I’m writing this after just returning from the Executive Committee’s (EC) MidWinter Meeting in early February. This is the most important meeting of the year for the EC, where the annual budget is approved. During three long days we accomplished much. We approved a set of core competencies for practice in community psychology developed by the joint Council of Education Programs-Community Psychology Practice Council Task Group on Defining Practice Competencies. This document can help our graduate programs shape their curricula, and graduate programs will soon be asked to indicate the degree to which they provide training in these competencies. Prospective students will then have a clearer basis for choosing programs that meet their educational needs.

We also approved a plan to move ahead with hiring an executive director for SCRA. It has become clear that we cannot continue as an “all volunteer” army of community psychologists and meet our goals. We need a staff person who can provide continuity that the rotating elected leadership cannot. We expect that a director will help us become a more effective organization and serve you, our members, better. By the time you read this, I hope this has been accomplished.

A large part of our time was spent developing a strategic plan that built upon our previously identified four focus areas. Under each of these focus areas are some (by no means all) of the tasks we’ll be undertaking.

**Strengthening Our Academic Programs**
- Provide mentoring for students and junior faculty;
- Provide seed funding for faculty research; and
- Recognize accomplishments of community psychologists in university settings.

**Gaining Greater Visibility**
- Increase members on APA boards, committees;
- Increase relationships between our IGs/Committees and other divisions, including through interdivisional grants; and
- Develop a broad visibility campaign for community psychology and SCRA;
- Increase coverage of community psychology in introductory and other textbooks;
- Translate our members’ research into the popular media; and
- Use our Web site and social media to increase our exposure.

**Increasing Our Impact**
- Continue mini-grants for practice work;
- Develop a public policy “marketplace” to showcase members’ policy work; and
- Develop strategic partnerships with three service organizations.

**Supporting Our Members’ Professional Development.**
- Enhance Web site to make it the place for employers to post jobs and for members to find them;
- Create a searchable set of profiles of members on the Web site to facilitate collaboration and community;
- Strengthen research methods and data analytic capabilities through workshops at regional conferences, the Biennial, and APA.
As you can likely see, these focus areas are clearly interconnected, and some tasks could fit under multiple areas. To accomplish these tasks, we’ll be working with existing IGs, committees and councils, and creating new ones (perhaps a training committee, and/or a visibility task force). Even with the hiring of an executive director, we’ll certainly need your help. Send me your ideas, thoughts and suggestions about these, and let me know how you’d like to be involved. If you’re passionate about one of these areas, please let me know how we can help feed your passion.

One aspect of our work plan that might be of concern to some of our members is our growing relationship with APA. We are moving to have a stronger connection with APA, using their financial services, having closer connections to their Web site, and having a stronger presence at APA. APA has resources we can use at no cost to us; and, it is to our advantage to have greater visibility at APA and to have the public and other psychologists find our “brand” of psychology when they go to APA to learn about psychology. We believe that we gain through having a stronger relationship with APA. However, we remain an independent organization, and we will continue to make clear when our views are different from those of APA. We will also continue to criticize APA’s tendency to act as if clinical psychology were the only area of practice within psychology.

You should know that the EC is comprised of a hard-working group of community psychologists who are committed to advancing our discipline and our society. It was a pleasure to work with them at the MWM, and it continues to be an honor and privilege to serve you as president. As always, we welcome your input. Let us know how we can support you. And please make sure, as you work to make a difference in your community, that people understand that you are a community psychologist and that you are “doing” community psychology. Take the time to explain. Make sure they know.

Jim

From the Editor

Maria B. J. Chun, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa

“We’ve Always Done Things This Way!”

The counterargument to this is one of my Boss’ favorite quotes: “Evolve or die.” The statement is a little blunt, but after all, I do work in an academic surgery department. Cliches and stereotypes aside, the tanking of the economy in 2008 pushed these opposing views into heated debate. Largely tied to budgetary matters (i.e., no money), favorite programs and events were forced to be downsized or eliminated. These changes often came without much warning or explanation; further fueling any negative feelings. For example, our department was extremely fortunate to have some meeting meals funded by an affiliated entity during our weekly educational conferences. But, due to budget cuts, one day mid-fiscal year, we were told that the funding for those meals was gone. Immediately, we had to find a way to cover almost $20,000 in lost funding. An impossible task because we too were suffering from fiscal constraints. Because there was a strong desire to continue the meals, the immediate solution was to slash the budget in half and still provide meals. This
was three years ago and then the questions arose: “Do we need to provide these meals?” “Why are we providing these meals in the first place?” “Who is really eating these meals?” “Who really should be paying for these meals?”

To me, a relative newbie to the department at the time, I wondered why we couldn’t just phase out the meals and eliminate them completely. Based on my observation, no one was really eating the food and some of the faculty even deemed the offerings as unhealthy. The meals could be perceived as a luxury we could no longer afford. However, that suggestion has been met with constant and strong opposition. It even came down to determining whether a part-timer’s salary stipend should be cut to continue to provide food. We had agreed to take an objective, “semi-scientific” approach to determining whether the budget for the meals could be cut further. The answer for the past two years had been absolutely not. Could someone else help pay for meals? The answer was yes, so eight out of 52 meals could be covered by another entity. So, now we just had to find $8,800. It doesn’t sound like much, but given all of the other priorities, it is a lot.

This year, I decided to have one of my student interns conduct a more formal assessment of the meal situation by finding out how other departments handle meals and to look for alternatives to our existing meal service (i.e., ways to cut costs with the current vendor or potentially selecting another vendor). I needed to lay the groundwork for her by helping to answer the four questions above, so I revisited the topic with my Boss. When asked whether the meals are necessary, he reiterated “yes” because it is a long-standing tradition that could not be eliminated. I then asked why the meals are provided in the first place. He reminded me that we have our educational conference very early in the morning and the breakfast would help to encourage attendance. It also positively impacted the morale of our surgical residents. With regard to who is really eating the meals, one of the staff reviewed the sign in sheet and conducted observations. It was determined that the surgical residents and medical students were the ones eating most of the food. As mentioned earlier, faculty apparently did not much care for the spread. This led to questioning what entity should be paying for the meals. And, this is when the poop has always hit the fan. Even though I am tenured, I won’t get into it here.

