developing nations—are largely excluded from its use. While many of us have minute-by-minute access to computers and networks, many community members who need to be participating or leading the charge have little or no regular access. This potentially creates another disempowering strategy for liberation that requires those with more power to advocate

and act even more for those with less. Additionally, the technology is rooted in Western traditional values and for those not familiar with these beliefs or tools, they can marginalize and make people feel even more invisible.

Second, the ease of online activism for advocates risks turning activists into “click monkeys.” This is how I’ve been feeling lately as I semi-blindly respond to e-mail action requests by clicking through calls for justice without really paying much attention to the substance of the issues. If it’s from a group that I generally respect, I trust the concern is important enough to demand my “action.” This uncritical response is devoid of the necessary deliberation and learning that is fundamental to the democratic process. Whereas the benefit of online activism is in its ability to inform debate and spur action, the risk of using this technology in activism lies in streamlining the process to such a point that it subdues outrage and passionate connection to the issues.

Lastly, online activism risks taking people away from physically working in communities in solidarity with others to affect change. This is a fast-paced world. We take on too much work and face a plethora of distractions in the form of material goods, media, and managing our stuff. Social action takes time, and anything that helps save us some time is welcomed and appreciated. So we move to electronic forms of action and stop attending rallies, community forums, group actions, and demonstrations. Our connection to the human and social components of social action is lost and only the illusion of collective action is preserved. Imagine if the courageous African-American students who organized sit-ins at segregated lunch counters during the civil rights movement had resorted only to e-mail campaigns or blogging. Maybe they would have avoided being arrested or beaten, but the dramatic demonstration of the injustice of the system would have been minimized.

#### Does it make a difference?

We know from the past that the Internet and electronic communications can be a powerful tool for change. One example is the 1994 rebellion waged by Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico (Cleaver, 1994). The Zapatistas were able to get their messages out rapidly through local supporters who sent them out

over the Internet to potentially receptive audiences around the world. As a result, they gained supporters in over forty countries. Communications analysts described it as an “electronic fabric of struggle.” With electronic communication, they were effective in pulling together a grassroots movement against the current political and economic order in Mexico.

Other events around the world have demonstrated how the Internet can play a role in mobilizing people for action. In Beijing, ten thousand members of Falun Gong suddenly showed up for a protest outside the government leadership headquarters, all made possible through virtual organizing. In Indonesia, student pro-democracy leaders who were linked by the Web mounted mass protests that eroded the then President Suharto’s authority and sped his ouster into place as the new national leader (Engardio et al., 1999). In the U.S., online activism plays a role in elections; in 2004, 11% of U.S. internet users, or more than 13 million people, went online to donate money, volunteer, or learn about the time and place of every political event that suited their interests (Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The

People and The Press). There were innovative strategies to connect local people through the *house parties phenomenon*. Swing state phone banks and neighborhood walks were organized online, and volunteers

received direction from campaigns without lifting their fingers from the keyboard. There are numerous examples, around the world, illustrating the significant power of the Internet in helping others help others organize for action.

There have been a few instances when I felt my own contributions to internet social change had been moderately successful. I’ve participated in many online action campaigns spearheaded by the U.S. group MoveOn.org. They have been very effective in, among other areas, relating successes back to the people who participate in community actions. Taking part in their online campaigns has contributed to stopping a Congressional House proposal slip away overtime pay from six million Americans, and helped restore several of the budget cuts made to National Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting System (PBS). During this NPR and PBS campaign, MoveOn.org reports that members generated more than one million online comments.

The “ONE Campaign to Make Poverty History,”



driven by a large partnership of international non-governmental aid organizations, has recently marched dramatically onto the global activism scene. They’ve recruited support from big-name celebrities such as Bono, Elton John, Cameron Diaz, Brad Pitt and a crowd of other good-looking people. They’ve influenced leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) meeting at the G8 Summit to get real financial commitment in fighting the crisis of extreme poverty and global AIDS. I and 1.4 million other Americans joined the campaign, and ONE suggests these efforts helped result in pledges by G8 leaders, pledges that provided an additional \$25 billion in development assistance for the emergency in Africa. This contributed to an additional \$50 billion projected globally by 2010. Hey, if it’s good enough for Brad Pitt, it’s good enough for me.

There is also an encouraging trend lately in the field of psychology. Groups within the American Psychological Association (APA) and affiliated with psychology are using the Internet to take action. Some is directed at APA itself. Consider a call by Divisions for Social Justice (DSJ), the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology (Division 48 of the APA), Physicians for Human Rights, the Ignacio Martin Baro fund, Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR), and Psychologists Acting with Conscience Together (PsyACT), all reacting to APA’s soft stance on the role of psychologists in interrogations and torture at U.S. prisons in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. They collectively called on the U.S. Congress to investigate and demanded that APA issue a clear statement against the direct or indirect involvement of psychologists in using inhumane, degrading, or coercive interrogations.

PsySR has long maintained a presence on the Internet and has served as a resource destination for psychologists who want to get involved in social and political issues. They also maintain several email lists for a variety of action committees. In 2003, in an informal partnership with PsySR, we started PsyACT with the intention to further facilitate action on social issues that affect the well-being of

individuals and communities. Although the experiment has only achieved moderate success, dialogs at psychology-related conferences demonstrate that PsyACT can be a valuable resource for action. The site ([www.psyact.org](http://www.psyact.org)) has a page on “Every Day Activism” (see Harre and Bullen in this issue) to share ideas on how to live our values by being an activist through our everyday actions (through purchase choices, conserving energy, choice of career, etc.).

### Maximize the web for action

How can we avoid the perils and maximize the web for social change? I’ll highlight four important factors to help maximize online activism efforts:

#### 1. Be Selective.

If you’re like me, you probably find it easy to sign up for numerous e-mail action lists for progressive causes. As I’ve turned into a click monkey, I’ve decided to slim down my involvement and limit myself to those groups and issues I feel most passionate about. When we’re talking about change, we’re most likely to be engaged and effective when our heart is in it or when we have a personal stake. Find those groups that represent your deepest convictions and then get involved deeply. Focus on taking action on those issues where you feel outrage, where you know something must be done, by you.

#### 2. Act On and Offline.

As mentioned earlier, one risk is the potential for online involvement to become our only means of taking action. We need to continue to get our hands dirty. We need to connect with others in the human struggle for justice, and not just through message-boards. Use the Internet as a means of connecting with people who you also see in person. Email and a website are good ways of storing information and allowing everyone easy access to it, even if

they’re all members of a group you meet with regularly. The Internet can be a great way to organize for action only if you also respond to those local notices about meet-ups, actions, and other forms of physical protest. I’ve felt the most connected to my community and to the people in it during those moments when I was physically engaged with others in the democratic process. We need to think of our online communication and activism activities as a complement to our in-the-world civic participation. And that *in-the-world action* mostly happens locally.

#### 3. Think globally, act everywhere.

One of the beauties of online activism is that you can join in social justice fights anywhere in the world. It’s important that we join in solidarity with others around the globe to help make a difference. Building a world-wide collective voice against oppressive forces can be a powerful tool for change. Online movements against the Iraq war and efforts to raise awareness about the genocide in Darfur built international coalitions for change.

At the same time, we can be effective in many ways locally. PsyACT has realized the need to connect people locally, and has encouraged people to set up local action teams. In many ways, this sums-up the goal of online activism—connect people globally and mobilize them locally.

#### 4. Help those directly affected.

Find ways to help those most affected by the issues you care about. Work with those disenfranchised individuals and groups to help them get their message out. As we work to increase access to and application of technology in activism, we challenge power dynamics. Make sure we make the community central to that process. Online activism can be a mysterious, foreign process, seen as something white, western, and money-dominated. We need to invite people into the process, not impose it upon them. Our most effective approach may be to find ways to work alongside disenfranchised individuals and

groups to help them learn to use electronic means to take action for their own liberation.

### Conclusion

Online activism is potentially effective by bringing large numbers of imaginative people into a collective endeavor, where their joint efforts can challenge power. Lately, e-mail and web pages have been cited by protagonists on all sides of the political spectrum as playing key roles. Mostly, they play the role of finding otherwise hard-to-obtain information and circulating it widely. Through sharing the very information that the mainstream media mostly ignores or refuses to seek, groups can best organize their resistance against abuses of power. These e-mail lists and web pages constitute a kind of alternative, oppositional

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**Through sharing the very information that the mainstream media mostly ignores or refuses to seek, groups can best organize their resistance against abuses of power.**

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community of dialog and debate outside of (and operating much more democratically than) traditional policymaking institutions;

institutions that for the most part are in business to maintain the status quo. While some might question the effectiveness of online activism in achieving its intended outcomes, at a minimum, it is successful as a democratic process. At its core, online activism is democracy in action.

We need many tools in order to become actively engaged citizens who can effectively help others. The Internet is just one of these mechanisms. The ability of the Internet to unite people around the world for a common cause is clear. It helps distribute and diffuse information and knowledge, helps us critically evaluate that information, and aids us in best organizing and mobilizing our communities for action. If used wisely and alongside non-virtual means, it can substantially help develop our understanding of where power and the means for change reside. Such understanding can be leveraged into support and the necessary resources for socially just struggles wherever they may develop. Can the members of SCRA utilize the rejuvenated SCRA website as a tool for collective action and social change? The possibilities are endless and I welcome your ideas.

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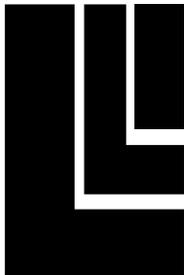
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### Suggested Readings

(Resources for Action)

- Ignacio Martin Baro Fund – [www.martinbarofund.org](http://www.martinbarofund.org)
- MoveOn.org – [www.MoveOn.org](http://www.MoveOn.org)
- Net Action.org – [www.netaction.org](http://www.netaction.org)
- ONE: The Campaign to Make Poverty History – [www.one.org](http://www.one.org)
- Progressive Portal – [www.progressiveportal.org](http://www.progressiveportal.org)
- Psychologists Acting with Conscience Together (PsyACT) – [www.psyact.org](http://www.psyact.org)
- Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) – [www.psyshr.org](http://www.psyshr.org)
- Society for Community Research and Action (Division 27, APA) – [www.scra27.org](http://www.scra27.org)
- Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology (Division 48, APA) – [www.webster.edu/peacepsychology/](http://www.webster.edu/peacepsychology/)



## Narratives and Communities of Action

by Niki Harré and Pat Bullen  
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I started cycling to work because I came across a stall run by Cycle Action Auckland at our local community festival. I am not sure why I was attracted to their small plastic table; perhaps it was for some light relief after trying to choose between a hand-painted pot-plant holder and a fish made from a car bumper. I looked at a few of their pamphlets and got into a conversation with a man of about my age. It turned out he, like me, worked at the university, only he cycled in everyday. I guess I was vulnerable to being converted, maybe because I was an ex-cyclist (aren't most of us?), but his story totally gripped me. The next day I dragged out my partner's bike and made it to work in one piece. It was scary but fun. Over the next few months I talked to lots of people about cycling. I am not sure quite how it works, but whenever I'm into anything new, people with experience seem to pop up everywhere. As I listened to their tales and started to form my own narrative about being a cyclist I became stronger and stronger in my commitment to leave my car at home as much as possible. (Niki)

Life is like that. As social creatures we don't really come up with original ideas; we adopt the ideas that are out there, and fashion them into something of our own. One of the best ways to absorb ideas and make them part of us is through stories. We spend a lot of our time listening to stories, telling stories and dreaming about the stories we hope to live. As psychologists we can play a significant role in using stories to enable community action. There are many possibilities, but we'd like to focus on two of these. One is to collect narratives about community action and then pass these on, hoping that others will absorb them and learn from them. The second is to create structures to encourage people with similar values to get together and tell each other stories about themselves and what they are doing to make a difference.

### Collecting and passing on stories

Listening to people describe their experience and then fashioning that into a story that combines the original storyteller

with the perspective of the listener is one of psychology's central techniques. There are many examples of psychologists (and sociologists) doing this in relation to community activists. Two examples of collections of stories of activists are Bill Berkowitz's book on local American heroes (Berkowitz, 1987) and Colby and Damon's study of 'moral exemplars' (Colby & Damon, 1994). While Berkowitz's heroes are perhaps a little more flawed, and so more real than Colby and Damon's exemplars, both books provide compelling portraits of lives that make a positive difference to others. Equally compelling are the studies by McAdam (1988) on college students who went to Mississippi in the 1960s to enroll black voters and Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks' (1996) book 'Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World' – the title says it all.

Paul Loeb's books 'Soul of a Citizen' (1999) and 'The Impossible Will Take a Little While' (2004) are also key collections of stories of participation, written in a less academic style. These books provide templates for how it is possible to be an activist in this day and age. They show us, as Paul Loeb has written, that "those who participate in our society as active citizens... are people of imperfect character, acting on the basis of imperfect knowledge, for causes that may be imperfect as well" (1999, p. 54). By letting us into the secrets of ordinary activists, these books bridge the gap between our far-away heroes with apparently super-human dedication, crystal clear causes, and our own ambiguous and sometimes frustrating efforts to contribute to the common good.

Creating structures for storytelling - website  
 Reading about the lives of activists can be extremely inspiring. But it is perhaps even better to connect with others who are struggling here and now with the same issues as ourselves. In



*Cycle Action Auckland*



[everydayactivists.org](http://everydayactivists.org)

collaboration with Brad Olson, we are working on two projects along these lines. One is a website called [everydayactivists.org](http://everydayactivists.org). This site is a space for people who want to create a more just, peaceful and eco-friendly world through their daily practices. Here you can read about the individual and collective actions of like-minded people and (if you are sufficiently brave and inspired) share your own story. Here are extracts from our stories. We hope they resonate with you in some way.

I come from a hard working, Democrat, middle class, Catholic family. My parents and perhaps my religious education were responsible for fostering in me a genuine concern for those less empowered (like the Good Samaritan who stopped to help the injured traveler in the New Testament). I also hold central to my life the possibility of an equitable, just, and sustainable world where priority is placed on human wellness. There are several defining moments in my life that I believe have helped solidify my values. While at university, I took a course in political philosophy. The professor encouraged us to think critically and to seek out and support fairness and justice in society. Several students from this class (including myself) took part in an organised march on Washington D.C. to protest against US involvement in Central America. Taking part in this event showed me first hand the power of human voice. (Pat)

I've been thinking about different levels of action - personal, organizational, community, national and international. The personal level is about living as you think the world should be. We recently decided to only buy free range eggs. My son (aged 12) is easily moved by issues that involve improving conditions for animals and advocated for this. He was almost drowned out by his 14-year-old sister who thinks that we should put people before animals. Her main argument concerned whether or not the government should put money into

saving the weta. The weta is a rather fierce looking insect that most of us would rather not live with on an intimate basis – which was her point! At the organizational level our research group has been talking about how we can have input into university practices. Quentin, a student in our department, co-wrote a wonderful submission to the university hierarchy, suggesting the university plant native trees to off-set the carbon emissions created when academics fly to conferences. We are working on ways we could get this proposal adopted. At the community level, a group of us who live in my suburb have got together to try and reduce the speed of cars and increase the number of people walking and cycling. (Niki)

This website stemmed from conversations we had at the Psychologists for Social Responsibility and Counselors for Social Justice conference in Portland in May 2005. One of the things we realised at the conference is how powerful it is to hear about how other people manage to live out their values. First, there is nothing like talking about values with like-minded others to create an instant sense of intimacy and collective purpose. That in itself is hugely energizing. Second, by talking about what we are doing right, rather than dwelling on our many failures and/or all the problems in the world, we become more optimistic.

