As President of the Society, and on behalf of the co-chairs of the SCRA Biennial Committee, our hope is that each and every one of you has had safe travels to Chicago and back home again.

We hope you took time to enjoy all of the city, and all it has to offer.

We know you found new strength and inspiration from seeing friends, meeting new colleagues, exchanging ideas, and absorbing the spirit of those who share such deep and vital values.

We enjoyed seeing you share the best of your connected community’s ideas, loves, and practices with the larger collective. We hope you brought back the best of what you learned to your home communities.

We should all continue to reflect on the diverse meanings of inclusion, meanings deeply connected to being a community psychologist.
SCRA members are quite good at embracing these differences in all their facets, keeping our biases at bay, and treating every individual—standing in a hall or by a poster board—with a smile, and with equal concern for every aspect of well-being and respect; as a friend.

Let’s keep continually and critically examining ourselves—our work, our life, and our practices. Let’s continue to grow in ways consistent with all of our community psychology values.

Our beliefs and actions can always, throughout our lifetimes, grow to become incrementally more consistent with these values.

We hope the meeting inspired you to—when you returned home even in our most beloved and closely-knit communities and traditional families—advocate for the fullest inclusion and defend equal rights for everyone.

Through each other, we can all become greater action-oriented allies, reducing the extent any one person, anywhere, feels a part of a less-than or othered-community.

Most of all we hope you enjoyed yourselves immensely.

We are grateful for being able to be present among so many of you talented, engaged, and caring colleagues.

We looked forward to coming together to help improve communities and change the world.

Best,

Bradley D. Olson, PhD
President, Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA)
Co-Chair, SCRA Biennial 2019, Chicago
From the Editors

Written by Susan M. Wolfe, Susan Wolfe and Associates and Dominique Thomas, University of Michigan

Even though they were busy preparing to attend the SCRA Biennial, TCP column editors and members came through with another interesting and thought-provoking set of articles. As TCP editors, we are grateful for the time and effort everyone put in to share with the SCRA membership.

We begin this issue with a statement prepared by members of CERA in response to the New Zealand shootings. In addition to voicing SCRA’s support for and solidarity with the people of Christchurch, New Zealand, this statement includes a call to action for SCRA members to speak up against violence, white supremacy, and Islamophobia. We can’t stand by and ignore the impact of white supremacy, from every day microaggressions to acts of terror. By virtue of our values, we’re obligated to speak out and act against them. We would like to ask all SCRA members to read this and take time to think about what you can do to combat racism, Islamophobia, racial violence and injustice, and white supremacy at the individual and systems levels.

For our Special Feature, we invited the 2018 and 2019 award winners of the Best Dissertation in a Topic Relevant to Community Psychology, Emory L. Cowen Award for the Promotion of Wellness, Early Career, and Mentoring to share something about the work they did, their experience, or any other topic they would like to write about. Five of the eight winners submitted columns and we are excited to share them with you.

We hope everyone has a great summer and enjoys reading this issue of TCP. Please feel free to email us at tcp@scra27.org and let us know if you loved it, hated it, or want to share anything else with us.

Susan and Dominique

Call to Action

Statement in Support of Christchurch, New Zealand, in Condemnation of White Supremacy: Call to Action

The Council on Cultural, Ethnic and Racial Affairs (CERA), under the auspices of the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) - Division 27 of the American Psychological Association, stands in solidarity with the people of Christchurch, New Zealand. We write this statement as an offer of our deepest condolences to the communities who have suffered at the hands of white supremacist terrorists and provide recommendations for SCRA members to continue to act in solidarity.

We are committed to working toward the eradication of white supremacy in all its forms, including terrorist attacks, in the western hemisphere and globally. These attacks are crimes against all humanity. The rise in global nationalistic vitriol represent a clear and growing transnational threat and an opportunity to create a global sense of community, committed to healing, resistance and radical transformation. The actions taken against community members of Christchurch are an example of such hatred and bigotry in action (https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-mosque-killer-white-supremacy-20190315-story.html).

The hatred, bigotry, xenophobia and racism that forms the basis of white supremacist ideology cannot exist in an equitable world, and the time to take seriously the threats of white supremacy is now. We cannot wait until more innocent people lose their lives in such hate crimes. History continues to remind us that bigotry is one of the roots that perpetuates terrorist attacks, requiring an adoption of anti-racist cultural, institutional, and state sponsored identities to redefine individual and community calls to action. We are also beginning to see research on terrorist attacks seeking to...
understand the root causes for why and how individuals engage in such activities, which has implications for how Community Psychologists may play a role in further understanding such actions and preventing future attacks (Spaaij, 2010).

**LINK WITH SCRA MISSION AND VALUES**

As members of CERA, we stand by the existing SCRA statement, which notes that acts of terrorism, either domestically or internationally, that white supremacy has become so entrenched in the Western world, that it is woven into the fabric of our societies ([http://www.scra27.org/what-we-do/policy/rapid-response-actions/condemnation-white-supremacists/](http://www.scra27.org/what-we-do/policy/rapid-response-actions/condemnation-white-supremacists/)). There must be a paradigm shift in how we view and negotiate white supremacy and the terror it leaves in its wake. We stand by those who are marginalized by the colonial systems that discriminate and the systemic racism that seeks to maintain the hierarchies of us and them - superiority and inferiority, sustained by hatred.

As community psychologists, we have, “endeavored to be political activists, agents of social change … to be dissenters and transgressors in pursuit of liberation and empowerment with communities, especially those who are institutionally marginalized. Today, we reflect on this historical call to action, and we emphasize and urge our colleagues to stand for anti-racism, and to condemn white supremacy and race-based domestic [and international] terrorism in all of its implicit, subtle and systemic, blatant forms” (Fernández & Tran, 2019). These values hold absolute significance, and are tested in these moments of violence and hate. Thus, we must rise in resistance to violence in all of its manifestations and speak back to these systems of power and oppression that maintain and reproduce hegemony.

Community psychology is guided by four interconnected concepts, however one of them stands of most value and relevance to these conditions of violence rooted in white supremacy. This value is social justice, which is characterized by the following statement:

“Community psychology will become a field of research and action that makes a significant difference on issues of social change by promoting social justice. Social justice is defined as conditions that promote equitable distribution of resources, equal opportunity for all, non-exploitation, prevention of violence, and active citizenry. The field will explicitly state its commitment to social changes that promote social justice and greater inclusion for historically marginalized groups and will see that commitment manifest in the various aspects of the field’s work.”

We believe that as an organization more attention needs to be devoted to the interrogation and disruption of racialized violence, and that must be made explicit in our discourses of social justice, liberation and transformational change. We write this statement to condemn the violence at the intersections of whiteness and xenophobia, and also to invite our fellow community psychologists to consider our role in being advocates, agitators, and practitioners of racial justice-oriented work within and beyond the US.

**CALL TO ACTION**

We call upon all of us to put into practice the words of two powerful scholar activists and thinkers:

“My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you.” - Audre Lorde

“You seek allies and, together, begin building spiritual/political communities that struggle for personal growth and social justice.” - Gloria E. Anzaldúa

Thus we must speak up against violence, white supremacy and Islamophobia. We must build liberatory and anti-racist coalitions. Below we offer some resources to engage in solidarity.

1. We invite you to take action, and act in solidarity with many others taking similar action: [https://qz.com/1574592/people-are-supporting-mosques-after-new-zealand-shootings/](https://qz.com/1574592/people-are-supporting-mosques-after-new-zealand-shootings/)
2. If anyone wishes to sign onto a petition sending love and solidarity to the Muslim families of New Zealand, and pledge to fight white nationalism, you may take action at this site: https://action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/send-a-message-of-love-solidarity-to-the-muslim-families-of-christchurch

3. For anyone looking for ways to further support the victims of the Christchurch shootings, you may be able to contact several groups that offer the power of social sharing and networks for critical and accessible resource development: See this article for details: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/16/world/asia/christchurch-shooting-charities.html

For all those affected, we stand with you, as hate is not the answer, but love.

Signed,

Ann Marie Beals, CERA
Jessica S. Fernández, CERA
Tiiffany R. Jimenez, CERA
Chris Smith, CERA
Dominique Thomas, CERA

REFERENCES


To give TCP readers an opportunity to learn more about the experiences of dissertation and early career award winners, we invited the 2018 and 2019 recipients to write articles to share their experiences, or anything else they would like to write about. This section features articles by Kyrah Brown (2019 Early Career), Erin Rose Ellison (2019 Emory L. Cowen Award for the Promotion of Wellness), Michele Stratton (2018 Emory L. Cowen Award for the Promotion of Wellness), Dominique Thomas (2018 Best Dissertation in a Topic Relevant to Community Psychology), and Amie Thurber (2019 Best Dissertation on a Topic Relevant to Community Psychology).

**Early Career Reflections from a Black Community Psychologist**

*Written by Kyrah Brown, The University of Texas at Arlington — 2019 Early Career Award*

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I am excited about receiving the 2019 SCRA Early Career Award. I am so grateful to everyone within and outside of SCRA who has invested any amount of time and energy into me. For this column, I chose to describe my professional journey and share words of advice for other Black emerging professionals in the field of community psychology.

**My Personal Journey**

My journey in community psychology began as an undergraduate psychology student at Spelman College. I enrolled in an Introduction to Community Psychology course at Morehouse College taught by Sinead Younge, a Black woman community psychologist. This course exposed me to the action-oriented field of community psychology and provided me with my first participatory evaluation experience in a community setting. I was hooked. During my senior year, I joined SCRA and became involved with the Community Psychology Practice Council where I gained mentors, colleagues, and close friends. I went on to work with well-respected community psychologists during my doctoral training at Wichita State University. During graduate school, I had the opportunity to have a Black woman community psychologist, Rhonda Lewis, as my graduate research mentor. Since I attended an HBCU, I did fully understand how unique it was to have a Black woman graduate mentor was until later in my career.

Following the completion of my doctoral degree I faced a crossroad. I was not sure if I wanted to pursue an academic position at a university or a practice position at an organization or company. I found myself wondering if I could do both and I was often frustrated with the available options. Previously, I was open to picking up and moving anywhere. But, my long distance relationship with my now-husband, Carl, meant refining my search to specific geographic locations. Fortunately, with the support and leveraging of resources from my close mentors and colleagues (and unwavering support of Carl), I was able to co-create a postdoctoral appointment. This also meant staying in Kansas longer which was a compromise in my personal life. This postdoctoral appointment was created through an academic public health partnership between a local health department and a department of preventive health within a neighboring medical school. It was through this experience that I was able to engage in a good mix of community-based research, program evaluation and practice work with local health coalitions.

After two years, it was time to relocate and join Carl in Texas. I accepted a position as an evaluation consultant (again with the help of a mentor) at a nonprofit management organization. This was a more practice-oriented position that provided me with the opportunity to strengthen my
skills in program evaluation, consultation, coaching, and capacity building. It was very different from the flexible world of academia and government/nonprofit. I struggled with the concept of billable hours and staying within those allocated hours even when our clients needed additional help. I also struggled with time tracking and feeling creative within a highly hierarchical organizational model. Despite these challenges, I developed a skill set (e.g., time tracking, process efficiency) that would later prove valuable for my next position.

I was able to reflect on the similarities and differences between these two positions and see more clearly what I wanted my day-to-day to look like. I knew that I wanted to return to my passion area in maternal and child health (MCH). I loved both research and evaluation—and my strengthened evaluation skills made me a better researcher. I loved working with the community and engaging in capacity building. I appreciated structure (but not too much structure). I loved academic and technical writing. I needed to have time to reflect, think, and co-create ideas. I let what I learned about myself guide my job search. After many applications, leads, and rejections, I finally came across a position that felt like a near-perfect fit in terms of work culture, value placed on work-life balance, and what I felt I could contribute.

In September 2018, I accepted a tenure-track assistant professor position at the University of Texas at Arlington. I joined the Department of Kinesiology public health program which includes an undergraduate and graduate program. I joined an environment that valued my multiple professional identities as a community psychologist, public health researcher and evaluator. This position was everything that I had willed for. But, it took a winding and largely unpredictable journey to get here (and I have much further to go). In my role as an assistant professor, I infuse community psychology principles into my undergraduate and graduate public health course.

I also direct the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Equity Lab which includes a team of undergraduate and graduate students. The MCH Equity lab collaborates with communities to conduct participatory research and evaluation dedicated to improving maternal health and birth outcomes. Our guiding values draw on community psychology principles. We believe that transformative, sustainable change requires collaborative, equitable academic-community partnerships, strategies that address multiple levels beyond the individual (including systemic racism), recognition and leveraging of existing community strengths and an investment in strengthening the community’s capacity to understand and engage in research efforts. The goal of my research is to understand how individual, social, and systems-level factors shape Black women’s health across the life course and how those influences shape their reproductive and birth outcomes.

As I work to establish myself, most of my focus has been on maternal and infant health and engaging in community-based research that centers Black women’s voices and experiences using qualitative methods. My work also includes using population-level data to investigate patterns and associations between MCH outcomes and system-level factors. As an evaluator, I also work with MCH organizations and coalitions to provide training, consultation, and evaluation capacity building in an effort to ensure that initiatives designed to improve birth outcomes are efficient and effective. I leverage my program planning and evaluation course to partner with MCH organizations to provide evaluation capacity building support. For me, it is important that community organizations dedicated to maternal and child health equity have the technical capacity to implement research-informed practices and continuously improve their service delivery through evaluation.

Lessons Learned as a Black Early Career Community Psychologist

It is important to remember to recognize and retrieve the knowledge and wisdom that we have gained from our journey thus far (and the journeys of others) to guide our future steps. Sankofa is a Twi word and adinkra symbol created by the Akan and Gyaman people of Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire. Sankofa means to reach back to reclaim that which
is lost in order to move forward. It is easy to lose things along the way. These things may be our personal confidence, our voice, our sense of pride in ourselves, connections to the communities that we represent, or our guiding beliefs around authentic community engagement. Below, I share four lessons learned from my experience.

**Remember What Makes You Unique**
There may be times when you feel like an imposter, intimated, or even fearful of taking opportunities. I have experienced all of these feelings at some point. To deal with this, I have had to train myself to manage those negative thoughts and feelings (and remind myself not to compare myself to others). I do this by first acknowledging my feelings and taking time to determine the source of those feelings (*Why is this really causing me such anxiety? Why do I really feel threatened or fearful of this?*). Next, I challenge myself to think of one unique thing about me personally or professionally that adds value to the team or situation. It does not have to be earthshattering. It may be that you offer the unique perspective of a Black first generation college or doctoral student or that you are the only community psychologist on a team of nursing professionals. It is about rethinking the things that we think are our deficits and seeing how they actually add value. Also, holding on to what makes you unique helps to center your unique experiences that might otherwise be othered.

**Build Your Village and Call on Them**
Isolation can negatively impact your personal well-being and professional growth. We need our village to help us navigate our respective career paths. By village, I mean an informal network of seasoned mentors, peer mentors, and colleagues that you trust. Early on, it is important to think about what you need in a village (e.g., people with content expertise, people who are supportive, people who you can exchange ideas with) and how you can also reciprocate value to those in your village. My mentors have shown me through their actions how to pass the torch by mentoring and supporting others.

Use professional association directories, conference networking events, LinkedIn, or organization websites to search for people in your area or nationally who share similar interests. Send an email to invite that person to an in-person or phone meeting to learn more about each other’s work and interests. I usually offer to exchange CVs and keep the person’s CV in a folder to reference. After making initial contact, stay in touch by scheduling another meeting periodically sending the person information that they might find interesting (e.g., relevant news, articles) or information that might benefit their work (e.g., forwarding a funding announcement). These approaches can provide a solid foundation for lasting relationships with people who can help guide you along your path.

Once you’ve taken the time to build your village, call on them frequently and shamelessly. Your seasoned mentors are able to share their wisdom and advice, connect you to people and resources, and pull you in to their work. Your peer mentors and colleagues can provide a good support system as you navigate the same stages of your career and can serve as early collaborative partners. I’ve been qualified for every position that I’ve taken. More importantly, the reality is that with each of those job opportunities there has been someone from my village connected to it who has been able to vouch or advocate for me.

**Speak Truth to Power**
Black students and professionals navigate experiences embedded in racism. For instance, being overlooked, being viewed as threatening, having your professional credentials omitted, having your ideas stolen, being seen as a diversity token rather than for your merit, and so on. Having a strong village is crucial to navigating and coping with these experiences. One of my biggest challenges has been related to speaking truth to power as a Black woman in community spaces that are governed by deeply rooted power dynamics.

As a specific example, I have observed researchers and professionals (who are usually Caucasian) essentially colonize predominately Black communities by occupying the space to conduct run-of-the-mill research and hold claim to the flow of resources (e.g., control of partnerships,
grant funding) in those communities. The difficult part is that while others (including Black professionals) tell me that they observe the same phenomenon, there tends to be a sense of demoralization and defeat which allows this issue to continue. It is an issue that keeps me up at night. My approach, however, to combatting this has been to acknowledge and speak on what I (and others) observe and to be very intentional about forming collaborations with diverse individuals and groups who share similar values rooted in empowerment and equity. By focusing on the work that we can and have done together, it has been a way for me to speak truth to power through action and contribute to change that way. As a Black community psychologist, you will continuously have to figure out how to navigate complex community issues and find your voice to speak truth to power in intentional ways.

Find Joy in the Journey

Finally, remember to slow down and find joy in your journey. During college and graduate school, I was on a relentless quest for the next thing to accomplish. Completing my doctoral degree had always been the long-term goal. In retrospect, I did not take enough time to reflect on my identity outside of my professional career. Who was I? What else did I like to do? Who do I want to become? I think I lost a bit of myself along the way because I was in such a hurry to get to the next phase. Hold on to what makes you you and to call on your village to help you remember to invest time and energy into the things that add joy to your life as you continue to advance your professional career.

**

I want to say a special thank you to my village within SCRA who has mentored and poured into me over the years (in no particular order): Rhonda Lewis, Susan Wolfe, Tom Wolff, Gloria Levin, Bill Berkowitz, Chris Corbett, Chris Nettles, Jean Hill, Shawn Bediako, Sinead Younge, Jim Cook, Greg Meissen, Sharon Johnson-Hakim, Chris Kirk, Ashley Anglin, Ashlee Lien-Ramos, Olya Glantsman, Carlos Luis, Nicole Freund, Jessica Drum, Jasmine Douglas, Dominique Thomas, Jacque-Corey Cormier, Gina Cardazone, Katherine Cloutier, Ramy Barhouche, J’Vonnah Maryman, Jamie LoCurto, Michael Lemke, Chauncey Smith, and so many others.

“Let Us Be Careful With Each Other, So We Can Be Dangerous Together”: A Story of Praxis

Written by Erin Rose Ellison, California State University, Sacramento – 2019 Emory L. Cowen Award for the Promotion of Wellness

Dissertation Abstract

Collaborative Competence as Relational Praxis Among Community Organizers: The Reproduction of, and Resistance to, Systems of Oppression

This dissertation is a mixed-method, multi-level examination of relational empowerment processes among organizers of an academic workers’ union. Participants were union organizers; 29 organizers participated in a network questionnaire, and a subset of 12 participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Using social network analysis (SNA) and qualitative analysis, this study investigated the relational empowerment element termed collaborative competence, which attends to the functioning of the organizing group and serves to build power via social support and group cohesion. This research is value-driven, examining, in context, how community organizers address systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism) in order to build power and make socially just change. Understanding transgressions in a visceral, embodied manner was instrumental for individuals to engage in this process. Additionally, respectful and supportive relationships were required for participants to understand and make sense of their complicity in systems of oppression in proactive and potentially transformative ways. Nevertheless, providing these relational resources requires relational labor, and social network analyses
indicate that the distribution of relational labor was inequitable, thereby hampering the union’s collaborative capacity to make sociopolitical change. Thus, two overlapping practices – corporeal literacy and supportive relational labor – form the basis of a praxis model for collaborative competence. This study concludes with implications and future directions.

Article

In what follows, I briefly discuss how I arrived at my dissertation research through collective action, and how collective action informed my theoretical grounding in Social Reproduction Theory (SRT). SRT is a Marxist Feminist theory that explains the range of human activities that support the persistence of inequality under capitalism, such as activities that reproduce the worker, as well as the revolutionary potential for reproductive labor to foment systemic transformation (Bhattacharya, 2017). Activities such as teaching, care work (raising children, caring for elders, nursing the ill), as well as building, maintaining, and repairing relationships, are reproductive labor. I argue that this relational work is necessary to empowerment and needs to be recognized for the potential of repairing our world. We have to care for each other to do the dangerous work of social transformation.