From determining the look/formatting of future versions of the TCP and many other initiatives and products, SCRA is faced with similar questions as those presented above. Even though the meal scenario may seem silly and inconsequential to some, my point in describing it is to demonstrate the importance of asking objectively “why.” For example, when the possibility of an all electronic version of the TCP was put on the table back in 2009, there...
It is no secret that interpersonal violence on college campuses is a problem. Sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking happens at alarming rates on college campuses, leaving colleges and universities with the responsibility of providing resources for those affected by violence. While resources are important for those affected, one community psychologist has taken it a step further and is attempting to prevent the violence from happening in the first place.

At California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, California, the interim coordinator for the Violence Prevention and Women’s Resource Center, Mayra Lewis, is addressing this problem. The university has a larger male student population, so the goal of the center is to reach men on the college campus in an effort to include them in the prevention of violence in their community.

Mayra and her team found that more men are willing to pay attention to the issue of interpersonal violence when they don’t feel they’re being targeted as perpetrators, but instead are being treated as allies. The Center created a student group called “Men Against Violence.” The men on the Cal Poly campus have responded so well to the student group that the Women’s Resource Center came up with other ways they could include men in the prevention process.

Mayra said: “I think that it’s important to include men in the movement to end interpersonal violence (sexual assault, dating/domestic violence and stalking) and having a “Men Against Violence” student group based out of our office definitely supports this goal. We want men to be allies and encourage their male peers to speak out and stand against abuse of women. Most men are not abusers, but most abusers are men, therefore we must not come into this work assuming that all men are potential perpetrators.”

Over the course of the last few months, the Women’s Resource Center on the Cal Poly campus has implemented many ideas to reach their goal of including men in preventing violence on their college campus.

In October 2011, Mayra and her team held a program called “These Hands Aren’t for Hurting.” This program gave men an opportunity to pledge not only to not hurt women, but also to not accept other men who hurt women. During the course of the program, men were allowed to share their personal stories and experiences of how interpersonal violence affects men. Some stories included the men having witnessed domestic violence in their homes and how they were affected by the rape of a loved one. The stories gave a new perspective to the role violence plays in all people’s lives, not just the lives of women.

Many men had commented to the staff of the Women’s Resource Center that they felt their voices weren’t being heard in the struggle to end interpersonal violence. So, in February 2012, they decided to abandon the original “The Vagina Monologues,” which has been institutionalized as a program on campus over the last 10 years. In place of this play, they did a production of “A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant, and A Prayer.” This play used not only women’s voices, but also the voices of men. This further opened the conversation about men’s roles in ending interpersonal violence and created some new dialogue about men’s roles in the feminist movement.

The team of dedicated staff at the Violence Prevention and Women’s Resource Center on the Cal Poly campus are making great strides in the prevention of interpersonal violence on their college campus.
Their ideas are simple and can easily be adapted to fit other college communities. Mayra suggests the first step in attempting to implement this type of “community idea” is to identify male leaders that will commit to creating a “Men Against Violence” (or other name) group. The creation of this group and the visibility of male leaders standing up against violence will help people to see men as potential allies and advocates and not eventual perpetrators.

The community ideas column is meant to showcase ideas that are happening in communities across the country. Whether you’re creating community coalitions, helping underfunded schools secure resources, or creating prevention programs, we’re interested in hearing about it.

We are looking for your ideas, whether they’ve been implemented or not. Whether you wish to write your own summary of ideas or you would like us to write it, we want to hear what you have to say.

All submissions can be made to amandalarcher@live.com

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**Cultural and Racial Affairs**

Written by Rhonda K. Lewis, Wichita State University and Pamela Martin, North Carolina Central University

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**The Importance of the Ethnic Minority Mentoring Award**

The Cultural and Racial Affairs Committee was established in 1976 and was designed to focus on the concerns of people of color. The mission of the Cultural and Racial Affairs Committee was designed to represent issues of cultural diversity and promote the concerns of people of color as a focus of community research and intervention, to promote training and professional development of people of color interested in community psychology; to advise the Executive Committee on matters of concern to people of color; and to inform and educate the Executive Committee regarding the implications of decisions as they pertain to people of color (SCRA Policies and Procedure Manual, 2011, revised). One of the many activities of the Cultural and Racial Affairs Committee is to issue the Ethnic Minority Mentoring Award to SCRA members who have demonstrated exemplary contributions to mentorship of ethnic minority persons. The committee believes that this is one of those most significant contributions of the committee in that we want to highlight the work of good mentors, particularly mentors to people of color. The notion of not having a good mentor is not a new concept and all students sometimes suffer from poor mentoring. This is especially true of students of color who may find themselves isolated in their departments as graduate students or junior faculty members.

Previous award winners have devoted their career to training and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty members. Characteristics of Ethnic Minority Mentoring awardees include taking the time to listen to students’ career objectives, opening professional networks, and fostering a relationship for a lifetime. They generously share their knowledge of the research process, provide specific strategies for working with communities and conducting socially responsible research, and impart wisdom regarding career and professional development issues. They also create a supportive environment and show a genuine interest in the overall well-being of their mentees.

Again, the purpose of SCRA’s annual Ethnic Minority Mentorship Award is to recognize a SCRA member who has made exemplary contributions to the mentorship of ethnic minority persons. Mentorship may be provided in various forms. It may entail serving as the academic advisor of ethnic minority undergraduate or graduate students; developing strategies to increase the acceptance and retention of ethnic minority students; involving her/himself in efforts to recruit and retain ethnic minority faculty members; or providing opportunities for ethnic minority persons to become involved in positions of leadership within community-oriented research or intervention projects.

