As we greet Spring with enthusiasm, there are a variety of exciting SCRA updates. Our Executive Committee met February 2nd-4th in Atlanta, Georgia. Jim Emshoff and Georgia State University were gracious hosts for our productive meeting. This meeting serves an important purpose for us to come together to review the many facets of our strategic plan, capture our progress to date, and discuss and move forward with new initiatives. Members can review the briefing book (includes detailed annual reports from executive committee members, councils, committees, interest groups, special initiatives, strategic plans and proposals) online at http://www.scra27.org/who-we-are/leadership/scra-documents/. A big thank you to Elizabeth Thomas for putting it together – it comes in at 175 pages. Since most of you will not have the time to take a look at all of our progress, I would like to provide some highlights related to research, membership, and mini-grants.

Regarding research, first, a shout-out to Jack Tebes, who has done an amazing job with our SCRA journal and is serving in his last year as AJCP Editor. He has gone the extra mile to work with people from a variety of disciplines across the globe to facilitate publication in our journal. AJCP submissions are robust - 295 new manuscripts were submitted in 2016 (a 10% increase from the mean of the previous 6 years), with about 40% international authors. The rejection rate is high (over 70%), so it is very competitive. The journal continues on a trajectory of being cited more frequently and is well regarded by related disciplines. A new section – Highlights – has been added to summarize key contributions, and this will help with access and visibility of our research. Another strategy underway to increase visibility includes a virtual special issue of AJCP/JCP on immigration and refugees, with a policy statement as the lead – the timing couldn’t be better on this important issue. On another note, given the success of our Practice Council and Council on Education, a Research Council will be established to create opportunities to strengthen our research and visibility, including advanced research methods training, networks, mentoring, and integration with education and practice.

Regarding membership, there are a variety of ideas we are excited to implement regarding growing our membership. One example is a new award, the Student Membership Circle, to recognize community psychology and related programs that grow student membership in SCRA. There will be 3 tiers (Gold, Silver, Bronze), and award recipients will be determined based on the percent of students in the program who are members of SCRA during Biennial conference years. We will create a scorecard on our website to
publicize our friendly competition. Recognition will involve certificates and acknowledgement at the biennial, in the TCP, and on the website. We hope students and programs will gear up to participate!

In 2016, we distributed over $20,000 in mini-grants to foster and support work conducted by SCRA members. The Practice Council awarded 10 grants, and these projects include trauma intervention in Rwanda, arts intervention in NYC public schools, community development in Minnesota for the Red Lake Tribal Nation, Ubuntu Village School community program in Kansas, juvenile offender intervention in Mississippi, domestic violence service integration in Ecuador, and PAR methods to address intimate partner violence. The Council on Education (COE) awarded 6 grants, and these projects included a focus on collaborations, teaching, learning communities, student capacity building, and cross-national education. The Committee on Cultural, Ethnic, and Racial Affairs awarded 5 grants, and these projects focused on addressing Black student concerns, Muslim women teachers, reconnecting homeless military veterans with their communities, engaging through race, and urban agricultural practices. The Public Policy Committee awarded a grant to update and expand the SCRA Task Force report: How to help your community recover from disaster: A manual for planning and action. It is rewarding to support the diverse, impactful, and meaningful work being conducted by our members. Be on the lookout for mini-grant opportunities and biennial travel awards for 2017 to support your work and involvement and engagement in SCRA!

As a fitting ending to a productive midwinter meeting, there were a few of us who took a later flight home and had a chance to go to the Center for...
Welcome to Spring! As we transition into the next season it is a good time to reflect on the great work happening in our field. The Spring issue features several projects from community psychologists working in a variety of settings. Olya Glantsman and Nicole Freund provide us with an overview of the Practice Council and upcoming initiatives to support practitioners over the next year. From CERA’s column on negotiating intersections of identity to mentor students, to Gloria Levin’s profile of Kyrah Brown, we see the multiple ways that community psychologists challenge and shape the contexts in which they work. Coming off the EC midwinter meeting, we hope to provide more opportunities for you to share the great research and practical work you are doing. We look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming Biennial!

Dan and Tiffany

From the Editors

Daniel Cooper and Tiffany McDowell
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ENVIRONMENT & JUSTICE
The Environment & Justice Interest Group is focused on research and action related to global climate change and environmental degradation. With a focus on environmental justice, particularly how environmental change affects and often perpetuates social inequality, this group explores the role community psychology can and should play in understanding these urgent changes to our ecology.

Chair: Lena Eady, allianceondemocracy@gmail.com

INTEREST GROUPS*

AGING
The Aging Interest Group focuses on the productive role of aging in the community and the prevention of mental health problems in the elderly.

Chair: Andrew Hostetler, andrew.hostetler@umich.edu

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES
The Children, Youth & Families Interest Group facilitates the interests of child and adolescent development in high risk contexts, especially the effect of urban poverty and community structures on child and family development.

Chair: Michelle Ronayne, michelle.ronayne@gmail.com

COMMUNITY ACTION
The Community Action Interest Group explores the roles and contributions of people working in applied community psychology settings.

Chair: Bradley Olson, bradley.olson@mli.edu

COMMUNITY HEALTH
The Community Health Interest Group focuses on health promotion, disease prevention, and health care service delivery issues as they relate to the community.

Chair: Venonica M. Batú-Aburum, criolla@hotmail.com

COA INTEREST GROUPS*

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, & TRANSGENDER (LGBT)
The LGBT Interest Group increases awareness of the need for community research and action related to issues that impact LGBT people, and serves as a mechanism for communication, collaboration, and support among community psychologists who are either interested in research/services/policy related to LGBT people and communities, and/or who identify as LGBT.

Chair: Debbie Ojeda, debbie.ojeda@pdx.edu

ORGANIZATION STUDIES
The Organization Studies Interest Group is a community of scholars who are interested in community psychology themes (e.g., empowerment, ecological analysis, prevention, sense of community) in organizational contexts, and is focused on organizing study organizations, concepts, methods, models, and theories into community psychology.

Chair: Kimberly Boss, kimberly.b.bess@coastal.edu; Neil Boyd, neil.boyd@bucknell.edu

PREVENTION & PROMOTION
The Promotion & Prevention Interest Group seeks to enhance development of prevention and promotion research, foster active dialogue about critical conceptual and methodological action and implementation issues, and promote rapid dissemination and discussion of new developments and findings in the field.

Chair: Toshi Sasaki, tossao@gmail.com

RURAL
The Rural Interest Group is devoted to highlighting issues of the rural environment that are important in psychological research, service, and teaching.

Chair: Susana Helm, helms@dpw.hawaii.edu

SCHOOL INTERVENTION
The School Intervention Interest Group addresses theories, methods, knowledge base, and setting factors pertaining to prevention and health promotion in school.

Chair: Melissa Maras, marasme@missouri.edu; Joni W. Splett, splett@milbook.sc.edu

SELF-HELP/ MUTUAL SUPPORT
The self-help/mutual support Interest Group is an international organization of researchers, self-help leaders, and policy makers that promotes research and action related to self-help groups and organizations.

Chair: Greg Townley, gtownley@pdx.edu

TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE IN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH
The vision of the Transformative Change in Community Mental Health Interest Group is to strive to establish an alternative paradigm that focuses the promotion of mental health based in community settings based upon the values of citizenship, recovery, empowerment, inclusion, and social justice. This includes the articulation of models, the identification of promising practices, and research to demonstrate the value of this alternative paradigm and its exemplars.

Chair: Jose Ornelas, jorge.ornelas@iopa.pt

*Last updated 12/05/16
A Year in Review

In 2016, the Practice Council (PC) built on its strengths in order to gain momentum as members move into 2017 and the challenges that await community psychology practitioners. We describe these strengths in the updates that follow and share the new avenues for action that are being explored for 2017. Practitioner Connection.

Meeting Community and Practitioner Needs

Last year, the PC continued to provide starter funds for larger community interventions that engage local community members via the SCRA Community Mini-Grants program. In its 6th year, the Community Mini-Grants program funded a total of 10 impactful, small-scale, and community-based grants. A total of 25 reviewers were trained and 19 applications were received. The program has funded projects led by SCRA members in over 10 countries; and multi-year evaluation data indicates grants are impacting communities around the world and promoting the visibility of SCRA/Community Psychology. As we look to the coming year, small wins in community action will help mitigate more institutional difficulties caused by changes in the national conversation, and this program will be more important than ever. We are looking forward to helping communities do more important work in 2017. Peer Consultation Calls, continue to provide support to those engaged in community practice around the world. Callers have an opportunity to share their work with colleagues in similar and diverse domains, simultaneously giving and receiving ideas and assistance. This effort increases member growth and engagement while providing theoretical and practical support to participants. Pooling resources and convening people across both geographic distance and practice domains will be essential in efforts to sustain the social progress made in the last 40 years. The newly formed Welcoming & Recruiting (W & R) group aims to better guide and build connections with new and existing members of the council. The group develops strategies and processes to maximize member participation and engagement in the Practice Council as well as ensure that new members feel welcomed and find it easy to get involved. In doing so, we hope to promote connectedness among council members. Since Spring 2016, this workgroup has documented a list of priority areas to accomplish the overarching goal based on continuous discussions within the group and feedback from the larger Practice Council membership. Finally, many PC members continue to meet needs by serving as advisors for the Ask an Advisor service, sponsored by the Community Tool Box at the University of Kansas, in which advisors answer questions on community development from people all over the world.

Student Support

Practitioners start as students and supporting the next generation of practitioners is an important strategy for the PC. As a result of the ongoing conversation about the disconnect of undergraduate students getting involved in community psychology, the Community Psychology Association student chapter at Wichita State University was founded in 2015. An officially recognized student organization, CPsyA promotes membership growth and engagement as well as increases the professional presence of community psychology outside of SCRA. In addition to new work on a variety of social justice initiatives, they continue their work on sexual assault prevention at Wichita State University. The sexual assault project (an intentional mix of research and action) initially conducted focus groups with students and faculty and launched a survey assessing attitudes toward rape myths, evaluation of current campus-wide sexual assault resources, and needs for additional/different resources. Focus group moderation and transcription were carried out by both undergraduate and graduate students, and data from both the focus groups and survey were presented at the Midwestern Psychological Association Conference in May of 2016, giving undergraduate members the opportunity to both attend...
and present at the conference. In addition, two journal articles are currently in progress pertaining to the data collected, giving graduate students the opportunity to mentor undergraduate students through the submission process. Research on this project led to action in the form of presentations to Title IX Coordinator and other stakeholders, advocating for change with university administration and working to bridge gaps between community and campus services. In addition, last year, Wichita’s chapter pledged to support a similar chapter at DePaul University.