Praxis, or, how I developed my project

I came to Community Psychology from an interdisciplinary background, by way of community organizing and youthwork. When I began my doctoral research at UC Santa Cruz, a hotbed of organizing and theorizing for social justice, I became involved with a number of groups taking action against the privatization of the university, budget cuts, and tuition increases, and the many social issues that were constitutive of divestment in public education. Overlapping organizations were abuzz with activity for years: long hours of planning, building relationships, disagreeing with and sometimes confronting each other regarding political opinions and oppressive dynamics, and engaging in dangerous tasks, that may or may not have included striking, shutting down the university, or occupying a bank.

Affinity groups formed and were in flux over time. One of those groups, for me, was an anarcho-communist feminist collective. We started our meetings with check-ins, and often read feminist scholarship, academic and otherwise. We discussed issues of hegemonic masculinity within our social, academic, and organizing circles, supported and fed each other, and strategized about how to address the oppressive dynamics salient to us, usually sexism and sexist racism, within these settings. We individually and collectively confronted individuals who had perpetuated oppressive dynamics, including call-outs and call-ins when a male organizer shut down discussions brought up by one of our members, as well as more volatile survivor-led confrontations with perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault. Yet none of the confrontations, nor other strategies for dealing with patterns of patriarchy, seemed effective.

We needed our organizing settings to be empowering for all of us in order to keep up the fight, and we were expending energy trying to create healthy settings and care for each other, with little recognition for the contribution to organizing efforts. Nevertheless, when we directly addressed someone who had done harm, it was often followed by more conflict, and the disintegration of important relationships, even among those who attempted to hold transgressors accountable. I needed to learn how to promote an ethos of being careful with each other. In light of not only the entrenched and persistent issues our affinity group encountered, but also some that we perpetuated, I needed to ask: How are settings transformed into empowering ones? How can organizing groups increase participation and power of those who often lack an equal share of resources? How do groups employ prefigurative politics? These questions focus on the relational work of collective empowerment and liberation.

I did not come up with these questions in isolation; in addition to my advisor and colleagues, I owe a debt of gratitude to those with whom I
engaged in collective struggle. My thinking about this project arose out of conversations and actions with friends at the barricades, the occupations, the oh-so-long meetings, and the bar or dinner debriefs. The reading discussions, and writing of my friends, especially on social reproduction, have influenced my program of research. My ability to connect the subtle injustices (e.g., microaggressions) to the more obvious ones (e.g., sexual assault), and connect all of the above to the maintenance of an unjust social formation, is rooted in collective action. Moreover, my capacity to recognize the reproductive, relational work that happens within social movement organizing (and that is necessary for socially just transformation) was sparked in those moments of praxis.

It became evident to me that organizers were facing similar challenges across the country. Years before formulating my dissertation research, I had been asked to attend an emergency meeting. An organization (on another campus) was faced with the report of sexual assault committed by a member of the leadership. Organizers grappled with legal, organizational, and interpersonal issues. This event has had lasting effects, including burnout, and a change in leadership and participation (queer, mostly white, women took over leadership after this event). I chose this site for research because their organizing had been impacted by the very phenomena I was interested in understanding, and they continued to thoughtfully discuss building power for change, as well as relational processes of accountability and care implicated in that project.

**Relevance to Community Research and Action**

Empowerment, a key process in community organizing, is integral to social movement organizations’ ability to build power and change unjust social systems (Rappaport, 1981). It is a collective process through which groups lacking an equal share change inequitable power dynamics, increase access to resources, and promote wellbeing (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Rappaport, 1981). Empowerment is hampered by the many ways that members of a collective engage in oppression, from microaggressions to assault. Sometimes members of an organization create harm for others within the setting, even when unintended; harm can be done irrespective of intent (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Sue, 2010). These behaviors also foster a hostile environment, perpetuate a white supremacist and/or patriarchal culture, and therefore create a setting that is disempowering. This harm is deleterious to individuals and the collective, and therefore, the capacity to address it is integral. That is, empowerment requires reproductive activities in the form of relational labor: building, maintaining, and repairing, relationships. This is attended to in the empowerment literature, particularly in the articulation of relational empowerment, which is described as “interpersonal transactions and processes that undergird the effective exercise of transformative power in the sociopolitical domain” (Christens, 2012, p. 121). Of particular relevance is “collaborative competence”, an element of relational empowerment defined as the ability to act within a collective for transformative power, and “bridging social divisions”, which refers to the capacity to develop trusting relationships across difference (Christens, 2012).

Relational labor aligns nicely with this conceptualization of empowerment. Relational labor holds organizations together in order to achieve goals (Fletcher, 1999). Like other forms of reproductive labor, it is feminized, under-recognized and inequitably distributed (Crittenden 2001; England, Budig, & Folbre 2002; Fletcher, 1999; McDowell, 1992; Tronto, 1993; Williams, 2000). I consider relational labor in community organizing as that which holds the group together, works through socially constructed differences, and sustains the ability to exercise power to transform and repair our world (Ellison, in prep A). Thus, our understanding of empowerment can be deepened by including contributions rooted in the theorizing of Women of Color feminisms and Marxist materialist feminisms, which elucidate that: a) relational labor is gendered, raced and classed and thus an under-recognized labor, and b) that race, class and gender are mutually constitutive and thus by
Taking care to mend our settings, and our social movement work that is often undervalued with Community Psychologists research complicates and contextualizes the way more equitably distributed social movements recognized in the functioning of organizations. Nevertheless, these labors confronting racism in the women's movement Bridge Called My Back Moraga, 1983, who wrote in the preface of settings and society are long asymmetric understanding of social change. repr myself to the many others who call to include social strong, sustainable outside of it. organization to change inequitable social relations changing inequitable social relations within an providing supportive labor in the form of caring, supporting, holding each other accountable, and providing other relational needs. This is the work of changing inequitable social relations within an organization to change inequitable social relations outside of it. Relationships make organizations strong, sustainable, and powerful (Fletcher, 1999; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Speer et al, 1995). I add myself to the many others who call to include social reproduction activities at the center of our understanding of social change. Concerns over asymmetric relational labor in social movement settings and society are long-standing ones (see Moraga, 1983, who wrote in the preface of This Bridge Called My Back about experiencing and confronting racism in the women’s movement). Nevertheless, these labors continue to go under-recognized in the functioning of organizations and social movements, should be illuminated, and be more equitably distributed. My hope is that my research complicates and contextualizes the way Community Psychologists understand, engage with, and measure empowerment, and centers social movement work that is often undervalued. Taking care to mend our settings, and our relationships is necessary to mend our world, which is indeed a rather dangerous undertaking.

References


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**Identity Attachment and Awakening the Capacity for Intercultural Accompaniment**

*Written by Michelle Stratton, Center for African Immigrants and Refugees Organization – 2018 Emory L. Cowen Award for the Promotion of Wellness*

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**Dissertation Abstract**

**Culture, Resilience, and Adaptation: The Voices of Rwandan and Congolese Refugees**

This research explores the experience of displacement and resettlement for Rwandan and Congolese refugees in New Hampshire, USA, highlighting cultural perspectives and values that contribute to psychosocial resilience and a restored sense of well-being in these communities.

Participants elaborated on their childhood experiences of culture, the disruptions of war and displacement, and their experience of resettlement and adjustment to life in the U.S. The research considers the cultural perspectives and values that have contributed to well-being within African refugee communities, and that can generate a sense of stability as refugees negotiate cultural expectations in new homes. The research also considers intercultural relationships and relationships of psychosocial accompaniment. Phenomenological and ethnographic methodologies were used to gather and analyze data through the lens of liberation psychology and depth psychology. Decolonizing methodologies, including a commitment to reflexive practice and psychosocial accompaniment, were also integrated. Data was gathered through semi-formal interviews, focus groups, observations, and researcher field notes. Rarely are refugees invited by resettlement researchers, to reflect on patterns of repair, restoration, and the generation of culturally informed adaptations. Participants in this study reveal their experience of culture, overlooked challenges, and the creative adaptations that generate possibilities for success and restored balance in families and communities. The research offers an approach to engaging cultural communities in responding to the challenge of resettlement with integrity, while drawing on resilience and familiar cultural patterns.

**Article**

Worldwide we have seen a dramatic increase in the displacement and migration of people responding to war, climate change, poverty and violence, as well as movement by those with the means to explore global opportunities (United Nations, 2017). As a result, schools, social services, neighborhoods and political systems are challenged to respond to the needs of immigrants who bring significantly different values, experience, and cultural perspectives. However, immigration also presents an opportunity to create strategies for mutual engagement in efforts that promote a sense of belonging and collective well-being. This article
explores the use of identity attunement and intercultural accompaniment with the aim of shifting our focus toward strategies that strengthen intercultural communities.

In my doctoral research I was able to reflect on this opportunity and to look closely at the intercultural dynamics that both promote understanding and that get in the way of recognizing and responding to one another. The aim of my research was, “to create opportunities for African refugees to explore and identify cultural values and perspectives that contribute to sustaining and regenerating psychosocial resilience and community well-being” (Stratton, 2016, p.4). In addition, the research considered the impact of a liberatory approach on “…strategies for effective intercultural relationships oriented toward accompaniment, understanding, and commitment to overcoming the challenges encountered by refugees and host communities in the United States” (Stratton, 2016, p.8).

While getting to know the experience of Rwandan and Congolese refugees I was frequently reminded of an observation expressed by a Congolese friend, “New Hampshire people do not see my people deeply” (Stratton, 2013, p.6). This concern was reinforced by many stories shared by research participants. African immigrants frequently described the experience of feeling misunderstood, and a sense that their cultural perspectives remained invisible or disregarded despite determined attempts to make their needs, interests and cultural strengths known. They were often treated, both intentionally and unintentionally, as “foreigners” and struggled to feel a sense of belonging, even after many years of living in the U.S. The wish to be seen and understood speaks to their desire to have others recognize their complex and adapting identities and their place in the fabric of society.

While I became increasingly adept at noticing interactions that reflected these concerns, I also became increasingly aware of how unprepared I was to begin to “see” African immigrants, or indeed any immigrants, in the ways that they so desired. It was tempting to study Rwandan and Congolese culture, history and experience, drawing on “experts,” while accumulating stories from participants that would reinforce what I was learning. However, while gathering published information was helpful, it was not enough. Despite a solid background in social justice and a commitment to a reflexive practice aimed at stemming personal contributions to inequity and bias, it became increasingly evident that my internal compass often got in the way of “seeing” African immigrants. Martín-Baró, (1994) writes of this experience as “opening toward the other” in order to create space for relationships that may not have been imagined before.

I found that the concept of attunement fit well with my desire to bear witness to the complex and diverse histories and experience, the impact of loss and trauma, and the cultural patterns that could too easily remain unrecognized or marginalized. As I built relationships with African communities, I wished to pay close attention and develop the capacity to respond with authenticity to the stories and to accompany them in the journey of understanding the shape and nuance of identities framed by complex and unexpected circumstances. Mary Watkins (2015) writes that, “Those involved in psychosocial accompaniment are mindful of the power of each individual to construct meanings and to transform the world. Interventions are not to be proposed ‘from the outside,’ but determined with participants, alongside, through dialogue and critical reflection” (p.329). With full commitment to attunement and accompaniment I began to “see” African immigrants more fully, not only as I learned about history and experience, but as I began to notice their extraordinary efforts to adapt while also holding on to a rich cultural heritage.

I had the good fortune of developing honest and genuine relationships with African participants and informants who were willing to challenge me on my perceptions and assumptions. At times this felt like an unfair arrangement that risked replicating persistent demands on African immigrants to accommodate or inform people from my social and cultural location. I often grew discouraged by my inability to remain oriented toward, and attuned to,
different expressions of culture and wondered if I was doing my part as a committed learner and listener. This commitment to “seeing” African immigrants was further complicated by the rapid pace of change for newly arrived immigrants responding to the experience of emersion in very different cultural contexts. I was also very aware that my efforts to attune to their experience and to witnessing their stories, remained a choice for me. As is true of many communities colonized toward the margins of society, African immigrants must practice their skillful observations for survival, protection, and to take advantage of limited opportunities for success. Participants in the study could not afford to shift their focus or relax their careful observation and response to the demands of U.S. dominant culture.

This vigilant attention to those who hold dominant social power, privilege and mobility clearly places an unfair burden of accommodation and subordination on recent immigrants. However, there is also value in this capacity to attune to others so carefully. In its functional form attunement weaves together and strengthens collective cultural communities. When attunement is absent, weakened or relegated to a protective stance, our sense of belonging and our capacity to respond to and feel connected to others is diminished. African participants not only spoke of the loss they felt as their families and communities adapted to U.S culture – becoming less collective and attuned to others – but they also spoke of their concern for an American society where they observed people longing for genuine connections and social supports that were overshadowed by a dominant focus on the concerns of the individual. As I listened closely a new possibility arose – the possibility for mutual attunement to identity that both affirms cultural perspectives and recognizes multiplicity and change that takes place over time.

Why Identity Attunement and Intercultural Accompaniment?

I contend that our capacity to accompany one another with skilled attunement to identity is central to the work of advancing intercultural community wellbeing. We must develop this capacity for attunement to the ways that identity presents recognizable cultural and familial patterns, while also developing the capacity to notice multiplicity and changes in identity that are influenced by complex social, emotional and political circumstances.

Donna Hicks (2011) succinctly identifies the link between our inner struggle to both individuate and integrate and the damage that is incurred when identity is compromised.

“Throughout our lives, our inner worlds are dominated by a struggle between the ontological drives to individuate, to become who we are, separated from all others, and to integrate, to remain connected, to belong, to be a part of something greater than ourselves. Thus, it makes sense that an assault on one’s identity and the exclusion that results from it can be emotionally devastating.” (p.35)

The negotiation of individuation and integration is complicated for immigrant families who encounter pressure to adjust to a status quo that disregards important cultural patterns that have long shaped their identity. Familiar patterns of identity formation and cultural identity are often disrupted as family members adapt and change to accommodate a new cultural environment. Their experience of feeling invisible to the broader society also contributes to this difficult process.

Participants in my research who had lived in the U.S. for many years spoke about their process of “taking the best from both” cultures. In our initial interviews, those who arrived in the U.S. more recently expressed their worry about the loss of language and culture for their children. However, before the end of our work together they had begun to confidently identify the values they were not prepared to give up and were becoming more comfortable with the new cultural frame in which they now live.

As we look to provide a welcoming and responsive community for refugee families, I propose that we develop our skills to be attuned to identity that is shaped by culture, the complex experience of displacement and resettlement, and...
the process of adapting to a very different cultural context. Orienting our lens toward identity allows us to attune to the individual, the family or the community with a curiosity about the multiple layers of influence on their sense of self. This attitude of attunement brings us closer to the possibility of “seeing” our immigrant neighbors, coworkers, students, and peers more fully, allowing us to notice identities that are rich with history and culture, but that are also influenced by a changing world. As we learn to accompany newcomers and to create permeable and safe borderlands for cultural expression, intercultural sharing, and the capacity to “see” one another, we will all benefit from the rich expression of diversity and collective wellbeing that unfolds.

References
constructed and then validated using survey data from 334 participants split into two samples. Exploratory factor analysis supported a three-factor solution with 15 items. Confirmatory factor analysis suggested a good model fit and the measure demonstrated reliability, convergent validity, and criterion-related validity. Recommendations for improvements to campus racial climate are provided.

**Article**

Mental health is a major concern in the current U.S. sociopolitical climate, especially for those who experience multiple forms of oppression rooted in colonial structures. This colonial matrix of power is driven by a White supremacist capitalist patriarchal ideology that inflicts structural, epistemic, and physical violence against those deemed “other” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). **How is this coloniality/modernity maintained? What are strategies that have been used in resistance of coloniality?**

As a Black man born in the U.S. Deep South who has spent most of my life in educational spaces (student, researcher, lecturer, post-doc) and who also studies the Black experiences in these spaces, I propose that this coloniality — in the form of racial capitalism — informs and reproduces through educational institutions, leading to negative effects on Black people’s well-being. I will also discuss Afropopulism as a critical practice for intervention efforts in support of emancipation, liberation, and psychological well-being.

**What is racial capitalism?**

Racial capitalism is an economic system with its roots in slavery, imperialism, colonialism, and genocide (Robinson, 2000). The acquisition of the means of production, goods, and value was achieved largely through the exploitation of indigenous communities and people of color. Racism and capitalism are not two independent phenomena, but an intersection of various epistemologies, philosophies, and ideologies that serve to maintain and reproduce a power structure built along racial lines (Robinson, 2000).

Black people across the diaspora have been subjected to displacement, segregation, institutionalized oppression, deculturation, and destruction of capital. Some refer to climate change as a future apocalypse, but as stated by Public Enemy “Armageddon Been in Effect” for many in the African diaspora (Anderson & Jones, 2016). The transatlantic slave trade ripped millions from their homelands and dispersed them across the world. By the 19th century, as much as 90% of the world was controlled and/or colonized by western (European and European-derived) nations (Young, 2003). This “Armageddon Effect” of racial capitalism continues to persist, but how? As with any hegemony, individuals must be socialized into it. **Race, capitalism, and education**

Like all institutions, education does the work of culture: defining and organizing the way people interact with societies. Education determines levels of economic participation and outcomes (Jones, 1997). In capitalist societies, educational institutions reproduce the status quo of inequities such as racism/racial capitalism/colonialism (Potts, 2003). Black students’ educational experiences have always been racialized, and how could they not? Several Ivy League institutions engaged in the slave trade in order to keep the institutions operational: some of these schools would not be open now if not for their participation in the slave trade. In addition to this, Black people were largely prohibited from even learning how to read (Du Bois, 1935). After reconstruction, those public institutions serving Black students lacked the funds and resources to match schools for White students once the federal government removed support. The lack of resources was one impetus for desegregation efforts, but the psychological health of Black children was also at stake; Mamie and Kenneth Clark’s doll studies demonstrated the psychological harm segregation inflicted on Black children. Even after Brown v. Board of Education, racial capitalism still worked to subjugate Black people. Southern White people established private segregation academies and used their political power to divest funds from public education and
invest in private schools (Bell, 2004). Efforts to circumvent the court-ordered integration would set the stage for the future privatization of education. The growing push of school choice echoes attempts by Southern White people to establish their own segregation academies to avoid integrating with Black students. Public education has evolved to serve the corporate interests of training people to take their place in the world and identify those best prepared or with the most talent. Schools engage in practices such as tracking, standardized testing, and culturally biased curricula. Narratives are pushed that fail to recognize and respect different epistemologies, worldviews, and cultures (Jones, 1997). The message remains the same, quality education is only guaranteed for those with the social, economic, and political power to decide who matters. These are all examples of the epistemic violence that Black students face in educational institutions.

Epistemic violence is the destruction of viable ways of thinking that are rooted in their natural context with ways of thinking that are maladaptive (Adams & Estrada-Villalta, 2017). It erases, excludes, marginalizes, and delegitimizes voices and perspectives of already marginalized people. The ability to define the truth is indistinguishable from the ability to control others. Knowledge is always related to systems of power (Foucault, 1980). A version of this is expert power, “a type of power based on the perceived knowledge, skill, or experience of a person or group.” Epistemological violence involves interpretations of social science on “the Other” that problematizes them or proposes their inferiority to the exclusion of other equally viable interpretations; the academic context legitimizes these interpretations as knowledge (Teo, 2010).

**The Black Scholars Matter Project: Campus Racial Climate**

The university setting is where all these practices come into stark relief. Campus racial climate in many ways is emblematic of the intersections of race, capitalism, and education. Based on my research with Black college students, I define campus racial climate as the perception of how the college/university reproduces cultural and institutional racism towards Black students across four dimensions:

1. Quality of interracial interactions among students
2. Experiences with racism on campus
3. Attitudes people have toward Black students
4. Policies and practices universities implement

An important concern that comes up is the role that Black students have in improving their campus climates. Afrofuturism is a critical perspective that can frame intervention efforts including Black students. But what is Afrofuturism and how it connected to campus racial climate and creating alternative settings for Black students?

**Imagineering Black Spaces/Creating Alternative Settings.** Afrofuturism was first coined to refer to Black literature with elements of speculative fiction, the intersections of race and future technology, and projecting Black people into the future (Womack, 2013). Since the inception of the term, the concept has been broadened to be more than just a literary genre, but as a theoretical perspective and critical practice. The perspective is not bound by European/Western/White Enlightenment ideas of universalism, critical theory, science, or technology (Anderson & Jones, 2016). Scholars have pointed out that Afrofuturism has always existed as a phenomenon among diasporic Africans, being equated with the West African concept of Sankofa which promotes using the past to move forward toward a better future. This also overlaps with the Black radical tradition (Robinson, 2000). Afrofuturism is Black people making it with what they got and projecting themselves into futures they weren’t supposed to be in. As a critical project, the goal of Afrofuturism is to imagine Black futures.