The site does feel like a risk. It is hard to talk about trying to live in a particular way – shades of cultism perhaps. There is also the lurking fear that having told everyone you are a dedicated member of Amnesty International (or whatever), they'll catch you going out for dinner when you should be on a demonstration. Better to say nothing we might think, than be caught out. On the other hand, if we keep it secret that we are trying to make a difference through our everyday actions it is much more difficult to connect with others who are doing the same. And without community it is very hard to sustain much at all. Since we started the site, we've been talking about the idea of consciously living our values with people who we think might be interested. A few weeks ago I (Niki) had the most amazing conversation along these lines with a woman who volunteers for Refugee and Migrant Services. She had been allocated a family from Zambia and was setting up house for them. I felt enormously grateful to her that she was doing this and that I was able to pass on some items that had been cluttering up my house. She was young, early twenties, and had a lovely manner - very cheerful and optimistic. Her cheer was contagious and I left the encounter feeling refreshed and inspired. We hope our website

can help you feel connected and give you what it takes to start conversations with others about trying to live a more value-based life.

Creating structures for storytelling - workshop  
We are also involved in running storytelling workshops. The full instructions for these are on our website. They will also be published in an upcoming book for peace activists (Harré, Bullen & Olson, in press). We've run workshops with psychologists and psychology students, health care providers, staff in a programme for youth at risk, and a community street-reclaiming group. The workshop gives you an opportunity to tell your story, and hear the stories of other people in your activist group, workplace, school or community organisation. Together, your group may hit upon new ways to take collective action that are grounded in your common visions. It is an excellent tool for newly formed groups, groups with several new members, or groups with cliques that need restructuring. Because of the formal process that requires everyone to speak (and prevents anyone from speaking too much), this method genuinely provides space for everyone to be heard. This encourages democracy within the organisation and reduces the risk that a single view dominates or becomes the group's position, simply because it is being stated by someone perceived as powerful.

Ideally, the workshop runs in two sessions. In the first session, people are told about the method and the theme on which to base their stories. The theme is:

*What are my values? Where have my values come from? How do I live these values? How am I supported in living these values? What ideas do I have for how I could live my values more fully?*

This theme is designed to capture how people's values and life-stories are intertwined and is also the basis of the stories on our website [everydayactivists.org](http://everydayactivists.org). Participants then write a story in the time available, at a minimum 20 minutes, preferably over night.

In session two, or after people have had a bit of time to write notes for their story, the group gathers for the storytelling, and participants are organised into smaller groups of about five people. A formal process follows in which people tell their stories one by one. After each story, everyone else in the group says how this story *is like* and *is not like* their own experience. Every one gets a turn, and no one should interrupt a speaker. Finally, the group constructs insights. These insights should focus on things the group has in common as well as ideas for new personal and collective

action. Although the insights will, for the most part, be written, groups can also present insights in other forms, for example, diagrams or short skits (we've seen it done!).

After the groups have generated their insights, these can be presented to the larger group. From this point, groups could generate collective action agendas, based on the insights and what participants have learnt from the process.

### Conclusion

Social change organisations have always understood the power of narratives to recruit participants and keep them involved (Kiecolt, 2000). The more our stories of working for the common good are embedded in meaningful social networks the more likely we are to remain active (Passy & Giugni, 2000). As psychologists, we are ideally placed to use our people skills to create opportunities for everyday activists to craft and share stories of involvement. By doing this we strengthen each individual and help create that most critical force for social change—communities of action.

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## What the Graduate Student Has to Offer Community Psychology in Regards to Social Action: A Call for an Intervention in Undergraduate Awareness

by Jordan Braciszewski

As a new member to the field of community psychology, I found it, at first, difficult to envision the possible futures of our field. How could I, for instance, a graduate student, fresh off my first year, have any worthwhile contribution to helping set the course for a field that is almost twice as old as I am? One small possibility struck me last October, while I sat engrossed in a keynote session at the Midwest ECO Conference in Saugatuck, MI. Dr. Rhona Weinstein charged the audience, particularly the women, to set forth on their careers with the goal of becoming faculty members at schools with community psychology programs. Her reasoning behind this challenge was one formed from her own current situation. She was the only faculty member in her department committed to training students in community psychology.

"Once I leave," she stated, "there will be no more community psychology at UC-Berkeley. Who will train the community psychologists of the future?" The future of our field, I thought, is one where students are more inclined to become professors and teachers of community psychology, which requires individuals who have the potential interest in community psychology, individuals who aim it is to seek such careers, and individuals who work to help open such doors.

Many schools may soon face the same future as UC-Berkeley. My own school, Wayne State University, has Dr. Paul Toro as its sole community psychologist. Once he decides to move on, community psychology and its teachings at Wayne State will be over. As in these two instances, many other schools have come to this crossroad, and many others will if new students no longer choose the path of academia. While there are numerous reasons that speak to the under-representation of various groups in academia, we as community psychologists should develop more effective means to increase the number of individuals

willing to devote themselves to teaching the new crop of ecologically-minded psychologists.

To this call you may say, however, that there simply are not enough community psychology departments, and therefore jobs, available. Yet we, as a field, need to grow at academic institutions across the country. In the spirit of Drs. Leonard Jason and Chris Keys, among many others who founded community psychology programs, newer community psychologists should seize the opportunity to develop programs at new institutions that are prime targets for our field. It may be thought that there are not enough people interested in community psychology at the undergraduate and graduate level to start these programs. Yet this is the very reason we, as students, need to do everything possible to spread the message and teachings of community psychology, starting now. I have often heard people say that community psychology is not even mentioned in the majority of the most widely used introductory psychology textbooks. This is astounding and disappointing in every respect. It is of course somewhat attributable

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to the fact that we have struggled over the years to even approach a common definition for the field. The time has come to use the principles by which we preach (i.e., social action) and spread the knowledge of community psychology, not just in our programs, but across our universities as a whole, and beyond these institutions.

In deciding on a central community action, we know that many of our fellow graduate students teach introductory psychology classes. Since getting that spark from Dr. Weinstein, I have found it far too easy to ask the instructors of these courses for guest lecture spots, and use this opportunity to talk about our field in their classrooms. I am sure many of your departmental instructors would not mind taking a breather for a day, and would be willing enough to keep the course content open for a discussion on community psychology.

On the several occasions I have given these lectures, I have found the reactions to community psychology at the undergraduate

level quite interesting. While many students have only heard in passing the title of the field, those more familiar with the field were impressed by what we do. Even these latter students, however, had skewed perceptions of the field as a whole (It's just like sociology, right?). The key point is that great potential exists in terms of the undergraduate students' natural values and inclinations. Because there are a plethora of undergraduate students interested in helping individuals at the macro-level, this seems a perfect opportunity to provide them with information about our field. Activism at the undergrad level has been alive and well since the 1960's and is just as strong today. Community psychology can give these individuals direction with their efforts, a home they often have trouble finding otherwise. The majority of college students are not only fervent, but intelligent, able to use our direction, our principles in the most productive possible ways.

Many of our schools, including mine, offer no introductory community psychology course. For those of you in a similar boat, we can all work simultaneously to ensure that such a class is offered at every school with any community psychology component in its graduate department. If we are represented at the graduate level, why are we not being represented at the undergraduate level? If we have able-bodied faculty and graduate students, there are few excuses for not offering such courses to undergrads. There are several well-written community psychology texts that are particularly appropriate for this level, and developing an introductory course should not require a great amount of effort, and as there are certainly few topics would be more enjoyable to teach. We can maximize these benefits not only for the undergraduate student but for ourselves as well, particularly for graduate students. We are all required to have teaching experience, and by requesting to teach undergraduate community psychology courses we can further our understanding and the field at the same time. Provosts may argue that students will not be interested, but this is simply, as we all know, not the case. Perhaps these administrators are the primary individuals we need to educate about community psychology. This is the type of community action that we should know and practice better than anyone. Once people find out about our field and what we stand for, they will be more than willing to learn more about it, and support it themselves. If they are not, we can continue to offer a calm, moderate, educational message, until that message fully gets through.

It is the responsibility of graduate students to play a more central role in recruiting and teaching undergraduates about our great field.

While current faculty members have a wide range of knowledge about community psychology, it is the graduate students who can best connect with undergraduate students on a peer-to-peer level. Teamwork between graduate students and senior members, however, is likely the most effective method. It is recognized that the call made here is a large one. It is understood that these goals may seem somewhat difficult to reach, but if we want to preserve our field far into the future, these are some of the necessary steps we, as graduate students, and those beyond graduate school, must take.

It is also a fact that community psychology is practiced in many different fields: social work, urban studies, sociology, and public health, among others. Many of the programs within these disciplines have trained community psychologists in their departments, throughout the country. However, the norms and values of our field differ from these related departments. Despite our need to branch out into more interdisciplinary work, we simultaneously need community psychologists teaching community psychology. If we do not continue to grow within the world of academia, if we do not all take responsibility for keeping these current programs alive, the future of community psychology may not be available for many undergraduates who will eventually search for an action-based field devoted to helping empower those who need a stronger voice.

## **In Service to Whom?: Challenges and Considerations in Service Learning Courses**

### **Teaching Service Learning Courses: Graduate Students Share What They Learn from Teaching**

*by Danielle Rynczak, Benjamin Hidalgo, Simone Barr, Natasha Watkins*

As graduate students in a clinical-community psychology program, teaching undergraduate students takes on new meaning and opportunity. This paper will explore the challenges graduate students experience as community-based service learning course instructors. The authors are all graduate students currently teaching service learning courses to selected undergraduate students who possess the interest and maturity to take on the responsibilities associated with this community involvement. The collaborations include a local residential treatment center for children who have been abused or neglected, a center for community men who are homeless,

an advocacy program that focuses on low-income African American families, and an outreach program that provides social support to youth recently released from detention. Based on our experiences, we describe the types of training and forums for course instructors of service learning courses so that all stakeholders benefit most from the interactions, benefits, and community action involved.

Service learning, the educational opportunity for students to apply classroom lessons while learning from and working with the community, is a teaching method that embodies the core values of community psychology. What better way to teach undergraduate students about community intervention than to facilitate active collaboration with community members, where students can see human competencies and problems within the social, political and community contexts in which they occur? What other way is there to teach about action and action agendas than through action itself? How do we teach our students that facilitating empowerment and hearing community voices is important if we, ourselves, silence them by talking only about our own values and preconceptions? How do we truly pass on the intricacies of community involvement and action if we do all the talking at blackboards or with Power Point presentations in two-hour seminars? Students learn lessons about what socially responsible psychologists value by engaging in the work that we do as professionals. Community-based service learning is a "do as we do, not simply as we say" approach. It is intrinsically about community action.

The benefits of volunteering in the community are well known and accepted in the psychological literature. Community service may increase self-esteem, leadership capabilities, dependability, mastery over one's life, and one's personal sense of social responsibility (Kirby, 1989). In the more structured and educational context of service learning, empirical evidence suggests that students engaged in these courses equally share these benefits. Students enrolled in these courses and faculty believe that as a result of service, students possess a greater awareness of social issues (Keys et al., 1999; Primavera, 1999; Rowe & Chapman, 1999), a stronger sense of social responsibility (McKenna & Rizzo, 1999; Reeb et al., 1999) and a greater appreciation of diversity (Keys et al.; Primavera). Even students who engage in short-term service learning report a continued sense of social responsibility after the course has ended (Reed et al., 1999). Moreover, students are not the only ones who benefit from community-based service learning courses. Faculty feedback



*Benjamin Hidalgo, Simone Barr, Danielle Rynczak, and Natasha Watkins*

(Rowe & Chapman, 1999) and positive outcomes in working with community agencies (Reeb et al., 1999; Driscoll, 1996) have indicated that service learning can help at least three of the key players: students, instructors, and community partners. Others (the university, consumers and neighborhoods) undoubtedly benefit as well.

Since service learning is an invaluable tool in teaching community psychology, it is important to reflect upon our own experiences as teachers of such courses. We must learn from each other. As current graduate student course instructors, these are the challenges with which we have been struggling, and it is from these challenges that we can best learn.

### **Defining Stakeholders**

As instructors of service-learning courses we have an obligation to a number of different stakeholders such as community partners, clients, students and the university. Each party has its own agenda for engaging in the service learning experience. These agendas, for the most part, have similar objectives; however, there may be components that are at times in conflict. The task of understanding and explaining these different agendas poses some of the greatest challenges for us as instructors. For instance, in establishing the optimal hermeneutic relationship between the student and the community setting we, as course instructors, must strive to understand and communicate to our students what our personal agendas are, who our community partners are, and how the social phenomena under study has been defined by each of these stakeholders.

The undergraduate students in our projects have expressed a number of reasons why they believe they have enrolled in service learning courses. These courses, they suggest, provide

a unique opportunity for them to explore what happens when the ‘rubber meets the road.’ The students expect and are eventually able to see how the concepts taught in their community psychology courses, such as collaboration and strengths based interventions, apply to real life settings. The students also get the opportunity to obtain hands-on experience in populations that are not normally available to undergraduate students.

A number of these students are interested in social service careers, and this service learning opportunity allows for them to investigate if these careers are a good fit with their needs and desires. Yet this hands-on community involvement almost always tends to be a core theme identified by students as why they chose service-learning courses.

Community partners also have their own agendas for participating in service-learning projects. With constant cuts to social service funding, community programs must identify unique ways to fulfill their needs and goals. Collaboration with the university can provide a number of resources that may be otherwise difficult to obtain in community settings. In exchange for optimal field experience, the undergraduate students in these projects provide services in community settings without monetary compensation. In all of the projects, intensive training and supervision are provided to students within the university setting. In addition, our projects address a number of needs that community services have not been able to address. For instance, students in the juvenile detention center outreach project provide aftercare, such as mentoring and life skills training, to youth leaving the detention center.

Self-consciousness of values is a hallmark of community psychology (Rappaport, 1984). There is little that is more challenging and essential than for graduate students teaching

undergraduate students and attempting to build systemic bridges across a complex of stakeholders than to define our own personal agendas. We must be reflective when developing these service learning projects, when mentoring the students who enroll, and at every other stage when engaging in community action. How can we create and maintain a space where students can develop their own opinions about social policy and reform even when they are in stark opposition to the views of other stakeholders? What about when they are in opposition to our own? How do we make sure that our agendas do not impede the intellectual development of our students? In turn, how do our classroom experiences transform the way we think, teach, and engage in the community?

Service learning can provide a unique opportunity to aid in students’ moral, career, and intellectual development. As instructors, we want to best address the needs of our students while paying attention to the goals of our community partners. One way that we balance these expressed needs is to be selective in the students that we choose for each project. Each student must go through an intensive interview process to ensure that her or his needs can be addressed by participation in the service-learning course. We also have ongoing communication with our community partners to make certain that our students engage in meaningful activities. In our program, meaningful internship and advocacy placements are created for the students so that they are seen as more than just “volunteers”. For example, in the low-income families program, students must engage in

advocacy-oriented contact with clients and not just serve as babysitters or more efficient methods of transportation (although these services may be greatly needed).

### **Setting Curricula**

This tension of values, reflected in the diverse views of stakeholders, also creates unique challenges for how instructors develop curricula. As agents of the university, it would be somewhat easy for instructors to put the university’s agenda or their own personal agendas above those of other stakeholders. Thus, instructors are challenged to find ways by which the goals of all stakeholders can be effectively integrated. Another challenge

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**Community partners also have their own agendas for participating in service-learning projects. With constant cuts to social service funding, community programs must identify unique ways to fulfill their needs and goals.**

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instructors face is remaining effective facilitators of learning when the values of stakeholders (e.g., students) conflict with the core values of the instructor or service-learning program. Because these conflicts naturally arise, developing curricula that incorporates the needs and goals of each stakeholder requires a great deal of intentionality. Instructors must work diligently to achieve a balance between two aims: being responsive to the immediate needs of community partners and ensuring that students are engaged in rich and meaningful learning experiences.