Visibility and Outreach

Practice Council members have been involved in the development of a number of books and publications this year. One example is the widely shared “10 Places Where Collective Impact Gets It Wrong” by Tom Wolff published in the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice and a follow-up article in Nonprofit Quarterly. In its 5th year, the Community Psychology Practice Blog continued to facilitate a dialogue and interest around Community Psychology topics among a varied audience and raise awareness about the field and the people who do Community Psychology related work. Since the beginning of the year, there were 5 blog posts on a variety of subjects related to the field. The Outreach Group of the Council continued to generate monthly bulletins (called THEory into ACTion) on innovative work in community practice. These bulletins are distributed to the SCRA list-serv and other community psychologists, APA media outlets, and some community practitioners in other disciplines. They are also posted to the Community Practice Blog and were also re-published in the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice.

Looking Ahead

Looking back on the successful past year, we cannot help but think about the future. What can we do to prevent the unraveling of what we, as a field, have achieved in the past 40-50 years? In raising this question and questions about how to sustain community development initiatives, the Practice Council has several ideas to pursue in 2017. Among these are creating an active network of community psychologists around the country to proactively gather information about the dismantlement of social justice protections, programs, or research in order to add to the compilation on SCRA27.org or to partner with the Public Policy Committee on Rapid Response Actions. The PC is also considering information dissemination strategies and working on effectively communicating action announcements to the broader SCRA membership. The power of practice is in collaborating to act, using research and evidence based approaches to address adaptive, evolving problems. While current events make for challenging times, we are looking forward to using this power both in our successful, established programs, as well as in new projects. As always, we invite all SCRA members to join us as we work to sustain progress and the values of a socially just world.

Committee on Ethnic and Racial Affairs
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Kinship, Justice and Students of Color
Written by Bianca Guzman
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In 2012, I published an article in the Journal of Community Psychology (Guzmán, 2012) called “The educational journey of a Latina feminist community psychologist.” This piece was part of a special issue on feminist community psychology. The main goal of that piece was to describe in some detail the journey that had led me to become a Latina feminist community psychologist. At that point in my career I had just been promoted to an associate professor at a primarily teaching institution. Over my 21 years in academia I have taught and mentored hundreds of students, mostly of color. Recently, I was asked by the Committee on Ethnic and Racial Affairs to write a follow up piece on my journey and to discuss how my journey has included students. My first thought is why would a piece like this be interesting to the field of community psychology. I mean really, what could I add that has not already been said about teaching and mentoring students of color? So, my response to this question is complicated. First, there is too few Latina women who receive doctoral degrees in psychology, many fewer specialize
in community psychology and fewer yet have the opportunity to teach and mentor at an urban institution that has a diverse student population. I am also a triple threat minority in that I am a woman, Latina, and an immigrant so the views and conclusions I hold about higher education may be unconventional. My colleagues and other academics comment that I am at the margins of my field. This is not an offensive comment to me since I have always felt that I am swimming upstream and that the theories and concepts that I endorse are often controversial. I find this a welcome challenge but it does not come without a lot of struggle. This idea of struggle is nothing new to people of color or to other groups or individuals that are often marginalized. Given this information perhaps what I share can provide some valuable information about how students of color can be mentored to succeed in higher education with techniques that may often seem unconventional. I must point out that I am not sharing any techniques that are radical; anyone can do the things that I am suggesting and I predict that rewarding experiences must follow. The other caveat that I want to mention is that I am 100% invested in the success of my students as I am sure we all are. I am also passionate and love interacting with them and I think the environment I create in the lab is warm and welcoming.

In order to situate my lived experiences with students I must explain my environmental context. The university where I reside is California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA) a comprehensive university designated a Hispanic serving institution. Cal State LA is located in University Hills near East Los Angeles, where more than 97% of the population is Latina/o, less than 6% of the residents aged 25 or older have a four-year degree, and 24.2% live below the federal poverty rate (U.S Census Bureau, 2014). The student population on campus is 60.9% Latino/a, 14.4% Asian American, 7.8% White, and 4.1% African American. The majority of Cal State LA students are the first in their families to attend college and many are first generation Americans (CSU, 2016). Over 70% of the University’s students come from households with few economic resources. In 2016, 2,932 Bachelor’s degrees were awarded to Latina/os (Malhorta, 2016). Incidentally, the New York Times has ranked Cal State LA as the number one university in the United States (US) to propel low income students into upward mobility based on a study conducted by the Equality of Opportunity Project. The study found that Cal State LA has propelled a higher percentage of students from the bottom fifth of income into the top fifth of US earners, from among 2,000 colleges and universities that were studied (Aisch, Buchanan, Cox, & Quealy, 2017). I believe this makes Cal State LA a pretty incredible place to work and make a difference.

I am a full professor of Chicano (a) Latina (o) Studies and I am an administrator. I currently direct the universities cradle to career pipeline called Great Outcomes (GO) East LA. The GO East LA initiative is a presidential initiative that is administered out of the Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good. The GO East LA Initiative is a partnership between Cal State LA, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)- East, and East Los Angeles College (ELAC). The main goal of GO East LA is to advance a college going culture in the East Los Angeles area and to ensure that Latina/o students have the opportunity to complete higher education. There are many activities that we conduct to outreach and educate the community such as leadership visits to all participating schools, parent academies, kindergarten college admissions days, college/university campus visits, community celebrations and forums. We also conduct evaluations and research projects as part of the initiative. As can be seen from the activities that I engage in I do have a support staff of students who assist in the daily operations of the work. So, while I no longer teach in a traditional classroom sense I do have a social science research lab that administers the GO East LA initiative and it is here where I have student interns, directed study students, work-study students, students completing thesis and dissertations. Moreover, prior to being in this position I was the chair of the Chicana (o) Latina (o) department and I also taught.

So, where do I begin? Recently,
I was reading a brief article about what the authors called impostor syndrome (Strahm, & Littlepage, 2017). The authors define impostor syndrome as an unwarranted fear that students have of being found out or discovered that they are stupid or unworthy to be a college student. The article goes on to conclude that the students who experience this syndrome in their sample were first-generation college students, working-class or poverty-class college students (sic), women, and/or students of color. The authors state that these students often described feeling inadequate—like they are frauds who do not deserve to be members of an intellectual or campus community. Although I can understand that students may often feel unprepared and uncertain about their abilities I think the conclusions reached by this work can be problematic. In my experience with hundreds of first-generation mostly Latina/o students that come from families with little economic resources I see first-hand the struggles they have on campus and feeling like an impostor is just one of the many things that may impede their educational success. Moreover, in the last decade researchers, have talked about student’s feeling a sense of belonging which to some extent suggests that students must conform and learn to belong to an institution in order to experience success is also challenging. This idea seems difficult to embrace when institutions of higher education have historically been dominant structures that perpetuate structural inequalities for students of color. For example, some researchers, have suggested that many students of color do not find a positive level of comfort on a university campus for their entire college career. Turner (1994) has pointed out that the metaphor of “we are a guest at someone else’s house” describes more what students feel. That is to say that students of color can never relax in someone else’s house and just put their feet up on the table, they must keep out of certain rooms and always be on their best behavior. Turner also suggests that this metaphor can be extended to the campus environment where students have no history of the space they occupy, there are no pictures that reflect their images, no scents they recognize and no sounds they hear in their own environments. I think what this work points to is that the behaviors of students and the outcomes of the interactions of student’s in an educational environment like a four-year university are complex and cannot be reduced to a syndrome or a sense of belonging. I am not suggesting that this work does not have worth, I am just not clear that the solutions being proposed are so one dimensional. As part of our training as community psychologists we do uphold that there are many factors to the success of students. So, do I have any suggestions? Well in my experience, I think that one of the ways that students can succeed is through the concept of kinship. A couple of years back I read
a book by Father Greg Boyle (2010) called *Tattoos on the heart: The power of boundless compassion*. The topic of the book was gang members and/or former gang members of all races and ethnicities. What I remember most about this book is that it made me see gang members in a different light. It shifted my conversation about who gang members were. Through Father Boyle’s stories of interactions with gang members both male and female I was able to see that there is no difference between a gang member and a student or myself. What this book taught me is that individuals who live in communities that have little to no resources are often left to turning to gangs in order to have kinship which is a complex web of support systems, feelings and emotions that humans need in order to be healthy and successful. I was reminded of this message again this past week when Father Boyle came to speak on campus. Father Boyle spoke eloquently about the lives of gang members and he kept saying “No kinship, no justice”. This really struck me because it made me question what justice looks like in an educational setting.

Merriam-Webster (2017) defines kinship in two ways 1) as the state of being related to the people in your family and 2) a feeling of being close or connected to other people. To me this signifies a pretty intense bond that humans make with each other in order to feel loved. Kinship means creating an environment with a student where the student feels perfectly whole and complete just the way they are. This idea of unconditional acceptance for a student is what I think is at the heart of feeling kinship. So how does this happen in a mentoring relationship between student and faculty member and/or administrator. I think that what is hard to understand is that in a traditional sense of a mentoring relationship we often assume that there is one individual who has more authority or position and this individual—usually the faculty/member administrator—is teaching or imparting some wisdom to the student/mentee. From my perspective, I do not believe that this is all a mentoring relationship can be. I am clear that students have as much to offer me as I have to offer them and it is in this development of a reciprocal mentoring relationship that creates a sense of kinship. In order to explain my mentoring relationships with my students I feel it necessary to describe the setting in which we interact.

As I mentioned previously I run a social science lab where students participate in a variety of ways. My goal for the lab is to have students have a well-rounded experience in community based research. I have learned over the years that in order to have a good cohort of students the magic number that I can mentor effectively is 10 students at any one given time. I feel that having any more than 10 students begins to cut down the quality of time and experiences I can create for the students and myself and that in turn affects kinship. I also believe that I am the one that needs to make the connections with the undergraduate students. I know from my own experiences as a psychology undergraduate student I hardly ever got to interact with the faculty member in charge of the research lab. Most often who I created kinship with was the graduate students. While I do believe that undergraduate students creating kinship with graduate students is important it is also vitally important for students to establish kinship with faculty members. The other criteria I have for students is that they must sign up for a year-long process whether they are student interns, directed study students, work-study students, or students completing thesis and dissertations. I also do not create a distinction between any of these student categories. To me all the students in the lab are here for one reason and that is to learn about how higher education works and how to create a path that they can be successful in. We have weekly two-hour staff meetings with students where we discuss the interventions we are conducting, the research, and the community services we are delivering.