**Imagineering as a conceptual analytic.** Much of Afrofuturist literature references cyborgs, post-racial identities, alien encounters, and other science fiction concepts. Some have called for interventions that consider the current material
realities that Black people grapple with. Imagineering (Im)possibility is a conceptual analytic that allows for the use of materials that can address material concerns of Black people (Daniels, 2016). “Imagineering (Im)possibility ushers in the use of materials, texts, embodied expressions, and art that has been constructed, imagineered from contexts that are available for mining.” One can see this Afrofuturist impulse in many aspects of Black culture such as hip-hop and Black Twitter.

Afrofuturist writers and scholars make the point that “all organizing is science fiction.” This rings true in so many ways given the epistemic and epistemological violence inflicted on Black people through knowledge production. Black student activism and organizing has consistently taken place on college campuses for decades (Rogers, 2012). Black students have had to assert their humanity in spaces that were not built for them: spaces that in many ways perpetuate and reproduce their marginalization. Students became radicalized via campus visits of radicals and militants such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Stokely Carmichael. The Black Panther party was born out of Black student activism and many future Black student unions (BSU) would model themselves after the Black Panther Party (Rogers, 2012).

Decades of research has supported the efforts of Black students, citing negative racial climates for Black students (Cabrera et al., 1999; Chavous, 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Tynes, Rose, & Markoe, 2013). In terms of improving campus racial climate and resisting the violence of colonial structures and thought, Black college students come to the table with a wealth of cultural resources accessible for their activism and organizing. This makes Black students an ideal group of stakeholders to identify problems and solutions.

**Thematic Map from Dissertation Research.**

As a part of my dissertation research, I conducted group interviews to create a thematic map of campus racial climate based on Black students’ perspectives. Three broad themes emerged from the group interviews. Institution: characteristics, practices, and policies within the structure of the university that promote racial/ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, and the support of Black students at multiple levels of the institution. Perceptions of Black Students include beliefs that individuals hold about Black students at multiple levels of the institution. Interracial Interactions are the day to day interactions that Black students have with students of other races and ethnicities and that students of all race and ethnicities have across racial lines.

**Campus Racial Climate Recommendations.** Students were asked this open-ended question: “What do you think can be done to improve the experiences of Black college students?” Based on preliminary analyses of the responses (N = 307), these are broad categories of recommendations:

1. More Resources to support students
2. More Black students
3. More Black faculty and staff
4. Black spaces
5. Diversity/cultural sensitivity trainings
6. Courses on Black history and culture
7. Less racism/anti-Blackness

Black students recommended mostly institutional level interventions and changes. While they did address individual level bias and discrimination experienced, students pointed to actions the university could take to improve the environment for Black students. They are also consistent with demands that Black students have been giving for decades and their recommendations are supported by decades of peer-reviewed research. What I hope to demonstrate in this project is that students from marginalized backgrounds are knowledge creators who play a vital role intervening against the epistemic and structural violence inflicted on students via racist educational practices and knowledge production.

**References**


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**The Neighborhood Story Project:**

**Lessons from the Cutting Room Floor**

*Written by Amie Thurber, Portland State University – 2019 Best Dissertation in a Topic Relevant to Community Psychology*

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**Dissertation Abstract**

The Neighborhood Story Project: Keeping More Than Our Homes

Gentrification—commonly understood as the transformation of areas with high levels of affordable housing into areas targeting middle and upper income uses—proves a range of losses. People may lose their homes, neighbors, and sites of historical significance, along with their sense of place, belonging, and history. Yet, policy makers and community practitioners often restrict interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods to the material effects,
such as trying to reduce displacement through the creation and preservation of affordable housing. While such responses are critical, they fail to recognize and address other harms residents may be experiencing concurrent with or independent from a loss of housing. This study explores the Neighborhood Story Project, a 3-month action research intervention engaging residents as researchers in their communities. Through a multi-case constructivist study of the intervention in three gentrifying Nashville neighborhoods, I find that participants deepened their place-knowledge and place-attachments, strengthened social ties, and developed an increased sense of agency to advocate on behalf of their community. Results suggest that interventions such as the Neighborhood Story Project can complement efforts to build and preserve affordable housing in important ways. Through creating a learning, caring, and empowering environment, The Neighborhood Story Project offers a practice model for fostering a attachments to people and places, and facilitating collective action in gentrifying neighborhoods. This study also suggests the need to retheorize gentrification to better account for the more than material dimensions of neighborhoods, and for researchers to engage residents as theorizers and agents of change in their communities.

Article

In June of 2013, my family and I packed up a life we loved in Missoula, Montana, and drove to Nashville, Tennessee so that I could begin doctoral study at Vanderbilt University. Trading hiking trails for highways, crisp mountain air for sweltering summer heat, a mountain-ridged horizon for a skyline dotted with cranes, the transition was stark and disjarring. Grieving the loss of a beloved place and cherished people I had willingly removed us from, I tried to get my bearings where we had landed. And as I rode my bike through my new neighborhood, attended community meetings, and talked to people about their city, I found that many Nashvillians were grieving the loss of a place and people too, only they hadn’t moved.

Nashville was changing, adding people and jobs at a record-setting pace. Entire neighborhoods were rebranded and rebuilt to attract a wealthier, younger, and whiter market; boutiques and breweries steadily replaced corner stores. More times than I can count, people waved their hands desperately at the ever-encroaching new construction and asked, “who is this being built for?” And while many people laud the development for accelerating the economic engine of the city, others—particularly within communities of color—are suffering its consequences, from lost housing to severed social ties; disappearing place histories to dissolving political power. I designed the Neighborhood Story Project to offer one vehicle for residents to give voice to their own experiences of neighborhood change. Throughout 2016, I worked with small groups of residents in three gentrifying Nashville neighborhoods. Meeting together over 12-weeks, participants in each group identified guiding research questions about their neighborhood, collected and analyzed data, and shared what they learned through culminating community-wide events (for a summary of the three projects, visit https://www.humanitiestennessee.org/programs-grants/core-program-overview/neighborhoodstoryproject/). One team, concerned about frayed social ties and lost neighborhood history, hosted an interactive arts exhibit featuring large format photographs and quotes from their neighbors alongside a ‘build your own’ neighborhood timeline. Another team, troubled by the way gentrification heightened the stigmatization of their neighborhood high school, created a feature length documentary film that drew on interviews with alumni and teachers from every decade of the school’s history. The third team, devastated by the displacement of their neighbors, created a set of organizing tools that included a video and report documenting the ‘state of emergency’ in their community, and a comic strip explaining how residents can get involved in zoning hearings.

The three neighborhood-based action research projects were nested within my dissertation study.
(Thurber, 2018). The data collected by residents in each neighborhood—oral histories with neighbors, archival photographs, and videos—was their own, the bulk of which the teams decided to archive in the Nashville Public Library. While residents were studying their neighborhoods, I studied our work together. I wanted to understand how participation in the project impacted residents, and what insights from this project might be beneficial to other communities grappling with similar social/spatial transformations. I analyzed recordings, transcripts and field notes from each of the team’s 12 weekly sessions as well as follow-up interviews and artifacts created along the way.

Findings from the study suggest the Neighborhood Story Project offers a practice model for building attachments to place and people, and mobilizing collective action in neighborhoods undergoing rapid demographic change (Thurber, in press). More broadly, the results underscore the need to reimagine the role of community practice beyond helping people find or keep housing, and expand the use of interventions that engage residents in place-making, public pedagogy, participatory research, and/or community organizing (Thurber & Christiano, in press). I also drew insights from this study to conceptualize a ‘more than material’ framework for theorizing gentrification (Thurber, 2017), which recognizes the constellation of losses residents may experience as neighborhoods gentrify, including, though not limited to, a loss of housing. Ultimately, I hope this emerging body of work assists those of us in social work, community psychology and related fields to better understand and more effectively engage in neighborhoods. But I also learned lessons in humility and reciprocity that are more difficult to parse into generalizable findings.

As the facilitator of the Neighborhood Story Project, I was frequently struck by how little the residents needed from me to achieve their goals: they did not need a facilitator to spark their curiosity or desire to affect change; most team members entered the project already invested in their neighborhoods and compelled to make a difference. Without a doubt, members highly valued being part of a facilitated process. The design of the project was accessible to people with varying skills and abilities, required a manageable investment of time, and provided the necessary scaffolding for each team to move from ideas to action.

But though all neighborhoods need facilitation to organize for change, not all need outside facilitators to do so. I was reminded of this one evening soon after the Neighborhood Story Project wrapped up, as I happened to tune my radio to The Moth—true stories told live—to hear Aaron Naparstek recount the story of honku (https://themoth.org/stories/honku). After months of working from his home-office on the third floor of a Brooklyn apartment, Aaron lost his cool over the incessant honking from the intersection below. Realizing the need to find a productive outlet for his increasing distress, he decided that every time he found himself agitated by honking, he would “sit down, take a deep breath, and observe the honking on Clinton Street.” As he explains, “and then I take those observations, and I start boiling them down into three-line, twelve-syllable, 5-7-5 haiku poems. And I call them honku.” His “honking therapy regimen” progressed to sneaking out at night to tape copies of honku to lampposts up and down Clinton Street.

On one such evening, he was greeted by a neighbor who excitedly referred to him as “the bard of Clinton Street.” She shared that her family loved his work, and that her daughters had started writing honku as well. Indeed, seeing other honku taped to lampposts, Aaron soon realized there were others with shared concerns, and he began organizing his neighbors. They made up letterhead for ‘the honku organization,’ sent letters to their city council leaders, and attended community meetings, where they called on elected to enforce the city’s no honking ordinance. Eventually, the police agreed to a three-week blitz enforcement of the rule. While there were some improvements, Aaron acknowledges, tongue in cheek, “the honku organization—I’ll just be honest with you—we did not accomplish our ultimate mission of ending horn-honking in New York City. Like, that battle is still
there to be fought for someone else.” But the group did stay involved—with each other and with their neighborhood—and went on to make tangible improvements for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. “The real success,” as Aaron concludes, was that “instead of sort of being in our little bubbles of honk-anger, we started talking to each other, we were really trying to fix something. Clinton Street wasn’t just a street anymore; it was a neighborhood.” Honku had helped knit together a community.

Listening to Aaron’s story as I scrubbed my kitchen floor, I was struck by the similarities between his work and my own. Though the concerns on Clinton Street are a bit afield from those of the Neighborhood Story Project, both efforts brought people together to give and receive support, to build a collective understanding of their problems, and to organize for solutions. And yet, Clinton Street did not need a social worker, community psychologist, community organizer, or neighborhood association to facilitate their work together—they had the Bard of Clinton Street. As part of professional fields that often find themselves scrambling to legitimize their value, there’s something important about recognizing one’s own dispensability.

But there certainly are neighborhoods in which outside facilitators can be helpful—neighborhoods that are full of people with creativity and frustrations and skills, though perhaps not the skill of facilitation. And these are important places for those of us working in community practice to engage. But Aaron’s story heightened my awareness of the reciprocal nature of these engagements. We are not only facilitating processes for the benefit of others, but knitting ourselves into the communities we call home. Indeed, just as the 28 participants of the Nashville Neighborhood Story Projects invested in one another and in their communities, they also invested in me. As they deepened their attachments to their neighborhoods, I too—through their place-stories, generosity, and care—came away more deeply connected to the place I lived and the people with whom I had the honor of working. It was not only participants who gained a sense of efficacy, but me as well, buoyed by our collective accomplishments and more hopeful than ever about the differences small groups of neighbors can make in one another’s lives and the life of their neighborhood. Grounded in my grief of a community left behind and guided by the wisdom of the community I formed through the Neighborhood Story Project, I left Nashville with a deeper understanding of the kind of scholar, practitioner, and importantly, neighbor, I hope to become.

Acknowledgements: The author gratefully acknowledges the members of the three Neighborhood Story Projects for contributions to this work.

References
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Conversations that Raise Your Practice Game
Written by Tom Wolff, Tom Wolff Associates

Starting in the Fall of 2018 the Community Psychology Practice Council began a monthly series of webinar/conversations with prominent community psychology practitioners. The series, hosts by Tom Wolff, is titled Conversation that Raise Your Practice Game” and the focus of the discussions was just that. Each of the presentations were recorded and you can now catch up with any of them that you missed. If you have suggestions about future presentations (including self-nominations) please contact tom@tomwolff.com.

The videos can be viewed at: http://www.scra27.org/what-we-do/practice/practice-council-initiatives/conversations-raise-your-practice-game/

MAY 17TH, 2019 – Revisiting the Definition of Community Psychology Practice with Dave Julian, Nicole Freund, Tom Wolff

The original definition of community psychology practice was efforts “to strengthen the capacity of communities to meet the needs of constituents and help them to realize their dreams in order to promote well-being, social justice, economic equity and self-determination through systems, organizational and/or individual change” (Julian, 2006)

In the intervening years much has emerged that requires the field to revisit this definition. This includes:

1. The development of the Community Psychology Practices Competencies with books, and journals addressing their use.
2. Increased focus on systems and policy change in CP Practice -including extensive writing on institutional and structural racism (see Gina Langhout on anti-racism, anti-sexism approaches and the need for self-examination); inclusion of policy work in CP graduate training (See Ken Maton’s work) and most recently the focus on decolonialization from Pacifica (Nuria Ciofalo and others)
3. New areas of community research that enhance and inform practice. If we are to rely on evidence based – what are we calling evidence? Are the lessons learned by practitioners considered evidence?
4. Community engagement and community power in our CP Practice work with communities – see collaborating for equity and justice (below)
   a. Explicitly address issues of social and economic injustice and structural racism.
   b. Employ a community development approach in which residents have equal power in determining the coalition or collaborative’s agenda and resource allocation.
   c. Employ community organizing as an intentional strategy and as part of the process. Work to build resident leadership and power.
   d. Focus on policy, systems, and structural change.
   e. Build on the extensive community-engaged scholarship and research that show what works, that acknowledge the complexities, and that evaluate appropriately.
   f. Construct core functions for the collaborative based on equity and justice that provide basic facilitating structures and build member ownership and leadership.

MARCH 21ST, 2019 -- Conversations That Raise Your Practice Game with Nuria Ciofalo

Nuria Ciofalo, a community psychologist who has been devoted to co-constructing Indigenous Psychologies in collaboration with various communities from Mexico, presented her
collaborative community project in the Mayan Lacandon Rainforest in the state of Chiapas that resulted in a book entitled, “Indigenous Psychologies in an Era of Decolonization” published by Springer Nature. Mayan Lacandon youths and adults co-authored this book sharing their knowledge on environmental management, ecotourism, education, mythologies, legends, poems, and photography. Nuria is Professor in the Community, Liberation, Indigenous, and Eco-Psychologies Specialization at Pacifica Graduate Institute. This was a deeply moving conversation in which Nuria illustrated building a respectful partnership with the community that she is working with.

**DECEMBER 14TH, 2018 -- Evaluating Health Equity Means Deep Analysis of Structural Racism, a Commitment to Social Justice, Strong Evaluation Skills with Kien Lee, Community Science**

Kien Lee is Principal Associate and Vice President at Community Science. She has expertise in designing and implementing capacity building and evaluation strategies that support progress toward equity. She has consulted with foundations, federal and local governments, and nonprofit organizations. She believes that doing this important work as a research, evaluator, and strategic advisor requires a deep analysis of structural racism, systems, and community, as well as the commitment to go beyond the call of duty.

During this call, Kien provided an overview of her career trajectory in practice and academic settings and shared general reflections and lessons learned from her efforts to make practice and academic work more of a continuum rather than dichotomy in her career. During this call, Kien also posed these questions to the group: What stage are you in your career and what have been the challenges or supports that you have encountered while trying to balance practice and academic work? What does a practice-academic continuum 'look like' for others?

**SEPTEMBER 28TH, 2018 – Promoting Wellness in the Criminal Justice System with Chris Sadeler, Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council**

Our first conversation was Chris Sadeler, last year’s winner of the Award for Distinguished Contributions to Practice in Community Psychology. Chris’ work in crime prevention from a community psychology perspective is innovative, successful, and it’s being replicated across Canada. As the founding Executive Director of the
The Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (CPC), she has been for the past 22 years, is the local leader on prevention and the promotion of wellness, as an alternative to the dominant approach in the criminal justice system of costly law enforcement, jail, and prisons. Over time, the CPC has grown from 17 members to over 40 members that represent every sector of our region – from the Chair of Regional government, to the Chief of Police, to individuals representing groups often given little voice, such as indigenous peoples, seniors, the LGBTQ community, and youth. Chris shows true leadership with this body – not by telling members what they should be doing – but by helping them work together on significant issues such as drug abuse and gang activity that challenge community safety.

Rather than focus on antisocial behavior or drug addiction of individuals, for example, the root causes approach draws attention to poverty, economic inequality, racism, homophobia, sexism, diminished social capital, and a lack of opportunities. Chris conveys this approach with passion and persuasion in a way that pushes community members to reframe crime as a social problem, not as an individual failing. Chris is a graduate of the community psychology program at Wilfred Laurier University in Canada.

Reference
APA’s call for integrating “diversity” across the curriculum

Importantly, the APA (2013) has acknowledged the need for the construct of “diversity” to go beyond single identity issues (e.g. racism, sexism, ableism), and explains that teaching “diversity also comprises intersections among these social identities and the social power differences that are associated with diverse identities and multiple contexts” (p. 12). Notably, goal three of APA’s guidelines for the undergraduate psychology major reflects core values of community psychology by featuring social justice language such as privilege, social change, benefiting community, global concerns, application of psychological principles to public policy, and the importance of serving others.

Regardless of the area of psychology, these should be goals for all psychology students, as well as for teachers and researchers, and if we are going to prepare our students to be of service and responsive to “multicultural and global concerns” (p.27) we’ll need to expand our toolbox. Intersectionality honors diverse experiences of various groups as both an analytic tool and a theoretical frame for psychology courses. Additionally, it is critical for community psychologists to practice intersectional cultural humility (Ortega & Faller, 2011), or the acceptance of never fully “knowing” a culture different from one’s own. Instead, community psychologists can commit to life-long learning rather than focusing on an outcome (e.g. cultural competence). Intersectional cultural humility provides space for teachers, researchers, students, and clients to learn, grow, and attend to the individual while acknowledging their experiences in the context of relationships and social institutions.

Origins of intersectionality

The term “intersectionality” was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1991, although women of color, transgender women, women with disabilities, and lesbian and bisexual women were writing about intersectionality well before the 1990s and outside the United States (Kurtis & Adams, 2017). The term itself captures the need to understand a person in context, meaning we cannot parse apart a person’s identities (race, gender, sexual orientation) to simplify our analysis of their experiences within systems of privilege and oppression (e.g. legal, educational, and healthcare). A central tenet of intersectionality is a commitment to social justice through identifying intersections where people are rendered invisible, such as the reproductive choice movement which focuses on abortion while largely ignoring reproductive justice denied to poor women, women of color, women with disabilities, lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender women. Therefore, intersectionality is not about who people are (race, gender, sexuality); it is about how things work (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Social/personality psychologist Elizabeth Cole (2009) offers three strategies for psychologists to consider when researching people, although they are also useful for thinking about how we frame our psychology courses: 1) Who is included within this category? 2) what role does inequality play? and 3) where are the similarities? Cole’s questions require attending to diversity within social categories (e.g. race within gender), hierarchies of privilege and power, and potential for coalitions and collaboration. On paper, these recommendations offer the potential to transform how we research and teach; however, creative approaches are needed to implement them into practice.

Integrating intersectionality into our work

Implicit in Cole’s recommendations are core values held by community psychologists such as social justice for all individuals, empowering marginalized individuals and communities, embracing and promoting diversity, and understanding human behavior in context, all of which require the examination of social systems that perpetuate unearned privilege and power through oppressive practices. Notably, teaching about privilege and oppression is difficult because we cannot necessarily “see” how systems might privilege us (e.g. media, education, law, culture); likewise, it is difficult to “see” how these same systems oppress others, which may manifest in our teaching practices. Therefore, as community psychologists we must be mindful of how our
(partially informed) worldviews inform our teaching and research. Through the use of intersectionality in any psychology classroom, we can practice intersectional cultural humility while teaching and learning with/from our students.