Do you know of someone who has a track record of doing an excellent job mentoring students and professionals in community research and action? Consider nominating them for the Society for Community Research and Action Ethnic Minority Mentoring Award. Specific criteria for the award include two or more of the following: 1) consistent, high quality mentorship and contributions to the professional development of one or more ethnic minority students and/or recent graduates involved in community research and action; 2) contribution to fostering a climate in their setting that is supportive of issues relevant to racial/ethnic diversity and conducive to the growth of ethnic minority students and/or beginning level graduates; 3) a history of involvement in efforts to increase the representation of ethnic minority persons either in their own institutions, research programs, or within SCRA; 4) consistent contributions to the structure and process of training in psychology related to cultural diversity, particularly in community programs. Given SCRA’s commitment to diversity and training of future community psychologists, please nominate someone for this award.
in program planning. The program used the competency list in two ways: a) to structure student and setting planning for a year-long practicum experience that is a capstone to their program, and b) as a framework for review and planning of overall program curriculum. The authors also discuss questions and challenges to be addressed during this process. This thoughtful essay is valuable reading for all of us.

Practice Competencies and Community Social Psychology at UMass Lowell
Written by Meg A. Bond, Andrew Hostetler, Nellie Tran, and Michelle Haynes, University of Massachusetts, Lowell

What specific competencies enable practice in community psychology? And how can our graduate programs be designed to foster these skill sets? Members of the Society for Community Research and Action have been engaging in discussions about exactly these questions for many years. Over the past five years, the dialogue has intensified, and several TCP articles and Biennial Conference conversations have sparked spirited and generative exchanges (e.g., Dalton & Julian, 2009; Dalton & Wolfe, 2010; Scott, 2007; Wolfe & Dalton, 2010, 2011). In this article, we hope to contribute to these ongoing discussions by sharing recent work of faculty at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell (U Mass Lowell) to utilize a competency framework to reevaluate our master's program in community social psychology (CSP). Our efforts have benefited greatly from the ongoing SCRA conversations, and we have borrowed heavily from the lists and definitions circulated through the division. However, we have also needed to tweak, alter, and combine previous iterations – in proud embrace of a social ecological orientation – in order to establish a list of competencies that works for our particular context. Our discussions of competencies at UMass Lowell are ongoing, and our definitions will surely shift before we are done. Thus, what we share here is a “work in progress.”

The CSP Program at UMass Lowell was established in 1980 and was among the first master's degree-level graduate programs in community psychology developed in the U.S. From the beginning, there has been an explicit focus on bridging theory and practice toward the development of specific community psychology competencies (Lykes & Hellstedt, 1987; Mulvey & Silka, 1987). Although some of our graduates eventually pursue doctoral degrees in community psychology and related fields, most enter the workforce directly after completing their degrees. Accordingly, the need to meaningfully integrate theory, research, and practice has long shaped our curriculum.

Towards this end, our program has always included a one-year practicum experience. In 2004, when we decided to make the master's thesis optional, it became the sole capstone experience for most students. As such, when we as a faculty decided in 2009 to engage in a thorough curriculum review, we spearheaded the process by focusing our efforts on articulating and refining a set of core competencies for the practicum course. Given its position as the catalyst for our subsequent curriculum review, we present our experience with the practicum first and follow with a discussion of the more thorough curriculum review that is now in progress.

Practicum: A capstone grounded in competencies for practice

The primary purpose of the year-
long practicum is two-fold: 1) to allow students to apply, integrate, and evaluate the information and skills they have acquired in their masters-level academic course work; and 2) to develop new understandings and competencies as community social psychologists while contributing to a field setting. We are explicit about our hope that the experience will assist students in developing the necessary skills for future work as social change agents. Our stated goals are that, over the course of the year, students will: 1) learn to analyze social problems & design appropriate prevention-oriented interventions, 2) develop skills for carrying out systems interventions, 3) develop a deeper understanding of ethical and professional standards for work in the community, 4) expand their understanding of how to work with people and groups of diverse identities, classes, and backgrounds, 5) build upon current personal skills and areas of strength, and 6) increase awareness of and address areas for self-improvement.

While we, as a program, have many well-established relationships with community-based organizations, we ask students to negotiate their own practicum site because we place a premium on a match between the student’s specific career goals and the activities that will come to be part of their placement. We have established a variety of criteria about the nature of the work and the commitments required of site supervisors (see: www.uml.edu/psychology/graduate/practicum), but at the core, the most essential criterion is that the practicum work should include activities that are tied to specific target competencies.

At the start of the year-long experience, students utilize a competency framework to negotiate a learning contract with their site supervisors. This contract must identify at least two skill areas from among a list of five (i.e., community assessment & program evaluation, program planning & development, resource development, advocacy & public policy, and community organizing & coalition building). Then the students and supervisors work together to delineate a year-long calendar of tasks and projects that will forward student mastery in the selected competency areas. Our belief is that more focused attention on two competencies will lead to greater mastery than would a diffused focus in an attempt to address them all.

In addition to identifying two focal competencies, all students are required to articulate goals (and associated activities) in three additional areas: 1) participant conceptualizing, 2) interpersonal and group process skills, and 3) general professional development. All skill areas are required to incorporate attention to diversity issues. After negotiating target competencies and activities, the student contracts are then subject to review not only by the practicum instructor but also by two additional members of our Graduate Program Committee. This level of collective review reinforces the notion that the practicum competencies are not merely relevant to this more explicitly applied course but are also valued by the program as a whole. The expanded review process also reflects our belief that hearing varied faculty perspectives can contribute to student learning.