The tension of balancing community partner and student needs in setting curricula is an ongoing concern when the service being provided is in high demand or one of few available resources that can help address a particular need. Instructors may feel pressure to develop curricula with a focus on quickly and efficiently “training” students to deliver the needed service or engage in other community work. Community partners anticipate the arrival of students; students are excited about opportunities to “help” and act in real-life settings; and the campus units offering the service-learning course are interested in offering successful programs. Yet, focusing curricula on training alone limits the potential of the service-learning experience in which “learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection” (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Service learning curricula should be created in ways that allow students to participate as active consumers and producers of knowledge. Such an approach does not preclude a focus on training; it just means that training should not be the overriding focus of the curricula. Service-learning curricula that draw from multiple disciplines and perspectives, challenge students to think critically about social phenomena, and expose students to new ways of thinking are more aligned with the goals of service learning and community involvement and will only bolster training curricula. Overall, achieving some balance in the shape of the curricula benefits all parties involved. Students are provided with an experience that is both intellectually stimulating and “real world”, community partners and clients benefit from having bright, eager, and thoughtful individuals assist in community efforts, and campus units are allowed to provide courses that sufficiently challenge student growth and facilitate the development of future scholars.

Another curricular challenge arises when the values held by community partners, students, or the general public is in contrast to the values espoused in the service-learning curricula. All of the programs referenced in this article identify with and ascribe to empowerment and

social justice-oriented frameworks. Curricular materials address topics such as empowerment theory, cultural competency, and participatory approaches. Service learning work also occurs from a strengths-based approach that emphasizes positive assets and abilities and advocacy. Some students may experience a clash with the core values of the service-learning course. The values may seem in direct contrast with the theories and concepts that students learned about in previous courses and/or students’ personal values. This conflict can be viewed as a “good thing” as it allows students to be challenged and stretched in ways that facilitate learning and personal growth. Growth, however, rarely occurs without some pain. Students may exhibit resistance to these new ideas, and this opposition may take the form of persistent questioning of ideas, silence or inaction, or adherence to familiar approaches that are inconsistent with the values of the course.

Providing a safe space for students to process and reflect on curricular material and community experiences is an important way by which faculty supervisors and graduate instructors can support students through this process. Reflection represents an important means by which students reconcile differing sets of information and where they truly connect thinking to action (Kolb, 1984). Being responsive through curricula is another way for the instructor to support student growth. The instructor may select readings or engage in activities that normalize the existence of different or competing values. Great care should be taken in selecting curricular materials that are both challenging and nurturing to students, and provide them with inspiration for their own self-reflection. In our experience, faculty supervisors, many of whom have years of teaching experience, have been excellent resources in identifying appropriate curricular materials and activities.

### **Obligations to the University**

Since we, as educators, are agents of the university we will also expand on the ways in which universities set their agendas and policies in the creation and maintenance of university–community collaborations. This includes a further consideration of what the university perspective may be, how the university is situated in the local community and how strategic shifts toward community collaboration influence and are influenced by

policy at the state level.

Universities in general, especially land grant institutions, are heavily re-committing to investing academic resources into the community. These approaches vary by name and scope, but whether a university engages in outreach, public engagement, community collaboration, or civic commitment, the basic agenda is the same: sharing of campus resources with the communities in which the campus is located to meet that community’s needs.

At the administrative level, universities have been, for the past decade, increasingly focused on promoting engagement activities, such as service learning, as they reevaluate what it means to successfully serve society (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Holland, 1997).

That campuses are interested in promoting such service learning partnerships reflects both an increased accountability to a university’s supporters, such as legislators, alumni, and local governments, as well as a genuine commitment to promoting the democratic process.

In most public institutions, universities are required to demonstrate the degree to which they give back to the states in which they reside. From a slightly cynical perspective, engagement, to this effect, serves as a sort of public relations tool. It enhances the reputation of a university when it is active in the community and perceived as giving back to that community.

However, there is a concurrent agenda that is decidedly less self-serving. In this sense, engagement with the community is conceptualized as more directly fulfilling the main educational mission of the institution (Boyte & Hollander, 1999) by providing learning experiences that groom students for citizenship. This therefore serves as a framework within which a service learning agenda can prosper. By taking students off campus and putting them into the community classroom, universities are recognizing the importance of introducing them into real-world social systems. By promoting rigorous scholarly reflection on socially relevant projects, universities encourage the development of agendas that are more meaningful to the students and to society in general. As students connect real world problems with community populations, they begin to transcend the

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## **Service learning curricula should be created in ways that allow students to participate as active consumers and producers of knowledge.**

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discipline-bound techniques against which Sarason (1978) cautions. The students begin to develop problem focused solutions that are accountable to the lived experiences of the community members themselves. When students thus engage in service learning projects, they are gaining the experience of becoming embedded within community as participant-learners. This embeddedness strengthens the democratic endeavor. Students begin to recognize themselves as being part of a larger social

structure and as being able to better contribute to the social dialogue. From the university's perspective, and in many individual instances it is true- the service learning project

engenders in the student a personal accountability to the community as well as an ability to comprehend a systems-based approach to social phenomena. As universities prepare students to navigate this complex social structure they more effectively prepare them to become tomorrow's democratic participants.

### Conclusion

In this article, we have focused on the challenges encountered in service learning work. While these challenges have required much from us as instructors of these courses, they have also contributed to our growth as instructors and socially responsible clinical-community psychologists. Throughout the process of teaching these courses, we have been fortunate to receive guidance, direction, and support from amazing faculty supervisors whose visions of doing "good community work" have afforded us the unique opportunity of instructing these courses. We'd be remiss if we did not mention the importance of these "stakeholders" in our experiences teaching service learning courses.

Through all of our experiences, each one of us agrees that service learning courses are a highly favorable method of facilitating the growth of future psychologists, and promoting greater general service and social action. We also unanimously agree, however, that it is a challenging process. Graduate students must define the needs of stakeholders, develop comprehensive curricula, understand the university context within which community partnerships can develop, and perhaps most important of all, work consistently and

continually in acknowledging personal agendas.

Luckily, graduate students are not alone. Community engagement is not a new concept and there are many resources now in place that have been effective in helping instructors with these and other related challenges to teaching service learning courses. In our program, most clinical-community psychology graduate students teaching service learning courses meet weekly with a professor for individual

supervision. This allows the graduate student and professor to shape the course throughout the year to meet everyone's objectives. Most programs also have departmental talks for faculty and graduate

students. Graduate students can utilize these institutionalized forums to discuss their successes and challenges. Student conferences, like the Midwest Ecological Community Psychology conference where this paper was first presented, are also a great forum in which to discuss and learn from each other. Here are several other mechanisms that may be helpful:

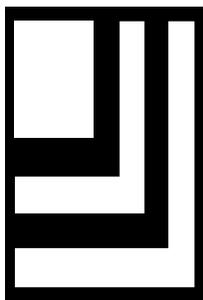
If we are to be effective instructors in service learning courses we must first learn how to facilitate and support learning in the "real world". Although the extent of training differs by university, graduate students are usually trained in how to teach. Typically this training is based on traditional modes of teaching (e.g., mostly in the classroom, mostly influenced by instructors and students) but service learning courses require added skill on the part of graduate students. We must know how to advocate for our partners, negotiate needs, facilitate empowerment, and promote critical thinking skills in our students. Perhaps, graduate students who are on the path to teach such classes should first be paired with prior or current instructors so that when they begin teaching they will have experienced many of the challenges ahead of them. For instance, in our program, some graduate students serve as community liaisons or teaching assistants for a year before becoming the course instructor. This is very effective because it allows the graduate student to learn about the community agency, develop relationships with the community agency, learn how to teach about related course issues, and be mentored by a professor who (in our case) has effectively engaged in the community for years.

Graduate student instructors should also make use of the natural resources available to them: each other. Although all of the authors attend the same university and teach in the same department, it was only in the preparation of a conference presentation and the later writing of this paper, that we recognized our common challenges, each one of us facing so many of the same concerns. We knew we all taught the same service learning classes, but never completely understood that we all experienced the same tensions, shared the same value-based struggles. The resulting dialogue helped us frame questions, re-conceptualize our experiences, and to start seeking common answers. Graduate students supervising and teaching undergraduate students in community-based programs should be an interactive and mutually-communicative enterprise, providing forums whenever possible in which to discuss and learn. This can be as simple as starting a weekly or monthly brown bag with fellow instructors of service learning courses, or it may involve a university-wide meeting (community engagement is not unique to community psychology), or it may best exist across universities where graduate students from various regions speak and learn about our common and unique challenge of perpetuating community involvement.

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## Call to Action: Consider Studying Animal Welfare Issues

by Jamie De Leeuw

One of community psychology's core objectives is to attempt to understand social problems and minimize injustices such as oppression and exploitation. As a group we might therefore better recognize that moral standards pertain to the treatment of nonhuman animals and not just the human species alone. The exploitation of animals that occurs in the United States, put simply, is cause for concern. Each year in this country alone, *billions* of poultry and more than 100 *million* cattle, pigs, and sheep suffer their entire lives on factory farms to satisfy consumers' tastes and to raise profits in the agribusiness industry (Singer, 2001). Yet, as community scientists, the unnecessary harms caused to animals in the research world are found within our own academic departments. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Care Report, the total number of animals used in research per year exceeded one million. When taking into account the number of birds, rats, and mice that were excluded from the report, estimates suggest that 23-25 million animals are used in research studies every year within the United States.

What is particularly troubling about the latter figures is that given the lack of sufficient animal welfare legislation, researchers have virtually no legal restrictions on their experimental methods. In the field of psychology, there is no true externally supervised checks-and-balance system to judge the intrinsic value of each study, often allowing experiments to be conducted that are too trivial, redundant, or inapplicable to the human condition to ethically perform. The oversight that exists in other fields is also inadequate. The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, formed under the Animal Welfare Act, and used to oversee government-sponsored animal-based research, has not lived up to its full potential. Dresser asserts, "committees require little more than a perfunctory claim to research value to justify extensive animal harm" (Shapiro, 1998, p. 275). Brody states: "The legal regime hardly considers whether a research project's potential value can justify its cost in terms of animal suffering." Further, the committees' inadequacy stems from being "dominated by scientific members" who will only

maintain the status quo. While some would like to address ethical issues, they are "hand-picked by the chief executive officer of the facility" and when "nine of ten committee members either receive funding or are involved in some capacity with animal research, there is tremendous conflict of interest."

The APA Guidelines state that "ethical concerns mandate that psychologists should consider the costs and benefits of procedures involving animals before proceeding with the research" (2005), but does not reference or even suggest the use of available pain scales, scales of invasiveness, or ethical costs. Published articles that indicate the degree of invasiveness, or notably discuss the above APA statement, are practically nonexistent. Of significance is that several rating scales have been developed measuring "degree of invasiveness" and other

### The exploitation of animals that occurs in the United States, put simply, is cause for concern.

aspects of "ethical cost" and have been found to have good internal and inter-rater reliability. These scales have been incorporated into the legislation and regulatory boards of several countries, but have not been widely used in the U.S. The current USDA classification system, whereby researchers check one of the following categories: no pain, no pain-relieving drugs; pain, with drugs; or pain, no drugs, is inadequate. It provides no information on the degree of pain experienced by the animal and no information on the 80% of laboratory animals excluded from the Animal Welfare Act (Shapiro, 1998).

Psychology's official position has been that the benefits of animal research are great and the costs are minimal. These claims have not been substantiated. As scientists, psychologists have a burden to provide scientific data based on adequate measures to support such claims. We as a scientific community have an obligation to take action in revising the system by demanding that available tests measuring the degree of invasiveness and that ethical costs be more fully considered. We are also responsible to the community as a whole since tax dollars are going towards unsubstantiated, and often harmful research studies.

It is largely the field's elitism, in the sense that it lacks and even actively rejects oversight, that has led to these deficiencies in insight. The likely results include errors in judgment that occur from psychological phenomena such as groupthink and confirmation bias (Frey &

Schulz-Hardt, 2001), whereby researchers maintain the status quo on their views of animal research rather than seriously questioning their own practices (Ulrich, 1992). Claims from psychology's animal research proponents regarding the value of their experiments have been demonstrated to be strikingly overstated. Only a small percentage of references in two highly-esteemed clinical journals, the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* (less than 1/3 of 1%) and *Behavior Therapy* (2%) cite animal studies, demonstrating that while clinicians depend critically on human research to treat clients, animal research is rarely used (Shapiro, 1998). Similarly, pharmacological animal research is shortsighted in its biological approach and can draw attention away from more applicable human studies; after all, many psychological problems such as eating disorders and alcoholism are "problems in living", requiring sociocultural attention rather than exclusively physiological attributions (Yates, 1990). Let us be mindful that the presence of an animal model on a topic itself is not indicative of the scientific benefits of that research.

We humans need to recognize that we are not the only members of our community. The pervading lack of sufficient legislation to protect the interests of animals - as defined as freedom from suffering - used in factory farming, research, and other arenas, (not to mention animals' lack of voice) coupled with community psychology's core principles of altruistic values, consciousness-raising, education, social action, and social change, make community psychology ideal for contributing to the improvement of animal welfare in the U.S. and around the world.

There are a number of cognitive and historical reasons why rampant animal suffering takes place, and these may eventually be found to be effective points of community intervention. Perhaps the main cognitive reason why so many people turn a blind eye to animal exploitation or suffering is *speciesism*, which refers to "a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species"; it parallels racism and sexism (Singer, 2001, p. 6). Speciesism can be equated with ingroup bias,

whereby one group favors its own members, in this case human beings, over members of other species. This categorization may lead to an over-estimation of differences between the groups and an underestimation of the differences within the outgroup (Plous, 1993). A second psychological factor is the common practice of placing different types of animals into a hierarchy of importance. These decisions are often based on anthropomorphism, whereby one favors, or identifies with, the well-being of animals that look or act the most like humans (Gallup, Marino, & Eddy, 1997). Related to this concept is the idea of *scope of justice*, whereby those included within this psychological boundary are given moral consideration, and those falling outside the boundary are considered undeserving. Humans tend to exclude animals from their scopes of justice, leading animals to be perceived as expendable and acceptable to harm (Opatow, 1993). A combination of the latter two concepts might explain why in the U.S. and numerous other countries, a pig, which is as intelligent as a dog, is kept restrained and bored its entire life before being slaughtered, while a dog is often given a more rewarding life as a human companion.

History has played a substantial role in our current perceptions of the importance of animals and their suffering, and has in turn likely interacted with the previously mentioned psychological factors. Western attitudes toward animals have origins in Judaism and ancient Greece and come together in Christianity: Genesis states that "God made man in His own image" and explicitly gave man, the human being, dominion over every living thing (1:26-28); Aristotle believed that animals existed to serve humans, although he didn't emphasize human status as being so far above animals (Singer, 2001). Christianity then professed the uniqueness of the human species to the Roman world, with importance placed on humans' immortal souls and life after death, hence the sanctity of every human life, and only human life. Thomas Aquinas is representative of the Christian view of animals prior to the Reformation and while he acknowledged that animals were capable of suffering, believed cruelty to animals was only adverse because it might be extended to humans. Several

quantitative studies have demonstrated this link between animal harm and future human harm (Nibert, 1994), and there are merits to this strategic approach in reducing animal harm, but the topic of animal welfare is justified for the sake of the animals themselves, not simply because it happens to fit on the human agenda.