**The Intersectionality Project**

Toward these goals, I developed the *intersectionality project* for a master’s level course titled “The Psychology of Gender, Race and Sexuality” (GRS) which focuses on complex intersections of gender, race, sexuality, class, and as noted in the syllabus, “other dimensions of difference within systems of oppression and privilege” (for detailed instructions see Rios, Bowling and Harris, 2017). I have used variations of the intersectionality project in undergraduate courses, and it is amenable across types of psychology courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Key lessons include understanding that 1) people have multiple social identities, some of which contain more/less access to power/privilege; 2) people’s lived experiences change at these intersections; 3) privilege maintains systems of inequality; 4) there will be key intersections where students feel uncomfortable (e.g. White men feeling defensive of their privilege; women of color denying privileged statuses); and 5) we can use our privilege to empower ourselves and others. The course is service-learning oriented with a real-life activism component.

As a large group, the class selects one social issue to address, such as sexual violence. In smaller groups of 3-4, students choose groups of people to research (e.g., white women, undocumented Latinas, men). Students sometimes choose “singular identity” groups (e.g. men), but through their research they learn that at certain intersections the social issue is experienced differently (e.g. white heterosexual men vs. white gay men). Next, in the same small groups, students choose a type of intervention which may take the form of coordinating with a community organization, or the creation of products such as brochures for an organization or a social media outlet.

The final assignment for the course is small group presentations where students present an overview of their “intersection” (e.g., African American women), their activism, and connections made between their activism and course material. Groups present their work to the larger class to illuminate differences and similarities of experiences at a particular intersection (e.g., White women compared to African American women), key lessons they learned during the process, and their previously held assumptions about the equality of laws, social/cultural practices, institutions, or groups of people. For example, while researching the effects of the #MeToo movement, students discovered that affluent, attractive, white women were more likely to get media coverage and justice compared to all other groups of women. Additionally, sexual violence against men is largely unacknowledged, with only the most privileged men taken seriously (e.g. Terry Crews). Finally, perpetrators of violence face different consequences depending on how much power and privilege they hold at the intersection of race and gender (e.g. Donald Trump versus Bill Cosby). In sum, students learn through their use of intersectionality as an analytic tool how social issues and institutions are experienced differently depending on a person’s social identities, and the role of power and privilege in those outcomes.

**Reflections on intersectionality and reminders about cultural humility**

Although the project is challenging, students are quite moved by their expanded understanding of psychological theory, intersectionality, and how these apply to inequality. Student course evaluations often include comments about how their beliefs about social institutions were challenged (e.g. marriage, education, legal system), feeling empowered to take action because of skills/tools/knowledge gained, coming to terms with privileged statuses and using that privilege for the greater good, and generally acknowledgement that they grew not only as students but as people. Overall, students reflect on their own privilege, gain a more complex understanding of social institutions, understand their standpoint is partial and incomplete, and gain empathy for groups they perceive to be different from themselves. Ideally,
these are values we hope to embody as community psychologists, and what we hope to encourage in our students. I am continuously moved by the capacity of my students for working toward a more just world for all people, and I am grateful to them for their reminders to practice intersectional cultural humility in the classroom and community.

References


Several months ago, I saw a posting on SCRA's listserv, offering opportunities to students for field research in Senegal, from SCRA member Judi Aubel. Her signature block stated that she is an Ashoka Fellow – Ashoka is an organization of social change agents to which I have donated since its beginnings. I had an inkling that she was, like me, a returned Peace Corps Volunteer – which my googling confirmed. That started an email exchange and an in-person interview during her March 2019 visit near my home.

Judi was born in the San Francisco Bay area, her family having moved from El Cerrito to San Rafael when the bridge to Marin County was built. Her father was an engineer for Standard Oil; her mother's career in journalism was ended by immobility caused by the polio she contracted in 1950. This middle-class family was rounded out by a sister, three years younger. Judi attended the University of California (UC), Davis for two years, after which she transferred to UCLA, majoring in political science and international relations, minoring in African studies. Interested in a teaching career, she volunteered in Los Angeles to tutor in Watts (with African American students) and East LA (with Hispanic students) and studied a fifth year to obtain a teaching certificate. Her first teaching job was in Marysville, CA (near Davis), an area with a shortage of teachers for migrant schools. She taught elementary school for two years, learning Spanish in the process.

At that time, Judi developed an itch for another international experience, first planted by her well-travelled, multi-lingual, uncle. She volunteered for the Peace Corps and was assigned to the Ivory Coast to teach English to secondary school students. Since the Ivory Coast is a Francophone country, her training was conducted in Quebec.

She had a head start by being a trained teacher and having earlier studied French. The Ivory Coast includes over 50 ethnic groups, speaking multiple dialects. Her students came from all over the country, so French was their only common language. She extended her structured job by making herself available to students to practice conversational English, sitting under a tree in a public setting. Her summer vacations allowed her time to travel around Africa.

After Peace Corps, she taught Head Start for two years in Santa Barbara, CA. In this role, she conducted home visits, meeting with and educating parents. This activity soon became central to her mission and introduced her to another cross-cultural perspective.

Her itch for yet another cultural experience resurfaced, prompting her to buy a one-way ticket to Spain, intending to learn to speak Spanish fluently. She taught 3rd grade in an international American school in Madrid for two years. After leaving Spain, she moved to Arizona State University where she earned a MA in adult education, based on her having identified education of parents as her priority. She then worked as a teacher advisor for three years in Phoenix (where she also volunteered for Planned Parenthood, working in the local barrios). She also volunteered in the summers for World Vision in Guatemala.

Her work in Guatemala involved training community health workers, leading her to the field of public health. She went to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill for an MPH in the health education department, known for its strong international health focus. The department included a strong community orientation and professors connected to Africa, the continent where she wanted to return to work. From Chapel Hill, she moved to Burundi for two years on a UNICEF project on women, nutrition and agriculture. From Burundi, Judi got a job based in Dakar, Senegal with a small American NGO, followed by working in other African countries for several years, on a variety of contracts. In Dakar, she met her now-husband, Tom Osborn, an American expert in
international agriculture who led the NGO, Winrock International in Senegal for six years.

A British academic encouraged her to study for a Ph.D., “suggesting the experience would provide an opportunity to better conceptualize my work.” Shuttling between England and Senegal, Judi earned a doctorate in Education and Anthropology from the University of Bristol in 1992. Her thesis documented use of an innovative qualitative method for formative research on health-related issues, in two projects (in the Sudan and Niger) on which she had coordinated development of culturally-grounded health education strategies.

In 1998, Judi moved to Fiji for six years for Tom’s next assignment. While based in Fiji, she continued to contract for consulting assignments, in southeast Asia and Africa. The couple left Fiji in 2003 for Rome, where Tom took a job at the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organization (from which he recently retired). The couple’s home base has been Rome since 2003.

In her community work with various NGO’s, Judi took notice of the very significant, if underappreciated, role of grandmothers in non-Western cultures, initially pertaining to maternal and child health. For example, in almost all non-Western societies, grandmothers advise and supervise their offsprings’ pregnancies. While the content of their advice differs, depending on the cultural context, the nature of the grandmothers’ role is consistent. Judi further observed that the advisory role of grandmothers continues throughout the life cycle of their family members. Yet development programs overwhelmingly focus on the younger part of the population, ignoring the contribution of elders.

Around the same time, Dixon Chibanda, one of only 12 psychiatrists in Zimbabwe (population 16 million), observed grandmothers sitting in pairs or small groups around town on park benches. Grappling with the overwhelming gap in mental health resources in his country, Dr. Chibanda realized that these wise women were an untapped resource which, if trained, could be mobilized into a corps of lay mental health advisors. In 2007, he, with a colleague, created the concept of the Friendship Bench for Zimbabwe (and being adopted elsewhere in Africa and even in New York City) in which grandmothers are trained in basic mental health counseling techniques. Called “community grandmothers,” these lay counselors sit on designated benches outside health centers to advise people with mental health needs, using psychosocial problem-solving techniques in which they were trained.

With the encouragement of Elisabeth Mealey, an Australian journalist, Judi decided to create a non-profit organization devoted to the empowerment of grandmothers in the Global South. She founded Grandmother Project (GMP) - Change through Culture in 2005, raising the initial money from U.S. donors. A small board of directors was formed, initially composed of Judi’s American friends. Over the years, the Board has increased in size and in managerial effectiveness. Annual meetings are held in Washington, DC. The annual budget for 2018 was $240,000 of which 30% was raised from individual donations and the rest came from foundations, UN entities, several western embassies and contracts for technical assistance. Judi does not receive a salary as Executive Director.

A big challenge in the nonprofit world is that donations are almost always designated for program activities but rarely for an NGO’s operating costs. Further, few grants or contracts extend beyond one year, so fund-raising is a constant pressure. Funds raised from conducting regional workshops on GMP’s approach have supported salaries of the GMP team members in Senegal. Recently, there is some promotion in the NGO donor world to encourage funders to earmark a significant percentage of their donations to the recipient NGO’s operating costs. “However, this noble concept is more aspirational than it has been operationalized by donors,” Judi observes.

GMP’s program consists of two “prongs”: First, action research with communities in the Kolda Region of southern Senegal to develop, test, refine and codify innovative community programs; Second, building capacity of other NGOs through training to adopt and adapt GMP’s Change through
Culture approach. For example, the organization has developed and conducts 5-day workshops for NGO program managers and some university academics. (UNICEF has contributed some of the funding for these workshops.)

The Girls’ Holistic Development program operates within schools and communities to promote all aspects of girls’ health, education, and rights. Judi observes: “Our grandmother-inclusive and inter-generational approach contributes to bringing about lasting positive impact by increasing girls’ success at school, while promoting broad change in ending harmful traditions such as favoring boys’ education over that of girls, child marriage, and female genital cutting.” Evaluations of the Girls’ Holistic Development program have shown that a grandmother-inclusive strategy contributes to building community-wide consensus for adoption of more girl-friendly norms and practices. These include helping girls stay in school and delaying marriage and pregnancy until they are older.

Judi has made an effort to generate theory and research findings based in the applied nature of the Grandmother Project. Always an eclectic reader, she was strongly influenced by the work of Noel Chrisman (Professor Emeritus, University of Washington) and medical anthropologist, Arthur Kleinman, among others. Later, she discovered a natural fit with community psychology theory and research, finding it highly relevant to promoting system change in communities. Over the years, she found a kinship with the work of the late Seymour Sarason and, later, Mark Zimmerman, Pennie Foster-Fishman, and Abe Wandersman. She presents at SCRA’s biennial conferences, as well as those of the American Community Development Association in the off years, facilitated by her annual summer stays in Indiana, her husband’s family home.

Her substantive contribution to the field of community studies includes the consideration of three generations (elders, parents, children), rather than the usual two generations typically addressed in intergenerational studies and interventions. She has collected extensive evidence, across cultures in the Global South, that expanding the lens to include the additional generation fosters recognition of elders’ naturally occurring contribution. Elders constitute an abundant resource that can be marshalled to strengthen communities’ social infrastructure and social cohesion.

However, Judi has found insufficient appreciation by scholars and international development workers for grandmothers’ natural and multi-faceted role, most particularly in the area of maternal and child health. “Most tend to view grandmothers, when they are even considered, as constraints to social change. We have found the opposite.” In this regard, she notes the potentially significant role of grandmothers in promoting the abandonment of female genital mutilation (FGM), a tradition still practiced in 28 countries. “Even my Senegalese colleagues and I were surprised at the determination and effort of the grandmothers to promote community-wide change on this issue." Far from being a hindrance, she says that it is the grandmothers who are catalyzing the process of abandonment of FGM in their communities. She said, “the grandmothers continue to amaze us by their wisdom and openness to new ideas.”

Her effort to spread the “Change through Culture” approach is slowly having an impact, with a few programs “bubbling up” that explicitly target grandmothers as agents of social change. In addition to work on overturning long-standing practices of FGM, other areas that are particularly ripe for change (and are incorporated within the project’s interventions) are maternal and child health and nutrition; reproductive health; early childhood development; adolescents’ health; child marriage; and teen pregnancy.

From her home base in Rome, she focuses on proposal writing, communicating with other partner organizations and providing support to the GMP team in Senegal. The daily management of the Senegalese operation is largely left to the organization’s very dedicated and qualified staff of 8 persons (administrative, financial and program). She is in contact almost daily via Skype with the Senegalese team but also spends about 4 months a year working directly with her team in Senegal. In
Rome, she is assisted by a small, part-time staff who work on communications, donor relations, grant submissions and liaison with the American-based Board of Directors. Despite all her travel, Judi is committed to Rome as her home base. “I have not lived in the U.S. since 1988. I prefer the European pace and lifestyle. I find unnerving dining in American restaurants where tables are expected to turn over quickly. In Rome, we can occupy a table as long as we want.”

Judi acknowledges that the evaluation of the Grandmother Project to date has not been as rigorous as she would like, so GMP is interested in expanding its collaboration with university programs. They are open to collaboration with graduate students whose backgrounds are relevant to GMP’s program and who are looking for a viable research field site. A prerequisite for potential collaborators for research projects is that they must have good proficiency in French and also some prior experience and knowledge of the African context. She is hopeful that just such a collaboration can be found within SCRA.

EDITOR’S NOTE: To learn more about the Grandmother Project, go to www.grandmotherproject.org or email Judi Aubel at judiaubel@grandmotherproject.org.

News from the Western Region U.S.

WEST REGIONAL COORDINATORS
Greg Townley, Portland State University; Mariah Kornbluh, California State-Chico; and Rachel Hershberg, University of Washington-Tacoma

Society for Community Research and Action: Policy Mini-Grant
Written by Mariah Kornbluh, Lindsay Matthews, Lauren Kohler, Amber Rubalcava, Ana Bernardino, Alisandra Macias, and Gustavo Moreira, California State University, Chico

Introduction: Homelessness has become an increasingly common phenomenon, prompting the need for collaboration between policy makers, service providers, community organizations, and most importantly homeless individuals themselves, to identify the strategies and supports that effectively serve this unique high-need population. While most often associated with urban areas, homelessness is rapidly growing in rural communities as well (First, Rife, & Toomey, 1994). In a rural area in Northern California, the Homeless Point in Time Survey (PIT) yielded a 76% increase in sample size as compared to the 2015 PIT (CoC, 2017). The local city council has struggled to balance limited resources, varying political agendas and a lack of concrete data in trying to find solutions to this complex issue. Funded through the Society for Community Research and Action Public Policy Mini-Grant, our community psychology research team explored potential environmental barriers for homeless individuals in accessing shelters, housing voucher opportunities, and needed support services. In particular, we explored:

1) what are barriers to accessing shelter services
Methods: This study consisted of a sequential mixed-method design. First, 100 surveys were conducted throughout the city (i.e. downtown plaza, bus stops, mall, shelters, etc.). Second, fifty-two qualitative interviews were conducted (i.e. local homeless shelter, a transitional housing apartment complex, in the downtown plaza, and on the outskirts of town). Data collection consisted of a collaboration between research team members, shelter staff, community liaisons, and housing insecure individuals. All researchers were given training on sensitivity with vulnerable populations, as well as human rights and dignity in research. Content coding was utilized to assess thematic prevalence across interviews. Two coders coded every transcript to ensure reliability in code application. Findings were shared (via member checks) with fourteen housing insecure individuals at a low-barrier shelter, and the Local Action Housing Team (N = 4) to ensure credibility.

Preliminary Findings: Survey findings indicated the following five factors as the most reported barriers to accessing housing services and supports: 1) limited transportation and distance of the shelter from other needed services (N = 27); 2) strict shelter requirements surrounding sobriety and not allowing pets (N = 21); 3) lack of available shelter services (N = 20); 4) lack of personal identification to access housing services (N = 20); and 5) mental health challenges (N = 18). Qualitative interviews further stressed the need for the following services: 1) expansion of services (i.e. a year-round low barrier shelter, tent cities, tiny villages, etc.); 2) transportation to available shelters; and 3) a county harm reduction program (see Table 1).

Table 1. Reported Barriers to Accessing Housing Services and Supports and Service Needs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers to Accessing Services and Supports: Survey Responses (N=100)</th>
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<td><strong>Barriers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited Transportation &amp; Distance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strict Shelter Requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Available Services</td>
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<td>Lack of Personal Identification</td>
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<td>Mental Health Challenges</td>
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<th>Service Needs: Qualitative Interviews (N = 52)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Needs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Needed expansion of housing, and alternative housing services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation Support to Services</td>
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<td>Harm Reduction Program</td>
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Qualitative interviews stressed the following shelter design recommendations: 1) social support programs (i.e. counseling, support groups) and community building activities (i.e. communal cooking, arts, and crafts), 2) a community advisory board to ensure safety amongst residents, 3) basic amenities (i.e. laundry, lockers, chargers, WIFI access, etc.), and 4) incorporation of nature (i.e. plants, communal garden, windows, etc.), and relaxation areas (i.e. meditation room, quiet areas, etc.).

Advocacy & Dissemination Efforts: Findings have been shared with the Greater Homeless Task Force (a coalition of health and social service professionals, community members, and individuals experiencing housing insecurity), and the Local Housing Action Team (a local non-profit working towards providing homes for housing insecure individuals). Members of our research team have also testified in front of City Council using data to advocate for the building of Simplicity Village (a tiny home community for elders experiencing housing insecurity) (see Figures 1a and 1b).

In addition, there has been growing debate around the building of a low-barrier shelter throughout the city. After witnessing the large amount of discourse surrounding homelessness online, our research team is working on disseminating myth busters (i.e. infographics) geared towards tackling online misperceptions and misinformation surrounding homelessness amongst college students and the local community (see Figures 2a and 2b).
News from the Midwest Region U.S.

**MIDWEST REGIONAL COORDINATORS**

Olya Glantsman, DePaul University; Amber Williams, National Louis University; Melissa Ponce Rodas, Andrews University; and Tonya Hall, Chicago State University

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**What’s Happening in the Midwest?**

*Written by Tonya Hall, Chicago State University*

This academic year (2018-19) certainly has been and continues to be a fortunate time for SCRA members passionate about community psychology to be in the Midwest! At least five SCRA-related events need to be underscored.

First, the 42nd Midwest ECO Conference was held at the University of Illinois Chicago in October 2018 with keynote speaker Dr. Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar, panelists, presenters, and an outstanding student-led team of organizers. This conference served as an impetus for sharing thought-provoking community psychology research in the Midwest during this time. If your university is interested in serving as an ECO host, please reach out to Melissa Ponce.

Second, the SCRA Midwest region just hosted the SCRA-affiliated meeting as a part of the 91st Midwestern Psychological Association conference that was held at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago, Illinois on April 11-13, 2019. More than 3,300 individuals attended the conference. Midwestern community psychology researchers including undergraduate and graduate students submitted approximately 50 well-prepared conference proposals, which were all accepted this year including 5 symposia, 15 roundtables, and 30 poster sessions. Student posters were rated by three judges and three poster winners, who served as first author for each poster, were selected and recognized at an informal SCRA dinner held at Exchequer restaurant. The poster winners will be announced on the SCRA listserv so stayed tuned.

A record number of students, faculty, and staff attended this annual dinner, which provides members the opportunity to socialize and network with one another. The next MPA conference will be held on April 23-25, 2020 at the Palmer House a Hilton Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. Check out one of the pictures from the SCRA dinner event.

Third, the 17th SCRA Biennial Conference, “Making an Impact: Ecological Praxis: System Complexity, Cycles of Action and Extending our Metaphors with the Natural World,” was held on June 26-29, 2019 at National Louis University in Chicago, Illinois. We hope we saw you there sharing formally and informally the wonderful work that you are doing in the field of community psychology.

Fourth, the American Psychological Association (APA) Convention will be held August 8-11, 2019 in Chicago. APA Division 27 (SCRA) will partner with APA Divisions 7, 37, 43, and 44 to host a pre-convention workshop, “Setting a New Agenda for the Psychology of LGBTQ Youth and Emerging Adults” on Wednesday, August 7, 2019. According to an email sent via the SCRA listserv by Dr. Jean Hill (jeanhill@scra27.org), “Registration fees will be $30 for students and community members and $70 for professionals and faculty. Through this Pre-Convention Workshop, six divisions of APA will..."
be coming together to create a Statement of Priorities and an Agenda for Psychology of LGBTQ Youth and Emerging Adults. The Workshop will be held on the campus of the Chicago School of Professional Psychology (325 North Wells Street, Chicago, IL 60654). Workshop organizers gratefully acknowledge the support of the Chicago School of Professional Psychology in hosting this event, and the Committee on Division/APA Relations in providing significant financial support. Learn more about the workshop by visiting www.apalgbtqyouth.com, or contact SPSSI Policy Director Sarah Mancoll.