Our current definitions of the practicum competencies are as follows:

**Community Assessment & Program Evaluation.**

Develop competencies in data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and in the use of this information to describe and assess the interaction of persons, settings, programs, systems and social structures. Students should be able to articulate and write about the implications of the findings for the issue or program under study.

**Intervention/Program Planning and Development.**

Develop multiple intervention skills and become familiar with multiple modalities for bringing about change. The student should be able to select, use, and adapt appropriate strategies -- at multiple levels of intervention -- for assisting the setting in fulfilling its mission. The student should be able to determine how interventions can be designed, implemented, and managed for a specific context.

**Resource Development.**

Learn varied approaches to helping community-based groups and organizations access the resources they need to do their work. The student should build skills for developing a wide range of resources such as financial support, credibility, visibility, and community connections.

**Advocacy and Public Policy.**

Develop skills to influence policy at organizational, local, state, and/or national levels. The student will learn how to advocate for issues relevant to constituencies connected to her/his program or organization. The student should become familiar with current public policy issues and debates and learn how to translate theories and research findings into useful information for policy makers, clients, organizations, citizens.

**Community Organizing and Coalition Building.**

Develop skills for bringing varied constituencies together to accomplish shared social justice goals. The student should be able to develop and maintain a network of constructive work partnerships and to pursue avenues for collaborations with community members, organizations, and interested parties, including members of constituencies to be served. The student should learn how to work with a community to take sustained collective action in order to improve conditions affecting their communities.
community.

**Participant Conceptualizing.**

Participate in and observe the setting and its various activities, events, and programs. The student should be able to apply community and systems theories — e.g., ecological paradigm, multi-leveled analyses — to understand the dynamic relationships among individual, organizational, and community phenomena observed. We sometimes also incorporate these skills into a competency referred to as “reflective practice.”

**Interpersonal and Group Process Skills.**

Develop process skills needed for effective intervention at multiple levels, i.e., with individuals, groups, organizations, and community-based groups. Skills include effective interpersonal communication, interviewing, group facilitation, conflict management, and leadership, among others.

**General Professional Development.**

Identify one’s own unique professional development needs and be willing to work outside one’s comfort zone to strive for personal and professional growth. Students should adopt ethical approaches that enable life-long, continuous self improvement and enhanced personal and professional effectiveness. Work on all competencies should incorporate sensitivity to cultural and diversity issues.

In addition to defining these competency areas, we also provide students with fairly detailed lists of activities that potentially contribute to each competency area. Students are not required to address every element of any competency area but rather are expected to specify elements that fit with their selected practicum site. For example, although two students may both target the first competency area of “Community Assessment/Program Evaluation,” one might focus more on community assessment and the other on program evaluation based on the mission and history of their site and/or program goals.

For those who have followed the TCP and SCRA discussions of community psychology competencies, it will be clear that we have drawn heavily upon the work of other community psychologists. However, it will also be clear that we have combined and altered some of those definitions. We have found that a more consolidated list makes the learning contract process more manageable for students, and the more targeted list is also more effective for communicating the essence of community psychology to supervisors. While our site supervisors...

...a longer list of competencies may seem on the surface to be necessary in order to be more comprehensive, but longer is not necessarily better or more useful for structuring educational efforts. Any competencies should be weighted for their mastery of specific competencies relevant to community psychology, many are fairly unfamiliar with our field before making the commitment to mentor one of our students.

**Program review: Working for alignment with competency framework**

In 2010, we began a broader review of our curriculum to assess alignment with the competences we adopted for the practicum. The unique mission and history of our CSP Program provide some context for our interest in using a competency framework to guide our program review. From the beginning, our graduate program has been mainly focused on practice competencies throughout our curriculum, and there has always been a strong emphasis on addressing the needs of the region. In fact, one of the distinguishing qualities of our program is the depth of our connections to the local community (Lykes & Hellstedt, 1987; Mulvey & Silka, 1987).

The current impetus for a review of our program goals is also rooted in the spreading emphasis in academia on evaluation and accountability. Our university administration has become more explicit in their expectation that master’s programs, in particular, will enable students to develop concrete, marketable skills. The need for a review that will yield a streamlined yet well-integrated curriculum has been further intensified by the university’s interest in the BA/MA model, whereby students should be able to acquire target skills with just one additional year beyond their bachelor’s degree. In line with these priorities, there is a press for rationalizing new faculty hires based on potential contributions to strategic priorities.

We have faced some interesting logistical and structural questions as we have been engaged in this process, some of which we highlight below:

*What is the specific list of competencies that will work best for us given the unique qualities of our graduate setting?* While we have begun our curriculum review by revisiting the practicum competencies, we recognize that the skill outcomes we expect from the whole program are broader. Over the course of many conversations, new competency areas have been identified; some areas have been combined. We have wondered together whether some competencies should be weighted...
more heavily than others (i.e., are some competencies essential and others optional?). For example, we consider applied research skills to be essential building blocks for developing any level of competence in community assessment and program evaluation and thus a skill set that we require of all students. The need to consider differential weighting for various skill areas is intensified by the fact that we are a master’s program; having only two years with our students places very clear limits on what we are able to accomplish. On a related note, we are also identifying some competencies as cross cutting that should thus be addressed in all our courses, while others may be the primary focus of a single course. For example, frameworks that promote the understanding of “people in context” cut across most, if not all, of our courses (even though we may draw upon different literatures, e.g., Kelly & Trickett vs. Bronfenbrenner vs. Kurt Lewin), whereas grant writing (as one aspect of the “resource development” competency area) is taught in an intensive elective.

Should we structure our curriculum with the hope that we can access or leverage the resources needed to teach to our ideal list of competencies or should we shape our targeted competencies around the expertise we already have? After coming to some initial consensus about a list of community psychology competencies, we took a look at which courses map onto which competency areas. One aspect of this review has involved evaluating the extent to which current course offerings are contributing to student mastery of target competencies. Such a review process will inevitably identify gaps that can inspire the development of new courses, the revision of existing courses to bring them more in line with desired student outcomes, and the recruitment of new faculty with needed expertise.