During the Enlightenment, humanism, with its emphasis on human uniqueness, free will, and reason, claimed that individuality and reason are qualities exclusive to human beings, and thereby did not improve the status of animals. The maintenance of the categorical divide between humans and other animals sustained the view that animals deserve little moral consideration (Shapiro, 1990). Even after Darwin's evidence demonstrated that human beings are animals themselves (rather than being created to serve us), intellectual thinkers at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and onward tended to urge for greater consideration of other animals' interests, and yet were largely unable to give rational justification for their consumption. Still today, when human and animal interests collide, humans tend to disregard the animal's interest, or put it outside their scope of justice, despite evidence that many species think, have feelings, and engage in a full, social life (Singer, 2001). Isn't suffering, whether the being is intelligent, rational or not, still suffering? Our historical origins have paved the way for a vested interest in laboratory breeding companies, the agribusiness industry, and various scientific research institutions, to profit at the expense of other species.

There are a number of ethical arguments as to why animals' distress ought to matter to community psychologists. Kenneth Shapiro, in his book *Animal Models of Human Psychology: Critique of Science, Ethics and Policy*, lays out four ethical philosophies for considering animals' welfare. First is the case for animal rights, which focuses on the Western emphasis of the individual over society. Each living being has a value of its own with inherent rights, which should be protected. In marked contrast is utilitarian theory, which evaluates the ethicality of a decision (such as a research experiment or food choice) based on the potential benefits and costs to all affected, without prejudice to race, sex, or species.

Singer argues that animals warrant moral consideration as sentient beings- capable of suffering and enjoyment. He invokes the principle of equality from the American Declaration of Independence to assert that the capacity for suffering implies possession of interests and that to be just, all must be given equal consideration.

Feminist theory, the third standpoint, focuses on immediate relationships rather than individualistic ideologies and emphasizes caring and responsibility. Midgley, a proponent of this theory, states, "What makes our fellow beings entitled to basic consideration is surely not intellectual capacity but emotional fellowship" (p. 233). Lastly, there is a community-based ethic whereby moral consideration extends beyond the feminists' scope of immediate relationships to others in the community. Humans and other animals co-evolved within a single society and are all social beings that share feelings and emotions like compassion, trust, and love. Ethical consideration for other beings stems from the human-capacity to extend sympathy beyond the human species, creating a greater "sense of community."

There are several ways in which community psychologists can become involved in promoting animal welfare. My hope is that a number of readers will take an honest look at animal exploitation and extend their empathy beyond humans by incorporating animal welfare into their scholastic endeavors, perhaps making it a new subfield in community psychology. Elsie Shore, with her research on companion animal overpopulation and animal shelter diseases, is the only community psychologist I am aware of who studies matters of animal welfare. The following is my list of suggestions for the various ways community psychologists can become involved in improving animal welfare:

1. Get informed about animal welfare laws (or lack thereof), the various forms of animal exploitation taking place, and the aims of animal rights and welfare groups.
2. Identify the vested interests involved, such as the agribusiness and experimental breeding industries and the various "scientific" political lobbies.
3. Survey the public, conduct experiments, or look up Scott Plous' past survey statistics to find out how much the public knows about animal welfare conditions and laws today, and then set out to inform it.
4. Recognize that history and tradition, including religion, have bolstered our attitudes toward animals, and that we can change. In addition, realize we are likely part of the problem and need to check our own biases.
5. Encourage vegetarianism and buy free-range products to boycott the agribusiness industry (perhaps the only way to make change is to alter our own practices).
6. Look to European countries, which often have stricter laws concerning animal welfare. For instance, the European Union is phasing out the standard bare wire cages

for farm animals. Australia also mandates an Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee, which includes a person interested in animal welfare who is not employed by the institution (Singer, 2001).

7. Become acquainted with Ken Shapiro's solid critiques of animal models of human psychology, and the social construction of the laboratory animal. Interact with animal experimenters both personally and through publications to influence their mindset.
8. Lobby the APA for a stricter ethics policy, or systematic approach, to discern whether individual experimental animal research studies are justifiable. Then, have researchers acknowledge this approach in their published work.
9. Become familiar with how the treatment of animals is related to the treatment of human beings (e.g., moral callousness, aggression.)
10. Evaluate and implement educational programs fostering consideration for animals' interests.
11. Impact public policy by submitting relevant findings to legislators, and animal rights/welfare groups, as well as to the media.
12. Collaborate with other disciplines, including social psychology and animal welfare science, to reduce fragmentation in community action efforts.

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#### Community Action in Kenya

by Audrey K. Bangi, Gary W. Harper, Bridget Crowell, DePaul University and Sr. Eileen O'Callahan, Holy Cross Dispensary, Thigio, Limuru, Kenya

The theme designated to commemorate the 2005 World AIDS Day on December 1<sup>st</sup> was "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." This theme was partly an appeal to governments and policy makers to ensure they met their professed goals in the fight against HIV/AIDS, yet it also called upon individual citizens and organized groups to make and fulfill their own promises in response to HIV/AIDS as members of the global community. The theme capitalizes on the importance of continually recognizing that HIV/AIDS is a global catastrophe, requiring not only an international response, but a human one. Given the pandemic's ineffable human toll and dramatic social, economic, and political influences, it is imperative that we better understand how various communities are affected by HIV/AIDS and how we and other community members can more effectively work toward common action to thwart further spread of disease. One of the most salient paths is reflected in the necessity for us to all offer common contributions. Combining resources, energies, and experiences from multiple facets is not only a strategic imperative, but also a moral obligation, particularly given the magnitude of the response needed to effectively fight this pandemic. The responses of communities to this crisis reflect fundamentally human stories, and ones that should be told so that we may learn from and be inspired by them. One such story, told here,

integrates multiple perspectives and illustrates the effective utilization of existing resources to affect change.

### **Background: HIV/AIDS as a Health and Social Issue**

Globally, approximately 42 million people are living with HIV. Youth and young adults between the ages of 15 and 24 years account for half of all new HIV infections worldwide, with more than 6,000 new individuals contracting the virus each day. Although HIV infection has impacted individuals and communities throughout the world, Africa (particularly Sub-Saharan Africa) is the most severely affected—70 percent of those infected worldwide reside on the continent. Each year, 3.2 million Africans—8,700 Africans every minute—are infected with HIV, and approximately 2.3 million are killed by it each year (UNAIDS, 2005). Given these figures, it is imperative that we, those who live and thrive in resource-rich countries, reach out to our fellow community members in developing areas who are battling this pandemic and provide assistance in the form of HIV prevention/education and capacity building. As such, we must create change that is not limited by the borders that surround the communities in which we live and work, but rather transcend these artificial obstacles. Doing so, becoming involved in a broader sort of community action, highlights the notion that what affects one, affects us all. It underscores the importance of mobilizing our resources in the most effective ways possible to best protect and strengthen the health and well being of *all* young people.

Kenya is one African country that has been among the most critically impacted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. National trends indicate that the annual number of AIDS deaths continues to rise steeply and has doubled over the past six years to about 150,000 deaths per year. Approximately 1.25 million adults and over 100,000 children in Kenya alone are believed to be living with HIV. These rates, though overwhelming, are nevertheless severely underestimated, particularly given that only 14% of Kenyan adults are aware of their HIV status. Easily accessible HIV testing sites are extremely rare, particularly in rural regions. The majority of new infections in Kenya occur among youth and young adults, especially young women aged 15–24 and young men under the age of 30 (UNAIDS, 2005).

Some hope can be found in that, among these

rising HIV rates, there exists, in Kenya, the presence of various members of the Vincentian family (a collective group of nuns, priests, brothers, and lay people who follow the teachings of Vincent DePaul and Louise de Marillac in response to changing social needs). The Midwest Province of the Congregation established their East African mission in this nation more than twenty years ago, and has been providing an expanding array of services (e.g., training/education, assistance to the poor, etc.). Ever since the Vincentian confreres of the Midwest Province opened their first diocesan seminary in 1981, they have greatly expanded their work, and have been joined by the Daughters of Charity (DOC) who in 2002 began their first Kenyan mission in Thigio, a poor farming area in the Rift Valley outside of Nairobi.



*Audrey Bangi with staff of the Holy Cross Dispensary.*

Due to the combination of severe HIV/AIDS rates and community-based Vincentians, it was a logical step for members of DePaul University (a Vincentian University) to build upon this foundation and assist in Kenya's fight against HIV/AIDS.

### **Building Bridges, Uniting Worlds**

In December 2004, collaborative endeavors between our group (Gary Harper and Audrey Bangi) from DePaul University and the DOC, who operate the Holy Cross Dispensary in Thigio, were initiated during a Vincentian Heritage trip to Kenya. Upon introduction, a mutual interest was stimulated in addressing the needs of Thigio youth, particularly through coordinated HIV prevention efforts. We shared our previous experiences in HIV/AIDS research and evaluation activities, community activism, and social change efforts in the U.S., while the DOC described their interests in enhancing the Holy Cross Dispensary staff's knowledge of HIV/AIDS. Based on the number of families and individual parishioners who sought care from

the DOC and the Dispensary, it had been estimated that the problem of HIV/AIDS in Thigio was steadily rising and had been for some time. Our greatest challenge included addressing the unique realities and experiences of local youth and young adults, an approach that was critical in determining how best to begin preventing further spread of the disease in this rural context.

One of the DOC's first observations that helped serve community action was the perception that while there were many interactions with youth and young adults among their staff, no formal activities or programs were in place to specifically address HIV/AIDS prevention with this vulnerable population. While the DOC expressed great interest in sharing their

knowledge and experiences of work in this rural community, they also emphasized the value of integrating the voices of indigenous members of Thigio, several of whom work at the Dispensary. These voices would be found essential in the series of dialogues about the youth's most critical prevention needs. This mutual exchange of ideas was exciting as we, this collection of stakeholders, each worked *with* one another and recognized the value that our individual and collective perspectives had on understanding this social problem. The exchanges deeply resonated with our common interests in combating HIV/AIDS. It was these very resonations, the vibrations, from this collection of perspectives, that touched on our

emotional senses and that ultimately led to our community action.

When the DOC scheduled the HIV/AIDS training session with the Dispensary staff, members of the DePaul team focused their attention on the resources we possessed that might be useful to share within this enterprise. It is important to note that we did not come prepared to conduct any HIV/AIDS-related workshops during this initial trip to Kenya, but developed an HIV prevention workshop modeled after our previous work (based in the AIDS Risk Reduction Model). While we were somewhat unfamiliar with this new, rural community context, we prepared for the session by searching for background information and literature on the impact of HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Based on this information, we developed summary sheets of the national trends to share with staff. We also anticipated spending about two hours with the staff and structured our activities accordingly (e.g., sharing basic HIV/AIDS facts, discussing strengths and

challenges in working with young people in general and specifically with those in Thigio). Given the informal nature of our sessions with staff, we also intended to be flexible with the direction the discussions would take, which we decided would be largely dependent upon the needs and interests of the group. In short, we recognized the importance of allowing the natural community dynamics to take place, while we tried to gently facilitate the discussion.

### Spurring into Action

The primary training session was held in a small, brightly colored room with a single table and a crib where mothers were often seen with their infants. The infants often required health check-ups or other health services (e.g., immunization shots). A DOC member was also present, playing an active role (e.g., administrative, health service provider) at the Dispensary, as were seven Dispensary staff members, including a pharmacist, lab technician, nurse, special education teacher, teacher's aide, secretary, and young women's program coordinator, all of whom were residents of Thigio. While we discussed the facts and myths related to HIV/AIDS, the staff members expressed a strong desire to better address the HIV/AIDS problem among young people in their community. They understood that they lived within a vulnerable sector that needed better exposure to accurate information about HIV transmission, prevention, and other health-based protective skills such as more effective sexual communication and sexual decision-making skills. The staff also conveyed the importance of discussing the issue of death and dying with young people whose parents and/or other family members were infected with HIV or diagnosed with AIDS.

Further action steps were taken when Dispensary staff invited us to conduct an HIV prevention workshop for youth and young adults (ages 16-24) in Thigio and surrounding communities in order to deepen our

understanding of young people's concerns about HIV/AIDS. This workshop not only generated insightful comments about the effects of HIV/AIDS on their personal health and well-being, but also bolstered the need to rally local youth around HIV prevention efforts and provide them with the best possible opportunities to respond to HIV/AIDS as a united front.

After these initial workshops and training sessions, we were eager to continue our collaborative HIV prevention efforts with the Dispensary staff. The following week, we conducted a strategic planning session where the staff not only identified the strengths of local youth, but described locations where the youth typically hung out, various social activities that they engaged in, and whether young leaders in the community would be interested in generating excitement and commitment towards local HIV prevention efforts.

The staff also shared several critical issues (e.g., fear and stigma about HIV/AIDS, power dynamics in relationships, peer pressures, religiosity) that provided a cultural lens through which HIV/AIDS needed to be addressed in their community.

The strategic planning session also outlined specific goals for the proposed HIV prevention efforts that included: a) increasing youths' awareness of HIV/AIDS by providing them with printed information in public spaces and b) increasing the number of youth that engage in casual communication with other youth about HIV/AIDS. The first goal's objectives included distributing HIV/AIDS-related notices, leaflets, brochures, and posters in places where youth would likely encounter and read them. The group brainstormed over a list of places where youth were the most likely to socialize, receive services, receive education and training, and worship. We also discussed ways to create local HIV prevention materials with the help of youth, parents, and other community members. The second goal's objectives included training twenty popular youth (10 females

and 10 males) to talk with their friends and peers about HIV/AIDS. This included sharing information about general STD facts, general HIV facts, HIV transmission/risky behaviors, HIV testing, HIV prevention, healthy communication, and abstinence. Specific Dispensary staff members volunteered to be responsible for taking the lead on each objective and agreed to meet several deadlines for the proposed work. There was also a mutual commitment by all parties to share various resources (e.g., funds to purchase food for the HIV prevention training workshops, informational materials) to help ensure that the goals were met, and to communicate with one another via email and telephone about the progress surrounding group aims.

These two sessions with the Dispensary staff, and the HIV prevention workshop with Thigio youth and young adults proved to be instrumental in generating much excitement and

concrete steps in achieving the goals of establishing a much-needed resource in the community. In fact, such ideas were also shared with several young males involved in the Thigio church youth group over an informal game of ping-pong and darts,

to get a sense of whether HIV/AIDS was an important issue among the youth themselves. The youth not only echoed the importance of having young males and females involved in more HIV prevention efforts, but ten of them voiced their interest in being HIV peer educators. We encouraged them to share this interest not only with the Dispensary staff, but with their friends and family members as well. In doing so, the leadership among the youth was taking shape as an untapped, yet invaluable component in bringing about social change.

### Continued Momentum

As evidenced above, the issue of HIV prevention among Thigio youth has not only been prioritized, but it has generated much community participation. The dispensary staff not only met the goals outlined in December 2004, but expressed their interest in expanding their HIV Peer Education training program. They also expressed a desire to have us return in the Summer of 2005 to conduct further HIV trainings

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Gary Harper with several members of the Thigio youth group.

and workshops. We realized that moving forward together required us to harness such energy and further strengthen our efforts to engage youth in significant community action.

Accompanied by a DePaul undergraduate student (Bridget Crowell), we returned to Thigio in August 2005. Bridget's involvement highlighted the need to expand the education and training of our own DePaul students, particularly in gaining a "real world" understanding of the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in East Africa as well as the urgent need for service and support rooted in Vincentian values. Community action, we realized, needed to be accomplished not only by the young people in Thigio, but among those in the DePaul community as well. As such, Bridget was encouraged to work with existing groups such as the DePaul AIDS Project to disseminate information about the need for increased attention to HIV prevention in East Africa and ways that DePaul students could assist in those efforts.