The SCRA Midwest Regional Coordinators are actively recruiting another RC to serve for a three-year term. If you are interested or would like more information, contact Tonya Hall at thall26@csu.edu. Announcements and information for inclusion in future Midwest updates should be sent to Melissa Ponce-Rodas (ponce@andrews.edu). Remember to keep community psychology alive and well in the Midwest, nationally, and globally!

News from the Northeast Region U.S.

NORTHEAST REGIONAL COORDINATORS
Monique Guishard, Bronx Community College; Justin Brown, LaGuardia Community College; Jameta N. Barlow, The George Washington University; Candalyn B. Rade, Penn State Harrisburg

Introducing the 2019 SCRA NE Student Coordinator

Taylor Darden is a third-year student in the Community Psychology Ph.D. program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Her research and professional interests center on how social determinants (e.g., racial discrimination, racism, and SES) impact health inequities in marginalized communities, such as African-Americans and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. She aims to advocate for health equity and make a positive change by using psychological, evidence-based research in this area to inform decisions and evaluation of policies and programs.

Rural Interests

Edited by Susana Helm, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

The Rural IG column of The Community Psychologist highlights rural resources as well as the work of community psychologist and allied professionals in their rural environments. We invite submissions from current and new Rural IG members, from people who present on rural topics during SCRA biennial and other conferences; and from leading and emergent rural scholars publishing in rural-focused journals. Please refer your colleagues and friends in academia and beyond to our interest group and column. Please email me if you would like to submit an article or brief report for the Rural column or if you have resources we may list here.

My goal for the Rural IG column for 2019-2020 is to diversify the rural lens through authorship, geography, and intersectionality (see TCP 52-2). Rurality is a geographic phenomenon that goes beyond physical space by considering the human element. National Geographic defines geography as the, “study of places and the relationships between people and their environments” https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/what-is-geography/. With this in mind, the Rural IG chairs facilitated a dialog on our google group to better define the meaning of rural in geographic terms. This article shares their brief report.
Our goal in this paper is to explore a range of answers to a seemingly simple question: “What is rural?” We explore this topic with an overview of commonly used definitions, commentary on their gaps, and thoughts about alternative ways to classify "rural communities."

Rural is … Not One Single Definition

For both researchers and practitioners, operationalization is critical to compare and build together the things we learn in one context with what we uncover in another context. Debate over operationalizing “rural” is not new. Consider San Bernardino County, CA, which encompasses over 20,000 square miles (twice the size of Massachusetts). This county is a little larger than Switzerland, and about the size of Belize and El Salvador combined. San Bernardino touches two Metropolitan Statistical Areas and is considered part of the Greater Los Angeles area. While it stretches eastward across the Mojave Desert and Death Valley touching the Nevada and Arizona borders, its large population is primarily in the west, within commuting distance to LA and Riverside. But what about the central and eastern parts of San Bernardino County - are they rural? The answer matters to small towns like Landers, CA (pop. 2,900) which can face obstacles to rural health funding simply because they border a heavily populated area.

The US uses multiple definitions of “rural.” Figure 1 highlights three differing definitions from US government agencies. The Census Bureau (2018) and the Economic Research Service (ERS; 2019) definitions may appear similar, but ERS evaluates population using entire counties as their “areas,” whereas the Census utilizes a complex land-use and residence area mapping approach to create their own “areas.” As illustrated with San Bernardino County, the distinction is consequential.

Figure 1. “Rural” definitions in North American: Comparison of population criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Organization (Abbreviation)</th>
<th>Source Country</th>
<th>Population size</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Bureau (CB)</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Management &amp; Budget (OMB)</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Urban Cluster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Research Service (ERS)</td>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>Urbanized Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO)</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Rural Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistique Canada (STATCAN)</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Small Town Core</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Rural-Urban Mapping Project (GRUMP)</td>
<td>U.S.A., Global</td>
<td>Metropolitan Area</td>
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Because different definitions are used by different US government agencies when allocating public funding, “rural” areas by one definition may not qualify for rural funding by another. A town may be qualified as rural based on census numbers indicating low population density but disqualified based on location. Navigating which meaning is used and whether it applies to a given community can be intimidating and confusing. For example, a recent FAQ from the Bureau of Health Workforce (2019) advised potential applicants to consult three different definitions when applying for a Rural Residency Development Program grant.

**Rural is … the Residual**

Quantitative definitions often treat “rural” as the residual category: somewhere left over after identifying “urban” areas. A “commuting area,” the areas surrounding an urban region where large populations of people live, is often classified as urban. Rural emerges as a negative space, so designated because of characteristics it lacks, rather than what is there.

**Rural is … More Than Population Density**

Qualitative understandings of the mindset or meaning of rural have value for the people who live in these locations. The rural communities of, say, southwestern Arizona are vastly different from the rural of midwestern Iowa or northern Maine. Culture is impacted by not only blunt geographical density measures but also the views of the people who live there.

Alternative approaches to defining rural exist. The US ERS goes beyond population-based categories, such as the Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes (2016). These codes quantify the degree of commuting that occurs from different areas (from the metro to micro, or small town to micro, etc.). While still based on population data, these classifications capture the culture of small towns that are located near well-maintained highways or railways. While they may be geographically disparate from other areas, the people living there tend to work and commute to urbanized regions. Small commuter towns have a much different flavor both from agricultural communities of similar size where income is generated locally, and from communities with large numbers of second homeowners relative to year-round residents.

Sole reliance on quantitative definitions also misses the varied experiences of people who live in small communities. Mexico’s definitions of rural, set out by the government agency Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO; 2018), consider distance to large urban areas (rural localities near cities) and to small urban areas (rural localities near towns). This captures relative ease of access to such things as material goods, health care, and electricity (Rhoda & Burton, 2011). CONAPO also identifies settlements within walking distance of paved roads (rural localities near roads), noting that access to services and goods in an urban area may not be readily available but may be obtained via bus. The final CONAPO category of isolated rural localities describes areas without easy access to an urban center.

Likewise, the geographic classifications of Statistique Canada now consider multiple factors (2017). The 2016 designations consider population density, employment density, paved road distance, and airport locations in conjunction with the land area to classify communities. Reviewing these newer definitions is beyond the scope of this brief commentary, but it is promising to see the start of more diverse approaches throughout North America.

**Rural is…Different Across the Globe**

Looking beyond North America, we encounter still more definition overload. The UN Statistics Division states it well, “Because of national differences in the characteristics that distinguish urban from rural areas, the distinction between the urban and the rural population is not yet amenable to a single definition that would be applicable to all countries or, for the most part, even to the countries within a region” (2017, p. 188). The UN also notes that, while population size may be a useful metric, it is often of limited value in industrialized countries. More nuanced criteria that evaluate non-industrialized, less population-dense areas of a
country should be used to supplement rigid quantified categories.

An intriguing definition of urban-rural used outside of social science is the Global Rural-Urban Mapping Project (GRUMP). This approach combines country census data with NOAA’s night-time brightness satellite data (SEDAC, 2005). GRUMP considers both population density and night-time light usage accessed via a reliable infrastructure for delivering and utilizing electricity, thus reflecting community economics as well as regional and geographical factors.

What Rural is... Recommendations

“Rural” definitions change over time; they differ between countries; and they certainly change in everyday usage. In light of this brief column, we offer two small pieces of advice.

When you read “rural” in an abstract or presentation, resist the urge to interrogate the presenter on precisely which definition was chosen and why. Instead, ask how areas were delineated as rural and how the project considered different aspects of rurality.

We urge community psychologists and others interested in working in “rural” towns to go beyond government classifications. Rather, talk to community partners about experiences living in their area. Move beyond the binary - “Is it rural or is it not?” - to learn how rural residents understand their access to valued resources, not only to supermarkets and health care, but also to clean air, quiet nights, affordable housing, access to nature, recreational space, and other factors that matter to them.

Above all, let’s continue the conversation, exploring perspectives and alternatives in how one might define “rural.”

References


Postcard Parents: A Support Group for Knife Crime-Related Bereavement

Written by Tehseen Noorani, University of Durham

Column Editor’s note: In this interview Allison Vitalis introduces Postcode Parents, a volunteer-led support group based in Hackney, London. Postcode Parents was set up in 2015 to support the psychological and practical well-being of bereaved families who have lost loved ones to knife crime. Through the group, family members take workshops, share experiences and comfort one another through the grieving process. They can be found at https://www.thecharlieburnsfoundation.com.

TN: How did you get involved in Postcode Parents (PP)?

AV: I work for an organization called Hackney Play Streets, where residents close off their streets to through traffic for a few hours weekly or monthly, so that children can play out more safely and neighbors come together – making streets friendlier for all. On my very first day at work I had to meet PP, who were interested in closing a street as part of their knife crime awareness fun day. I attended the group to discuss what my organization could do for them, and then decided to stay for the rest of the session. I didn’t contribute but listened and was moved by their stories. It was heartbreaking to see them crying over the traumatic loss of a child to knife crime, but very moving to see how compassionate they were and how they all provided support to each other. I offered to help as a volunteer, including searching for funding as I had had previous experience working in the finance sector and in a charity. I began to attend PP regularly. In February 2017 my nephew was stabbed 6 times in an unprovoked knife attack. Thankfully he survived. PP became my support system during this time. I then made it my duty to dedicate as much time as I could to assist with the group.

TN: What was the background to the setting up of PP?

AV: Charlie Burns was tragically killed in a knife attack in London on August 18, 2014, one week before he would have turned 20. Charlie had just become a father and was training to be a plumber. In the aftermath of his death his mother Keeley Burns, with the support and guidance of family and Charlie’s friends, set up The Charlie Burns Foundation, a group established to advocate against, and raise awareness of, knife crime and serious youth violence. The Charlie Burns Foundation set up Postcode Parents as a support group for those bereaved through knife crime by providing a time and a space to talk for those who had similar experiences of trauma. UK postcodes are akin to US ZIP codes, and it is said that youth gangs in London are territorially divided and defined by their postcodes. Postcode Parents derived its name from this, though it is not restricted to one postcode.

In the current criminal justice and judicial systems, sudden bereavement can leave families feeling powerless and marginalized. Victims do not have a clear roadmap in the aftermath of a homicide. Statutory and voluntary services are often experienced as individualizing and limited, only a partial response to the complexity of their trauma and grief. Counselling is also offered in the early stages to those bereaved, but immediate therapy is often not what families need – usually
families are consumed with finding the perpetrators of their child’s stabbing. Where perpetrators are caught, families are unable to process what they are going through until after sentencing, and yet a victim’s journey through the criminal justice system suppresses the grieving process. For example, in order to attend court, the parents/family are not permitted to show any emotion as not to influence the jury. Once this period of time is over, they are expected to just assume a ‘normal’ life.

**TN: How does PP run?**

**AV:** With the help of a grant received in 2017, PP currently meets every two weeks, bringing in a facilitator every other meeting to run a workshop on a topic chosen by attendees - such as yoga, first aid or massage therapy. Workshop topics are selected according to the needs and themes that come up in meetings. In meetings where there is a facilitator, the group takes 30 minutes prior to the workshop to address any concerns (if any) and 15 minutes at the end of the workshop to discuss the workshop and what attendees learned from it, time permitting.

![The Relaunch of PP in April 2017](image)

We are in the process of looking for a secure space and funding to continue running PP and are also in the process of arranging a referral system between PP and existing infrastructures of support for victims of crime. However, as a newly formed CIO, I have found it very challenging to make applications for funding due to the specifications in applications and the available pots are restricted in value due to the size of the organization.

**TN: What is a typical meeting like?**

**AV:** Chairs are laid out in a semi-circle. The meetings are facilitated by the founder Keeley Burns and me. My role as the facilitator of the project is to ensure the room is set up with refreshments available and to greet the users. I would assume the position as an observer. We do not have explicit ground-rules but there are unspoken rules as the group shows respect and values each other’s journey and experiences.

Each session is different. There are times when one of the users has experienced a difficult time during that week and share their experience with the group. There is a tremendous amount of care and compassion. On other occasions the group is full laughter and it’s very satisfying to see everyone relax, if only for a moment.

Sometimes certain individuals will dominate the session while others do not speak up as much, something I try to mitigate by asking everyone about their well-being at the start of the session to get everyone speaking. I have never been to a session where everyone does not participate in a conversation. This may be down to the number of users that attend and the level of understanding that they have for each other as they have similar experiences.

**TN: Who attends?**

**AV:** In the support group meetings, the majority are females between the ages of 45 and 65. Workshops tend to attract male and female adults from diverse cultural backgrounds. One family sometimes brings their 12-year-old daughter, though in general I have found that once a parent attends a session, their child is more apprehensive to attend, assuming the group is for their parent.

New users tend to be introduced to the group by existing members, or through our flyer distributed in the local area. We have regular users who attend nearly every session, but also those who cannot attend due to commitments such as children or work. Not everyone who has attended has lost a child to knife crime. We have attendees whose family members were perpetrators of gun and knife crime attend a few times, as well as parents who are concerned with their children’s
behavior and come to the group to get advice and support. To this end, we have run workshops on youth culture and gang culture.

Those who need support but cannot attend sessions are able to speak on the phone with me or I arrange a suitable time to meet with them. In these one-to-one contexts, parents often disclose sensitive information that they might not feel comfortable to disclose in the group. This might be because they feel I have the answers so, depending on what is discussed, I usually try to encourage that they share it with the group or signpost them to an organization that are able to support them further. Some fear to disclose their information in the group as they are either a perpetrator's family or their child had gang affiliation and they fear being judged. I never dismiss them but do sometimes remind them what the group is for and that, no matter what the circumstance, they are all grieving parents who need support.

**TN: What themes emerge in the conversations?**

**AV:** Discussion points emerge around the intricacies and failures of the justice system and the (lack of) support received, which tends to be different from person to person. Attendees also discuss well-being strategies for oneself and for loved ones, counselling waiting lists, medication, hospital and doctors’ appointments, and the lack of support for their children who have lost a sibling. Attendees often discuss the questionable value of the therapies offered, which are based on methods and practices that are not always the right fit for parents bereaved through knife crime. Most parents in PP who have had therapy state that it's not for them and that they do not like it. They were not given a choice of therapy but treatments that were said to be the best for them.

For those who have not yet received justice, their focus is on doing all they can to get wanted posters out and catching those responsible for the death of their child. Many parents want to set up their own organizations in their children’s names to do things within the community they live in to help with the youth to teach the of the implications of knife crime.

The bereaved parents share how they cope in different ways - some live in homes with images and reminders of their lost child everywhere whilst others have removed every reminder. They also discuss their health problems, which for some are very extensive and concerning. A couple of parents have put on excessive weight due to medication they are taking for ailments in the aftermath of losing their child. One parent carries around a carrier bag full of medication that she has to take daily (for blood pressure, water retention, water in the brain, knee pain and shoulder pain).

Attendees who are not bereaved through knife crime bring up their concerns with their children’s behavior at home/school, including not knowing how to address concerns over their child carrying a knife, and/or not listening to their parent.

**TN: Does the group engage in more overtly political conversations and activities?**

**AV:** Attendees compare their journey through the justice system, which from user to user is very different. They are very sensitive about the compensation scheme which is a subject touched upon but never spoken in the group in any depth - though I have had private disclosures from users. The compensation scheme seems to be a lottery system which victimizes and stigmatizes these families based on their backgrounds and child’s involvements with the police or gangs.

Certain users of the group are invited to attend discussions at City Hall and the Houses of Parliament to voice their views on policy and practices. Attendees usually agree that the government doesn't care much about their youth, aren't doing enough to prevent knife crime, and feel the community are left to be responsible for the prevention of knife crime.

When another knife crime is announced in the media, the mood of the group is very solemn and the discussion is usually around the media story, which is usually very racialized - if it is a black youth the media tends to use negative descriptions such ‘thug’ or gang member’ whereas with white youth use headlines that paint a positive picture,
such as of a ‘star student’. Discussion of stop and search, curfews and youth culture often occur. We talk about the incidence of knife crime, including who and where is being affected. These conversations usually end with reasons why youth are committing knife crime and what the group thinks can be done to reduce this. The group are divided on their views of such topics, but all views are respected. In my time at PP there has never been a heated debate - if opinions differ there can be a momentary silence, when I think users are reflecting rather than feeling uncomfortable by the difference of opinion.

There are mixed views about the responsibilities of parents, where some blame poor parenting and consider that parents should be more intrusive, searching their child’s room or school bag before they leave for school, that children shouldn’t have mobile phones or certain apps on their phones, or that children should be involved in extracurricular activities to prevent them from getting into troublesome situations. Others believe that the police, schools, educational facilities and the government need to take greater responsibility in the safety of our youths.

Outside of the group meetings, we have been invited into churches to speak about what we do and to pray together with the congregation. We attend anti-knife crime marches with other anti-knife crime organizations to demand the government listen to the families grieving and a community affected by knife crime.

Alternatives Conference: An Interview with Deb Trueheart, a Lead Organizer

Written by Emily Cutler, Troy University

EDITOR’S NOTE: This interview was conducted before the Alternatives Conference was held and published afterward because of the submission timeline.

The National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery was pleased to host the Alternatives Conference in Washington, D.C. on July 7th-11th, 2019. (see https://www.alternatives-conference.org).

The consumer/survivor/ex-patient movement has historically represented a group of activists with lived experience of emotional distress, trauma and/or mental health treatment. Today, many in the movement are moving away from the term “consumer” and are choosing terms they more readily identify with. While consumers traditionally have identified as having positive experiences with mental health services and psychiatric treatment, ‘survivors’ and ‘ex-patients’ feel they have had more harmful encounters with mental health services and identify as having ‘survived’ coercive interventions (Morrison, 2013). Many people also identify as ‘peers’ and work as peer specialists within the mental health system. These groups all share the common goals of expanding consumer- and survivor-delivered services, increasing the self-determination of people with mental health diagnoses, and decreasing stigma and discrimination against those with psychiatric histories. The Alternatives Conference provided a space for these groups to come together and discuss challenges and opportunities related to these goals.

EC: What is the Alternatives Conference?

DT: The Alternatives Conference is planned and implemented for and by people in the peer recovery/liberation movement to come together and share their lived experience with one another. The mission of the Alternatives conference, now in its third decade, is to include as many diverse perspectives as possible, and is renowned for offering the latest and best information in the peer movement.
The Alternatives Conference is a place where peers come together to share our wisdom, strength and hope; where we make room for all the ways we experience and express life; where we turn our experience into fuel for our truth-telling. We have taken good notes about what helps and what hurts as we have navigated experiences of trauma, mental health diagnosis, and/or substance use challenges. We have become experts in our own lives, and we share that expertise with one another.

This year’s theme was Standing Together, Celebrating Our Gifts, Raising Our Voices. We stand together as a vibrant learning community; celebrate our skills, talents, and wisdom; and learn to use the power of our collective voice to influence and create policy, programming, and support. We represent a broad spectrum of perspectives on mental health and personal choices in the language we use and how we choose to respond to our emotional suffering.

There is room in our movement and at this conference for those who choose traditional mental health treatment, and who may or may not take medication, for those who use intentional peer support, or alternative therapies and mind-body approaches, for those who use art, movement, and creative expression, for those involved in social action, advocacy, and reform, and for those whose focus is Mad Pride and neurodivergence and for all the ways we intersect with each other.

EC: How did the Alternatives Conference historically come to be?
DT: The Alternatives conference grew from the roots of the mental patients' liberation movement, now known as the peer recovery movement, which started in the U.S. in 1969 with the founding of the Insane Liberation Front, a self-help and advocacy group in Portland, Oregon. Riding the wave of the civil rights movement, psychiatric survivors were a small but fervent group of activists focused on human rights and liberation. In 1972, the first national conference—the Conference on Human Rights and Against Psychiatric Oppression—was held in Detroit as a way for those early pioneers to come together and share their common experience and develop strategies to advocate for themselves and others. They had no funding and for twelve years, conferences were held on college campuses or in other inexpensive locations.

By 1985, the Community Support Program of NIMH had become convinced that the peer movement had important ideas and skills to contribute to community inclusion and they funded On Our Own of Baltimore to host the first Alternatives conference. Alternatives then became the movement’s annual conference.

According to Dr. Ron Manderscheid, Executive Director of the National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors and the National Association for Rural Mental Health, the most important innovations in the mental health field in the last 20 years have been inspired and created by the peer movement. The most important innovation is the recognition that people who experience emotional distress and crisis can and do recover to live full lives in the community. The peer movement has also advanced alternative understandings to traditional biomedical models of mental illness, including trauma-informed paradigms that view distress as a response to marginalization and violence. The conferences have also highlighted the importance of the peer voice and peer support in transforming the system from its focus on maintenance to promoting recovery.