For example, advocacy and public policy are currently under-represented in our curriculum. Simultaneously, we have looked at what expertise current faculty have to contribute and how we can best capitalize on this expertise to benefit our students. Although some of the faculty who contribute to our graduate program may not define themselves as “community psychologists,” they do have important contributions to make to student learning that are in sync with community psychology. In fact, this process has brought some unacknowledged strengths to light that we hope to build on by developing new graduate certificate programs. In a sense, we have found that our curriculum review needs to involve a recursive process, whereby how we define the target competencies will shape areas of needed expertise, while available expertise will also shape how we frame our competencies.

How can we best incorporate input from students? We have tried to anchor all of our discussions in an understanding of the needs of the students we serve and what our graduates want to do with their CSP education. In recent discussions with our students about what drew them to the CSP program and what they value most, they mention many of the competencies outlined above. In addition, they highlight the unique processes community psychology -- and our program -- employs to promote learning. More specifically, they appreciate and value the way that instructors often integrate coursework with actual work in the community. The integration starts with their very first graduate introductory course; it is intensified in core skill-oriented classes like applied research methods, program evaluation, and grant writing; and also permeates our topical seminars in areas such as aging, health promotion, immigrant psychology, women in the community, and workplace diversity. This feedback points to the importance of considering process as well as content in any competency-driven program review. The pedagogical approaches we employ in order to foster particular learning outcomes are as essential to our success as is our list of required readings. While many may feel it is not appropriate in the academy to dictate to faculty exactly how to teach their courses, we should be engaged in discussions about best practices as they relate to specific learning outcomes. For example, can we really teach students how to do program evaluation without engaging them in the actual process of doing it? In addition, feedback from our students underscores that the overall climate of a program is also worth considering in any program review, i.e., what type of graduate climate best promotes the development of community psychology competencies. For example, our students placed importance on extra-curricular community-building activities, such as brown bag discussions, student-initiated community projects like food drives, and social hours, which allow them to get to know one another and faculty outside of the classroom.

In grappling with these questions, it has become clear that our ultimate challenge may well be to maintain integrity in terms of targeting competencies that enable students to effectively address social concerns from a community psychology perspective, while acknowledging that few, if any, of our individual courses (or perhaps even our full educational program) will address every one of the long list of skills that our field may consider part of the CP package.

Ongoing work on community psychology competencies

As we continue with our curriculum review, we hope to remain in conversation with the SCRA Task Force on Competencies for Practice and other SCRA members currently
engaged in articulating and refining a list of core community psychology competencies. In this spirit, we share a few additional observations in hopes that they might contribute to the work of the SCRA Task Force and to other ongoing discussions. First, a longer list of competencies may seem on the surface to be necessary in order to be more comprehensive, but longer is not necessarily better or more useful for structuring educational efforts. We mention the limited time we have with students in a two-year master’s program, but it may actually be impossible for any graduate program – master’s or doctoral -- to fully address all the competency areas that have been discussed by SCRA. Thus, the search for a shorter, more manageable list of competencies may enhance the usefulness for all graduate programs working to align their curricula with community psychology practice skills. Second, we hope the task force will keep in mind that doctoral- and masters-level programs have somewhat unique concerns and capabilities given obvious structural differences. Third, we urge that any use of the SCRA-developed competency framework for graduate program reviews look at both the substance of course requirements and the pedagogical approaches employed to foster applied skills. A focus within our field on competencies without serious discussion about the processes by which we enable students to develop those competencies would be of limited value. Finally, we hope the SCRA Task Force will agree with us regarding the need to articulate an overarching competency around adopting social ecological principles. A critical element of what makes community psychology unique is not just a set of technical skills, but, harkening back to Jim Kelly’s classic exhortation that “T’aint what you do; it’s the way that you do it” (1979), our ‘value added’ is that we think contextually and adopt systems frameworks to guide all that we do.

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Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a participatory collaboration which engages community members equally along all stages of a research project and focuses on a balance between research and community action (Israel et al., 2003). As graduate research assistants in a community psychology program, we are fortunate to be involved in several CBPR projects with individuals with disabilities. These projects include working with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to design and conduct research and studying the use of CBPR with adults with developmental disabilities as an external evaluator. Since the relationships among project members and our advisor were formed prior to our involvement, we began our collaborations in a unique position wherein we became the new and unfamiliar members of our respective teams, yet were allowed a greater amount of trust than strangers due to our relationships with our advisor.

We joined as true outsiders – we are both white women with no disabilities and no prior connections to community partners. As disability and CBPR researchers have grappled with the unique role of being nondisabled researchers (Walmsley,
community psychology without disabilities requires a balance of our expertise with an understanding that our perspective is not the community priority. This forces us to accept our modest roles as the least powerful individuals in the disability research community (Björnsdóttir & Svensdóttir, 2008), a perception that somewhat squelches our confidence in our places in the research teams. Our lack of perceived power is understandable—
to academics, we have not finished our education or accrued as much experience as many researchers in the field, and to community partners, our academically driven motives lack personal relevance.

Despite our complicated researcher identities and minimal perceived influence in research, we are both dedicated to the CBPR approach and our interests in disability research. Therefore, our aim here is to contribute to the discussion of the unique challenges and rewards of conducting CBPR with individuals with disabilities as graduate students. The value community psychology places on self-reflection and transparency in the research process (Goodley & Lawthom, 2005) urges us to share our experiences and techniques in addressing challenges. We hope to encourage others to reflect on their own work and to continue the dialogue in which hardship may be respectfully addressed in CBPR collaborations and graduate departments.