Upon our return to Thigio, we provided HIV prevention workshops to over 1,200 youth in the span of four days. The workshops integrated interactive activities and cultural specific components (e.g., the Kenyan flag, the Kenyan coat of arms, the importance of shields as a symbol of protecting personal health and the health of those we care about). Two trained HIV prevention peer educators also participated in skits that illustrated effective communication skills when confronted by peer pressures (e.g., to have sex with an older partner, to use drugs/alcohol, to disobey parental rules). Furthermore, we trained an additional 75 youth from Thigio and surrounding rural communities to be HIV peer educators. We used a peer educator model in order to reach a large number of youth, since the youth we trained were asked to educate 10-20 of their peers about what they had learned. We also encouraged the youth to develop creative ways to disseminate the information to other youth via action planning. This was based on a diffusion of innovation approach which helps model how new ideas (HIV prevention) are spread through the population. An empowerment theory perspective was also utilized, maintaining that people change through a process of coming together to share experiences, understand social influences, and develop novel solutions to challenging problems.

Lastly, our efforts included the coordination of focus groups to create HIV prevention materials, some tailored to young males and some to females that could be more broadly disseminated throughout their communities.

Such groups helped to elicit richer understandings of youth strengths, youth concerns, and ways to more appropriately reduce HIV risk. The focus groups equally provided us with feedback on gender issues, information that will likely prove critical as we refine and further develop our intervention activities. All of the information shared, in fact, will be instrumental in future efforts to create community-specific prevention messages and materials. Beyond the professionally produced materials that we have already disseminated, supplemental materials will attempt to include even more culturally specific messages. We will also have assessed the feasibility of adapting one of our DePaul programs whereby youth engage in contests to create HIV prevention materials and then distribute those materials throughout the community.

### Community Action Beyond Borders

Overall, we have found each of these efforts to be infinitely rewarding, particularly due to the far-reaching effects of community action that is not limited by geographic boundaries. Members of various sectors of the Thigio community (e.g., health care, church, school) are giving voice to their problems and solutions while those from the DePaul community provide only some additional contributions to such vital efforts. The opportunities for continued collaboration are solidified by strong work relationships and friendships that we have established with one another across many stakeholders and social networks. More importantly, it is the young people themselves who continue to play an active role in developing and disseminating information about HIV. Those from Thigio and the surrounding rural communities provide the single best reassurance that the messages are culturally specific and relevant, strengthening their ownership of HIV prevention efforts, and becoming fully engaged in creating and sustaining social change efforts. Thigio youth are actively engaged in a process that recognizes their individual and collective strengths and continually generates greater awareness of HIV/AIDS and more effective ways to combat the disease. Exchanging ideas, interests, and energies has been the primary impetus for continued growth and unity in this under resourced fight against a global pandemic.

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## A Need for Community Action to Achieve Social Change and Increase Access to Healthy Foods in Minority Communities

by Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar,  
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Recent popular books such as *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser, 2001), films such as *Super Size Me* (Spurlock, 2003), and publicized studies in collaboration with the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (e.g. Mark, 2005; Mokdad, Marks, Stroup, & Gerberding, 2004) have brought the issue of Americans' poor eating habits to the forefront of public concern. Most commonly cited statistics refer to rising rates of obesity in the United States. Indeed, the U.S. is facing an epidemic of obese and overweight children, youth, and adults. However, a pervasive and often overlooked problem that may be linked to this epidemic is the lack of access to healthy foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables in working class and low-income communities. Individuals in low-income communities are less likely to have healthy dietary patterns and have higher prevalence and incidence of cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and cancer than do residents in more economically prosperous communities (Miller, Carter, Sigmund, & Smith, 1996). Many working class and low-income communities in urban areas, such as Chicago, are minority communities of mostly African-America and Hispanic families.

Researchers have found that individuals in minority communities are more likely to have limited access to healthy produce at reasonable prices, and instead, they are saturated with liquor stores, fast food chains, prepackaged foods and soda and candy vending machines (Block, 2004; Dibsall, Lambert, Bobbin, & Frewer 2003; Morland, Wing, Diez Roux, & Poole, 2002; Slone, 2003).

The problems associated with lacking access to healthy foods may be compounded by marketing pressure toward unhealthy foods in these communities. Food advertising aimed at children is extremely effective (APA, 2004) and there is a strong relationship between increases in the prevalence of childhood diet-related health concerns and advertising of unhealthy foods (Horgen, Choate, & Brownell, 2001). Furthermore, eating habits formed during childhood tend to persist throughout life (Jacobson & Maxwell, 1994). Thus, while we often blame individuals for failing to consume healthy products, this issue is often due to more



systemic or societal level factors. If we take a tour of a low-income community in a city such as Chicago, we cannot help noticing an abundance of billboards announcing cigarettes, liquor stores and quick shops. With little access to healthy foods, ubiquitous advertising, and easy access to unhealthy foods, can we really expect residents to obtain fresh and low-cost fruits and vegetables? Maybe not.

In addition, economic issues also limit the consumption of healthy foods. Some individuals in these communities, especially children, may be experiencing extreme poverty and hunger. For instance, the US government estimates that about 31 million Americans are food insecure; meaning they lack access to nutritionally adequate food needed for a healthy life. Of these 31 million, 3 million households (with an average of 3 people per household) experience hunger, which is one of the consequences of food insecurity (Kaiser & Townsend, 2005).

Given the severity of the problem of access to healthy foods, what are we doing to learn more about potential solutions that involve social change strategies? Several communities around the country are engaged in community-based efforts to increase access to healthy foods in low-income neighborhoods. Some of these efforts have included the creation of food cooperatives, the distribution of food coupons, and the expansion of farmers' markets. The creation of the Chicago Food Systems Collaborative (CFSC) is one example of efforts undertaken in Chicago. The CFSC called for a systemic approach involving nutrition education and community development activities to address the problems of access to nutritious foods and the associated negative health outcomes in a community lacking such access.

The CFSC is a consortium of community-based agencies, faith-based organizations, technical assistance providers and academic institutions that address the issue of food access in a working class African American community. This effort was spearheaded by a community activist with expertise in community development. The project was concentrated in one neighborhood in Chicago in which the median household income was \$34,000, and about 25% of its residents lived below the poverty level (City of Chicago, 2000, U.S. Census, 2000). This community had a high incidence of health-related problems such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory problems and obesity (City of Chicago, Department of Public Health, 2003). Given the context of the problem and the lack of access to healthy foods,

the team began the process of working together to identify models that would address the issue of access to healthy foods in the community. In a study sponsored by CFSC and conducted by Suarez-Balcazar, Martinez, Jayraj, and Cox, (under review) researchers evaluated the impact of a farmers market in the target community. Sixty-four residents who visited the local farmers market and participated in a brief interview consistently said that they were more satisfied with the fresh produce offered at the farmers market, compared to the produce offered at local stores, despite the fact that the market was only available during three summer months. Residents also alluded to dissatisfaction with their health in general, and with their intake of fresh products.

Another study conducted under the CFSC examined access to foods using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) by plotting type and distance of stores and a survey of the store's food items conducted in the community. The GIS study revealed that, while residents had limited access to small grocery stores ("mom & pop" type) with limited fresh food products, they had easy access to liquor stores (over 19 stores in a 50 block area) and to fast food chains (Block, 2004). Also, it was found that residents did not have access to a large supermarket store, and that the quality and variety of products available in the many small stores was inconsistent. Based on these findings, the CFSC partners and the community are currently working with the farmers, local businesses, community organizations, grass roots groups and local officials to create social change through the development of a community food store and center.

In another component of the CFSC, a group of researchers began working in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) of the target community. After a series of observations during the luncheon period at two primary schools, researchers found that children had very limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Instead, they were frequently provided with fried foods and high carbohydrate or high cholesterol foods, such as pizza and hamburgers. These food options are likely related to the two physical health related problems often seen in children from Chicago's Public Schools (CPS): Many are overweight at higher rates than the

rest of the nation, and some are not obtaining the necessary daily nutrients and food intake for a healthy life style (Nicklas, Yang, Baranowski, Zakeri, & Berenson, 2003; Whitman, Williams, & Shah, 2004).

Nationwide, much attention has focused on what our children are eating, and many school districts are grappling with the same problems that the CPS are facing – unhealthy lunch options and unhealthy items in the vending machines. School districts throughout the United States-in California, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and New York-have instituted changes in school-provided foods and beverages (Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), 2005). The state of California for instance, has implemented drastic changes in the schools. California was the first to

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**...the CFSC partners and the community are currently working with the farmers, local businesses, community organizations, grass roots groups and local officials to create social change through the development of a community food store and center.**

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ban soda and candy bars from vending machines in schools and to introduce salad bars in the luncheon menu. Despite some resistance from school food providers, contractors and industry

lobbyists, the state of California was able to implement a new policy of either removing vending machines altogether, or providing access only to vending machines with healthy products in the public schools (CSPI, 2005). Factors that helped bring about positive school food changes include an awareness of nutritional issues through presentations, increased knowledge about how a poor diet affects health and learning, student involvement in the change process through nutrition classes, marketing of healthier products, intervention by a key leader or individual, and competitive pricing schemes in the vending machines (such as charging \$.75 for water and \$1.50 for soda), among others (CSPI, 2005). While similar statewide efforts have yet to be successful in New York, smaller more local initiative such as the "Food is Elementary" program created by the nonprofit Food Studies Institute includes a community participatory curriculum that teaches healthy eating, followed by introducing more healthy food into the school lunch. This step model toward improving children's food knowledge, eating patterns, and physical health includes parent involvement in both classroom learning and advocacy in changes food options at school (Demas, 2001).

The CPS system has more than 600 schools and about 435 thousand children, with an annual school budget of 5 billion dollars. CPS administration spends about 41 million dollars a year in food contracts. These vendors supply foods to all the schools. About 85% of children in CPS qualify for free or reduced lunch. In low-income communities not only are lunches and snacks provided to children at school, but also breakfast, for many children these are the only two substantive meals during the day. Traditionally, CPS food contractors have followed the USDA school nutritional standards. However, the implementation of these standards has not always been done in the best way. For instance, a typical week of lunches may include as main dishes foods such as pizza, fried chicken, cheeseburgers and fried fish. Offers of fresh vegetables are very limited. Not having access to healthy meal choices, plus having unhealthy food items available on school premises outside of formal meal times, describes a food environment that was of great concern to parents and health activists.

Members of the CFSC also collaborated with a city-wide task force called Healthy Schools Campaign to work in the schools and introduce systems change in the food offerings in the luncheon cafeteria and in the vending machines. The work of this task force resulted in very specific social change efforts in the CPS luncheon program, including CPS approval of the introduction of salad bars, the removal of vending machines, or the introduction of vending machines with only healthy choices such as water, fruit juices and granola bars. A group of researchers from the CFSC pilot tested the impact of a salad bar and nutrition education sessions with kindergarten and first graders and are now pilot testing it with fifth graders. The results showed that, despite the fact that only a small number of students were choosing the salad bar, the average number increased significantly after the nutrition education sessions began. This did not change significantly at a comparison school with no nutrition education and only the introduction of the salad bar. Post assessment surveys showed an increase in knowledge about fruits and vegetables and an increase in the level of satisfaction with having a salad bar in the

school cafeteria. However, the number of children actually having a salad for lunch was less than the number of children rating high levels of satisfaction with having a salad bar in the cafeteria. Actually, the number of children selecting fresh salad items or salad as an entrée was less than 20 percent of the group of kids being observed.

Overall, the work of the CFSC is just one attempt to address the issue of access to healthy foods in a working class minority community in an urban setting. Many other efforts are underway around the country, in order to address this important issue. It is common to assume that the problem originates with our children making poor choices and eating too much “junk”, thereby increasing their chances of becoming obese. However, the problem is likely more complex with multiple causes, including community level and larger systemic problems. We need to pay attention to the fact that many of our children do not have access to basic nutrients and fresh food choices necessary for a healthy lifestyle. Major “junk” food manufacturers have targeted children through highly effective advertising strategies and educators have not emphasized healthy eating or nutrition as part in parcel of the typically public school education. Major grocers have been less likely to open stores in these communities than wealthy predominantly white communities (Gallagher, 2005).

We believe that by expanding the framing of the problem to include food access as an integral issue in need of community action to achieve social change, we can more effectively address the larger problem of unhealthy eating and its numerous negative associated health effects. Social change efforts may involve policy or regulations regarding school luncheons, nutrition education, vending machines, billboard advertisement, and number of liquor stores available in a community and access to grocery stores, among other changes. The recent public concern over healthy eating and societal efforts towards making fresh foods easily available at a reasonable cost to anyone is overdue. Efforts to address the problem may have a broader impact using collaborative, grassroots and participatory approaches.

Community action has the potential to positively impact diet options for residents and health in neighborhoods across the country.

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## A Community Practitioner's Approach to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

by Joie Acosta and David Chavis,  
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As part of the Association for the Study and Development of Community (ASDC), a socially progressive organization that works to research and develop solutions to problems in today's complex society, the breadth and depth of disaster inflicted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita aroused the same questions that first created our interest in addressing social problems. How can we get involved in solving these problems? The initial response suggested by the media and aid organizations was to donate money; but it was difficult to locate local organizations to donate funds. In addition to donations, another suggestion was to volunteer personal time to assist in the disaster area or with the

needs of evacuees and survivors in our local area. However, neither of these options allowed us to contribute what was our most valuable asset: our expertise in building the capacities for healthy communities. So the question that we were soon asking ourselves is how can we apply the lens of community capacity building to improve the health of communities after a disaster?

Our organization had some experience with trying "to do our part" to help communities respond to 9-11 and the grief and backlash of anger towards persons of Arab decent and Muslims. We recognized that there were not many options for people wanting to do good locally. There were many great collective acts of kindness, intolerance towards bigotry, and relationship building that communities can share in the hope of fostering even more community responses. We developed a web-based resource on community responses to these conditions. The web site included links to resources, stories of community responses, and materials that local communities were developing to respond locally and nationally to this crisis. While we did think about putting a "hit" counter on the site, we were flooded with e-mails from people all over the country and even several people abroad.

To address immediate gaps in the system after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, our organization once again created a web-based information system to highlight events, activities, and information that were organized by communities throughout the country to express their grief, empathy, and concern regarding Hurricane Katrina and its consequences. The website ([www.capacitybuilding.net/Katrina/index.htm](http://www.capacitybuilding.net/Katrina/index.htm)) details the collaboration efforts of national and local non-profit and community organizations with grass-roots organizers, mobilization of community organizations to support the needs of the hurricane victims, and public dialogue to increase community awareness and knowledge about the impact of the Katrina and Rita. The web site contains links to information on community efforts within the disaster area and in response to the needs of evacuees and survivors, resources to help communities respond, information about donating to local and national organizations, as well as volunteering to provide local support, and stories and articles of community responses to the disaster.

It was apparent soon after Hurricane Katrina struck that public and private national relief organizations did not have adequate relations with local efforts and populations, especially in marginalized communities. Building relationships among institutions has been a key

part of our community capacity building strategy. To do this successfully between large and more grassroots organizations, it is especially important to build the capacities of each to work together. Larger and more powerful organizations need to adjust their practices to be more of a true partnership with local organizations and more grassroots organizations must be ready to effectively "speak truth to power." ASDC has developed relations with many local and national organizations through earlier projects. We believed that one of the things we could offer are connections to these organizations and networks operating in the disaster area. In order to do this we needed to work our networks and see how we could link them.

In collaboration with COMM-ORG, a web-based resource for community organizers, scholars, and scholar-organizers, we also developed a list of community-based relief efforts in the gulf region. This website (<http://comm-org.wisc.edu/katrina/>) provides information on locally based grass roots organizations, as well as organizations providing self-help and self-advocacy efforts to displaced residents in shelters outside the region.

Developing these resources required a close examination of the events, information, and stories surrounding the response and relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina and helped us to identify a gap in the current disaster system between national and local responses to Katrina. National efforts were not utilizing the capacity of local community-based organizations and were not coordinated to respond to a disaster of this magnitude.

As community practitioners interested in

ASDC's web page on Katrina resources

creating social change, our work often includes systems change efforts to “bridge a gap” in community-level systems through the use of capacity building, collaborative problem solving, and efforts to develop culturally competent systems.