Two years ago, the Alternatives Conference lost its government funding and has returned to its roots of holding the conference on college campuses funded solely on registrations and sponsorships. We are excited about the freedom to create the conference “On Our Own” again. (Referencing the 1978 book On Our Own: Patient Controlled Alternatives to the Mental Health System by early activist Judi Chamberlin, which became the standard text of the psychiatric survivor movement.)

EC: What makes the Alternatives Conference distinct from other mental health conferences?
DT: The biggest difference is at most conferences on mental health, the workshops are presented by credentialed professionals. At the
Alternatives Conference the most important credential is having “lived experience” of emotional distress, trauma, mental health challenges, or receiving mental health treatment. In fact, if someone without a lived experience wants to be on a workshop, the lead presenter must be a “peer” -- someone from the peer recovery movement with lived experience.

The Alternatives conference looks like most conferences: there are workshops, keynotes, caucuses, exhibits, and fun activities. Yet there is a palpable feeling of joy and freedom for participants to be with peers who have gone through similar circumstances and experiences. We can let our guard down and relax into a sense of acceptance and trust with one another.

**EC: What are you looking forward to most about this year’s Alternatives?**

**DT:** I LOVE the alternatives conference. I am amazed by the variety and breadth of the workshops and presentations. When I look through the bios, I read about people who have had experience with extreme states of consciousness, emotional distress, thoughts and attempts of suicide, trauma responses, homelessness, incarceration, addictions, and more. Yet, when I go to the keynotes, workshops, and caucuses I experience strength, resiliency, healing, hope, humor, knowledge, skills, and heart-centered sharing. The level of expertise that each person brings blows me away. This year’s dance has a superheroes theme with the option of wearing a costume. I’m convinced that each person at the Alternatives Conference is a superhero in their own lives!

I am looking forward to reconnecting with friends and peers from all over the country. I am looking forward to deep, meaningful, enriching conversations. I’m looking forward to learning from people I admire. I’m looking forward to meeting new people and creating new networks. I’m looking forward to hugs and probably some tears. And I’m also looking forward to being challenged by new ideas, new language, new ways of thinking and stretching into new possibilities!

**EC: Can you tell me a little bit more about the Hill Day pre-conference?**

**DT:** Another way the Alternatives differs from most mental health conferences is its focus on advocacy. As I said, Alternatives has its roots in the civil rights/liberation movements. Its early focus was on eliminating oppression and advocating for a seat at the table to influence policy and programs. We advocate for voice, choice, and self-determination. A guiding principle in the early movement was “Nothing About Without Us!” That focus has not changed.

At all Alternatives conferences, there are workshops on building advocacy skills. This year, we have a unique opportunity with the location of our conference in Washington, D.C. We are planning a two-day pre-conference on Monday, July 8th and Tuesday, July 9th. Monday will be a Public Policy and Education Academy, where participants will learn from panels of experts how to do direct advocacy. On Tuesday, they will go to Capitol Hill to meet with the elected representatives in their congressional districts. There has been significant preparation ahead of time where peers have developed policy priorities that they will speak about to their representatives. This is a powerful way to participate in active citizenship and stand together, raising our voices.

**EC: What do you think community psychologists and other researchers and practitioners in the mental health field could learn from the Alternatives Conference?**

**DT:** Alternatives is life-changing for peers and I believe it can be life-changing for you as well. My hope is that you will have an opportunity to expand your notions of what is possible with a mental health diagnosis, that you will learn about the Peer Recovery/Liberation movement and be able to refer people to our mutual peer support groups, peer-run programs and peer-run respites. You will find workshops in the following areas and we offer CUs from the National Association of Social Workers.

- Evidence-based Practices in Peer-run Programs and Services
• Bridging Healing: Mental Health and Substance Use
• Holistic Health, Wellness, and Mindfulness
• Economic Health and Recovery
• Leadership Development
• Healing Through the Arts
• Diversity, Inclusion, Intersectionality
• Social Justice and Human Rights Protection
• Cutting-edge Technology to Support Recovery
• Youth, Young Adult, and Multigenerational Learning

Resources
For more information about the peer recovery/liberation movement and peer-delivered recovery services, check out the National Empowerment Center at https://power2u.org/
For a list of consumer-run statewide organizations, visit https://power2u.org/consumer-run-statewide-organizations/.
For a directory of peer-run respites (i.e. short-term, residential alternatives to psychiatric hospitals), visit https://power2u.org/directory-of-peer-respites/.

References

Student Issues
Edited by Joy Agner, University of Hawai’i at Mānoa

Interpretative Theory of Hardship, Resilience, and Resistance in Chicago’s Little Village Community
Written by Ana Genkova, University of Illinois at Chicago

The leading framework for understanding Mexican immigrant health and wellbeing has been the contentious “health paradox,” the idea that culture has protective qualities. Cultural explanations for immigrant health patterns, however, may shift attention away from socio-historical contexts and issues of race and power (Viruell-Fuentes, 2012). Therefore, community psychologists have called for a critical lens through which to interrogate political and social construction of culture (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011). In my dissertation research, I adopted such lenses to theorize the relationship between culture, community context, and health in a Mexican immigrant neighborhood in Chicago. Widely known as Little Village, this community’s sociopolitical history presented a unique opportunity to build upon research on community resilience in a Mexican immigrant context.

This study emerged from a collaborative, community-driven health assessment in response to our community partners’ suggestion to include stories that contextualize health-related data (Hernandez, Genkova, Castañeda, Alexander, & Hebert-Beirne, 2017). To record the stories, we enlisted the help of StoryCorps, Inc, a not-for-profit organization that had the technical capacity to support the project. One of our partners recruited activists and leaders working on a range of issues in the neighborhood to tell their stories. I engaged in an interpretative analysis of these records.

Certain images, metaphors, and even omissions in the stories hinted at oppression narratives that paralleled those of cultural groups
who define themselves as survivors of colonial violence. Mexican residents in this Chicago neighborhood had to navigate power hierarchies within a broader colonial history. This is often the case for non-white, non-European migrants who undergo racialization as well as acculturation (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; 2009). Therefore, I used a decolonial lens to explore how Little Village residents countered oppressive narratives and realities.

Consistent with interpretative traditions, I reflected on my own positionality throughout the study. I emigrated from Bulgaria in my adolescence. Slowly over time I became aware of the part of this country’s history, which qualifies my own identity and experience as White. The lack of such historical angle in the highest levels of high school courses intrigued me all the more. As an immigrant and a White woman with split cultural sensibilities, I strive towards a mindset of humility in my exploration of race, ethnicity, and culture. I had developed relationships with people and organizations from the community over the two years that I spent as a research partner and volunteer. I share many immigration-related experiences with Little Village community members (i.e. stress, discrimination, acculturative pressures, familial relationship), but I also know that my own racialization has shaped these experiences differently. I also had a personal investment in this research as the mother of White-passing, mixed-race Bulgarian American whose Mexican great-grandparents settled in Chicago in the 1950s. These are some of the layers of complexity from which I have approached the study.

To interpret the stories, I attended to personal and collective frames of meaning (Wexler, DiFluvio, & Burke, 2009). When people narrate their life stories, they construct meanings that inform their ideas of justice, control, and coherence. Stories of personal and collective struggles allow people to situate their adversity in a broader narrative and re-emerge with a newfound sense of purpose (Rappaport, 1995; 2000). Therefore, a meaning-making framework became useful for understanding hardship and resilience in this Mexican immigrant community with a history of struggle for resources and basic rights. The study addressed two questions: 1) How do community residents understand and experience hardship? and 2) How do these understandings and experiences orient their responses to hardship?

With respect to the nature of hardship in the Little Village, conditions and narratives pre and post immigration destabilized the community. The stories corroborated previously documented

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Figure 1. Illustration of the Interpretive Findings
immigration struggles against financial insecurity, family separation, and trauma while adding specific narratives of hardship in the local context. Residents understood the shock of immigration and the life of insecurity in the United States as sequential and cumulative experiences that destabilized individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Destabilizing conditions and narratives included uprootedness, contested “legality,” and discriminatory policies. These conditions and narratives disrupted immigrants’ economic stability by limiting their opportunities for work and education. Instability afflicted children of immigrants in ways that resembled historical trauma (Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, & Tebes, 2014). Historical trauma persists through the generations in the form of narrative representations, or stories and collective memories that give meanings to past events. These stories are not only orally transmitted—they exist in public spaces, symbols, policies, and day-to-day interactions. Little Village was steeped in narratives of struggles, sacrifices, and loss resulting from immigration motivated by poverty or violence. In addition, narratives of deportation, exploitation, and political marginalization shaped the individual and collective frames from which children of immigrants drew meanings about their identities.

With respect to responses to hardship, the community acted as a re-stabilizing space. Characteristics of the Little Village neighborhood countered instability and promoted family values and community cohesion. The organizational networks and sense of community in Little Village helped residents rebuild relationships and create a collective narrative to affirm Mexicans’ national and local belonging. The culturally affirming space acted in response to the uprootedness many immigrants felt. Literally and symbolically, the community was a grounding space for immigrant families. Homeownership was a path to economic stability and way to grow roots in this country. In the context of family separation, homeownership and cohabiting helped immigrants cultivate family values despite economic and political conditions that eroded them. Furthermore, the neighborhood represented a generations-long struggle for physical space and sociopolitical identity of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the city of Chicago. In Little Village, Mexican immigrants and their descendants could assert and co-create their identity, express cultural pride and challenge stereotypes.

Community leaders’ transformative vision reflected a collective, intergenerational philosophy of change rooted in the history of Mexicans in Chicago. The stories spoke of the collective goal of raising a future generation of Mexican American youth as full rights members of American society. This meant securing economic mobility while maintaining cultural continuity. Storytellers considered quality education as a vehicle for economic mobility. Because of that, they perceived the lack of opportunities for youth as one of the most daunting threats to community wellbeing. Parents also recognized the importance of raising children who were aware and respectful of the significance of their immigrant, Mexican heritage. By identifying with their roots, youth could connect their sense of self with their parents’ immigrant legacies. Mother-activists played an instrumental role in carrying out this transformative vision.

In sum, the study describes the symbolic and pragmatic value of Little Village for Mexican residents in Chicago. In a city where racial and spatial struggles overlap, the Little Village community stands as a symbol for Mexican immigrants’ local identity and plight. The findings reflect the racial and sociopolitical positionality of Mexicans in Chicago. Insights from this study have the potential to contextualize the link between culture and health in the community and perhaps serve as a heuristic for other contexts. This study theorizes culture and health from a decolonial lens, which can guide as future research in community psychology. The insights from this study add complexity to acculturation and health paradox literature.

I am grateful for the support from the SCRA Student Research Grant in carrying this dissertation research. Receiving the National Student Representative (NSR) grant enabled me to
bring my results back to the community for member-checking sessions and to obtain other resources along the way. Member-checking provided an opportunity for feedback and helped sustain the spirit of collaboration and mutual learning that guides the larger project from which my study emerged (Hebert-Beirne et al., 2017).

References


SCRA Member Spotlight
Edited by Dominique Thomas, University of Michigan

The SCRA Member Spotlight lets us engage our members and highlight great work! Each issue we solicit submissions of accomplishments. We especially would like students, early career scholars, and practitioners to submit their accomplishments and work. Submissions can include but are certainly not limited to:

- New jobs
- Post-docs
- Promotions
- Thesis/Dissertation Defenses
- Newly published journal articles, books, chapters
- Podcasts, blogs, news items that are by or about you
- Certifications or other credentials
• Retirement
• Grants
• Awards
• Successful/ongoing projects
• New projects or community initiatives

If you are interested in submitting for the next issue, please click this link and fill out the form. We hope to hear from you!

Sarah Gabriella Hernandez (University of Illinois at Chicago) defended her dissertation in March 2019, which was a process evaluation of community-engaged dissemination of an oral histories project component of a community health assessment. The study linked Community-Based Participatory Research, Dissemination & Implementation Science, and Evaluation and employed novel methodologies for framing and qualitatively analyzing dissemination process data, to produce a generalized community-engaged dissemination model.

Lediya Dumessa (Mississippi State University) When the Ethiopian immigrant community in Tennessee mourned several deaths to suicide and targeted violence, she knew, from both professional and personal experience, the obstacles faced by this community. Understanding the cultural beliefs that strengthen mental illness stigma, and how recent events inspire fear and mistrust that can prevent seeking help, she committed to help. Lediya reached out to Ethiopian community groups to organize and facilitate a free psychoeducational workshop about mental health risks, and when and where to find help. Over 40 community members attended, asked questions, voiced concerns, and expressed appreciation for receiving information in their native language of Amharic. Lediya is evaluating similar training workshops for child-serving professionals.

Corbin J. Standley (Michigan State University) successfully defended his master’s thesis in May of 2019. His thesis examined the impact of intersecting marginalized identities on suicide risk for youth, as well as the role of social support as a protective factor for youth suicide using a social-ecological model. He plans to apply this research in his work with the local LifeSavers Suicide Prevention Coalition to design and implement social support programs across all contexts in which youth live, learn, and play. Corbin was also recently elected as Co-Chairman of the Board of Directors for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s Michigan Chapter.

From Our Members
Edited by Susan M. Wolfe, Susan Wolfe and Associates

#NoResearchAboutBronxPatients
WithoutBronxPatients: The BxCRRB’s Community Engaged Research Academy
Written by Monique A. Guishard, CUNY—Bronx Community College; Justin T. Brown, CUNY—LaGuardia Community College; and Lucretia E. Jones, Michael G. Williams, and Marzetta Harris, The Bronx Community Research Review Board (BxCRRB)

In this project spotlight we, an interdisciplinary collective comprised of members of the Bronx Community Research Review Board (BxCRRB), patients, caregivers, organizers, community social psychologists, and public health researchers share aspects of our participatory work aimed at shifting the culture of public health research in Bronx County.

Briefly, The BxCRRB’s mission is to ERADICATE health inequities that exist in marginalized communities in the Bronx. With RADICAL LOVE for our neighbors, we aim to:
1. TRANSFORM the culture of health research in our borough (from top-down to bottom-up) by
increasing the power of those who are researched
2. PROTECT the health of the Bronx through community engagement, our research review process, and promoting the return of research findings back to impacted persons and communities
3. INSIST on the shared ownership of benefits and products of research
4. PROVIDE healing-centered education to Bronx patients AND researchers, through our Community Engaged Research Academy (CERA).

The members of the BxCRRB value:
• The LIVED EXPERIENCES of marginalized and minoritized peoples in healthcare and in research.
• The SELF-DETERMINATION of Bronx residents, patients, and caregivers-- as it pertains to the research conducted on us and in The Bronx.
• RIGOROUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT that sustains high levels of community participation from the planning stages, to collecting data, to sharing the findings of the project. Rigorous community engagement must also compensate individuals for their expertise.
• MEANINGFUL COLLABORATION, for example, between patients, community-based organizations, researchers, and health care providers. Meaningful collaboration must include transparency, shared decision making power, understanding, and accountability.
• A STRENGTH BASED APPROACH TO RESEARCH, which demands that the research process educates, affirms, uplifts, and empowers people to better advocate for themselves and their communities.
• CREATING A HEALTHIER BRONX through community outreach, the creation of forums, Community Engaged Research Academies, workshops, and social media to inform residents of their rights in research and relevant research findings that impact the communities of the Bronx.

Together, over the past years, we co-facilitated the Community Engaged Research Academy (CERA). CERA is/was a street and patient centered learning space designed to catalyze radical engagement with research by teaching ordinary folks public health research methods. This provides a rigorous research ethics education in order to build their capacities to conduct independent action research projects without having to rely on researchers. Within CERA, community experts - not participants, were taught a variety of embodied public health methodologies including body mapping, space mapping, genetic ancestry testing, narrative analysis poems derived from their health records, and the social determinants of Bronx health. Classes were literally facilitated on the margins: within community spaces at community colleges, and at three community-based organizations.

Thus far 37 community experts have graduated from CERA. We have co-facilitated two exhibitions of their work and convened three community dialogues with over 150 attendees, to disseminate our findings back to Bronx communities. In the next issue of TCP we will share a digital toolkit we developed that highlights the
labor, research methods, teaching styles, and radical engagement of our participatory steering committee, the community-based IRB that ethically evaluated our work, the humanizing, healing-centered andragogy, activities, and dissemination strategies we used. We will offer our toolkit, in print and in digital form, as a much-needed resource to beginning and veteran community psychologists in addition to patient advocates. We situate our toolkit at the intersection of policy, in-between educative spaces, as necessary precursors to independent self-determining patient-centered movements.

Actualizing CERA was a powerful experience for all of us, reflections from participants and academic facilitators embody this sentiment:

“I've seen the change in me as a CERA alum, and in colleagues I knew before CERA. CERA has enlightened us community experts on issues of ethics in research, health disparities, and the need for true community engagement and not just participation in the healthcare process. CERA has awoken the passion in community experts to take on the system to make changes to improve the health and lives of Bronx residents.”
CERA 2017 Graduate Focus Group Excerpt

“I'm reminded to not overuse jargon, to continue to introduce complex terms and concepts and to break them down. CERA gives me hope for authentic, intersectional PAR work. CERA reminds me of patients' agency, amidst real fears and systemic power imbalances. CERA's presence/reflexivity on social media has influenced how I think about grant proposals, "voice," outcomes, and celebration.”
CERA 2018 Facilitator Feedback Survey Excerpt

The Community Engaged Research Academy was funded by a Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute Eugene Washington Engagement Award #3422. Follow our work at http://www.BxCRRB.org.

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Communities and Practitioners Need to Focus on Vulnerable Populations and Disasters

Written by Sharon L. Cohen, SCRA Member, Newtown Connecticut

Sadly, the last few months have proved once again how catastrophic events can harm mental health for the long term, particularly with more vulnerable individuals. My community of Newtown, Connecticut, recently faced the suicide of Jeremy Richman, PhD, whose six-year-old daughter Avielle had died in the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy in 2012. Although Dr. Richman had been conducting cutting-edge research on the brain through the Avielle Foundation, he lost his fight against pain and grief. In addition, Parkland, Florida reported the suicides of two students as another result of its 2018 school shooting, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) noted that mental health continues to be an urgent problem in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria. Numerous Puerto Ricans are living in constant fear and uncertain of the future; those who witnessed the enormous extent of the storm’s devastation are more prone to mood swings, panic attacks, and anxiety (The Costa Rica News, 2019).

As the quantity and severity of both natural and human-caused disasters continues to rise, it is expected that increasing numbers of people will suffer from acute-distress or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The American Psychiatric Association (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM–5, 2013) clearly recognizes the connection between PTSD and a traumatic experience. The APA explains that PTSD is a “psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault.” PTSD has been known by a variety of terms such as “shell shock” during World War I and “combat fatigue” after World War II. Yet it is now recognized that PTSD impacts many more people than veterans. It occurs in individuals of any ethnicity, nationality or culture, and age and affects approximately 3.5 percent of American adults. About one in eleven people will be diagnosed with PTSD in their lifetime, with women twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with the malady.

The research of long-time SCRA member Fran Norris, PhD continues to become more noteworthy with these growing catastrophes. Norris was previously with the Department of Psychiatry at Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and well-known for her expertise in disaster recovery, community resilience, and trauma/PTSD. Norris reinforced how characteristics as age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and culture influence mental healthcare on need for help; availability and accessibility of help; help-seeking comfort; and the probability that help is appropriately provided. In a 2005 article, she and Margarita Alegria concluded that certain factors can enhance disaster mental health recovery, particularly with vulnerable or “at-risk” populations. The authors suggested that practitioners endorse such activities as: assess community needs early and often; provide easily accessible services; work collaboratively and proactively to reduce stigma and mistrust and engage minorities in care; value interdependence and independence as a developmental goal; and promote community action. They concluded that despite their pain and stress, disasters create opportunities to de-stigmatize mental health needs and build trust between providers and community populations.

As Norris noted, every community has residents who are at higher risk for being negatively impacted in a disaster. Clearly, certain community populations are more vulnerable when disasters occur and many receive suboptimal healthcare. Typically, individuals who have received inadequate or diminished support services prior to
a calamity are the first ones to be overlooked once the event occurs.

The World Health Organization (www.who.int) defines vulnerable as “… the degree to which a population, individual or organization is unable to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impacts of disasters.” The Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) identifies at-risk populations as “those groups whose needs are not fully addressed by traditional service providers or who feel they cannot comfortably or safely access and use the standard resources offered in disaster preparedness, relief, and recovery.” Some of these vulnerable populations include, but are not limited to children and youth, the elderly, socioeconomically disadvantaged, physically disabled, mentally ill, non-English speaking, homeless, and migrants. At-risk individuals also include those on life-support systems and dialysis, having radiation treatment, and going to methadone clinics.