One challenge of CBPR that impacts us as graduate student assistants is the amount of time CBPR takes as compared to non-collaborative research approaches (Rodgers, 1999). Additional time is added to CBPR with individuals with disabilities when addressing barriers of inaccessible research processes (e.g., jargon and the abstract nature of research, transportation to university campuses; Rodgers, 1999). We must balance our desire to conduct CBPR in the disability community with our adherence to academic guidelines necessary for adequate degree progress. As an example, thesis and dissertation development involves collaboration with committee members from the university, but also regular discussions with project members to make sure depictions of the team and the project are representative and respectful of the team goals and expectations. We attempt to mitigate the challenge of academic timeline adherence with candid explanations of graduate program expectations, policies for graduate student projects, and presenting plain language summaries of all ideas and documents to project members. An advisor who appreciates our student status also works as an advocate within our research teams when necessary.

Another struggle involves compromising some of the tenants of CBPR collaborations to adhere to our academic roles. Problem definition, grant writing, research proposals, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) project approval traditionally occur in academic settings prior to collaboratively developing projects and establishing rapport with community members (Burgess, 2006). Further, universities often require many of these tasks to be independently completed by graduate students for theses and dissertations, along with data collection, analysis, and dissemination, which is contrary to CBPR ideology (Björnsdóttir & Svensdóttir, 2008). While our team members do not fully collaborate on such requirements, we are able to (and required to by our teams) seek community approval prior to major decisions on projects to ensure respectfulness and relevance to the community. Unfortunately, community partners are not allowed to serve on thesis or dissertation committees, even if they are the principal investigators of our projects; however, they are invited to attend our colloquia. Lastly, while our theses are not co-authored, any other publications generated by our projects will have project member co-authors.

Also contrary to CBPR principles with individuals with disabilities, doctoral guidelines dictate a level of analytical skill and academic language that further excludes project members, even when all other aspects of research materials are successfully accessible to individuals with disabilities (Björnsdóttir & Svensdóttir, 2008). Goodley & Moore (2000) discuss their struggle between accessible dissemination of their research through the use of pictures and text and being taken seriously by academics with expectations of traditional presentation style. As young scholars seeking credibility in our academic field, we struggle to effectively use inclusive communication while following the rules of the dominant culture of researchers without disabilities (Bourdieu, 1991). Despite numerous challenges, our experiences also exemplify the benefits of utilizing a CBPR approach. As graduate students with limited power in multiple professional spaces, we deeply appreciate the tenant of CBPR that strives to equalize power, including hierarchical relationships that may exist within community and academic groups. CBPR principles require the issue of power to be in the forefront of project conceptualization, and to be revisited throughout all stages of the research process (Nicolaidis et al., 2011). This allows us to reflect on and discuss our roles as graduate students without disabilities on our teams. It also allows us to take on roles of greater status and responsibility within the research context, since individuals’ unique skills and interests are emphasized over educational attainment (Israel et al., 2003).
Importantly, establishing relationships and trust with CBPR teams has provided us with benefits that would not have been possible using different approaches. For example, Colleen is able to define a dissertation project collaboratively with project partners, increasing the relevance of her work to her community of concern. Similarly, Erin has opportunities to integrate course projects into her research work, increasing her depth of understanding of her focal phenomenon. Such connections to the project members have also provided us with community insider knowledge that strengthens our research analyses and interpretations. Colleen’s community partners were responsible for shedding light on unexpected study results that only members of the community could have accurately understood in light of current events within the community. These relationships allowed us to feel more comfortable with our role within a community that we initially approached as outsiders as well. In addition to community partner relationships, the nature of CBPR encourages interdisciplinary academic collaborations that have allowed us to work alongside individuals outside our department and university to forge connections and deepen our knowledge of other fields such as social work, medicine, and public health. Establishing connections with all project members has not only benefited our lives academically, but enriched our lives personally by introducing us to diverse, creative, and inspirational individuals.

As we reflect on our shuffle between graduate school and community priorities, we recognize these tensions are impossible to fully resolve. CBPR’s encouraged self-reflexive processes create the opportunity to share our voice as graduate student researchers, both in our research teams and in our field. We are dedicated to the utilization of a CBPR approach in our futures as researchers, particularly since our values align with the potential for greater individuals with disabilities to be included, develop new skills, and meet new people. Despite the obstacles we face in our graduate student roles, we are humbled by and thankful for the opportunity to engage in such meaningful research. all that we do.

References


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Book Review:
Psychology for a Better World: Strategies to Inspire Sustainability by Niki Harré
Written by Allison Eady and Manuel Riemer


Also available as a free PDF at http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/psychologyforabetterworld

In Psychology for a Better World: Strategies to Inspire Sustainability, Niki Harré provides strategies to advocate for sustainability based on research from across the field of psychology. The book explores the role of positive emotions, imitation and modeling, identity, and morality as they apply to sustainability, summarizing the research on each of these themes, and suggesting strategies to use research results to make community change. While it is aimed at anyone working as an advocate for sustainability, this book may be of particular use to students and other emerging organizers as well as activists, teachers, and university professors.

This book makes an important contribution to the psychological literature related to sustainability. Multiple authors have pointed to
many psychological questions that arise in the context of global climate change and other environmental challenges and to the important contributions psychology, including community psychology, can and should make to promote environmental sustainability (e.g., Riemer, 2010; Riemer & Reich, 2011; Swim et al., 2009). There is also certainly interest among sustainability advocates to apply psychological knowledge. When the environmental psychologists McKenzie-Mohr and Smith (1999) published their book on community-based social marketing, for example, they made psychological theories and empirical findings from social and environmental psychology accessible to a broad audience and the book became an instant hit across the world. Most literature on the mitigation of global climate informed by psychology, however, has focused on behavior change, communication, and (social) marketing techniques (Dittmer & Riemer, 2012). A common mantra is that we have to make it easy for people to change and focus on one behavior at a time. Niki Harré takes a different approach. She considers the transformation toward a sustainable society as a challenging collective social enterprise. Her book also looks at a person more holistically with complex identities and personal stories navigating challenging moral dilemmas. As a result, she draws from a broader range of psychological literature than other contributions from psychologists that focus more on behavior change strategies. She also focuses on actions at the group and civic level in addition to the personal level. Similar to McKenzie-Mohr, however, Harré writes in a way that is very accessible and does not require previous academic training. As such, her book provides an important complement to the existing literature by providing insights from psychology on how to inspire sustainability without having to rely on marketing techniques.