As a lab, we also do weekly readings on a topic. The weekly readings are intended to advance the critical consciousness of the students so that students can awaken/advance their political consciousness as critical race scholars. Our meetings are also meant to be a safe space where students can learn from each other as well as from myself how to be critical researchers with the communities we conduct research with. They learn about the value of
research that is socially conscious. They learn about how to see individual human behavior from an asset-based perspective rather than a cultural-deficit sense. We discuss at some length the cultural biases we all may hold and how to break down our thoughts and behaviors around these issues. These conversations are often difficult to have and sit through. My students and I share our own hardship experiences about surviving on campus and in our daily lives. This is a time where we all can offer advice as to what techniques we can use to cope and survive with in hostile environments. I feel that it is also important for them to hear that I continue to experience racism, discrimination, macroaggressions, micro-insults and micro-assaults both on campus and in the community. Often students feel that once you get to be a professor that racism, discrimination and any kind of negative interactions stop for a faculty member/administrator. I want them to realize that as mostly students of color they will have to deal with these issues for the entire duration of their academic journey. Initially many students are shocked that I would continue to experience negative consequences. I think this belief that students hold may be because they see faculty and administrators as individuals who are far superior in a university setting that they should not be experiencing these events. I think that once students hear my experiences it helps them to humanize faculty and administrators. It helps them to see that we are people just like them and that we continue to have personal challenges along with all the success we may experience. I think it also makes me vulnerable and this is what creates affinity between my students and I. They root for me as much as I root for them and once that occurs we are kin.

It is in these meetings where students share their lives and their insecurities. Prior to beginning our meetings, we always have a check-in where the students and I talk about our week and we say whatever we need to say to be present in the meeting. It is during these check-ins that we learn about each other’s aspirations, shortfalls and successes. We share family events, health concerns and overall life activities. In my experience our lab space becomes an extension of their family. This is not to say that we do not experience challenges and there are students who have not respected our safe space. All of these things have occurred and we have addressed these issues and have developed solutions that work for the entire group. We negotiate and re-examine our practices continuously. We call each other out if we feel someone has been inappropriate or hurt someone’s feelings. I have to admit this process takes a lot of commitment and energy and it is so worth it when it works. I see students who enter the lab scared to voice an opinion open up over the year and take leadership roles and offer advice about issues that we might be experiencing. The other key thing that happens in this process of kinship is that students become family to each other. They have each other’s back they become good friends and often go to events together outside of the lab. They give each other rides, they come to each other’s rescue if someone is sick and they cover for each other when necessary. They love and care for each other like family. This enables students to trust and this trust lets students explore issues they would have never considered.

One issue that I see student’s consistently exploring after they begin participating in the lab is the idea of graduate school. Many times, when students first come to the lab they are just looking to finish their bachelor’s degree and nothing more. As they watch other students talk about their aspirations and experiences in applying to master’s and doctoral programs they begin to change. Pretty soon they are also talking about graduate programs. To me this is just about the most rewarding experience I can have and in the 21 years that I have been teaching all the students that have participated in my lab have completed their bachelor’s degree and many have moved on to graduate programs. Finally, I am at a point where I have students that have become full professors and administrators and I just marvel at the idea that I had the opportunity to have been of service to them. As a final note, I have to say that part of kinship is also sharing important events, food and having fun. I have had the privilege to do all these things with my students. I have even become a godmother to some of my student’s children. First, we always have food in the lab. I
find that most college students are always hungry and so students are almost always in a better mood if they have some food. In addition to food in the lab we celebrate monthly birthdays and you guessed it we bring food in a potluck style. I also have events in my house and student’s invite me to their family events. The most special event of all is graduation where I get to meet my student’s parents and I get to tell them how incredible their student is. These are the times I enjoy most of all seeing the families be so proud of the things their student has accomplished.

In conclusion, I return to the idea of kinship creating justice. Can I claim that I have contributed to justice for at least the students I have mentored and have mentored me throughout the years? My answer is that I have worked locally and narrowly with small groups of Latina/o students over the years and I feel that all of the students that have been in my lab are creating justice in the settings they are in. If this is part of the criteria, then I say “yes, I have made a small difference in the microcosm of my side of the world.” Moreover, I have written these observations in the spirit of offering my insights about what practices can advance successful students of color. My observations are not definitive and may not be useful to some but the thoughts I have shared have been my lived experiences.

References
Introduction

This report presents findings related to training in competencies from the 2016 Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) Council of Education (COE) Survey of Graduate Programs in Community Psychology, including the Competencies for Community Psychology Practice (“Practice Competencies”; Connell et al., 2013) and Competencies for Community Research (“Research Competencies”; Christens et al., 2015). The report also examines findings on training programs’ challenges and possible relationships between these challenges and the breadth and types of competency training they offer. Subsequent reporting will present findings related to other aspects of the survey, including questions regarding composition of faculty and students and career paths of students post-graduation. The 2016 COE survey is the eighth such survey since 1987 (cf. Connell et al., 2013). The last COE survey (Connell et al., 2013) was the first to include the Practice Competencies. These competencies were developed by the SCRA Practice Council and COE to help establish community psychology practice as a legitimate area of study and professional focus, distinct from but of comparable importance to academic scholarship (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012). As shown in Table 1, they include five Foundational Competencies, said to undergird all areas of practice, and well as 11 Specific Competencies in three practice areas. The practice competencies are now widely disseminated and used as bases for resources and tools for educators, programs, and professional training activities in community psychology (cf. Scott & Wolfe, 2015).

The success of the practice competencies stimulated interest in whether a similar and complementary set of competencies could be used to help refine training in community psychology research. In 2014, the COE (at that time, the Council of Educational Programs [CEP]) began working on developing research competencies. This work included semi-structured interviews with 19 senior and early career SCRA researchers focusing on the most important research skills in the training of community researchers and in designing and conducting impactful studies, subsequently described in a 2015 issue of TCP (Christens et al., 2015). In similar manner to the practice competencies, the research competencies include five Foundational Research Competencies, or competencies underlying all areas of research, as well as Specific Research Competencies in the areas of research design, analysis, and theory (Table 2), with large numbers of specific skills in each of these categories, reflecting the heterodoxy of community research (Tebes et al., 2014). Questions regarding the extent of training in these competencies were included in the 2016 Survey of Graduate programs for the first time. Aims of the report include examining: 1) the extent of training in practice and research competencies and challenges reported by programs; 2) differences in competencies and challenges by program degree level (masters vs. Ph.D.) and type (standalone vs. other); and 3) the ways in which training in research and practice competency areas relate to challenges.

Methods

To prepare for the 2016 survey, the COE compiled contact
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Definition: “The ability to ...”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundational Principles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Perspectives</td>
<td>articulate and apply multiple ecological perspectives and levels of analysis in community practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>articulate and apply a collective empowerment perspective, to support communities that have been marginalized in their efforts to gain access to resources and to participate in community decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural and Cross-cultural Competence</td>
<td>value, integrate, and bridge multiple worldviews, cultures, and identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Inclusion and Partnership</td>
<td>promote genuine representation and respect for all community members, and act to legitimize divergent perspectives on community and social issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Reflective Practice</td>
<td>Identify ethical issues in one’s own practice and act to address them responsibly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Program Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Development, Implementation and</td>
<td>partner with community stakeholders to plan, develop, implement and sustain programs in community settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention and Health Promotion</td>
<td>articulate and implement a prevention perspective, and to implement prevention and health promotion community programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community and Organizational Capacity-Building</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Leadership and Mentoring</td>
<td>engage, energize, and mobilize community members and groups regarding an issue of shared importance; and to identify personal strengths and social and structural resources that they can develop further to enhance empowerment, community engagement, and leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small and Large Group Processes</td>
<td>intervene in small and large group processes, in order to facilitate the capacity of community groups to work together productively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Development</td>
<td>identify and integrate use of human and material resources, including community assets and social capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation and Organizational Development</td>
<td>facilitate growth of an organization’s capacity to attain its goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community and Social Change</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and Coalition Development</td>
<td>help groups with common interests and goals to do together what they cannot do apart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>help a community develop a vision and take actions toward becoming a healthy community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Organizing and Community Advocacy</td>
<td>work collaboratively with community members to gain the power to improve conditions affecting their community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Policy Analysis, Development and Advocacy</td>
<td>build and sustain effective communication and working relationships with policy makers, elected officials, and community leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Education, Information Dissemination, and Building Public Awareness</td>
<td>communicate information to various segments of the public, to strengthen competencies and awareness, or for advocacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Research</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Community Research</td>
<td>work with community partners to plan and conduct research that meet high standards of scientific evidence that are contextually appropriate, and to communicate the findings of that research in ways that promote community capacity to pursue community goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>partner with community/setting leaders and members to promote program improvement and program accountability to stakeholders and funders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Competency domains and definitions described by Wolfe and Dalton (2012).
## Table 2. Competencies for Community Psychology Research (Christens et al., 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Definition: “The ability to…”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundational Competencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions &amp;</td>
<td>The ability to work with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage Points</td>
<td>community partners to identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>key research questions and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leverage points for research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to promote social action and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Community</td>
<td>The ability to work with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>community partners to plan and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conduct research that meets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high standards of scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evidence that are contextually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate, and to communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the findings of that research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in ways that promote community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>capacity to pursue community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage Collaborations</td>
<td>The ability to build and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manage collaborations across</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disciplines, methodological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strengths, and sectors to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conduct actionable community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Community</td>
<td>The ability to think critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Models</td>
<td>and analytically about the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relationships between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evidence, theory, and practice,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and to capture and produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>models of community change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>The ability to partner with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>community/setting leaders and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>members to promote program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improvement and program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accountability to stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and funders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Design Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quasi-experimental designs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mixed-methods designs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participatory research</td>
<td>Sampling &amp; data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>designs</td>
<td>• Team science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Survey &amp; interview protocol</td>
<td>• Meta-analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>designs</td>
<td>• Prevention science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluation</td>
<td>• Policy analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clinical &amp; prevention trial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>designs</td>
<td>• Research Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Data Analysis Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality data collection and</td>
<td>Missing data and data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management</td>
<td>reduction techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Basic qualitative methods</td>
<td>• Ethnographic approaches and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Descriptive quantitative</td>
<td>methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analyses</td>
<td>• Power analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multivariate inferential</td>
<td>• Agent-based and system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>methods</td>
<td>dynamics modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nested/hierarchical data</td>
<td>• Network analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structures</td>
<td>• Spatial analyses (e.g., GIS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Longitudinal analysis</td>
<td>• Profile analysis (e.g., cluster analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structural equation modeling</td>
<td>• Econometrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflective methods</td>
<td>• Epidemiologic methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advanced qualitative</td>
<td>• Multi-level SEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approaches</td>
<td>• Analysis of social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Measurement (e.g.,</td>
<td>data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychometrics)</td>
<td>• Research Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus groups</td>
<td>• Other branches of psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Research Theories &amp;</td>
<td>• Community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives</td>
<td>• Policies and policy change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ecological theories</td>
<td>• Social determinants of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Human well-being/flourishing</td>
<td>health; disparities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empowerment and power</td>
<td>• Broader social science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Theories of intervention</td>
<td>theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and change</td>
<td>• Community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critical theory</td>
<td>• Policies and policy change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Democratic/political theory</td>
<td>• Social determinants of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organizational development</td>
<td>health; disparities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Competency domains and definitions are further described in Christens et al (2015), including more specific definitions for some of the individual competencies in Design, Data Analysis, & Theories & Perspectives.
Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, & Correlations of Competencies and Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>(A)</th>
<th>(B)</th>
<th>(C)</th>
<th>(D)</th>
<th>(E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) Foundational Practice</td>
<td>3.31 (0.53)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Specific Practice (overall)</td>
<td>2.69 (0.52)</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) Foundational Research</td>
<td>3.07 (0.51)</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) Specific Research</td>
<td>2.56 (0.41)</td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(E) Number of challenges</td>
<td>1.40 (1.35)</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a 1 = None, 2 = Exposure, 3 = Experience, 4 = Expertise