It was more difficult for us to link with the national relief organizations. We did not have any connections within the disaster relief community. Fortunately, other community psychologists were also wondering how they could use those skills that make them feel like a community psychologist. Gloria Levin used her brains and talents to walk in cold into the offices of a national disaster relief organization and finesse her way into the central planning operations. With the help of Gloria we were able to assist this national organization to decrease the gap between national and local response by creating linkages with community-based organizations in the disaster area.

We suggested a different way to think about volunteers. Volunteers have been traditionally used to provide direct services. Building on a seed planted by Gloria, we helped this organization see how it could work in more of a true partnership with local communities and use volunteers to be more facilitators, organizers, and liaisons. This could be done by training volunteers, who would work with several communities at a time, using a case management approach. This national disaster relief organization is now planning to identify, recruit, and train volunteers to act as liaisons in the field and conduct assessments of needs to increase their capacity to respond to the Katrina and Rita disasters as well as future events. Approximately 300 volunteers will be trained in basic community organizing and other related skills.

As a result of our interactions with this national disaster relief organization we were also invited to attend a coordination meeting of partners engaged in Katrina and Rita organized by a large national disaster relief organization. This collaborative effort was formed to develop a deeper understanding of individual organizations and existing collaborations, identify gaps in services that need to be filled, work on creating linkages between collaborative efforts, and increase the involvement and planning from more diverse organizations.

To continue building on the dialogue that took place at that meeting, we have been asked to help facilitate a working group to take the areas identified for improving individual organization and cross-organization capacity for collaboration and create tangible action steps

for organizations to implement. To date, the work group has identified two urgent needs: (1) increase cultural competency in disaster response through outreach and assessment of the needs of marginalized populations (language, cultural, and disability considerations); and (2) identify processes and mechanisms for “developing connections” between disaster response agencies (traditional and non-traditional). We are in the process of translating these needs into action steps.

These action steps will be utilized as a platform to encourage systems change within and across organizations. Although, they are in the process of being refined through the work group, the action steps will be presented to the Chief Executive Officers of national and local organizations with recommendations to address the operation of organizations independently, as well as communication and coordination between organizations.

Important to the success of this collaborative relationship was the creation of ownership and buy-in from community organizations and sensitivity to the inter-group dynamics between large national disaster relief organizations and small agencies and organizations. Community members were responsible for taking notes, creating narrative to summarize our work, and contributing all the information. To ensure contributions from community-based organizations all members of the work group are reaching out to organizations they know to solicit participation and feedback about ways to address the two needs identified by the group. The large national disaster relief organization acted as a partner and utilized its resources as a vehicle for communication and convening these efforts: principles of effective collaboration and relationship building.

Our approach to the disaster created by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was to identify the needs and opportunities and then provide multi-faceted assistance that would be helpful in approaching the difficulties organizations faced when responding during the hurricanes. Tom Wolfe recommended in his recent newsletter that community practitioners could be useful in “developing community based approaches to planning for future disasters.” However we believe that community based approaches can be used at each phase of disaster response. The *Community Toolbox* provides a useful framework for understanding the opportunities for community psychologist in disaster relief. (University of Kansas, 2005).

- In the **preparedness phase** when survival and quick recovery from disaster depend on providing information and education

on personal and community planning, community based approaches can be used to facilitate planning between community-based organizations and national partners to increase preparedness. Tools for developing and using strategic and action plans, including tips for culturally competent action planning, are part of our community toolbox (University of Kansas, 2005).

- In the **response phase** where organizations are concerned with the immediate emergency and relief, community planning (i.e., preparedness) and coordination will create a thorough response, and community organizing skills will help to mobilize resources in the disaster area. Community mobilizing is another skill of community practitioners (University of Kansas, 2005).
- In the **recovery phase** activities include restoration of infrastructure and support systems, resumption of the routines of daily life, and repairing, rebuilding, or relocating homes. It is common for resources (i.e., human, material and financial) to diminish with decreasing public awareness in this phase. A strong, well-organized collaboration that focuses on long-term recovery can maximize the utilization of available resources to meet community needs during recovery. At this phase it is especially important to incorporate voices of all community members to ensure all sectors of the community are included in the resource allocation for community recovery (e.g. marginalized populations). Understanding culture and diversity in building community, building relationships with people from different cultures, and multi-cultural collaboration are important practical skills for success in this phase (University of Kansas, 2005).
- An important element of long-term recovery is the daily effort to lessen the long-term risk to people and property, or the **mitigation phase** of disaster. Including mitigation activities in a community’s recovery process may reduce future loss and impact and create increased preparedness within communities. Community practitioners are skilled in the implementation and evaluation of community based projects to assess and raise awareness of needs and risks within a community before another disaster (University of Kansas, 2005).

Collaboration, capacity building, and culturally

competent community processes, the three building blocks of community practitioners, are important in closing the gap and making the response in each phase more effective. We can build solutions through partnerships among professionals and citizens, as evidenced by the important role that faith and community based organizations played in response and relief efforts for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They have also ensured that the voices of all groups are heard in the current recovery efforts and in future disasters.

ASDC continues to work with the national disaster recovery organization to identify gaps in the system, develop a cross-culturally competent action plan, build relations, and facilitate the use of best processes and practices in the community building efforts in the gulf coast region. As a professional community, we have access to the knowledge of best processes and practices in community building and can offer our expertise to local and national organizations in this time of need.

The gaps between national and local responses to the Katrina and Rita disasters are gaps that we as community practitioners have the tools to fill. We are strategically positioned to view social problems through a community lens. Through this third position described by Newbrough (1995), we can work towards a unifying process to fill the gap and “achieve some consensus and cooperation in a resource poor world, where there are glaring inequities and intense feelings of injustice.”

Our organization has identified an institution, which is looking to change. The national disaster relief organization has taken an important first step towards change by recognizing that no single organization has the capacity to comprehensively and effectively respond to the human needs created by the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They are taking steps to change through their interactions with ASDC to bridge the gap between their national response and local efforts, as well as partnering with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to provide more culturally competent services to marginalized populations.

We are helping this national disaster recovery organization conduct meetings and are planning processes that promote more shared ownership among large and small as well as national and local organizations. Large organizations need assistance in learning how to manage these types of relations. National disaster recovery organizations do not have time to develop partnering relations during a disaster. The recovery has provided a great

opportunity for changing the way national disaster recovery organizations work with each other and with local communities.

To answer our initial question of how to apply the lens of community capacity building to improve the health of communities after a disaster, we can offer our expertise and skills in relationship building, facilitation, consultation, as well as providing resources and information. It is a unique opportunity that we (both an organization and professional community) have been given to become engaged in the recovery efforts, in a sense building community capacity in many cases from the ground up. Recovery efforts are just beginning and community practitioners can be instrumental in ensuring that the expertise needed for community building is available for these important efforts; some of the most comprehensive and urgent of our time. As stated by Julian Rappaport “The most important contributions from community psychology have been fueled with a sense of urgency. To give up such urgency is to live with mediocrity.” We challenge each of you to participate with urgency in recovery efforts locally or nationally to offer your expertise and practical knowledge of community building.

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## Katrina, Lifeboat Anxiety, and its Rationalization in Lifeboat Ethics: The Potentials of a PAR Political System

by Brad Olson  
DePaul University

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*Ev'rybody's building the big ships and  
the boats,  
Some are building monuments,  
others, jotting down notes,  
Ev'rybody's in despair,  
Ev'ry girl and boy  
—Bob Dylan*

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As members of the Community Field, we possess much knowledge about systems. Yet we might still reasonably question whether our Participatory Action Research (PAR) skills are put to their fullest use, or whether we have restricted those uses too exclusively to the world of health and mental health. As members of an academic and practice community, we witness Katrina and the subsequent failed political reactions and the complete relevance of our skills become more evident. We see close up—sometimes from afar—how existing relief systems could work more wisely and more effectively. Our PAR tools and their implementation are far from perfect, but compared to current political methods chosen by national policy makers, they are long-needed remedies for a better world.

Jokes have always existed claiming that the citizens best suited to political work are always those who most avoid it. The same may be said about our PAR methodologies with regard to this worldview of ours. Yet perhaps it is time for this philosophy to be thrust out onto the political stage. Based on the political reactions to Katrina's devastation, and other common policy approaches to world crises, it seems that PAR is a good candidate for enlightening government, and making an election-time appearance as an extremely reasonable political platform.

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*Crash on the levee, mama,  
Water's gonna overflow,  
Swamp's gonna rise,  
No boat's gonna row.  
—Bob Dylan*

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PAR should be a policy source and ethical mechanism that drives our country from its political center. We need an approach that considers the array of factors—community, family, and the individual—that are relevant to the consequences of Katrina. Despite the strong nationwide displays of community, the failures were evident and could have only been ameliorated by more communicative, psychological, and social action skills that are characteristic of PAR frameworks.

Of course a PAR political system would face many challenges. I have one in mind that I believe is the most difficult obstacle, and it is what I am calling here, *lifeboat anxiety*; what is known in some circles as *lifeboat ethics*. A new political system, more than anything else, would have to be able to serve as an intervention agent to eradicate lifeboat ethics. It is not an easy test.

There are some thinkers, John Stuart Mill, for instance, who have argued that we should never censure our reading, and sometimes focus on the most morally noxious of texts to at least understand the arguments held within. It was this philosophy that encouraged me to continue reading an essay on what was called with all seriousness, ‘Lifeboat Ethics’. The lifeboat, in this argument, was a metaphor for why one human should avoid helping other humans. As far as lifeboat ethics is concerned, no human is under a moral obligation to assist others with resources of any kind because, as the author argues, if we encourage others aboard, the lifeboat will fill to capacity and everyone in and out of the boat will inevitably and inexorably sink. In terms of an ethical system, lifeboat ethics is despicable, and yet it is enlightening in that it reflects more than a philosophy, because it pinpoints what I think is one of the central anxieties of our age. It mirrors, in an ostensibly rational form, the existence of *lifeboat anxiety*. That is, it reflects the delusion that one and one’s ingroup is constantly on a lifeboat and that others are perpetually trying to get on, and, if one lets them in the lifeboat, everyone will indisputably sink. We see this reasoning in the fall of affirmative action, in the continually tighter and more absolute immigration restrictions, and quite saliently in the series of tax cuts for the affluent. Perhaps, however, it was most visibly defined in the political reactions to Katrina. Lifeboat anxiety is rationalized into lifeboat ethics and implemented as lifeboat public policy. If lifeboat ethics is the manifest content, lifeboat anxiety is its latent meaning. We may never remove lifeboat anxiety from the American landscape, but a PAR political philosophy may act as a

partial antidote to the lifeboat anxiety that floats through every level of our current governmental process.

When the pool of tears beneath my feet  
flood every newborn seed  
—Bob Dylan

The exact workings of the PAR approach as a political process is not hard for us to imagine. Most would agree that a PAR approach in a president or throughout a FEMA would be a highly welcomed strategy. We have seen the smallest hints of it in the concept of a town hall meeting and within interactive fireside chats. We would of course have to imagine it being taken seriously, with critical and consistent speed, both systematically, and rigorously.

A primary advantage of PAR-based political practices would be its ability to increase basic comprehension. It would provide political figures with a greater ability to experientially visualize and understand the happenings that policy is intended to effect. This understanding was clearly in need throughout New Orleans and beyond. PAR would have better initiated productive meetings—the calling together of community forces for political duty in the form of focus groups. The composition of these groups would have been developed through appropriate sampling techniques, and community voices that traditionally had less access to political influence would gradually be heard more and more.

The methodology of the PAR political policy would be both qualitative and quantitative; the data would be processed and interpreted swiftly, yet with care. The policies developed through the PAR political process would always be cross-validated with segments of the population who had been equally affected by the problems at hand. There would be no worries that listening to and reacting to the wishes of the American people would be discounted as “polling” and as an “absence of leadership.” The public, I believe, would greatly appreciate the authentic intentions of this participatory action democracy.

It would then be the hope of everyone in this progressive political partnership that this interactive process—seeing and hearing the opinions of the American people—would begin to dispel our lifeboat illusions and alleviate our lifeboat anxiety, and that even lifeboat ethics itself would be seen as the refuse that it is.

Now, don't you try an 'move me,  
You're just gonna lose.  
There's a crash on the levee  
And, mama, you've been refused.  
Well, it's sugar for sugar  
And salt for salt,  
If you go down in the flood,  
It's gonna be your own fault.  
—Bob Dylan

Visualization alone plays prominently in the interaction between this PAR democracy and lifeboat anxiety. Unfortunately, vision alone is not enough to change the long-established mechanisms of sociological oppression or psychological repression. Mere proximity or visual acuity has never fully reduced psychological divisions, although it had once been perceived to do so within the ‘contact theory’ of prejudice. George Bush visited Louisiana after the disaster and saw first-hand the severe need for the lifeboats of the affluent. However, vision, while powerful, does not dispel these more intractable delusions like lifeboat anxiety, which allows both pity and practicality to cancel out community action.

Our politicians would (and this is the central point) benefit from a more standard set of methodologies that would promote more interactive, experiential, transformative modalities of knowledge-seeking. These public servants would benefit from a PAR-type of political science—praxis in its most practical form.

Well, that high tide's risin',  
Mama, don't you let me down.  
Pack up your suitcase,  
Mama, don't you make a sound.  
Now, it's king for king,  
Queen for queen,  
It's gonna be the meanest flood  
That anybody's seen.  
—Bob Dylan

The most disheartening reality of lifeboat anxiety is the ability of its victims to remain sympathetic while being paralyzed with the thought that helping any person will drown them all. The lifeboat illusion, as is true of all psychological phenomena, automatically goes wherever the victim goes. More accurately, the victim goes with the illusion. Whether the President stands atop a cruise ship docked in

the Mississippi delta, lands his feet on an aircraft carrier while dressed in military garb, or is kicking his shoes through the Texas dust, a part of him, I believe, always worries about the slightly unstable balance of the lifeboat on which he floats. He worries too, being human, about those who ride with him—his economic ingroup. If they, as a unit, do not always reach progressively more fortified ground, and if they do not stay one more step distant from those they imagine clamoring on the side of their boat, that anxiety—the fear of the water—will increasingly rise. The unsteady rocking will continually unnerve him, our President, and certainly, throughout our country, he is not alone.

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*I saw a white ladder all covered  
with water*  
—Bob Dylan

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There was a mere instant when Katrina looked as though it might have been a turning point for lifeboat ethics. Americans professed that they had seen something new about race, and about socioeconomic status, and it occurred right through their television sets. We all thought for a moment that the images might have brought about a collective epiphany, revealing the truth about disparities and injustice, particularly in a time of national duress.

It was eventually found that the visuals triggered action for some, solutions for others, and sympathy for just about all. But lifeboat anxiety lives on sympathy. It takes it in and then dampens it with a pragmatic dissonance, stating, “This is terrible. We should let them on this lifeboat. If only it wouldn’t mean the doom for the rest of us.” But these thoughts rarely arise above a whisper, and most of the time we don’t really hear them at all.

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*Yes, ‘n’ how many seas must a white  
dove sail*  
—Bob Dylan

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Had our PAR government been in place prior to Katrina, we can think of many ways that the outcomes would have been better, would have been less disastrous. The most obvious benefit, from the start, would have been better background knowledge, a greater prevention-oriented approach, and more mindful

preparation. This is somewhat easy to predict retroactively, but there would have at least been a superior secondary prevention approach. The levees might not have been appropriately bolstered, but the generators necessary for any rescue-agency communications would certainly not have been in Iraq.