In the first chapter, Harré outlines the three key principles underlying her work. The first is an emphasis on sustainability as “a collective social enterprise, aimed at new ways of managing ourselves” (p.6). This definition of sustainability differs from traditional, problem-based approaches in that it focuses on creating viable alternatives for sustainable living, rather than finding solutions to specific environmental issues, allowing us to broaden our visions, and make space for multiple creative and collaborative actions. The second principle is a focus on positive strategies, which Harré argues are more uplifting and engaging, and more sustainable, compared to negative approaches. Finally, this book emphasizes that sustainability advocates are human, too. Rather than pretending that researchers and advocates have access to an ultimate truth, her work positions advocates on equal footing with others in our communities to build sustainable futures. With this emphasis, she discusses how sustainability advocates are subject to the same confusion and hesitation that holds others back, and that we must strike a balance in acknowledging both our limitations and our power to change.

In the second chapter, Harré discusses how positive emotions can inspire creativity and motivate people to work for change. While negative emotions have their place in addressing immediate environmental crises, she demonstrates clearly how positive emotions foster innovative solutions, and action inspired by these emotions is more sustainable for those involved. She also presents a balanced perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of both positive and negative emotional appeals, and the value of each for different circumstances. Finally, in this chapter, Harré also introduces the concept of “flow,” a state of high interest and engagement, leading to great productivity and creativity. She suggests creating suitable opportunities for people to engage in sustainability work in ways that fosters their passion, and aims to create this state of “flow.”

While imitating others is often seen as a negative thing, humans are born to copy, and Harré demonstrates in the third chapter how learning from past successes and modeling positive behavior ourselves can be great ways to inspire change. People formulate their goals and undertake activities based on the possibilities demonstrated around them. By telling people about our successes, and providing detailed narratives of successful sustainability initiatives, we can make these actions seem more achievable for others, and inspire them to try and make their own change. Finally, Harré introduces the concept of self-modeling. Just as hearing about how others have made change increases the salience of their actions and goals, imagining ourselves accomplishing change can inspire us to take action.

The fourth chapter focuses on identity, which at its core “is about how we think of ourselves and our position in society” (p. 69). Harré rightly argues that our identity plays a key role in how we choose to act in this world and, as such, is critical to understand if the goal is to inspire sustainability. The first part of this chapter provides a theoretical overview in regard to six aspects of identity drawing from a variety of psychological literature: the importance of action in making an identity real, the social nature of identity, self-worth, how identities are held in place, identities are not just what we are but also what we are not, and identity as a filter through which we see the world. Similar to other chapters, the second part considers more directly how to apply this knowledge about identity to promote sustainability.
The fifth chapter covers the issue of morality and the related issue of cooperation. Harré’s goal for this chapter is not to present a moralistic view of what is right and what is wrong, but rather, describe how people decide what is right and what is wrong, which certainly matters in making decisions about sustainability. In this chapter she draws from the work by Elliot Turiel and Larry Nucci, who differentiated among moral, conventional, and personal domains. Using this domain theory as an organizing framework, she presents primarily findings from the literature on moral development. The second part tries again to apply this knowledge more directly to the goal of inspiring sustainability, but, in our opinion, comes short of providing a clear understanding of how this knowledge may be applied.

In the final chapter Harré offers a self-help guide for sustainability advocates. She presents this at three levels of actions: the personal level, the group level, and the civic level – going beyond most existing self-help guides for those who want to live more sustainably. The chapter presents why one should get involved at each of these levels and describes some of the common challenges. But, if one is looking for concrete instructions of how to carry out specific actions at any of these levels, this is not the right book. In the appendix, Harré provides some worksheets that help sustainability advocates analyze what they do or want to do at each of the three levels of action.

One of the greatest strengths of the book is that it considers the path to sustainability as a collective social enterprise that will require significant personal transformation as well as collaboration with others. Harré was able to relay some of the complexity of social and personal transformation for sustainability while keeping the book accessible to a broad audience. The fact that she has not only studied this issue extensively academically, but also is somebody who has gone through this personal transformation herself, gives her both credibility and personal insights that she shares with us in this book. The book draws both from well-established psychological knowledge and many personal stories making the concepts she presents easily understandable and relatable. Another strength of the book is that it makes psychological studies that are hidden in the hundreds of academic journals and thousands of books accessible to those who would be interested in applying it. This is facilitated by the clear application of the theoretical consideration to sustainability advocacy at the end of each chapter. Finally, it must be positively noted that Harré is making this book accessible for free in the public domain, reducing a significant barrier for many who try to access books written by academics.

Despite the overall quality of this book, it has some limitations. First, Harré’s summaries of the literature can be somewhat lengthy at times, and readers who are not seeking in-depth research reviews may find some sections excessive. While the book is well-written, it is quite text-heavy, and could use more tables, figures, and other visual aids to incorporate other ways of learning. It would also have been useful if Harré had provided more examples to illustrate how programs or interventions might apply the knowledge presented in each chapter. In addition, the techniques suggested in the book are already in use by many advocates, and although they may benefit from research support for their approaches, this book might not have as much to offer for those already immersed in sustainability advocacy. Finally, the review of the literature that this book provides is selective rather than systematic, and may, therefore be of less interest to those who are looking for a comprehensive review.