b Mean of Practice areas (Program Development, Capacity Building, Social Change)

c Mean of Research areas (Research Design, Analysis, & Theory)

d Total possible = 6; Range: 0-4

e Grouped by degree level, only master’s programs master’s n = 17) showed a significant relationship (master’s programs: r = .60, p < .05; Ph.D. programs: r = .14, ns)

** p < .01 * p < .05

information on all graduate programs in community psychology affiliated with SCRA, and sought to identify any unaffiliated programs via requests to the SCRA listserv. A short preliminary survey was used to help ensure that the additional programs identified through the listserv were adequately focused on community psychology training to qualify for inclusion. These efforts identified 56 programs, whose contact person (typically the program director) received an email invitation to participate in the COE survey. Following a series of follow-up email messages and phone calls, 52 programs completed the survey (93% response rate). For each individual research and practice competency, the survey asked respondents to indicate the level of training their program provides, on a 4-point scale (1= None, 2=Exposure, and 3 = Experience, 4=Expertise). The survey also asked respondents
to identify any challenges their program had experienced in the past year from a list of six, including challenges related to attracting and recruiting high quality student applicants, faculty recruitment and retention, and the status and regard for their programs in their respective departments and university. Table 3 reports means and standard deviations among all respondents for practice and research competency areas and program challenges, as well as correlations among these variables.

**Findings**

**Overall Levels of Training & Challenges**

Overall Research vs. Practice Foundational & Specific Competencies. Figure 1A compares averages of: 1) research versus practice Foundational Competencies, the basic competencies that enhance all aspects of research or practice (e.g., “Ethical Reflective Practice”, “Research Questions & Leverage Points”; see definitions in Tables 1 & 2), as well as 2) Specific Competencies, or particular types of skills in research (e.g., Mixed Methods, SEM) versus practice (e.g., “Community Leadership and Mentoring”, “Public Policy Analysis”). These averages represent differences in basic research and practice training skills, versus the more specific applications of these skills, respectively. Among the Foundational Practice Competencies, ratings were, on average, between the level of “Experience” (3) (i.e., a level such that “Most students gain a basic
Table 4. Comparison of Competency Levels by Program Degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Program Degree (N = 51)^a</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>t^c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s (I) (n = 17)</td>
<td>Ph.D. (J) (n = 34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Competencies^b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational Practice</td>
<td>3.18 (0.60)</td>
<td>3.38 (0.49)</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>-1.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Practice by area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>2.88 (0.63)</td>
<td>2.83 (0.79)</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>2.65 (0.66)</td>
<td>2.62 (0.58)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Change</td>
<td>2.56 (0.64)</td>
<td>2.56 (0.60)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Competencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational Research</td>
<td>2.99 (0.50)</td>
<td>3.11 (0.51)</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Research by area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>2.27 (0.38)</td>
<td>2.77 (0.36)</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>-4.27**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>1.95 (0.51)</td>
<td>2.55 (0.41)</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>-4.11**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>2.68 (0.42)</td>
<td>2.73 (0.46)</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Challenges^e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of challenges</td>
<td>1.41 (1.50)</td>
<td>1.40 (1.29)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a For t tests, two observations from Ph.D. programs at the same university were averaged

^b 1 = None, 2 = Exposure, 3 = Experience, 4 = Expertise

^c df adjusted to account for unequal variances

^d Mean across the three specific competency areas

^e Total possible = 6; Range: 0-4

** p < .01   * p < .05
ability” to use the competency) and “Expertise” (4) (i.e., “Most students gain an advanced ability to use this competency”). Somewhat lower ratings were found among Foundational Research Competencies, closer to the “Experience” (3) level (paired \(t = 3.72, p < .01\)). Among Specific Practice and Specific Research competencies, practice averages also surpassed those for research (paired \(t = 2.54, p < .05\)).

**Comparisons among specific research & practice competency types**

Figures 1B and 1C show comparisons among specific practice and specific research areas, respectively. Among practice areas, competencies focusing on programs, or “Community Program Development” were rated more highly (i.e., closer to the “Experience level” [3]), than those focusing on work with a broader range of stakeholders and settings, including those falling in the areas of “Community & Organizational Capacity Building” (paired \(t\) vs. Community Program Development: -2.4, \(p < .05\)), and “Community & Social Change” (paired \(t\) vs. Community Program Development: -2.79, \(p < .01\)). Among specific research competency areas, mean scores on both Research Design and Research Theory were greater than those for Research Analysis (Design vs. Analysis paired \(t = 6.04, p < .001\); Theory vs. Analysis paired \(t = 4.99, p < .001\)).

Challenges Reported by Programs. A majority of programs (35 of 52, or 67.3%) reported experiencing one or more challenges, with almost three quarters of these (25 of 35, or 71.4%) reporting problems with attracting student applicant pools of adequate size, quality, or both. Over half (20 of 35) reported problems with attracting or retaining high quality faculty. Fewer respondents (10 or 19.2%) reported challenges related to their programs’ status in their departments or universities.

**Program Group Differences**

No significant differences in extent of research and practice training in standalone versus other community programs were detected, though some were detected between master’s and Ph.D. programs. Table 4 shows results of independent samples t-tests comparing program degree types. Respondents from both master’s and Ph.D. programs indicate training students to similar degrees of competence in both research and practice Foundational competencies, and in specific practice competencies. In specific research areas, respondents from Ph.D. programs gave higher ratings for two of the three areas (i.e., Research Design and Analysis, but not Research Theory).

**Relationships of Competencies to Challenges**

As shown in Table 3, only training in specific practices was related to the number challenges reported by programs, such that respondents who reported engaging in more training in specific practice areas also reported experiencing more problems. The strength of this association varied greatly for master’s and Ph.D programs however, with a stronger association between specific practice competencies in master’s programs (\(r = .60, p < .05\)) than in Ph.D programs (\(r = .14, ns\)).

**Discussion**

Historically, SCRA graduate program surveys have tended to focus on broad descriptive or indicators of program health or performance, such as number of students, faculty, degrees conferred, or professional outcomes. The attempt to comprehensively assess training in specific competencies for practice and research in the 2016 survey is a first for the field. Given the newness of this work, the findings should be interpreted tentatively, but suggest potentially important avenues for discussion. Several sessions at the upcoming SCRA biennial in Ottawa focusing on 2016 survey results, including a program directors meeting, a roundtable, and symposium, will provide opportunities to examine more detailed findings from the 2016 survey, as well as compare this iteration of the survey to similar findings from the 2012 survey (e.g., on the Practice Competencies). To help drive these discussions, brief comments on possible implications of findings, below, are accompanied by questions for further consideration or empirical investigation. We hope that TCP readers can consider these prior to the conference and bring their ideas to these sessions.

Is there a need to strengthen training in practices focusing on community-level action (i.e., activities beyond working with specific programs or interventions)? Overall, levels of training reported
for practice competencies exceeded those for research competencies. This result should be encouraging to those concerned with placing community practice on an equal footing with research in community training programs. Respondents indicated providing more training in competencies focusing on program-level work, versus those concerned with agency capacity building, neighborhoods, etc. Descriptions of community psychology emphasize multiple levels of ecological analysis as one of the defining characteristics of the field. But can community psychology consider multiple levels (beyond those of individuals and programs) when many of its training programs provide only “Exposure” to, rather than “Experience” with competencies that would support such work?

Should certain programs (e.g., master’s level) narrow the focus of specific research design, analysis, or theoretical competencies addressed by their training? Generally, graduate programs appear to be addressing the broad range of research skills and perspectives examined by the survey fairly well. Both master’s and Ph.D. programs are providing a strong grounding in the Foundational Research Competencies, but average Research Design and Analysis ratings were lower for master’s than Ph.D. programs, generally indicating an “Exposure” level of training, or merely acquainting students, rather than providing a basic ability to use the competency. Would master’s students be better served by a more in depth focus on a subset of research areas?