It is disappointing that since Norris and Alegria’s conclusions in 2005, many disasters continue to occur where vulnerable populations are slighted and, as a result, at greater peril for experiencing trauma-related mental illness. Disaster response and recovery research describe a number of recent examples of resource non-parity. For example, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita clearly illustrated considerable gaps in emergency preparedness planning for the entire community, but particularly demonstrated how the needs of many of the community members were not met—or even ignored. Although organizations have tried to rectify this situation, “few have integrated the perspective and experience of local service providers to investigate the needs of these populations and create a unified framework for addressing the challenges involved” (Nick et al., 2009). A large number of the most vulnerable residents were left stranded and awaiting evacuation support, refused shelter by unprepared organizations, and faced distressing challenges in obtaining emergency services due to preexisting mental and physical health conditions.

During these same hurricanes, individuals with psychiatric conditions faced multiple forms of discrimination (National Council on Disability, 2006), such as denied access to housing and services and improper and involuntary placement in jails, emergency rooms, nursing homes, and mental institutions. Group home residents were sent to new locations without prearrangement or tracking systems and unable to be found by family members or original providers. People with psychiatric disabilities “encountered enormous problems with general shelters,” because such facilities were “crowded, noisy, chaotic, confusing, and sometimes violent, all inadequate circumstances for a person with psychosis, anxiety, or depression.” Although some special needs shelters were available, they were designed for people with medical and physical disabilities and not prepared for those with mental health needs. Such special needs shelters were used as an excuse to discriminate against individuals seeking access to the general shelters, and some mentally ill were not able to obtain shelter at all.

Research on survivors of Hurricane Ike in 2008 found that low socioeconomic factors were associated with greater likelihood of depression (Tracy, Norris, & Galea, 2011). Individuals with a lower annual household income and a high school degree as opposed to some college or more years of education were more likely to be depressed. Just last year, Puerto Rico was particularly devastated because of its previous socioeconomic, infrastructure, and health issues. Half of the island’s residents live below the poverty level. The Environmental Protection Agency reported that
severe lack of water in some cases led to drinking from wells at hazardous waste Superfund sites. The number of deaths neared 3,000 and the number of people who tried to commit suicide more than tripled.

Mental health has long played a backseat role in disaster response. It is only since the 9-11 attacks that the federal government and states have begun to focus more on psychological intervention. For example, psychological first aid became the model for early mental health support after disasters, and use of this care system has since proliferated across the country. At the same time, most communities do not have an established plan on how to meet the needs of their at-risk population. It is difficult to help these vulnerable populations if few resources are placed in learning more about their needs prior to the occurrence of a disaster. It is imperative that communities focus on conducting public/mental health assessments of these populations to determine their needs and assets, as well as requesting input from representatives of these groups to help develop and deliver better disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

Based on research, it is very clear that disasters can cause high levels of stress and, in many cases, PTSD, depression and anxiety. Severe levels of trauma will only worsen over time if left untreated, especially for those who live in areas of reoccurring calamities. Imagine what it is like for those who are still trying to recover from one major natural disaster when another one hits, and then another. Given the expected increase in severity and duration of disasters in the coming years, such repeat situations will become the norm. For those who are already vulnerable due to a large number of factors, the situation will become even more dire. Once again, it must be highly recommended that communities and practitioners make significant efforts to enhance their knowledge, understanding, and support of these at risk populations. Their untreated trauma and suicidal inclination is inexcusable.

NOTE: Cohen is co-author of Disaster Mental Health Planning: A Manual for Trauma-Informed Collaboration, to be published by Routledge in Fall of 2019. She received a SCRA mini-grant to kick off this project and was a speaker at the upcoming SCRA biennial meeting.

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Implementing In-Service Trainings for Mental Health Professionals: Working LGBTQ+ Affirmatively with Clients
Written by Natasha Colin-Ellerin and Cat Eskilson, Antioch University Los Angeles

At Antioch University of Los Angeles, two clinical psychology graduate students in the Applied Community Psychology (ACP) specialization conducted a field study which implemented a curriculum on “Working LGBTQ+ Affirmatively with Clients” by bringing the in-service training to various mental health agencies across Los Angeles. This field study provided an opportunity to utilize the community psychology tools learned in the program in order to engage in direct community-based work through hands on experience. Through taking this course, it allowed for engagement in topics and issues that are meaningful and provided a proactive approach to working in the community.

Although the content of the curriculum was adjusted slightly depending on the theoretical orientation of the agency, the foundation of the training focused on understanding terminology and vocabulary, as well as deconstructing internal and external assumptions and biases within the LGBTQ+ community, and providing best practices, techniques and interventions when working with clients.

Within this framework, two community psychology practice competencies (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012) were: 1) Sociocultural and Cross-Cultural Competence was addressed through integration of multiple cultures and identities within the LGBTQ+ community, addressing community issues that were inclusive and empowering, and articulating the ways in which our interactions with LGBTQ+ clients can be impacted by one’s own heteronormative and cisnormative privilege; and 2) Community Education, Information Dissemination, in which was addressed through communicating information and dialoguing with mental health professionals on the importance around public awareness, visibility and knowledge around being LGBTQ+ affirmative in their practice.

This information is provided to students in the LGBT Specialization at Antioch University; however, there is less accessibility to this content at mental health agencies that have not had training in LGBTQ+ affirmative therapy. Therefore, by providing access to these resources and discussion of these topics in a clinical setting, it allows for clinicians to be more aware and informed of the issues facing LGBTQ+ identified persons.

A general curriculum was developed during a Psycho-educational Groups class in the Applied Community Psychology specialization which was three hours long on how to apply the information in a clinical setting with LGBTQ+ clients. However, based on the agencies who indicated interest in this training, each curriculum had to be tailored to meet the needs of the agency and its theoretical orientation as they were all very different. These orientations included: Narrative, Feminist and Psychodynamic. In addition, another reason for this as a field study was to deliver this in-service and distribute pre and post assessment surveys to assess the efficacy of the trainings and determine whether there is a significant difference and increase in people’s knowledge and awareness of the LGBTQ+ community after going through the training.

The major tasks over the course of the quarter were adapting the curriculum to each agency, as well as giving the actual trainings themselves and then evaluating the data from the assessments that were conducted. Refining and adapting the curriculum consisted of assessing the material that was in the original in-service and tying in different theoretical orientations. In this process, a lot of research was done in order to collect relevant information to add. For example, in psychodynamic theory, there could have been a lot of avenues to go down when relating theory to LGBTQ+ topics (such as discussing Kohut and Self-Psychology, as well as Winnicott and the true/false self). However, for the purpose of the training, it seemed more pertinent to discuss the ‘unconscious’ as it related to internalized homophobia, biphobia and
transphobia, which took up the whole second half of the training for that particular curriculum.

In addition, handouts and resources were provided to participants in order to have supplemental information that was unable to be covered in the training due to time constraints. These resources consisted of a terminology and vocabulary list, a list of ‘Best Practices for Therapists’, a list of varying interventions and techniques working with LGBTQ+ clients, and a resource list of different organizations in Los Angeles that offer services to the LGBTQ+ community. After conducting the trainings, pre and post assessments were collected and entered into an Excel document, and the mean and mode between both assessments were calculated.

When data from the pre and post assessments collected throughout this process were analyzed, respondents indicated that because of this in-service they experienced an increase in their knowledge about working affirmatively with the LGBTQ+ community. This result is promising as it indicates that the trainings had a positive, measurable effect on the participants. The result is also encouraging as hopefully other LGBTQ+ competency trainings may have a similar effect and impact more mental health clinicians who may have LGBTQ+ clients. Participant’s responses revealed that the “most important” information they gained as a result of this in-service was: 1) definitions, language and terminology regarding the LGBTQ+ community; 2) how to create an LGBTQ+ affirmative space to do therapy; 3) the importance of not making assumptions; and 4) a better understanding of gender pronouns. This information can better inform our, and others, attempts to further expand on and improve in-services such as these.

**Reflections**

**Tasha**

Throughout this process, I learned a great deal about the needs of mental health practitioners in the field in regard to LGBTQ+ topics, as well as my own ability to conduct trainings and where improvement is needed for myself. I also learned how to improvise in the moment while presenting. For example, with each training I had a general idea of what I wanted to discuss; however, some of the activities had to be taken out or adjusted during the actual training itself, in addition to the original re-working of the curriculum before going into the training. Fielding questions throughout the presentation was also tricky at times as most questions I could answer; however, for some questions I was transparent around my lack of knowledge and in turn, presented resources for organizations which could provide more information regarding the question at hand.

I am grateful for this field study as it pushed me to conduct pre and post assessments, which gave me a better understanding moving forward on the efficacy of these trainings and various aspects that can be improved on or altered. Ultimately, this has only made me a better presenter, and has greatly helped my future goals of providing even better trainings to agencies across the greater Los Angeles.

As I want to continue presenting and bringing this information to various communities and organizations who do not have access to it, in the future I want to expand the curriculums to encompass material that can be applied to social workers, non-profits, and many other organizations and corporations. I will continue to change and adapt this process to fit the needs of my audience and hope to grow the curriculum to even a day-long training at some point.

**Cat**

This project allowed me to continue my passion for educating others about the LGBTQ+ community. These trainings were a new challenge as they were so different from any I have done. Switching the lens to training mental health professionals, instead of the one being trained, was a part of this challenge, as Tasha and I had to use what we learned in this Applied Community Psychology program to speak specifically to the context of mental health.

For me one of the most challenging aspects of this field study was the data analysis. I am fortunate to have took classes in both qualitative and quantitative methods during my undergraduate
career which made the work not as difficult as it could have been, and I am glad my sociology major proved useful. Even still, I found myself facing a huge learning curve and I was stressed quite a bit about this part of the project. Ultimately, I was able to re-familiarize myself with the work I needed to do, and I was actually able to remember that I enjoy data analysis.

Reference

What if Art and Research Could be Used as a Form of Community Dialogue, As a Space for People with Lived Experience of Homelessness to Empower Themselves? A Reflection on Unframed Lives at the Brighton Fringe, UK
Written by Bruno de Oliveira, University of Brighton

Visual research methods are used with the aim of facilitating people who have experienced homelessness participation to voice their understandings of the current set of welfare reforms. Visual representations of social reality and experience have been debated and discussed in the social sciences. Visual research methods are a set of approaches that are used to reveal and explore the lived experiences of a group in order to investigate social issues such as drawings, collages, videos and photographs (Bates, 2013; Cannuscio, Weiss, Fruchtmann, Schroeder, Weiner, & Asch, 2009; Literat, 2013; Pavesi, Denizci Guillet, & Law, 2017; Rose, 2012). Researchers and practitioners using visual methods have pointed to many ways of using visual methods in research such as films, diagrams, photographs, maps and paintings (Rose, 2012). Visual methods have an inbuilt potential to provide more layers in the portrayal of lived realities, while at the same time empowering the research participants as handle agency in their own hands.

Rieger (1996: 5) argues that using photography in the research process can be useful to discuss social change:

“Photography is well-suited to the study of social change because of its capacity to document a scene with far greater speed and completeness than could ever be accomplished by a human observer taking notes. Visual changes can be very subtle or so complex, that they are virtually impossible to document adequately without the use of a camera, which permits ‘freezing’ a scene in extraordinary detail. Furthermore, photography can be used in many circumstances in a relatively unobtrusive manner, compared to more conventional approaches”.

Research is based on the principle of social research going beyond documenting lived-experiences by using photos as a tool of transformation by the participants within the research process (Prosser and Schwartz, 1998). The participants using photographs are part of the generation of new knowledge as they interpret their community and their lived experiences. This is a need for a process for researching social issues such as homelessness that can reveal participants’ lived experiences and meaning-making. With that in mind, photos produced by people experiencing the social issue may be used during the photo elicitation process, in most cases with captions created by the person who took the photo to provide a context. Based on this notion, the project Unframed Lives was created, designing a participatory action research project that invited those with lived experiences of homelessness to contest social discourses related to housing, austerity and homelessness.

Brighton and Hove City Council have reported that they are concerned that the number of homeless people in the area could increase further over the next few years, due to the impact of welfare reforms and the high cost of entering and
sustaining accommodation in the city’s private rental sector (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2017). The city council sees approximately 4,500 people a year and gives advice and assistance to support them to resolve housing problems that may lead to homelessness. Almost 1,000 people receive a case prevention/casework service, and a further 1,000 people make a homeless application each year (The Brighton and Hove City Council: Homelessness Strategy, 2014). According to the report, there are about, 23,000 households on the housing register waiting for housing, with 1,500 in temporary accommodation. People sleeping rough are a transient population, and the city’s street services work with more than 1,000 cases each year, 20 every week. In November 2017, a snapshot of a single night estimated that there were 178 people sleeping rough in Brighton & Hove (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2017).

*Unframed Lives* is a photographic exhibition, panel event, and installation for Brighton Fringe. Brighton Fringe is an open-access arts festival held annually in Brighton, England. It is the largest annual arts festival in England and one of the largest fringe festivals in the world. The collective is formed of two projects; research-based photo elicitation with people with lived-experienced of homelessness under the current austerity policies co-organised by researcher Bruno De Oliveira [Photo 2], photographer Lee Radford, and MYBRIGHTON & HOVE Photo Project. For the photo-based research, they have been running photographic workshops via a partners’ organisation for those who choose to share their lived experiences, alongside building a photo elicitation research document exploring homelessness and the welfare state under austerity. It’s a creative collaboration between individuals who have experienced homelessness, artists, and researchers.

This was a creative platform for individuals who have experienced homelessness, and a chance to share journeys and histories, experiences and commonalities. While small, this project explores how art and research can be used not only as a tool for knowledge creation, but also in-and-of-itself as a space for empowerment. We had an evening of a meaningful discussion, impactful networking, and innovative co-produced problem-solving [Photo 1]. We brought together 75 people from the local community to explore how creativity can play a role in challenging views on homelessness. The panel discussion with members...
of the Unframed Lives collective included artists showing their work in the exhibition; artist facilitator Lucy Groenewoud, founder of My Brighton and Hove Photo Project; and PhD Researcher Bruno De Oliveira. Greg Headley from Passage UK spoke about his perspectives of creativity and its role in supporting people affected by homelessness. Also included on the panel were Stacey Keay, Creative Studio Co-ordinator at Justlife Studios and Alex Procter, Choir Manager from Choir With No Name Brighton, and some of the photographers. During the event, people were encouraged to join the debate on social media by using #bfhope19 and #bfausteirty19.

To conclude, people experience hardship, but hardship is not experienced in the same way. Our project sheds light that the lived experiences of hardship can result from institutional practices or be a by-product of policies. For example, part of this project focuses on the lived experiences of people who have experienced homelessness as they encountered the Universal Credit interview and outcome, the health condition of people claiming Universal Credit, and the interactions of welfare claimants with support services. This collaboration highlights how art and research can be as a space for community empowerment and dialogue.

References

Supervision in Community Psychology: A Scoping Review
Written by François Lauzier-Jobin and Paul Hayotte, Université du Québec à Montréal

After being neglected for decades (Hess, 2011), supervision is now taking a central place in mainstream psychology (Watkins & Milne, 2014). In contrast, supervision in community psychology (CP) has received less attention (Langa & Graham, 2011). Supervision is an essential part of developing the core competencies of community psychologists (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012). and ubiquitous practice in CP graduate programs in North American universities (Serrano-García, Pérez-Jiménez, & Rodríguez-Medina, 2017). Nevertheless, few writings seem to address the specificities of supervision in CP. This article presents the result of our efforts to better understand supervision in CP.

From a personal standpoint, as two students in the last miles of our graduate programs at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), we are convinced of the importance of supervision in our professional development. We have experienced great formal and informal supervision surrounding our interventions, not only through individual supervision but also through our own peer group supervision. In addition, our program requires
students to take a course on supervision after the completion of their first practicum (UQAM, 2019). We were looking forward to participating in this course in order to systematize our knowledge on supervision.

Unfortunately, this mandatory course is shared with students from all the specialties of psychology. Despite the good will of the teacher, we had difficulty recognizing ourselves in the principles and examples of the course. We couldn’t shake off the feeling that supervision in CP is or should be different than supervision in mainstream psychology. As a result of these experiences, we came to ask ourselves: What is supervision in CP? What should supervision be in CP? Are there any key texts on this subject? We decided to conduct a scoping review of the literature in order to find answers to these questions.

**Methods**

This scoping review was based on the framework outlined by Arksey & O’Malley (2005). A reflective process of literature exploration was undertaken, following the specified steps: (1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant writings, (3) selecting the writings, (4) charting the data, and (5) summarizing the results.

To increase the scope of our review, two lines of exploration were adopted to discover journal articles and handbook chapters addressing the topic of CP supervisions. The addition of handbook chapters was based on the recognition that they are important resources in the education of community psychologists. Error! Reference source not found. represents the flow of key texts through identification to the final corpus.

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**Figure 1. Review of the Literature and Selection Method**
Step 1: Identifying the Research Question

Our research question was: What are the relevant resources on supervision specific to community psychology practice? We limited ourselves to supervision in North America. We adopted the definition of Bernard and Goodyear (2014, p. 9):

Supervision is an intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior colleague […] This relationship is evaluative and hierarchical, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior person(s); monitoring the quality of the professional services offered to the clients that she, he, or they see; and serving as a gatekeeper for the particular profession the supervisee seek to enter.

Step 2: Identifying Relevant Writings

To answer our research question, we identified writings through two channels, each with its own strategy. First, a search for journal articles was conducted on the PsychArticles database (American Psychological Association [APA], n.d.) with the keywords “supervision” & “community psychology”. No limitation in the years of publication was imposed. Secondly, to identify handbook chapters, we first searched all graduate-level course syllabi uploaded on the SCRA website to find which CP handbooks were cited as required readings. A total of 28 syllabi were examined. To be selected, a handbook had to be mentioned in the required readings and have “community psychology” in the title. These two processes led to the identification of 77 articles and 11 handbooks.

Step 3: Selecting the Writings

In this step, a two-stage screening process was used to identify relevant articles. In the first stage, we screened articles based on their titles and abstracts following our criteria. Articles were excluded if they did not refer to supervision in CP (based on our definition). In the second stage, potentially satisfactory articles were read in full and a summary was written for each one. Of the 77 articles initially identified, 11 were read in full. Only handbooks cited more than once were selected. When more than one edition was available, the latest version was considered. Of the 11 handbooks initially identified, four handbooks were selected. Given its recency and importance for SCRA, the latest version of the APA Handbook (Bond et al., 2016) was added to the corpus, bringing the total to five handbooks. For these five handbooks, mentions of supervision were searched in the Table of Content and in the Index.

Step 4: Charting the Data

Even after a systematic search, we found few writings that seem to address supervision specifically to CP in North America. In fact, not one journal article or handbook chapter met our initial criteria. This finding (or the lack thereof) is important in itself: there appears to be no key text that details how to do supervision in CP in North America. For this reason, we decided to revise our method and reconsidered the writings that were previously discarded in Step 3. We broadened our criteria and thoroughly reviewed any articles which referred to interventions in CP. For handbooks, we looked at all the mentions of the word “supervision” throughout the entire text. This situation is illustrated in Error! Reference source not found..

Step 5: Summarizing the Results

In this step, journals and handbooks removed in step 3 were reexamined and every mention of the term “supervision” was analysed. One transversal observation can be made: the term supervision was often used in the literature to describe components of a psychosocial intervention. In these cases, it was not about supervision for or by community psychologists but rather supervision of teachers or children.

A majority of the remaining articles (6) mentioned supervision in a training context but offered few recommendations. A final article dealt with a format of supervision in a course where students had to perform a community intervention (Glenwick & Busch-Rossnagel, 1993). Nevertheless, we felt this article did not offer enough to support our present reflection.
In the five handbooks, a text search of the term “supervision” was carried out using the search engine in the electronic version. Again, the term was mainly used to describe the components of a psychosocial intervention or program put in place (16 out of 18 occurrences). One mention underlined the importance of peer supervision (here, in the sense of supervision of a former psychiatric patient). One notable exception is a chapter 37 the APA handbook, written by Serrano-García, Pérez-Jiménez and Rodríguez-Medina (2017), which addresses issues related to the teaching of CP. They underscore the contributions of CP in supervision and mentoring, as well as the place it takes in graduate programs.

Discussion

This article explored the academic resources for supervision in CP practice in North America. The results brought us to the conclusion that there are no sufficiently developed writings addressing supervision adapted to the practice of CP.

Mentions of supervision in CP were quite sparse and the issue is not sufficiently developed either in scientific articles or handbooks. This is surprising, given that supervision in CP seems to have been an issue in CP training for decades (Lykes & Hellstedt, 1987; Rosenblum, 1973; Silverman & Fourcher, 1975; Weinstein, 1981; Zolik, Bogat, & Jason, 1983).