One of the foremost differences between the PAR political system and current political parties is that the PAR platform would be based more on methodology than on a rigid adherence to specific issues. The process or approach would be emphasized more than a codified set of social and economic traditions. The PAR platform would eventually build a set of key stances, but it would keep opinions on specific issues flexible, belief systems would remain more permeable, and it would promote a more contextual orientation—certainly more than the present major political parties.

It is understood that there is some efficiency in holding politically set stances. Stagnant opinions are expedient. Neither the dogmatist nor the cognitive miser need waste time considering the fine points of a new policy for a new problem. They already know what is right, and the PAR political system would certainly be slowed in some cases by the consideration of more complex nuances. Yet what the PAR approach would lose in decisiveness, it would save in flexibility, prevention, early interventions, and the build-up of consistently reliable information. The iterative gathering of more reliable and valid information, placing it into an appropriate policy format, and reintroducing it back into the community for more feedback provides a more consequential and cost-effective benefit. The benefits of prevention would perhaps be equally great.

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*High water risin’ - risin’ night and day  
High water everywhere  
High water risin’, the shacks are slidin’  
down  
High water everywhere  
High water risin’, six inches ‘bove my  
head*  
—Bob Dylan

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It should be noted that a PAR political system could not be expected to impact, at least immediately, the lifeboat anxiety of the average American. No, the goal would be to first provide internal system check on the procedures of officials from federal, state, and local

governments. It would be enough to first strengthen the decision-making of these bodies through wisely-collected contextual information based on the episodic knowledge and experiential expertise of diverse citizens. Sometimes all that would be required by the PAR modality would be to produce more vivid images for these political figures and benefits would be derived from the emotions this vibrancy can provide. The advantages of a more visual empathy are many.

The mnemonic sketchpad, the common sense, the varied levels of abstraction derived naturally from multi-level thinking are all primary advantages of the PAR political system. PAR can act like a film that expands out to the city and back down to its individual residents. Too often, political decisions are based in macro sources and the few case examples tend to be biased and rarely obtained, if ever, through more thorough systematic means.

PAR politics would instead, whenever possible, attempt to better integrate several systemic levels simultaneously, combining idiographic narratives with more macro, quantitative means. PAR policy interventions are not simply about applying traditional forms of science to existing political procedures. The unique combination of ethical and methodological forces that incorporates interdisciplinary, context-based, and externally valid systems is uniquely PAR. Yet in combating the enemy of lifeboat anxiety (and of course its manifestation in lifeboat ethics), nothing is quite so critical within the PAR approach than the micro-focus on the honest feedback from everyday human beings.

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*Well my ship’s been split to splinters and  
it’s sinking fast  
I’m drownin’ in the poison, got no future,  
got no past  
But my heart is not weary, it’s light and  
it’s free  
I’ve got nothin’ but affection for all those  
who’ve sailed with me  
Everybody movin’ if they ain’t already  
there  
Everybody got to move somewhere*  
—Bob Dylan

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It is even possible that the PAR political system fits comfortably within the evolution of political, ethical, and historical thought, at least within the western variations. The social contract, for instance, as put forth by Rousseau and others,

was broken it seems, between the American government and its people, broken by Katrina, or at least its fissure was openly revealed by the storm. Utilitarianism, the philosophy that the most ethical action is that which is good for most people and bad for the least, has undoubtedly guided many of the world's most sound policy decisions. Utilitarianism unfortunately plays into lifeboat anxiety because it is by nature inescapably a decision-rule favoring the majority. In fact it was this fundamental bias that led John Rawls, said to be the greatest political thinker of our time, to develop an alternative philosophical theory of justice. A core component of this philosophy set forth that when attempting to make more just political decisions, we should place our minds into "the original position" or "the veil of ignorance," the imaginary state of not knowing where one stands on the socioeconomic spectrum or where we may end up. Once in such a state, we should make every consideration of the numerical minority in every political decision we make.

There is here some simplification of these more complex philosophies, yet what is important is this critical advantage of Rawls' system over utilitarianism—that is, the consideration of the numerical minority). Now the PAR political system takes this one step further. There are significant advantages of the PAR political philosophy over Rawls' conception. A PAR system not only imagines the needs of the underserved, it systematically derives information about these needs directly from the numerical minority and anyone impacted by a particular problem. It is all very admirable of Rawl's system to try and visualize the numerical minority, to imagine stepping in their shoes, and estimating how they would make policy decisions, but it is a practice greatly subject to misperception and bias. It is not easy to pretend that one is in a position when one is not, particularly when in a state of lifeboat anxiety.

The primary advantage of the PAR democracy is nevertheless founded in Rawls' thinking. The truest test of a PAR political system, or any new political system, is whether it can achieve Rawls' aim of sufficiently recognizing what is recommended by the numerical minority without relying on a veil of ignorance to cognitively get oneself there. Engaging in effective PAR maximizes the benefits for the most people, without depending on an overabundance of ignorance to get us there. Lifeboat anxiety, formalized as lifeboat ethics provides enough of an ambulatory form of ignorance, albeit it is one that invariably supports the majority. It never hurts for us to use utilitarianism or Rawl's

psychological tricks to help guide ethical decisions. However, when combating the scourge of lifeboat anxiety, PAR is indeed our best remedy.

There are of course necessary cautions we should observe. A PAR democracy, like any political philosophy, is subject to manipulation in favor of the majority. Again, despite the advantages of the veil of ignorance, when it is combined with lifeboat ethics it can make one say, "I could put myself in the original position, but I actually will end up in that condition if I let others on the lifeboat." Similarly, PAR can be impacted by both positively and negatively balanced values. That PAR requires us to recognize those values and reflect on their impact is one of our few forms of protection. And perhaps this is exactly what needs to be strengthened before PAR can be claimed to supersede Rawls. The system depends on honesty and ethics. The PAR methodology depends on consistent reflection of all possible biases emanating from the political self. Therefore, if the sampling honestly provides more weight to the numerical minority, if citizen-participants are honest, if their opinions are authentically absorbed into the political process, and if all other procedures are followed, our governmental system would be centuries ahead of where it is now. In addition, there would be radiating benefits, and genuine public appreciation. Lifeboat ethics would only influence the process to the extent that we did not abide by our philosophy, and yet our perpetual reflection on these errors is everything. There is always this paradox.

*Oh, what'll you do now, my darling young one?  
I'm a-goin' back out 'fore the rain starts a-fallin',  
I'll walk to the depths of the deepest black forest,  
Where the people are many and their hands are all empty,  
Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters,  
Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison,  
Where the executioner's face is always well hidden,  
Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten,  
Where black is the color, where none is the number,  
And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it,  
And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it,*

*Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin',  
But I'll know my song well before I start singin',  
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,  
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.  
—Bob Dylan*

Perhaps the hitherto unrecognized advantage of a PAR political philosophy is its potential to bring a shift away from typical first-order thinking—that is, thinking characterized by a fixedness on common, well-worn and ineffective solutions. Like lifeboat anxiety, first-order thinking plays a role in preventing progressive change. The path to understanding and eradicating first-order thinking is in fact to understand that it is both an antecedent and consequence of lifeboat anxiety. PAR politics, in contrast, has an ability to stimulate second-order thinking. Because PAR involves the collecting of new views and perspectives, it therefore has the power to inspire more diverse forms of thinking, bring about more transformative mechanisms of second-order change, transcend traditional, issues-based solutions and ideologies, and subsequently alleviate lifeboat anxiety.

We have seen for so long less effective methods of government through the combination of first-order thinking and lifeboat anxiety. President Bush did not, we know, engage in a PAR methodology when he took his visit and saw first hand the negative harms and occurrences in post-Katrina New Orleans. It is quite likely that on every step of the way, before and after his short visit to the region, the President perceived himself as standing on a type of lifeboat. He wanted (I like to believe) to help those swimming around the edge of the raft's rim. He would have helped directly if he had thought at all that it was a reasonable and feasible thing to do. But instead, thinking that he could not help everyone, he simply escaped on his lifeboat. He rowed as quickly as possible. As Air Force One left the region, he thought only about first-order solutions based in lifeboat anxiety. When this lifeboat landed in Washington D.C., he could think of no other solution than tax cuts for the affluent. This would only replicate and exacerbate the very same problems in New Orleans and throughout the country. He believed those tax cuts would stimulate the economy again, keep the lifeboats of his friends floating through smoother territory, and the trickle down effect—one of the most pernicious theories growing out of lifeboat anxiety—would eventually save the people of New Orleans.

We need to broaden our minds for bigger ships; cognitive ships that allow all aboard, knowing there can be plenty of room for everyone. We should push our nation toward giving the PAR approach a try, and thereby better prepare for the next rain. We should broaden our minds for larger, better-built, more effectively run ships that are wider and more inclusive than Noah's—more inclusive than Noah could have ever imagined.

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*Oh the time will come up  
When the winds will stop  
And the breeze will cease to be breathin'.  
Like the stillness in the wind  
'Fore the hurricane begins,  
The hour when the ship comes in.*

*Oh the seas will split  
And the ship will hit  
And the sands on the shoreline will be  
shaking.  
Then the tide will sound  
And the wind will pound  
And the morning will be breaking.*

*Oh the fishes will laugh  
As they swim out of the path  
And the seagulls they'll be smiling.  
And the rocks on the sand  
Will proudly stand,  
The hour that the ship comes in.*

*And the words that are used  
For to get the ship confused  
Will not be understood as they're spoken.  
For the chains of the sea  
Will have busted in the night  
And will be buried at the bottom of the  
ocean.*

*A song will lift  
As the mainsail shifts  
And the boat drifts on to the shoreline.  
And the sun will respect  
Every face on the deck,  
The hour that the ship comes in.*

*Then the sands will roll  
Out a carpet of gold  
For your weary toes to be a-touchin'.  
And the ship's wise men  
Will remind you once again  
That the whole wide world is watchin'.*

*Oh the foes will rise  
With the sleep still in their eyes  
And they'll jerk from their beds and think  
they're dreamin'.  
But they'll pinch themselves and squeal  
And know that it's for real,  
The hour when the ship comes in.*

*Then they'll raise their hands,  
Sayin' we'll meet all your demands,  
But we'll shout from the bow your days are  
numbered.  
And like Pharaoh's tribe,  
They'll be drowned in the tide,  
And like Goliath, they'll be conquered.  
—Bob Dylan*

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## SCRA COMMUNITY NEWS

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### APA Convention Student Poster Winner 2005

#### Introduction

*by Brad Olson  
2005 APA Program Chair*

Each year at the APA convention a contest is held for the most exceptional student poster related to community science. As usual, last year's convention in Washington D.C. saw many excellent posters on a host of topics ranging from student-led studies that utilized complex quantitative analyses to in-depth narrative examinations of topics that we all feel are crucial to the field's ideals.

All such posters submitted to Division 27 were collected as handouts or e-mailed to me, and I distributed the batch to the judges to rate and pick the one best exemplar of the field. When I received the comments back, the judges' decisions showed good inter-rater reliability and several of the posters were deemed to be outstanding representations of community science.

Yet one was consistently thought best.

Nevertheless, the judges gave somewhat different and somewhat intangible reasons why this one was just slightly ahead of the others.

When I looked at my scribbles from the poster session, I saw a note that the first three authors of this work, each one a student, had all been present at the conference, and I remember them talking vigorously in front of the poster with passer-bys.

I truly believe that, though the judges did not attend the conference, their intuition about the poster's excellence tapped into the same intellectual excitement and authentic involvement that was evident in these three students that day.

This type of energy, I should point out, could be found in many of the students and posters present that day. But for this one poster winner it all seemed to come together—the absorption in the work, the values, the cross-cultural samples. In essence, even though the total research project was not yet a completely finished product, the poster was simply well done, and the judges were unanimously impressed. We certainly hope this research team stays involved with SCRA for a long, long time to come.

### Community Perceptions of Human Security: An Explorative Study

*by Tatiana M. Pinedo, B.S., Caitlin O. Mahoney, B.A., and Joseph de Rivera, Ph.D.  
Clark University*

#### Abstract

This study examined the extent to which individuals depend upon their nation and/or state, or their community to enhance security. To assess the security levels of individuals, we developed a self-report questionnaire based on the eight-dimensions of human security as outlined by the United Nations (1994), which includes Economic, Food, Health, Environmental, Personal, Community, and Political security. We compared several different communities in Worcester, Massachusetts with each other and with similarly organized communities abroad including Basque, Spain and Costa Rica. Our results indicated that individuals living in more affluent and emotionally stable climates experienced a greater degree of human security.

#### Introduction

The concept of security has often been narrowly defined as focused on nations rather

than people (Human Development Report, 1994). In defining security as a nation or state's security from outside threats, the concerns and struggles of ordinary people and their communities may be overlooked. Hence, a number of investigators have begun working with the concept of *human security*. In their Human Development Report (1994), the United Nations Development Programme outlines the dimensions of human security as involving each of the following eight components:

- 1) **Economic security**, which requires an assured basic income, usually from some type of employment.
- 2) **Food security**, including physical and economic access to basic food provisions.
- 3) **Health security**, which denotes freedom from disease and premature death due to poor nutrition or an unsafe environment.
- 4) **Environmental security**, which is threatened by the degradation of local ecosystems and that of the global system.
- 5) **Personal security**, which requires that individuals are free from threats from the state (physical torture), from other states (war), from other groups of people (ethnic tension), from individuals or gangs against other individuals or gangs (crime, street violence), and from threats directed against women (rape, domestic violence). Personal security also suggests that children are free from threat (child abuse), and that individuals are free from threats to self (suicide, drug use).
- 6) **Community security**, which delineates security derived from membership in certain groups, such as family, community, organizations, or a racial or ethnic group, and can provide the individual with a sense of identity.
- 7) **Political security**, which requires that individuals live in a society that honors their basic human rights.
- 8) **Global security**, which is provided by international cooperation to control factors such as population growth, excessive migration and terrorism.

As defined, the above domains are interdependent, and intimate that human security is a universal concern. Further, the UN maintains that human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention. To ensure human security we must have a way to measure the extent to which it exists. The current study is an attempt to construct a survey that reflects the dimensions of human security as outlined by the United Nations.

Since the concept of human security is people rather than nation centered, we wondered about the extent to which aspects of human security might depend more on the community in which

people live than on their nation. To validate the survey and investigate the relative importance of community and nation we sampled students from different college communities in different nations and towns people from high and low income neighborhoods in two nations with different degrees of economic development. Student samples were obtained from campuses in different types of neighborhoods (Clark University in a poor urban neighborhood, Assumption College in a wealthy suburban neighborhood, and the University of Massachusetts in a rural environment). The security of these students was contrasted with students living at the University of Costa Rica (where there is less economic development), and the University of Basque Country in Spain (where there is high economic development but a degree of political unrest). The security of townspeople in low and high income neighborhoods in the United States was contrasted with those in low and high income neighborhoods in Costa Rica.

In addition to validating a scale to measure human security, it is our intention to examine the extent to which individuals depend upon themselves, their state, or their community in order to enhance security. Our scale includes items that explore the nature of this reliance, which we anticipate will differ both by community and nation. A preliminary analysis

of the data suggests that we should distinguish an immediate sense of personal security from a more future oriented sense of security. In both senses, the extent of student security depends on campus location, and townspeople in the United States (as well as students) experience much more security than those living in Costa Rica. Further, in both countries those living in wealthier communities feel more secure than those in poorer communities. These findings will be related to measures of each society's emotional climate and discussed in terms of the factors needed for feelings of security.

### Measure

We created a scale, in the form of a self-report questionnaire, which taps into each of the different aspects of human security as outlined by the United Nations (see Table 1 below). The survey contains 38 items, is offered in both English and Spanish, and includes questions that allow community members' to suggest ways to enhance security in their neighborhood. The survey includes items that enable us to compare reports of personal safety with those obtained using items from the recently published *Community Well-Being Questionnaire* (Christakapoulous, Dawson & Gari, 2001). After pilot testing, we combined economic and food scales because they seemed to measure the same construct and dropped the Global dimension.