Mo’ competencies, mo’ problems – it depends? The breadth of perspectives and skills encompassed by the Practice and Research Competencies may be unavoidable given the pluralistic nature of the field. Attempting to train students to higher levels of expertise in the full array of areas covered by the Practice and Research Competencies, however, could strain programs’ resources. This could result in challenges for recruiting students and faculty who can learn or teach skillfully in all of these areas, or decrease support for the caliber of work necessary to protect programs’ statuses in their departments and universities. Do survey results support this concern? Our findings suggest that the answer may be determined partly by the nature of the program involved, as Ph.D. programs failed to show evidence of such strain (i.e., no association of training and challenge levels), but a very strong \((r = .6)\) relationship of this kind was shown among master’s programs. Findings suggest further exploration of this issue may be important to ensuring quality and sustainability of training, especially in master’s level settings.

We hope our readers consider these questions (and pose others), and we look forward to sharing more of the survey results and engaging in discussions of their implications with you at the upcoming Biennial. See you in Ottawa!

Footnote
1 In the original publication of the practice competencies (Connell et al., 2013), these are referred to as Foundational Principles (rather than Foundational Competencies). Since the Foundational Principles are also considered competencies, they are referred to as such in the current paper for economy of presentation (i.e., rather than Foundational Practice Principles, they are referred to as Foundational Practice Competencies).

References


Footnote
1 In the original publication of the practice competencies (Connell et al., 2013), these are referred to as Foundational Principles (rather than Foundational Competencies). Since the Foundational Principles are also considered competencies, they are referred to as such in the current paper for economy of presentation (i.e., rather than Foundational Practice Principles, they are referred to as Foundational Practice Competencies).
 Simulation modeling has recently gained traction in community psychology as a research tool. One approach to simulation modeling is particularly useful for incorporating context: agent-based modeling (ABM). While it is becoming more common in community psychology, there are few training opportunities available for community psychologists to learn how to incorporate it into their work. To address this, we offered a one-day comprehensive workshop to introduce community psychologists to agent-based modeling, with support from a Council of Education Programs Mini-Grant and from the Michigan State University Psychology Department. Here, we will provide some additional information about this approach to research, report out about our event, and discuss next steps for disseminating training about ABM.

What is agent-based modeling?

Agent-based models are simulation models that allow researchers to explore a number of scenarios using a computer. In particular, this approach can be used to examine situations where agents (which can be defined as any type of entity, individual or organization) interact with each other or their environment and generate macro level phenomena (Neal & Lawlor, 2015). For example, a researcher working with an intervention might want to examine how a different recruitment strategy where participants use word of mouth to enroll others in a program might affect long-term program outcomes. Modeling this process allows the researcher to have some insights into how this change might influence outcomes without engaging in trial and error in the community setting. Thus, researchers can save resources and community members' time by using simulation modeling as a first check to see how a problem is operating or how an intervention might influence it. This approach has also been used in collaborative contexts with communities to build participatory models to represent problems of interest to them, making it a great fit for the research orientation that man community psychologists take with their work.

The Workshop

We offered a one-day workshop broken up into several parts: (1) learning about ABM and appropriate uses for it, (2) building a basic model as a group, (3) modifying our model to test interventions. First, we discussed ABM methodology and explored a few simple agent-based models that help to establish a background understanding of how they work and what kinds of problems it is useful for addressing. Next, we generated a model of a zombie apocalypse as a group. While this may seem silly, it is an easy metaphor that can be extended to think about problems community psychologists address, like the spread of an illness in a community or the diffusion of information. This provided an opportunity for participants to learn basic programming in Netlogo, a free resource for building agent-based models that is popular in ABM research (Lawlor & Neal, 2016; Neal, 2015). After generating a basic common model, participants had the opportunity to work independently and in groups to create interventions to address the zombie apocalypse. They implemented solutions in their models to see what would be most helpful for saving humanity from zombie-ism and everyone had a chance to present their findings at the end of the workshop. Solutions ranged from vaccinating against zombie-ism to sending in military reinforcements to protect the population from those who were infected. Running the models helped demonstrate how different solutions to the problem could generate a variety of outcomes.
An example of a zombie apocalypse simulation: gray agents are zombies, black agents are humans

Reflections & Next Steps

We were thrilled to have participants from a variety of universities around the Midwest and from a diversity of programs promoting psychological and community-based research. Surveys from the workshop indicate that many participants felt that it was worthwhile and helpful in finding ways to use this approach in their own work. In particular, participants reported benefitting from generating their own model interventions. One participant said, "I enjoyed the hands on experience of building a novel zombie model. It was nice that at the end of the workshop, I had some facility with Netlogo syntax." Another indicated that the intervention development process "gave me a greater breadth of coding than the rest of the day, which I think will be helpful going forward." However, the workshop provided an introductory overview of ABM and further training opportunities will be critical to give participants the depth of knowledge they may want or need to use ABM in their own work. In order to support further exploration and use of ABM, we are taking a few actions. First, we are planning a series of happy hour meet ups for local ABM users to gather and discuss their projects and workshop problems in their own models. We also intend to have an informal gathering at the upcoming SCRA biennial to bring together community psychologists with interests in simulation modeling. Finally, we are exploring options for offering continued training opportunities to community psychologists to reach a wider audience and to provide more depth in content for those who want to go beyond the beginner level. We are very grateful to the Council for Education Programs for making it possible to offer the first workshop with mini grant funds and we're excited to continue facilitating this type of educational programming in the future!

Learn More

If you would like to learn more, you can access the materials from our workshop, including powerpoint slides and example models at https://msusimulation.wordpress.com/. For an introduction to ABM for community-based research, you can also take a look at our recent chapter in Jason & Glenwick’s Handbook of Methodological Approaches to Community-based Research (Neal & Lawlor, 2015).

References


International Affairs

Understanding home: a reflection with ethnic young women who are victims of sex-trafficking in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Written by Yui Sum Poon

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Background

The trafficking of women is a major problem that exists in Thailand, with a realistic estimate of around 100,000 and 200,000 female sex workers throughout the country (Peracca et.al, 1998). Women-trafficking can emerge through various forms, including both voluntary and involuntary situations, as well as rural-urban migrations and cross-border migrations. Moreover, it usually arises from situations such as poverty, familial abuse, neglect, and caregiver drug and alcohol use (Farley et.al. 2003; Herman, 2003, Kara, 2009). These women are often pressured into, and stay within, the sex-trafficking industry due to the lack of viable livelihood alternatives (Mah, 2011).

In Thailand, ethnic minorities (such as Burmese, Chinese and Shan people) are more prone to be the target of traffickers due...
to their perceived ignorance and lack of citizenship (Mah, 2011). This is crucial as their lack of citizenship is “the single greatest factor for minorities in Thailand to become trafficked to sex work or to be otherwise exploited” (Arnold & Bertone, 2002). Their undocumented status makes them invisible to government and state regulators, and they are granted fewer legal rights than ethnic Thais (Kara, 2009). Their minority status is also the root of various additional psychological problems, such as fear and anxiety of arrest, loneliness due to language barriers, and social discrimination (Beyrer, 2001). Moreover, these are also the factors that limit counseling service use even when it is readily available.

In response to the devastating human-trafficking situation in Northern Thailand, foreign agencies flooded into Chiang Mai to provide humanitarian aid. Through the establishment of safe houses, boarding schools and orphanages, Chiang Mai slowly became one of the major hubs for foreign non-governmental organizations. Agencies often provide physical shelter, as well as some forms of education and vocational training. These agencies emphasize on building the person’s sense of stability and trauma healing in a secluded space. When the situation allows, there are also arrangements for repatriation and reintegration.

A Photovoice study at NLCF

With this context in mind, I would like to explore the conceptualizations of ‘home’ within this ongoing mobilized population. Traditionally, home is often referenced as a physical space. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, for example, the groundwork of ‘home’ is shaped by foundational needs – suitable physical/material structures and environment, safe environment, adequate space and center of fundamental activities such as sleeping and eating (Maslow, 1943). Furthermore, people expand home as a specific construct that is important in relation to one’s sense of belonging. As the circumstances young sex-trafficked victims face does not necessarily allow the attachments with physical spaces or relational individuals, the concept of ‘home’ might present itself in a different light.

Using my 6-month internship with New Life Center Foundation (NLCF) in Chiang Mai, Thailand through the Human Needs and Global Resources (HNGR) program at Wheaton College from June to December 2015, I investigated the conceptualizations of ‘home’ within a group of seven such young women ages 18-22 using photovoice, hoping to get a direct narrative on their understanding of ‘home’ amidst their backgrounds. Photovoice is a participatory action research method that allows the exploration of a topic through photos and group discussions (Wang, 1997). I adopted this method as it provides opportunity to enter or, a total of 35 photographs were collected and discussed over 3 photovoice sessions.

Through a thematic analysis of the conversation and pictures, it is found that ‘home’ remains to be found largely on familial-like relationships within women who had experienced sex-trafficking trauma despite previous literature suggest that there is a high prevalence of physical and emotional trauma inflicted within the family of these women. As the seven women unpacked what ‘home’ meant to them based on their context and understanding, talk of parents and siblings permeated the conversation, with extremely specific memories described with clarity in association of the concept of home. For instance, to Mandy (pseudonym), a 22-year-old Lisu participant, stated that, “the most important thing that makes me feel at home is family. Because no matter where we live – even if that place is not the place we call home – and we live with family, I can still feel at home.” She further presented a picture of a family as illustration (Figure 1).

Further exploration through open coding identified four themes that interacts with the emphasis on familial figures and relationships: 1) Warmth that is interpersonal in nature, with focus on physical proximity and closeness; 2) Togetherness that represents the antithesis to loneliness and a genuine understanding between people; 3) Safety that refers to the antithesis to harm, especially harm that is related to one human being inflicting to another; and 4) Diversity that emphasized the appreciation of each family members’ unique contribution to the home.

Home beyond physical space
Grounded by the foundational needs of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs – suitable physical/material structures and environment, safe environment, adequate space and center of fundamental activities such as sleeping and eating—home is often referenced to physical space (Maslow, 1943). Concurrently, the Thai word for ‘home’, baan (บ้าน), directly translates as ‘house’ in English, suggesting a spatial and physicality of the understanding of ‘home.’ Despite the traditional and cultural conceptualization of home, to women who are victims of sex trafficking and abuse, the results suggested that the concept of home goes beyond a physical space and also encompasses key relationships. Sixsmith’s (1986) inter-related model offers insight to this finding. Centered on the complexity and interrelatedness of personal, social and physical spheres, her model emphasizes the dynamic nature of “home.” The interactivity of the four themes – warmth, togetherness, safety and diversity – demonstrates this theory as they relate with familial relationships, yet each uniquely stands on its own. Warmth and safety focuses on the emotion coming out of the familial interactions, togetherness focuses on the presence of the relationships, whereas diversity focuses on the perception of personal involvement. As a result, the identification of distinct and separate themes exists only in an analytical sense, in actuality they are indivisible and intertwined together (Sixsmith, 1986).