Two sources seem useful to fill this gap. In dozens of postgraduate programs in North America (and elsewhere), there is a wealth of unexplored experiences, expertise and best practices to be uncovered. Scientific communication and research would be an interesting avenue to develop our understanding of this matter. In addition, inspiration for practitioners might be found in complementary approaches to CP such as systemic (Douville, 2018; Holloway, 2016), ecological (Simon, Cruise, Huber, Swerdlik, & Newman, 2014), feminist (Benishkek, Biesckhe, Park, & Slattery, 2004; Gentile, Ballou, Roffman, & Ritchie, 2010) or critical approaches to psychology (Bates, Ramirez, & Drits, 2009).

Practice in CP and the challenges that go along with it are distinct from traditional psychology (Lavoie & Brunson, 2010) and therefore its training methods should be adapted. Given that supervision is at the center of this training, a thorough reflection should be carried out in order to ensure that future community psychologists confront theories and practices with appropriate support (Langa & Graham, 2011).

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“Am I Doing This Right?”: Helping Housing First Clients Navigate Difficulties Conducting Community-Based Participatory Research
Written by Eva McKinsey, North Carolina State University and Anna Pruitt, University of Hawai’i at Mānoa,

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) and community psychology share similar values and goals, both emphasizing collaboration, power-sharing, citizen participation, and social action. Because of these shared values and CBPR’s documented benefits to marginalized communities, CBPR is becoming increasingly
common in community psychology research. Much work exists discussing the difficulties of conducting CBPR, pointing to issues related to power-sharing, IRB navigation, time, managing diverse agendas, and barriers to participation (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Lowry & Ford-Paz, 2013). However, these difficulties often are discussed from the perspective of academic researchers or higher-powered community partners. Perspectives of vulnerable group members, like individuals experiencing homelessness or severe mental illness, are rarer but important for understanding CBPR process effects (Rasmus, 2014). We discuss the difficulties that arose for our community partners—a group of Housing First “clients”—and the ways in which we as community psychologists (CPs) worked with them to address these issues. In particular, we discuss how increased community ownership of the project was associated with unique and unexpected challenges for these partners. While increased ownership and participation is a CBPR goal, researchers often neglect to consider the issues vulnerable community partners face when they take on a researcher role.

The Project

From August to November 2018, we worked with a group of Housing First (HF) clients and staff to conduct a Photovoice (PV) study as part of an ongoing five-year partnership. The current project was a follow-up to a 2016 PV study in which the same clients took photographs that represented their experiences with the program as part of a program evaluation. Aided by a Society for Community Research and Action Mini-Grant, HF clients used this second study to explore beyond their experiences with the program to address issues surrounding homelessness, such as stigma, and asked us to assist them. The study included 22 individuals: 15 clients, four staff members, and two CPs. Of the 15 clients, the majority (80%) had participated in the 2016 study. Adhering to CBPR principles, we collaborated with clients and staff in all aspects of the research process. Together we identified themes, such as past homelessness difficulties, caring for spaces and spaces that care for the person, exploring physical and social community, companionship and independence, stigma, everyday struggles, and the need for hobbies and purpose. The project results and photos were displayed at a local library, and client researchers indicated feeling empowered by their work’s potential to educate the community (see Figure 1).

Client Challenges

Despite these benefits, our fieldnotes and debriefing discussions with clients highlighted challenges unique to their experience as client researchers, including how to photograph abstract topics, feelings of inadequacy, and investigating topics in which they had high stakes.

How do I photograph stigma? In the planning phases of the project, client researchers discussed wanting to focus on their previous and continued experiences with stigma; however, only two client researchers took photos explicitly related to stigma (see Figure 2). HF clients expressed uncertainty as to how to photograph stigma. This challenge suggests that not every issue is photographable and that some issues may be harder to capture through photography than others (Gentry & Metz, 2017). This issue may be especially relevant for vulnerable community researchers who often find themselves at the intersection of multiple complex social issues. In
fact, the more clients explored the complexity of stigma, the harder it was to photograph it. In other words, their experiences went beyond what photos could capture.

Figure 2. No this; no that. Don’t do This; Don’t do That. People experiencing homelessness are often policed, told what they cannot do, but never given options for what they can do instead.

Am I doing it right? Even though the follow-up PV study was initiated by clients, and 12 client researchers were involved in the first PV study in 2016, many of these researchers were highly concerned with “doing it right.” These concerns surrounded various aspects of conducting the study, from how to take good photographs to whether or not they were taking photographs of the “right” things. One client researcher spent a month planning how he would respond to group-generated prompts (e.g., “How do we want people to see us?”). These experiences reflect previous findings that community researchers can feel insecure about their research abilities, “afraid to make mistakes and ‘look stupid’” (Case et al., 2014; Gentry & Metz, 2017). Similarly, our co-researchers questioned their qualifications. Importantly, these were seasoned client researchers whose concerns increased the more they took ownership of the project.

What if I already know what I want the “findings” to be? Perhaps most challenging, our co-researchers expressed difficulty researching a topic in which they were so invested. For them, the stakes were high, and they knew the outcome that they wanted to achieve—to advocate for themselves and other persons still experiencing homelessness. This circumstance often translated into the clients knowing what themes they wanted to discuss prior to developing the research questions and prompts, which led to somewhat of a reversed research process—developing study themes first instead of the research question. They were also concerned with the dissemination of the results, worrying that their work would not be taken seriously or worse, would lead to negative outcomes for them and others in their situation. As one client researcher stated, if the program lost funding and he ended up back on the street, he would “just die.”

Responding to Challenges
We addressed these challenges in several ways. First, we allowed for a significant time extension. Whereas the project plan predicted completion of the study within eight group discussion sessions, the project lasted four months. One reason for extending the project timeline was because it took several weeks or longer for some client researchers to gain the confidence to fully participate in the data collection and analysis. Each week, client researchers indicated they needed more time to take pictures to better represent the prompts and themes. We also reminded the group that PV recognizes that the discussion of the group’s topics of concern was just as important as the actual photographs taken to alleviate concern over having to photograph difficult topics the “right” way.

One of the most challenging aspects was the tendency for clients to come up with themes they knew they wanted to be central in the study findings before developing research questions. To address this issue, we decided to remain flexible in research methodology. We allowed client researchers to decide the purpose of the study while recognizing that, in doing so, we were also allowing for potential bias in the study findings. One way we attempted to counter this challenge was by continuing our own analysis of group meeting transcripts. We identified themes prominent in group discussions but never
explicitly identified and bring them to the attention of the client researchers. For instance, only through analysis of transcripts did we recognize the prominent theme of “everyday struggles.” Clients were hesitant to identify such negative themes themselves because of its potential negative implications for the HF program.

Additionally, we continuously discussed and investigated potential causes of the client researchers’ lack of confidence and concern with “doing it right.” We discussed the possibility that the client researchers’ lack of confidence in fully participating may arise from the practice of assigning a role to individuals who do not know how to assume that role—a situation that could potentially be overwhelming and stressful for those individuals. In recognizing that conducting research is not an easy undertaking, we better understood how assuming the role of “researcher” for a four-month long project could be an intimidating task for HF clients. This role requires knowledge, skills, and practice that the client researchers were still developing. It was our responsibility as CPs to share such knowledge through continued lessons on the research process.

Perhaps most importantly, we continually emphasized the division of skills and knowledge as opposed to the hierarchy of skills and knowledge amongst all project researchers. Although we, as trained researchers, were more knowledgeable of research methods, the client researchers were far more knowledgeable of the study’s subject matter—HF clients’ daily lived experiences, transition to housing, and issues surrounding homelessness—making them the experts on the study’s topics and themes. Reminding client researchers of their expertise on such matters as well as voicing the lack of lived experience of these issues by the trained researchers helped build the client researchers’ confidence in participating and contributing to the study.

**Conclusion**

CPs would do well to recognize that community partners face unique challenges related to stepping into the researcher role. While general CBPR challenges, challenges for traditional researchers, and barriers to participation for community members have been explored, less consideration has been given to the challenges that arise from participation itself—particularly for vulnerable co-researchers. Assuming the role of researcher, while desirable, comes with unique challenges for vulnerable researchers that should not be ignored.

**References**


Discourses about social justice and peace are taking place across the globe, particularly when divisiveness seems to rule notwithstanding that many vulnerable populations are experiencing violations to their human rights. Yolanda and Fabricio had the opportunity to engage in such a discourse when recently visiting with Toshi Sasao and his students at International Christian University, the Peace Research Institute, and the Community Research and Action Group in Tokyo, Japan. They conducted a workshop on community-based participatory research and social justice, emphasizing disability and inclusion, to an interdisciplinary and international group of students and professionals.

Workshop participants varied from community psychologists, educational/clinical psychologists, nursing and medical professionals, graduate students in education, psychology, and peace studies, Rotary Peace Fellows, and undergraduate students. Participants represented a variety of countries such as Japan, China, Korea, Colombia, Canada, New Zealand, Kenya, South Sudan, and South Africa. All workshop participants were working on social justice topics, including community participation and isolation of older adults, inclusion of people with disabilities, integration of immigrants and newcomers into Japanese culture, the well-being of Zainichi Korean residents and their families, and empowerment issues with Japanese-Brazilian factory workers, among many others. The theme of social justice was at the core of our conversations. Social justice is a concept that we often refer to as community psychologists to capture the essence of our work and an agenda item for social and political activists and advocates.

Japan, for example, is currently one of the safest places to live in the world, in the eyes of Yolanda and Fabricio, and its traditional spiritual culture reflects a philosophy that promotes the concepts of harmony, reconciliation and peace. Acknowledging its historical contradictions (Japan was involved in acts against other countries), Japan has increasingly been playing a role in promoting social justice and peace in countries beset by conflicts. At the government level, several initiatives have been implemented, including providing financial scholarships to students in displaced situations, especially from Africa and South East Asia, and to female students who have been denied opportunities for education. So, what does social justice imply for community psychology researchers in Japan? That was part of the dialogue that Yolanda and Fabricio had with Toshi and his students (see a photograph from the event in late March 2019). Based on these conversations, below we propose a social justice framework.
A Social Justice Framework

Social justice is a political and philosophical, broad, complex, and multifaceted concept that speaks to the opportunities and privileges that people have within a society (Braveman & Suarez-Balcazar, 2009). Social justice is the first statement mentioned on the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) website to characterize our purpose and is also used to describe one of our activities in terms of “fight oppression, work to reduce social inequalities, and work with marginalized people toward their empowerment” (www.scra27.org). Social Justice encompasses interrelated principles such as equity, human rights, empowerment, fairness, and access to resources among others (Fondacaro & Weinberg, 2002). Social justice and equity have also been subject to diverse philosophical positions and critical inquiry on the basis of moral judgment (Estlund, 2009). Social justice definitions have also been informed by discourses on equity (Corning, 2015); critical theory (de Vita, 2014); and social and economic injustices and structural racism (Wolff et al., 2017).

Based on contributions from early philosophers, the concept of social justice has focused on the moral and philosophical meaning of individual rights, free will, and democratic participation (Lowery, 1998).

Several models of social justice have been proposed and the literature on the topic is vast, therefore, and by no means is this a literature review of social justice models, neither a comprehensive discussion on the topic. This is a brief reflection on and a suggested social justice framework that is informed by the values and principles of Community Psychology, some of the literature on the topic, and by our experience in Japan. The framework incorporates the principles of access to goods, services and resources; equity as people’s needs are met; protection of human rights; participation and inclusion in all aspects of society; freedom from any type of oppression (marginalization, violence, cultural imperialism, exploitation, powerlessness, culture of silence and violence, Young 2004); and empowerment (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A Social Justice Framework
Unfortunately, these are some of the values that are being challenged by the growing income inequality in many countries in the world, including United States. In fact, these growing disparities are generating the opposite to what these principles are trying to pursue. In the United States, for instance, one of the most powerful counties in the world, the income, social, health and participation inequalities are significantly widening. These contradictions make it even more critical for community psychologist to continue to pursue change from within. As has been emphasized by many community psychology researchers, these principles are essential for the promotion of social justice and social transformation. The framework below captures the interconnectedness of the principles and the ongoing dynamic and interactive nature of its complexity.

We also believe that for community psychologists to change the landscape of social injustices, a Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach is warranted. Community psychologists are well prepared to promote social justice in the research and action work being undertaken in the field. In particular, scholars have underscored the use of community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches to promote social justice (e.g., Evans, Rosen, & Nelson, 2014). We have a long history of contributions to the literature on CBPR (see Jason and Glenwick, 2012). Importantly, a CBPR approach needs to be transformative, novel, strength-based, and emancipatory – meaning that stakeholders are significantly involved as collaborators and co-creators of knowledge, and that our research is driven by their ideas and their concerns. We also acknowledge that for some researchers, inviting community residents and individuals experiencing injustices, to be co-creators of knowledge can be challenging, especially if the collaborators have been oppressed all their lives and lack critical awareness. This, in turn, requires additional steps to promote critical dialogue directed at increasing participant’s critical awareness and understanding of their own capacity to transform their social reality. Paulo Freire (1970), a Brazilian educator well-known for his work on promoting critical awareness, eloquently referred to the role of the educator as the agent and facilitator of critical consciousness and promoter of social change.

Yet, it remains uncertain how we promote social justice in the long run, how it becomes sustainable over time, and what strategies and methods generate the best results. We argue for a balanced approach in which we carefully analyze social problems, listen to the voices of people in context and invite them to the table to identify solutions and alternatives that may be essential to bring about desired change (Sasao, 2018).

Social justice promotes peace (Galtung, 1996). Peace, according to Galtung – is not only the absence of conflict, the fact that groups that differ in views and values and engage in dialogue, free of violence and conflict, but the promotion of peaceful contexts and well-being as it is clearly articulated in our community psychology research and practice. We strive to promote societies in which people’s rights are protected, in which conflict is resolved through dialogue and mediation and not with violence or intimidation.

We argue that we need to be more critical of what is and is not community-based participatory research that promotes social justice, in particular, research that transforms communities and transform us as researchers; research that enhances equity, access to resources and goods, human rights, empowerment, and frees people from oppression. As we apply these concepts, we may ask ourselves how are we liberating individuals from oppression and how are we creating opportunities to develop democratic empowerment?

This was just the beginning of our conversation with the students from Tokyo. As you can see, we all have much to discuss and do. We were very pleased to see the interest and motivation of the workshop participants and we are confident that they are going to try their best to generate some change, the same way that we are all trying our best to promote change in our lives and the lives of
those that we teach and those with whom we collaborate with in the community.

**References**


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**SCRA Announcements**

**Special Contributions to Community Psychology Award: Dr. Donata Francescato**

Dr. Donata Francescato was selected to receive the Special Contribution to Community Psychology Award because of her exemplary contributions to the field of community psychology. She has been an intellectual pioneer and a champion of community psychology in her home country of Italy and throughout Europe. Dr. Francescato’s work spans more than five decades and has had a tremendous impact on academic and lay communities. Her work has advanced the field of community psychology through contributing to theory, research, methodologies, and training.
Dr. Francescato has contributed to the dissemination of community psychology among academics, community professionals, and the general public through mass media interventions, writing textbooks, and providing resources and support for psychologists to communicate with the general public. She introduced the Participatory Multidimensional Organizational Analysis (PMOA) model, Socio-Political Empowerment Training Labs, and innovative online collaborative learning models for conducting integrative, interdisciplinary, and empowering community practice. Dr. Francescato has been a strong advocate for women’s roles and women’s activism, and fostered empowerment at the individual, organizational, and community level for marginalized community groups.

SCRA Fellows 2019

Dr. Cindy Crusto

Dr. Crusto is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry (Psychology Section); Assistant Chair for Diversity, Department of Psychiatry; Director, Program Evaluation and Child Trauma Research at The Consultation Center Yale School of Medicine. She is a practitioner and evaluator, researcher, educator and administrator. Her contributions to community psychology expand across three main areas including evaluation of community-based programs and systems of change, teaching and mentoring students and advocacy and training. She has made extensive contributions to issues of equity and inclusion in evaluation research.

Dr. Crusto is a leader in establishing participatory evaluation partnerships with community stakeholders. Her work seeks to enhance the capacity of programs, organizations, and service systems to build an organizational culture of evaluation and data driven decision making. She has done this in different areas including domestic violence, prevention programs, early care and education systems seeking to reduce violence exposure among, child and family behavioral health systems child welfare system and schools. She is also a national leader in culturally competent evaluation. Her program of research stands at the intersection of childhood trauma health disparities and evaluation research. She has been widely recognized for her significant contributions to multiethnic issues in evaluation research.

Dr. Bianca Guzman

Dr. Guzman is currently the director of the Pathways Program Office and a Professor of Chicana/o Latina/o Studies at California State University, LA. Her contributions to community psychology expand across the areas of community practice and action, research, teaching and administration and professional service. She has made significant contributions to the study of Latina women and young girls, focusing on gender issues, sexuality and culture, and the advocacy of women in careers/educational attainment. She has examined educational attainment of Latina girls – examining cultural issues and context, the role of community and advocacy on the health and career development of Latinas. Her work and service contributions have improved the lives of the Latino community in particular health and academic success. As a practitioner she created and founded a non-profit organization – Choices- focusing on Latino community health and education – the program was created 31 years ago, and it is still impacting the lives of many Latina girls which has received funding continuously to support the work.

She is considered a national expert on teen sexual health – advocating for teen pregnancy prevention. The National Latina Network in Washington DC appointed her as the lead evaluator in two CDC funded programs to promote safer sex among adolescent of color. She led an
initiative to increase the number of Latino students attending and succeeding in higher education by changing the university environment. She has served as a SCRA member at large, chair the women’s committee and minority representative to APA Council when the position existed. From 2015 to 2018 she served as President of the Society for the Psychology of Women APA Division 35 section 3, Latina women. She was recently elected as President for the Society of Community Research and Action and will serve from 2019 through 2022.

**Dr. John Sylvestre**

Dr. Sylvestre is an Associate Professor in the School of Psychology, and Vice-Dean, Research, in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa. He has made distinguished contributions to the study of community of mental health programs and systems, with an emphasis on the topics of homelessness and housing among people with serious mental illness. This includes evaluations of a provincial homelessness initiative, mixed methods studies of family homelessness, collaborative research on supportive housing practice, and qualitative research on housing instability. He has written on issues of poverty and citizenship among people with serious mental illness. He is also well-recognized for his contributions to the study and evaluation of a wide range of community-based programs in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

He is a former Senior Editor of the Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, and recently co-edited a book on theory, research, practice, and policy related to housing for people with serious mental illness. His research has contributed to strengthening the local and provincial community mental health programs and systems in Canada and has filled important gaps in our knowledge of supportive housing and homelessness. Dr. Sylvestre was also a co-chair of the 2017 SCRA Biennial Conference at the University of Ottawa.

**SCRA Election Results**

Congratulations to the 2019 newly elected members of the SCRA Executive Committee! Please join the EC in thanking them for their willingness to serve SCRA.

- **President Elect** – Bianca Guzman
- **Member at Large** – Ashmeet Oberoi
- **Secretary** – Lauren Lichty
- **Regional Network Coordinator** – Christina Smith

Congratulations also go out to Camilla Cummings who was elected as the SCRA National Student Representative. Camilla is a doctoral candidate in the Clinical-Community Psychology program at DePaul University in Chicago, IL. Her research interests include coordinated entry and systems that serve people experiencing homelessness, housing interventions for individuals currently or at-risk of experiencing homelessness, and treatment and recovery interventions for individuals with substance use disorders, serious mental illness, and traumatic experiences. During her service as a SCRA student representative, Camilla is excited to expand the visibility of Community Psychology through social media and advocate for student interests on the Division 27 Executive Committee.
**SCRA Membership**

If you are not currently a member of the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) and would like to be, please visit [http://scra27.org/](http://scra27.org/) to learn more about the organization. If you would like to become a member, the membership form can be accessed at: [http://scra27.org/members1/membership/](http://scra27.org/members1/membership/)

If you would like to learn more about community psychology, visit [www.communitypsychology.com](http://www.communitypsychology.com).

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**TCP Submission Guidelines**

Articles, columns, features, Letters to the Editor, and announcements should be submitted as Word attachments in an e-mail message to Susan Wolfe and Dominique Thomas at [TCP@scra27.org](mailto:TCP@scra27.org)

Authors should adhere to the following guidelines when submitting materials:

- **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.
- **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).
- **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/graph 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”.
- **Headers/Footers**: Do not use headers and footers.
- **Long quotes**: Follow APA guidelines for quoted materials.