Table 1

UN Dimension	Sample Item
Economic/ Food Security	"How secure do you feel that you will have or continue to have a safe job that pays for your expenses?"
Health Security	"If you are sick, how worried are you about receiving appropriate medical help?"
Environmental Security	"How secure do you feel that you will have access to clean water, now and in the future?"
Personal Security	"In your daily life, to what extent do you feel personally threatened by potential threats such as domestic abuse, rape, abduction or other violent crime?"
Community Security	"To what extent do you feel your [self-reported affiliation] is welcomed in the community in which you reside?"
Political Security	"To what extent do you feel free to publicly express your political ideas?"

Table 2

Participants		
Country	Community	N
United States		
Students	Assumption College	36
	Clark University	31
	UMASS Amherst	78
Non-Students	Main South Community (Low SES)	52
	Tatnuck/Burncoat Communities (High SES)	30
Costa Rica		
Students	University of Costa Rica	62
Non-Students	Low SES Community	39
	High SES Community	26
Basque, Spain		
Students	Basque University	52
		Total = 451

**Table 3**

Students	Personal Security	Environmental Security	Group Identity Security	Overall Emotional Climate	Positive Emotional Climate	Negative Emotional Climate	Revised British Safety
Clark University	5.3	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.6	4.8
UMASS/Amherst	5.6	4.8	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.3	5.5
Assumption College	5.6	5.2	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.9	5.3
Total	5.6	4.9	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.5	5.3

**Table 4**

Students	Personal Security	Environmental Security	Group Identity Security	Overall Emotional Climate	Positive Emotional Climate	Negative Emotional Climate	Revised British Safety
United States	5.6	4.9	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.5	5.3
Costa Rica	4.7	3.2	5.1	3.9	3.5	4.3	3.8
Basque	5.4	3.7	3.8	4.4	4.0	4.7	4.8
Total	5.3	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.8

## Results

- After Factor Analysis we were able to create 4 cross culturally reliable scales:
  - Personal Security ( $\alpha=0.870$ )
  - Environmental ( $\alpha=0.826$ )
  - Group Identity Security ( $\alpha=0.784$ )
  - Political Security ( $\alpha=0.500$ )
- Other dimensions of security were represented by single items:
  - Economic & Food - (How often do you worry that you will not have enough money for necessities such as food, clothing and rent?)
  - Health - (If you are sick, how worried are you about receiving appropriate medical help?)
  - Community - (To what extent do you feel your group is welcome in the community in which you reside?)
- For correlations split by student status (student vs. non-student/community) it appears that the security of community members, across many levels, is related especially to perceived support (How much support do you receive from your family and friends?). This trend is not evident in the student population.
- Multiple regression analysis were employed to ascertain the extent to which related scales and items predicted Personal Security and Environmental mean scale scores.
  - Results suggest that support from friends & family predict 25% of the variance in personal security ( $r^2=.25$ ).
- One-Way ANOVA's were used to check

for significant differences between the 3 samples of US students. While no significant differences were shown to exist for Personal Security scores ( $F = 2.754$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .067$ , ns;  $M = 5.56$ ) or between positive emotional climate subscale scores ( $F = 1.714$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=.184$ , ns;  $M=4.57$ ), significant mean differences were found among the Clark, UMASS, and Assumption student populations for all other scale scores (see Table 3 above).

- In comparing students grouped by nation with One-Way ANOVA's on all scale scores, all means showed significant differences except negative emotional climate (see Table 4 above).
- 2 Way ANOVA's (Nation x Social Class) were utilized to compare communities in two different Nations (US and Costa Rica) and two different social classes (low and middle income). (Note: In these analyses social class is determined by the neighborhood in which data were collected, not by self-report.)
  - Main Effects were found for both Nation and Class for nearly all dependent measures (personal security, environmental, overall emotional climate, positive emotional climate, negative emotional climate, political security, and the revised British safety scale), excluding only Group Identity Security.
  - For each of the scales exhibiting significant main effects, security scores by Nation were greatest for those

residing in the United States and scores by Class were greatest for those residing in middle income neighborhoods.

- Significant Interactions were found for measures of Personal Security ( $F=9.2$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.003$ , partial eta squared = .064), Negative Emotional Climate ( $F=6.46$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.012$ , partial eta squared = .047), and Political Security ( $F=4.9$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.028$ , partial eta squared = .035). (The results for self-reported SES are similar except that there is an interaction for Environmental and non-significant interaction for negative emotional climate).
- ANOVA's were used to compare all groups on individual items and scale scores chosen to represent the original UN dimensions of human security as follows:
  - **Economic & Food** – Item 8 (How often do you worry that you will not have enough money for necessities such as food, clothing and rent?)
  - **Health** – Item 10 (If you are sick, how worried are you about receiving appropriate medical help?)
  - **Environmental** – Environmental Scale
  - **Personal** – Personal Security Scale
  - **Community** – Group Identity Scale, (To what extent do you feel your group is welcome in the community in which you reside?)
  - **Political** – Political Scale
- One Way ANOVA's were used to compare student groups. Means scored differed significantly by group for all dimensions (see Table 5, next page).
- We then utilized 2 Way ANOVA's (Nation x Social Class) to compare communities in two different Nations (US and Costa Rica) and two different social classes (low and middle income). Means scores differed significantly by group for all dimensions except Economic/Food and Community. Main effects for Nation and Class were observed for the Health, Environmental, Personal and political dimensions. Interactions were significant for Environmental, Personal, and Political (see Table 6, next page).

## Scale Items

### *Personal Safety Scale* $\alpha = 0.870$

1. How safe do you feel at home during the day?
2. How safe do you feel to walk alone in the street during the day?
3. How safe do you feel to be alone at home during the night?
4. How safe do you feel to walk alone in the street at night?

**Table 5**

Students	Economic/ Food	Health	Environmental	Personal	Community	Political
Clark	5.19	5.71	4.6	5.3	4.6	5.5
UMASS	4.99	5.78	4.8	5.6	4.2	5.4
Assumption	5.30	5.89	5.2	5.6	4.9	5.1
Costa Rica	4.08	5.13	3.2	4.7	5	5.2
Basque	4.51	5.50	3.9	5.5	3.8	4.8
<b>Total</b>	4.74	5.57	4.3	5.3	4.5	5.2

**Table 6**

Non-Students	Economic/ Food	Health	Environmental	Personal	Community	Political
US - Lower SES	4.53	4.21	3.8	4.6	3.9	4.6
US - High SES	4.89	5.36	5.3	5.6	4.9	5.5
Costa Rica - Low SES	4.93	2.75	2.6	2.3	4.3	2.8
Costa Rica - High SES	4.97	3.97	3.2	3.9	4.4	5.4
<b>Total</b>	4.82	4.15	3.8	4.2	4.4	4.7

- \*10. If you are sick, how worried are you about receiving appropriate medical help?
- \*11. How worried are you about being at risk for contracting a non-curable disease?
- \*12. In your daily life, to what extent do you feel personally threatened by terrorist acts, or potential war?
- \*13. In your daily life, to what extent do you feel personally threatened by potential threats such as domestic abuse, rape, abduction or other violent crime?
- \*14. In your daily life, to what extent is your community threatened by drug trading, mobs, bullying, or gangs?
- \*15. If you were to publicly express your ideas, would you feel afraid of being hurt by those who disagree?

*Environmental Scale*  
*alpha = 0.826*

- 17. How secure do you feel that you will have access to clean water, now and in the future?
- 18. In the event of a natural disaster, how secure do you feel that your local and national government will assist you in providing aid?
- 19. How secure do you feel that you will have or continue to have a safe job that pays for your expenses?

- 20. How confident are you that there are good opportunities for you to make a better life for your self and your family?
- 21. To what extent do you feel that you can count on the police or other city services to provide you with help when you need it?

*Group Identity Scale*  
*alpha = 0.784*

- 24. To what degree would you say you identify with that specific association/group?
- 25. To what extent does belonging to this group provide you with a sense of security?

*Political Security Scale*  
*alpha = 0.50*

- \*15. If you were to publicly express your ideas, would you feel afraid of being hurt by those who disagree?
- 16. To what extent do you feel free to publicly express your political ideas?

*British Personal Safety Scale*  
*alpha = 0.747*

- (revised Scale Items 1-4 only alpha = 0.853)*
- 1. How safe do you feel at home during the day?
  - 2. How safe do you feel to walk alone in the street during the day?

- 3. How safe do you feel to be alone at home during the night?
- 4. How safe do you feel to walk alone in the street at night?
- 5. How safe do you feel leaving the car in the street at night?
- \*6. To be safe here it is necessary to have security guards and/or a gun

*Emotional Climate Scale*

*(Positive Emotional Climate Scale Items 32, 34, 36 alpha = 0.768; Negative Emotional Climate Scale Items 33, 35, 37 alpha = 0.676) alpha = 0.736*

- 32. Are most people feeling secure that there is enough food, water, medicine, and shelter for themselves and their families, and that they will continue having these things?
- \*33. Are people feeling insecure because the amount of violence is preventing people from living peacefully?
- 34. Do most people feel secure that they belong here and are cared for?
- \*35. Are dangerous threats leading people to feel insecure and forced to take sides?
- 36. Do most people feel secure that others will help them if they have a problem?
- \*37. Are people feeling insecure because they cannot predict what is going to happen?

**References**

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*Congratulations!*  
to Mona Amer



Congratulations to Mona Amer the 2005 winner of the APA/APAGS Award for Distinguished Graduate Student in Professional Psychology!

The APA/APAGS Award for Distinguished Graduate Student is awarded on an annual basis from APA and the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS) to a graduate student who has demonstrated outstanding practice and application of psychology. Mona received this award for her work with Arab Americans and Muslim Americans after Sept. 11 which included the development and dissemination of a cultural competency training model for working with Arabs and Muslims, directing two conferences (one regional and one national) related to Muslim mental health, and working to establish the Journal of Muslim Mental Health of which she is an Associate Editor. Mona is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow within the Department of Psychiatry at Yale.



## Boyd McCandless Award

The Boyd McCandless Award recognizes a young scientist who has made a distinguished theoretical contribution to developmental psychology, has conducted programmatic research of distinction, or has made a distinguished contribution to the dissemination of developmental science. The award is for continued efforts rather than a single outstanding work. Scientists who are within seven years of completion of the doctoral degree are eligible, and for the 2006 award, nominees should have received their degrees in 1999 or later. The award is presented by the membership of Division 7 of the American Psychological Association, and the award winner will be invited to address the following year's meeting of the APA. To nominate an individual, please mail or email a letter of nomination, the candidates CV, up to four representative publications, and suggestions for additional potential referees to the chair of the selection committee: Hirokazu Yoshikawa, NYU Department of Psychology, 6 Washington Place, Room 279, New York, NY 10003. For more information, see: <http://www.apa.org/about/division/div7awards.html>. Nominations are due by February 21, 2006.

## Preliminary Call for Sites for the 2009 Biennial

SCRA's 2009 Biennial Conference Committee is beginning to meet to explore possible sites for that Conference. Although it's 3½ years away, it's not too early to seek preliminary interest, since other critical pieces begin to fall in place when that choice is made. If you've been thinking about applying, now's the time to get in touch with the 2009 Biennial Committee so we can begin working with you in exploring your interest and developing your application.

Here are some of the site requirements. Among the most important are spatial—the capacity to provide enough meeting rooms for conference programs (75-100, with two large spaces such as auditoriums, ballrooms, or gymnasiums) located with convenient access to available and economical housing (hotels, motels, dorms) and accessible restaurants, coffee shops, and cafeterias sufficient to feed 500-600 participants. There should be accessible and economic transportation to the site. A high priority is the provision of facilities for disabled participants. Because many bring their families, affordable and accessible child-care is a convenience routinely provided. There should be surrounding areas with sites of interest—natural, environmental, historical, and/or recreational, so participants can relax, learn, and enjoy in their downtime.

We look to mid-summer (deadline will be posted on the SCRA Listserv) to complete our review of applications, so if you're considering inviting the Biennial Conference to your own home-town or university, or if you have questions or seek more details about the application process, please contact Carolyn Swift, at [cswift@aol.com](mailto:cswift@aol.com) or [cbswift@ku.edu](mailto:cbswift@ku.edu); snail-mail her at 1102 Hilltop Drive, Lawrence, KS 66044, or phone her at (785) 842-2751.



## William T. Grant Foundation Invitation for Applications for the William T. Grant Scholars Awards

Every year, the William T. Grant Foundation awards \$300,000 (\$60,000 per year for five years) to each of five post-doctoral, early career researchers from diverse disciplines. The grants fund research that increases knowledge on how to improve the lives of young people ages 8–25.

Now in its 26th year, the William T. Grant Scholars Program supports original research on:

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- how these settings can be improved, and
- how influential policymakers and practitioners use scientific evidence.

Application deadline for 2007: June 29, 2006. The Foundation is particularly interested in reaching early career scholars of color.

For application guidelines visit [www.wtgrantfoundation.org](http://www.wtgrantfoundation.org) or contact:

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Phone: 212-752-007; Email: [wtdgs@wtgrantfdn.org](mailto:wtdgs@wtgrantfdn.org)



# Society for Community Research & Action

## **The Division of Community Psychology (27) of the American Psychological Association**

The Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), Division 27 of the American Psychological Association, is an international organization devoted to advancing theory, research, and social action. Its members are committed to promoting health and empowerment and to preventing problems in communities, groups, and individuals. Four broad principles guide SCRA:

1. Community research and action requires explicit attention to and respect for diversity among peoples and settings.
2. Human competencies and problems are best understood by viewing people within their social, cultural, economic, geographic, and historical contexts.
3. Community research and action is an active collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and community members that uses multiple methodologies.
4. Change strategies are needed at multiple levels in order to foster settings that promote competence and well being.

The SCRA serves many different disciplines that focus on community research and action. Our members have found that, regardless of the professional work they do, the knowledge and professional relationships they gain in SCRA are invaluable and invigorating. Membership provides new ideas and strategies for research and action that benefit people and improve institutions and communities.

### **Who Should Join**

- ◆ Applied & Action Researchers
- ◆ Social and Community Activists
- ◆ Program Developers and Evaluators
- ◆ Psychologists
- ◆ Public Health Professionals
- ◆ Public Policy Makers
- ◆ Consultants
- ◆ Students from a variety of disciplines

### **SCRA Goals**

- ◆ To promote the use of social and behavioral science to enhance the well-being of people and their communities and to prevent harmful outcomes;
- ◆ To promote theory development and research that increase our understanding of human behavior in context;
- ◆ To encourage the exchange of knowledge and skills in community research and action among those in academic and applied settings;
- ◆ To engage in action, research, and practice committed to liberating oppressed peoples and respecting of all cultures;
- ◆ To promote the development of careers in community research and action in both academic and applied settings.

### **Interests of SCRA Members Include**

Empowerment & Community Development  
Training & Competency Building  
Prevention & Health Promotion  
Self-Help & Mutual Support  
Consultation & Evaluation  
Community Mental Health  
Culture, Race, & Gender  
Human Diversity  
Social Policy

### **SCRA Membership Benefits & Opportunities**

- ◆ A subscription to the *American Journal of Community Psychology* (a \$105 value);
- ◆ A subscription to *The Community Psychologist*, our outstanding newsletter;
- ◆ 25% Discount on books from Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers;
- ◆ Special subscription rates for the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*;
- ◆ Involvement in formal and informal meetings at regional and national conferences;
- ◆ Participation in Interest Groups, Task Forces, and Committees;
- ◆ The SCRA listserv for more active and continuous interaction about resources and issues in community research and action; and
- ◆ Numerous activities to support members in their work, including student mentoring initiatives and advice for new authors writing on race or culture.



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