**Implications and Recommendations**

Based on this project’s exploration, there are two major recommendations for future programming in healing and reintegration for women who are victims, or at high risk for, sex trafficking and abuse.

First, organizations should consider providing services beyond a physical safe space, and include psychosocial elements of ‘home.’ Programming should address themes of warmth, togetherness, safety and diversity when considering the meaning of home for young women. As the identified themes are of high relational importance, this implies the importance of commitment in the selection of part-time staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers should be willing to commit to a minimum of serving for one year. This allows sufficient time for them to build trust and cultivate an environment with warmth, togetherness, safety and diversity with the women. Contrastingly, a meta-analysis by Barak and his colleagues (2001) indicated quick staff turnovers, or disengaging service-providers disrupt the process of trust-building between the two parties, detrimental to both the clients and remaining staff members, hindering cultivation of a sense of home in the physical space.

Second, organizations should consider including family, or familial-equivalent members to actively participate in these women’s post-traumatization and/or post-separation healing processes. Different than repatriation and reintegration, the inclusion of these familial figures, such as mother, father, guardian figures, and siblings, will likely facilitate these women’s sense of belonging to a home amidst locational separation for an extended period of time. Undeniably, potential risks remain in this proposal, as unhealthy communication, or even abusive patterns remains in these family systems (Kara, 2009). Therefore, it is further recommended that social and/or health professionals should carefully monitor this family-inclusive healing process. This could include accompanying women visiting their families, assessing household environment, educating families on communication and healing processes through life skills workshop, encouraging communication between family members and the women during times of separation, and making family counseling services available for affected families.

The concept of home holds great importance, especially to women who had endured trafficked experiences. Continual effort should be made in including the relationship-centered elements into post-trauma programming, offering
an alternate vision of home aside from a roof that shelters.  
Special thanks to Dr. Ezer Kang, Rev. Kit Ripley, Peggy Schmitt, all NLCF staff and women  
Endnotes:  
[1] To Amara, an Aka participant, the picture of a dining table is “very warm” and “very full”, and “we would not fear anything because we have a lot to eat, and we are full of our heart.”  
[2] To Bekah, a Lahu participant, the picture of a girl biking alone “makes me feel alone,” but “if I don’t have lonely feeling, and have a lot of people together, then I will feel at home and I will think of my home.”  
[3] To Karen, an Aka participant, the picture of a mosquito net makes her feel at home. She said, “It is because at home I feel warm, I feel comfortable, it feels safe, nobody will harm me. The mosquito would not bite me, and nobody will harm me.”  
[4] To Bekah, the picture of colorful bottles is important to her. She said, “this is important to make me think of home – the colorfulness of the bottles. Just like how each of us are different, the different bottles are like parents and friends, some of us are red, some of us are blue, and some of us are black… there is a lot of colors, and that makes me feel at home.”  

References  
“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 intent is to personalize Community Psychology as it is lived by its diverse practitioners. Prior columns are available online, at http://www.scra27.org/publications/tcp/tcp-past-issues These past columns contain a wealth of life advice gleaned from over 60 profiled community psychologists, from graduate students to retirees, representing an invaluable resource for community psychologists.

For this installment, we feature an early career community psychologist who has always been an activist in her communities -- a perfect fit for Community Psychology. Although she struggled at finding a position after earning her doctorate, she eventually landed a challenging and rewarding position in the nonprofit world. Her story is instructive for the many recent Ph.D.’s who are caught in the Catch 22 of applying for an entry-level professional job but expected to already have considerable prior professional experience and accomplishments.

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The name “Kyrah,” meaning “sweet” in Swahili, was found by her parents in a naming book; they added as her middle name – Kenya: the country of Kenya with an added “a.” Both her parents are educators in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her mother (Ruby) is a school teacher, and her father (Ron, who long worked with at-risk youth) now substitute teaches. However, his real claim to fame in Little Rock is that, for over 25 years, he has been a reggae music promoter and disk jockey, professionally known as Ras Levi. For example, he founded and has long run an annual One Love Bob Marley festival in the city.

Kyrah and her (younger) sister, Anikae, were raised in Little Rock’s small town environment where everyone knows everyone. Bisected by the Arkansas River, there is Little Rock (home of Central High School, famous from civil rights history) and North Little Rock. The Browns lived a short walk from North Little Rock High School. Both girls were good students and active in school clubs. Kyrah was in the school band and was also involved in student government. During high school, however, she began observing disparate injustices in the racially mixed but majority African-American school. For example, she noticed that entrance into the gifted and talented program favored White students, and counselors tended to steer African-American students to community college or to the military rather than to four-year colleges, reflecting lower expectations for students of color. Also she became more sensitized to racial issues as she observed differential treatment of the races during and after Hurricane Katrina’s disruptions in the Gulf area of the southern U.S.

Kyrah was determined to attend an historically Black college out of state; her sister remained in Arkansas for college. Kyrah chose the all-female and highly regarded Spelman College in Atlanta. “This was a great decision. I attended college among women like me but also learned about the diversity of Black women across the Diaspora. In addition, many international students attended Spelman, so I joined an international sisterhood of Spelman women.” Spelman provides a safety net for its students while urging them to go out and change the world. She was very successful at Spelman, making Dean’s List and winning several awards for scholarship and civic engagement.

Having participated in high school debate competitions and loving courtroom dramas on TV, Kyrah originally wanted to be an attorney. However, a freshman college course redirected her to a Psychology major. “I just knew Psychology was for me because I was interested in people’s behavior.”
Interestingly, Anikae also majored in Psychology. But it was not until her senior year, when she enrolled in a Morehouse College course taught by Dr. Sinead Younge, that she discovered Community Psychology. “The timing was perfect because I was just then applying for graduate school but until that time, my psychology interests were general. I just knew I did not want to be a therapist.” Her students accompanied Dr. Younge into the community to work with young men in Fulton County, GA, designing and evaluating interventions. “This was my ah-ha experience, just right for me,” Kyrah recalls.

Dr. Younge also encouraged students to join the Society for Community Research and Action which turned out to be a pivotal opportunity for Kyrah. After reviewing SCRA’s listserv and website, Kyrah decided to join the Community Psychology Practice Council (CPPC), starting with her participation on the Council’s monthly conference calls. Seeing that CPPC warmly welcomed student participation, she dove in by volunteering for tasks, not at all intimidated at collaborating with luminaries in the field despite being an undergraduate. “Spelman encourages its students to align themselves with a profession, as soon as they choose one.” She admits that she started out not knowing what she should be doing, but she just followed the lead of fellow CPPC volunteers, both senior members and graduate students. Among these leaders was Greg Meissen, a faculty member at Wichita State University in Kansas and co-founder of CPPC. “I had never set foot in Kansas before. But I learned that WSU strongly encouraged community activism, and I learned that Dr. Rhonda Lewis’ team worked on the kinds of development programs for youth of color that mirrored my experience with Dr. Younge.”

Although she applied to several doctoral programs, she chose WSU for the opportunity to work with Dr. Lewis but also because Dr. Lewis’ grants would cover a large portion of her graduate student expenses. At the time, her parents were “on the hook” as signees for her college loans so she did not want to incur more debt. (Toward the end of graduate school, she took out a new loan to pay off her college loans.)

WSU graduate students (and fellow CPPC members) Sharon Hakim-Johnson and Ashlee Lien were her support network at first, helping her find housing and adjusting to school and the community. Nonetheless, she experienced culture shock since Wichita has a small (under 10%) African-American community, which was unlike her earlier experiences within majority African-American communities. On the other hand, Wichita was like Little Rock in that “everyone knew everyone, with only TWO degrees of separation.” The process of fitting in took a while, but was facilitated by Dr. Lewis introducing her all around the community.

Kyrah’s involvement with CPPC continued as a graduate student, as was encouraged by WSU’s faculty. (Since the founding of CPPC, WSU graduate students have been among its most devoted members, taking on work responsibilities and leadership.) Students participated by speaker phone in the monthly telephone calls as a group, typically in Greg’s office, with Greg providing ongoing orientation and commentary. “And Dr. Lewis openly encouraged, even incentivized, our participation in CPPC.” Also helpful was Dr. Lewis’ assistance in setting up a detailed individualized plan that would lead to Kyrah’s completion of her Ph.D. within 4 years. When she, influenced by the peers in her cohort, tried to convince Dr. Lewis that she aimed for an academic career, Dr. Lewis was skeptical, saying knowingly to the born activist: “we’ll see.”

Wichita is a family-centered city. So, like most graduate students who are transplants to a new town, Kyrah’s social life in Wichita revolved around her classmates, staging potluck dinners, etc. However, she also socialized with the local African-American community, attending their dances, balls, NAACP events, etc. One outlet for her creativity and energy during her stay in Wichita was the Ubuntu Village School in Wichita, for which she served as teacher (“oloku” in Yoruba) and Program Evaluation Specialist. UVS’ team provides enriching, culturally appropriate education to families and students in kindergarten through eighth grade. She acquired a small grant from SCRA to evaluate a UVS program to empower African-American boys.

Kyrah has always had a special
place in her heart for maternal and child health issues – in reaction to the stillborn death of her brother, Baby Isaac, who she says is “very much a part of our family.” Combining her interests in developmental issues, health and populations of color, Kyrah’s doctoral dissertation was a research study of African-American mothers who had experienced a fetal-infant death. On track to receive her Ph.D. in 4 years (mid 2014), Kyrah began planning for life after graduation, representing “a fork in the road” for her. Applying for a wide variety of post-Ph.D. jobs, “I developed scar tissue along the way.” (By this time, her preference was for a job as close to Dallas as possible, having had, since college, a long-distance romantic relationship with Carl McCullough, a Little Rock native who had relocated to Dallas.) After a number of interviews and formal presentations made, she began to notice that the jobs for which she had applied were being offered to in-house candidates or – the curse of early careers – employers wanted more years of experience and/or a successful record of acquiring grants.

Having run out of options, she created – with substantial help from WSU classmate J’Vonnah Merryman who simultaneously directed a program at the local public health department – a two-year postdoctoral program in Wichita. Two more years living apart from Carl. Her research mentor was a physician/department chair at the University of Kansas Medical School at Wichita. There, among other duties, Kyrah directed grant-funded projects focused on maternal and child health; taught a competency-based training program for the public health workforce; and provided agency-wide consultation and capacity building to staff in research and evaluation.

After completing her postdoc training, she resumed her job search, this time widening her scope to anyplace in Texas, be it academia or practice. “I tried every possible approach.” To the rescue came SCRA and CPPC member Susan Wolfe of Dallas, who forwarded job announcements to Kyrah. Susan had recently left her private consulting practice for a fulltime position as Senior Consultant at CNM Connect, a nonprofit management firm that assists and educates community-based nonprofit organizations, mostly in north Texas. Susan thought a position might soon open at CNM, so in June, 2016, Kyrah took the risky step of leaving Kansas for Texas, without any job offer in hand. Fortunately, but only after enduring three rigorous interviews, CNM offered Kyrah a position, entitled Outcomes, Evaluation and Technology Consultant. Whoosh!

Overall, in her position, Kyrah is responsible for increasing evaluation capacity among the company’s clients, primarily nonprofits, as well as assisting these clients in designing their studies, instruments, proposals, etc. and analyzing data. Part of her time is devoted to developing and facilitating seminars and workshops, either designed for a single client organization or for groups of clients.

CNM thoughtfully eased her into the new job, starting her off with a small client load of just two (low maintenance) clients. Over the ensuing months, more clients were added. Fortunately, CNM consultants are not responsible for generating new business. Instead, another staff member is charged with marketing the company’s services. Although the topical areas covered by her clients are broad – broader than her earlier concentration on maternal and child health – she likes the intensity of the job, finds the nature of the work is the same and occasionally gets to work on MCH issues -- “enough to satisfy me.”

Although Kyrah feels her prior training substantially equipped her for this job, there were a few gaps in her training that she has had to self-learn. For one, she is learning SAS (e.g., SAS Office Analytics and SAS Visual Analytics), a skill she had not acquired in her graduating training. She also has had to get used to tracking her hours, in real time. “Although I am on salary and had prior experience in developing research budgets, I’m expected to calculate the number of hours I devote to each client and project. That is, I have to continually quantify my time and my value, something new to me.” She tailored an Excel spread sheet for this purpose and disciplines herself to keep track of her time in the moment, rather than trying to remember how her time had been used a week after the fact.

Tracking and valuing her time
is one example of the difference from an academic job. Another is having to make a compelling case for participating in outside professional activities (such as conferences, committee work, etc.) during work time. “I have to ask permission to accept a professional invitation, not only explaining the time this would require but also having to make the case as to how the activity would benefit my employer, that is, what amount of business will be generated for the employer. Academics have the luxury of considering how the activity will benefit their own professional development, with less concern for the benefits accruing to the university.”

Kyrah lives in Grand Prairie, TX, a 25-minute commute to either of two CNM offices. She estimates that her field work consumes half her time, primarily consulting with clients. She participates in teaching CNM’s 6-week Outcomes-Based Program Evaluation Certificate Program and in an intensive Outcomes-Based Evaluation Institute, as well as providing followup coaching. She also conducts “interest meetings” with prospective clients. Back at her Ft. Worth office, she identifies or develops evaluation tools and measures, analyzes data and prepares reports, working closely with CNM’s data specialist on her clients’ behalf.

Susan Wolfe is highly complimentary of Kyrah’s contributions, saying “We at CNM feel lucky to have found Kyrah. Not only because her training and experience have prepared her so well for CNM’s work content but also because her work ethic and collaborative nature fit into our organizational culture very well. And we get a lot of positive feedback about her from our clients.”

Kyrah is attempting to curb her workaholic tendencies after hours, trying to do a better job of separating work from home. “Carl plays a big role in this effort. After a few hours of working without any interference from him, he’ll suggest that I ‘find a stopping point’ or ‘begin to wrap up.’ He provides me discipline; otherwise, if left on my own, I could easily work through the night.”

Kyrah does not lack for non-work interests to pursue, mainly in the arts. She played clarinet and saxophone in high school and college, including for Morehouse College’s House of Funk Marching band. She also has written poetry since she was a young girl. She was editor in chief of Spelman’s oldest literary journal and also was in a slam poetry group that performed around Atlanta, geared to addressing social inequities through music and spoken word. In Wichita, she often taught poetry and music to her Ubuntu Village School students. In her spare time, she writes and reads her poetry at local open mics and occasionally teaches poetry to K-8th graders.

One outside activity she intends to pursue with Carl is travel. In addition to being a music producer and videographer, Carl works in customer service for an airline. This entitles him (and a companion, aka Kyrah) to take advantage of deeply discounted air travel. Jointly learning languages via Duolingo, a free online program, they recently practiced their rudimentary Spanish on a brief trip to Panama. Beginning to learn Swahili, their future travel plans could take them farther afield, to Africa.

Kyrah recently completed her two-year term as co-chair of CPPC in which, among other improvements, she worked with the leadership team to enrich the welcoming and orientation of new entrants to the field. “I have appreciated the relationships I made within SCRA. As I advance professionally, I also am interested in becoming involved in other organizations, such as the American Evaluation Association which directly align with my work and practice.” For now, she is reading AEA’s blogs and participating in their webinars. “I am thinking seriously about how to best invest my time and get the best returns for professional membership.”
Rural Interest Group
Edited by Susana Helm, PhD, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Rural.IG@scra27.org
Co-Editors Cheryl Ramos, PhD and Suzanne Phillips, PhD

The Rural IG column highlights rural resources as well as the work of community psychologist, students, and colleagues in their rural environments. Please email Susana if you would like to submit a brief rural report or if you have resources we may list here.

Rural Resources: Rural Suicide Prevention & Treatment

**Literature Review on Rural Suicide.** Although it is a decade old, the Hirsch review article is a great resource. The article “examine[d] the current body of literature on rural suicide and investigate[d] differences between rural and urban suicide, including socioeconomic, psychological, and cultural variables. Prevention and intervention strategies specific to rural communities are discussed.” Hirsch JK. (2006). A review of the literature on rural suicide. Risk and protective factors, incidence, and prevention. *Crisis, 27*(4), 189-199. DOI: 10.1027/-5910.27.4.189.

**Special Issue JRMH (2014).** More recently, a special issue of the *Journal of Rural Mental Health* focused on rural suicide (2014, volume 38.2): http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/rmh/38/2/. In addition to leading with a review article, the special issue provides both a national and international perspective on rurality. Articles describe organizational efforts at the national level, specific articles on veteran’s and indigenous concerns, and strategies for intervention, among other points.

**Grant Applications:** The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (http://afsp.org/our-work/research/apply-for-a-grant/).

**Brief Report: WICHE Mental Health Program: Six Decades of Community Engagement**

*Written by Dennis F. Mohatt, Vice President for Behavioral Health, WICHE dmohatt@wiche.edu*

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) was established by Congress in the early 1950s, as an interstate compact. It currently includes 15 western states and the Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States. The partnership works collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. Per the US 2010 census, the vast majority (over 80%) of all WICHE state geographic area is considered rural. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy, WICHE strengthens higher education’s contributions to the region’s social, economic, and civic life. WICHE established its Mental Health Program in 1955, the founders stating that healthy minds are an essential component of access to and success in higher education. For over 60 years, the program has sought to promote innovation and quality in mental health care and ensure a high quality professional workforce.

I was drawn to a career in Community Psychology as an undergraduate at the University of Oregon, mentored by James G. Kelly. My graduate training in rural community psychology, at Mansfield University in Pennsylvania, nurtured by Professors Peter Keller and Denny Murray, focused me on using the tools of community psychology to support rural communities.

My work at WICHE is a constant deployment of those skills, and the knowledge gleaned from 30 years of work with diverse people and communities. I wanted to share some examples of our work.

**Example 1: Suicide Prevention—Collaborating with Rural Veterans.** Despite successful implementation and effectiveness in other at-risk populations, culturally informed, community-based suicide prevention programs have not been applied to rural Veterans – a population for whom health disparities and increased risk of suicide are well established. To address this gap, WICHE is working with the Veteran’s Administration’s Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical center to develop a suicide prevention strategy for Veterans living in rural communities. This project integrates multiple individual and community level interventions into a comprehensive suicide prevention program for rural Veterans, called “Together with Veterans.” Their website may
Together with Veterans uses an evidence based, multi-level community participation approach to prevent suicide by improving access to care, resources and support services, and shifting community attitudes about help-seeking. The program emphasizes shared decision-making, community readiness assessment and buy-in, and capacity building at all stages to determine what will work best in individual rural communities. The program is innovative because it allows for some flexibility within an evidence-based framework. Instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach, the program supports customization and allows community planners to focus on practices that meet the specific needs and resources of that community. WICHE has supported the development of this model, and is now assisting the VA in piloting the program in six counties in Southern Colorado, bringing to bear our expertise in program modification for successful rural community outcomes. WICHE does not steer this effort, instead the local veterans utilize WICHE as a resource and expert consultant.

**Example 2: Mental Health Professional Development.**
A shortage of mental health professionals is a chronic challenge in the WICHE West. Every WICHE state has significant areas federally designated as health professional shortage areas for mental health (see also https://bhw.hrsa.gov/shortage-designation/hpsas). Psychology has had a significant shortage of accredited internship sites for doctoral students. The University of Alaska, in 2008, had launched a doctoral clinical-community psychology program and no accredited internship slots were available for their students. WICHE saw opportunity in the alignment of these challenges. Alaska feared students forced to leave the state for accredited internship would not return to be a part of the workforce solution for their state. In 2009, WICHE began a process of engagement with community based organizations to explore the development of an internship training program that supported the vision of preparing psychologists to serve rural and indigenous people. The participatory process led to the creation of the Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium. This multi-site consortium is unique in its use of technology to connect sites (some separated by more than 1000 miles) and interns, ensuring each intern has an immersion in cross-cultural village based behavioral health. To date this program has graduated 45 interns, and over 70% remain in Alaska. The effort has been such a success that WICHE has replicated the model in Colorado, Hawai’i, Nevada, and Oregon. The hallmark of the initiative is working and supporting local partnership and training interns to promote community behavioral health settings such as schools and health clinics.

These are just two examples, of over 30 projects WICHE Mental Health is involved in from South Dakota to the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific (http://www.wiche.edu/). Routinely, we are using data analysis to help local groups make data driven decisions, using community participatory methods to build enduring partnerships to improve systems, and providing technical assistance in a manner that strengthens local capacities.

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**Self Help Interest Group**
Edited by Greg Townley and Alicia Lucksted

Seeking interested individuals for Self-help Interest Group leadership position: Our second term as interest group co-chairs ends in Summer 2017, and we are looking to identify individuals interested in taking over this leadership position. We will happily provide technical assistance to make the transition as smooth as possible. Please email Alicia (Aluckste@psych.umaryland.edu) and Greg (gtownley@pdx.edu) to discuss further!

Take Off Pounds Sensibly: A Self-Help and Mutual Support Organization
Written by Lauren E. Chacon and Jessica Corral,
The University of Texas at El Paso; and Louis D. Brown,
The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Obesity, a burgeoning disease, causes numerous comorbidities such as heart disease, diabetes, and increased risk for chronic
diseases (Goldkamp, Anderson, Lifits-Podorozhansky, & Gavard, 2015). While popular weight loss approaches, such as pills, diets, and exercise fads can be dangerous and detrimental to health, Take Off Pounds Sensibly offers a sensible and economical solution to the obesity epidemic.

Take Off Pounds Sensibly, a Wisconsin based non-profit organization also known as TOPS, is an internationally recognized weight loss support group (TOPS, 2016). Since 1948 this group has been devoted to serving individuals who seek to lose weight and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The weight loss support group is available to both males and females of all ages. Furthermore, TOPS strives to offer economical and practical solutions to obesity while fostering friendship and support throughout the TOPS community. TOPS instills in its members that, over time, small increments of weight loss augment and allow for weight reduction in a healthy manner.

There are two options to joining TOPS: you can become an online member or join a local TOPS chapter. In the United States the annual TOPS membership fee is $32 and in Canada it is $36, however, there is an additional monthly chapter fee, about $5, which differs among chapters (TOPS, 2016). The monthly chapter fee does not apply to online TOPS members who do not participate in a local chapter.

Before meetings begin, participants have a private weigh-in to track their progress. The chapters start meetings by reciting the TOPS pledge, “I am an intelligent person. I will control my emotions, not let my emotions control me. Every time I am tempted to use food to satisfy my frustrated desires, build up my injured ego or dull my senses, I will remember—I Will Take Off Pounds Sensibly.” (TOPS, 2016). After such procedures, TOPS members are encouraged to share whether they met their weight loss goal. While most participants openly discuss their progress, no one is forced to share. Praise and encouragement are a focus in each group. Every meeting includes motivational or informational presentations supporting weight loss and the upkeep of healthy lifestyles.

The times and location of the meetings depend upon the chapter. Most activities that occur during the meetings, such as health discussions and monthly games, are decided upon by the local chapter. Typically, games, prizes, and incentives are incorporated into meetings to motivate members to lose or maintain their weight. While TOPS inspires individuals to live healthy lives, it also promotes camaraderie among the members and an enjoyable atmosphere. Each group is unique, for instance, certain chapters offer different health resources, nutritious recipes, and exercises dependent on the location of the TOPS chapters and the demographics of the members. All TOPS chapters, however, maintain the same goal of supporting one another in the battle against obesity.

**Promoting TOPS in El Paso County**

El Paso, Texas, a city that sits on the Texas-Mexico border, is approximately 80% Hispanic and is one of the poorest counties in the United States (Community Health Assessment, 2013). Further, 24% of adults living in the El Paso County are obese and an additional 39% are overweight (Community Health Assessment, 2013).

One initiative in El Paso County aimed at reducing obesity is called Healthy Fit, a research program led by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth), School of Public Health in El Paso. The project uses community health workers to reach residents of El Paso, Texas and surrounding communities with health navigation services. Community health workers administer a health screening and then offer a variety of health resources to address issues identified in the screening. Individuals who are overweight receive a fotonovela that provides education and activities aimed at improving heart health. They also receive a list of free and low cost organized physical activity opportunities in the community. TOPS is a promising strategy to lower the prevalence of obesity in El Paso County because of the organization’s communal support and cost efficacy. Thus, Healthy Fit also provides referrals to TOPS groups.

In an effort to learn more about the groups, their meeting format, who attends, and how they are helpful, we visited each of the four TOPS chapters in El Paso County. From our observations, the El Paso TOPS chapters presented similar characteristics. All the chapters were openhearted, friendly, and always welcomed new members. Whether individual members lost or gained weight, the TOPS
community was extremely supportive and encouraging of them. Activities, such as games and prizes, motivated members to maintain a healthy lifestyle; for example, “TOPS baseball” is a game that was played where members were split into two teams and the team who loses the most weight over the course of the month wins the game. Awards were also given to the “biggest loser” of the week, month, and quarter year. Other accolades were given according to member participation, weight loss, and the upkeep of healthy behaviors. The TOPS chapter locations were large, clean, private, and felt safe.

Although there are certainly advantages to participating in TOPS, the organization could improve upon the diversity of members, materials, accessibility of chapters, and meeting times. TOPS members in El Paso are predominantly women over 65 years of age. Groups are currently available only in English, thus excluding a large segment of the El Paso population that only speaks Spanish. In an effort to guide Healthy Fit participants towards the weight loss resources they are most likely to utilize, Healthy Fit staff only refer English speaking women over 50 to TOPS. To identify more participants that are a good fit for TOPS, Healthy Fit staff started recruiting participants from senior centers. After providing a TOPS referral, staff share participant contact information with TOPS members who volunteered to reach out to them to encourage their involvement in TOPS.

Disproportionate to the majority Hispanic population in El Paso, only a small percentage of the El Paso TOPS members are Hispanic. That TOPS material is only provided in English helps to explain this discrepancy. Conducting groups in Spanish may help to engage more of the Hispanic population in El Paso. We suspect the program can be appealing to the Hispanic population because of the cost efficacy and the sense of community, both of which are important parts of Latino culture. According to a TOPS representative, they are working on including Spanish and French materials for future members. To appeal to the younger population, TOPS is currently developing a mobile app.

Lastly, the number of TOPS chapters, their geological locations, and their meeting times may deter El Pasoans from joining TOPS. The El Paso County encompasses more than 1,000 square miles and inhabits approximately 800,000 residents (Community Health Assessment, 2013). Due to the expansiveness of the area, it could be difficult for residents to travel from one part of the county to the other. With only four chapters concentrated in the northeast and east regions of El Paso, it may be difficult for some participants to reach the groups. In the future, more chapters located throughout different regions of El Paso may better serve the community. Additionally, two of the four chapters meet during conventional work hours. These meeting times may conflict with work schedules and could account for the large number of TOPS members over the age of 65.

Overall, our observations of TOPS groups in El Paso suggest participants genuinely enjoy attending TOPS and benefit greatly. Some participants explained their weight loss struggles before TOPS, noting that they tried other weight loss programs but would not see results or found them to be too expensive. Given the risk of becoming patients in the hospital with diabetes or cardiovascular problems, we found it inspiring to see these groups of individuals trying to better themselves and believe TOPS is a unique weight loss solution. For more information regarding Take Off Pounds Sensibly, please visit: http://www.tops.org.

References
Society for Community Research & Action
Membership Application

Membership Contact Information:
First Name: __________________________ Last Name: __________________________
Address line 1: __________________________
Address line 2: __________________________
Address line 3: __________________________
City, State, Postal Code: __________________________ Country: __________________________
Telephone: __________________________ Email: __________________________
Academic or Institutional Affiliation: __________________________

Primary Job Title: __________________________
Secondary Job Title: __________________________

*** Please complete the following information ***

APA Membership Status: _____ Not an APA member

_____ Fellow _____ Member _____ Associate _____ Student _____ Lifetime Member

APA Member Number (if known): _______________

Please indicate any Interest Groups or Committees you would like to join:

_____ Aging
_____ Children & Youth
_____ Community Action
_____ Community Health
_____ Cultural & Racial Affairs Committee
_____ Disabilities
_____ Interdisciplinary Committee
_____ International Committee
_____ Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Concerns
_____ Council of Education Programs
_____ Organization Studies
_____ Prevention & Promotion
_____ Rural
_____ School Intervention
_____ Self-Help & Mutual Support
_____ Social Policy Committee
_____ Environmental Justice
_____ Women's Committee
_____ Indigenous
_____ Council for Community Psychology Practice

May we include your name and contact information in the SCRA Directory? _____ Yes _____ No

The following questions are OPTIONAL; however, this information helps us better serve our members.

Sex: ___ Female ___ Male

Race/Ethnicity (check all that apply)

_____ Native American, Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian
_____ Asian or Pacific Islander
_____ Black/African American
_____ Hispanic/Latino
_____ White/Caucasian
_____ Other: __________________________

Do you wish us to indicate in the database that you identify with a sexual minority group (e.g., lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender)? _____ Yes _____ No

Do you wish us to indicate in the database that you are a person with a disability? _____ Yes _____ No

What year did you graduate? __________
Membership dues enclosed (please write in amount):

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<th>Membership Type</th>
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Please send form and credit card payment information or check to:
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Annual membership is based on a calendar year, January 1st through December 31st.  
One year's dues are payable in full with application.
Those joining in November or December will be extended through December 31 of the following year.

Thank you for your support of the

*Society for Community Research & Action*
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• **Length:** Five pages, double-spaced
• **Images:** Images are highly recommended, but please limit to two images per article. Images should be higher than 300 dpi. Photo image files straight from the camera are acceptable. If images need to be scanned, please scan them at 300 dpi and save them as JPEGs. Submit the image(s) as a separate file. Please note that images will be in black and white when published.
• **Margins:** 1” margins on all four sides
• **Text:** Times New Roman, 12-point font
• **Alignment:** All text should be aligned to the left (including titles).
• **Color:** Make sure that all text (including links, e-mails, etc.) are set in standard black.
• **Punctuation Spacing:** Per APA guidelines, make sure that there is only one space after periods, question marks, etc.
• **Graphs & Tables:** These should be in separate Word documents (one for each table/graphs if multiple). Convert all text in the graph into the consistent font and font size.
• **Footnotes:** Footnotes should be placed at the end of the article as regular text (do not use Word footnote function).
• **References:** Follow APA guidelines. These should also be justified to the left with a hanging indent of .25”.
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• **Preferred email:** Please provide an email address for all authors so that readers can contact you directly and for you to be notified of commentary posted on the SCRA website in reference to your submission.

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