Through her accessible synthesis of a broad range of psychological literature to guide and support personal and social change, Dr. Harré makes an important contribution to the literature on sustainability advocacy. This book is a great introduction to the psychological literature on motivation and change for newcomers to advocacy. It could be an excellent tool for new organizers, as well as for teachers, university professors, or anyone who works to develop new leaders in environmental advocacy.

References


Growing up, her family’s economics improved over time. Her stepfather was raised on a Kansas farm, joined the Navy at 16, and is a self-made businessman. As he ascended the success ladder, the family moved up, to better neighborhoods and schools. The relocations contributed to her profound shyness, to the extent that teachers assumed her silence was a sign of her academic incompetence. Always poor in math and spelling, Alexis assumes she has a form of dyslexia. A teacher kept her in during recess, assigning her to mindlessly count a pile of beans. She actually was grateful because this was an excuse for not having to interact with her classmates on the playground. She was befriended by a very sweet girl in her class who accepted her into her social group. Alexis came out of her shell, modeling her social behavior after these girls. She learned to love school, in part due to a great teacher who challenged and nurtured her.

Alexis’ family encouraged education. Her biological father, born to a working class family in England, tested highly on entrance exams to Oxford University, from which he graduated. Her mother had been an educator before Alexis was born. A high school overachiever, Alexis had high expectations for herself and worked very hard in her Advanced Placement courses. This was in contrast to Ryan who hated school. (However, he is now teaching English in Japan and plans to pursue a master’s degree there.) She had talent in creative writing and participated in various high school clubs, including acting and government.

Fortunate that the University of California system offers a wealth of public university choices, she chose to attend the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), whose beautiful campus is located in a redwood forest overlooking the ocean, an hour south of San Francisco on the Monterey Bay. UCSC was a good fit for her, politically. For example, she was impressed by the campus’ Gay Pride movement which stood up for rights and acted on principles. Academically, she found UCSC easier than high school. Although some UC campuses are known for their students’ hypercompetition, with well known cases of students sabotaging each other, UCSC is characterized by a collaborative ethos. Students can choose not to receive grades, instead receiving a narrative evaluation. Alexis, however, chose to be graded on her work so she (already aiming for graduate school) could show a grade point average on her graduate school applications.

Alexis had been romantically coupled since age 15 and was determined to be unattached in college. However, during UCSC’s orientation, before taking her first class as a freshman, Alexis met Harrison Hamill, a transfer student from a junior college. He had been home schooled in Berkeley up to high school but mostly was self taught and self motivated. Soon after they met, she realized they’d be in a long term relationship. They were together for 7 ½ years before they married 3 years ago.

Thirsting for knowledge, she took full advantage of professors’ office hours. For example, when her English professor announced he was not holding discussion sections as part of the course, she and two fellow students decided to show up at his office hours to obtain the equivalent of a discussion section. Even after her two classmates stopped coming, she
continued to meet with this professor an hour every week since no one ever showed up for his office hours.

Her attraction to a psychology career started in middle school when friends confided their problems to her. Being shy, she was a natural listener. She realized that if people were going to continue confiding in her, “I needed to get better at this and protect myself,” having once been overwhelmed, carrying the burden of her friends’ problems. In the Bay Area, psychotherapy was prevalent and “psychology was on my radar as a profession.” UCSC only offered courses in social, developmental and experimental psychology, so she had no exposure to clinical psychology and never heard of community psychology. A lecture by Professor Elliot Aronson intrigued her about reducing racial conflict and addressing prejudice by teachers in classrooms.

She worked on several research studies with UCSC professors. These were discussed in a UCSC student profile in an online newsletter at http://currents.ucsc.edu/03-04/06-28/spencer.html. However, because of her difficulties with math, she is not oriented to a quantitative research career. While she loves qualitative research, she is nevertheless more oriented to working with people than on numbers.

Alexis was particularly interested in disability issues, dating back to second grade when she was captivated by the interpreter for a deaf classmate. As a primarily visual learner, sign language appealed to Alexis. She studied American Sign Language at a local community college at the end of high school. During college, Alexis volunteered at The Cabrillo College Stroke and Acquired Disability Center, an innovative and strengths-based facility for post acute stroke recovery, located in a community college setting (rather than a rehabilitation hospital). Her experience there predisposed her to a fascination with the power of settings. See http://www.cabrillo.edu/academics/strokecenter.

Wanting a new experience and loving travel (having accompanied both sets of parents on worldwide travel, from the Baltics to Tahiti), Alexis spent her junior year in Wellington, New Zealand as part of UCSC’s Education Abroad Program. The teachers were engaged with and supportive of their students, and she was impressed with the university’s support for the adjacent Maori center. She felt a responsibility to conduct herself in a way that would be counter to Kiwis’ perceptions of Americans as loud, brash, rude and as pro-Bush and pro-war. She organized a peace march there, but some New Zealanders attributed her peace activities to her being a Californian, thus “different from most Americans.”

Meanwhile, Harrison had graduated from UCSC and moved to London. He became a passport visa agent first and is now a computer programmer/analyst for the same visa company. He visited her twice in New Zealand, involving 30 hours of air travel each way, and she visited him once in London.

She returned to UCSC with only one quarter left before graduation, determined to go beyond a B.A. She knew that a B.A. in psychology (even though her B.A. was received with honors and membership in Phi Beta Kappa) would be insufficient to obtain a good job in the field, but she received little career guidance otherwise. One professor offhandedly commented that everyone in the class was smart enough to get a graduate degree and advised them to go for a Ph.D, not stopping at a master’s degree. In her last quarter at UCSC, Alexis loaded herself with courses, both for credit and audited, knowing this was her last chance to sample all that the university had to offer.

After graduation, Alexis delayed graduate school for two years, choosing to work with the deaf and disabled population in telecommunications while she decided where to apply for graduate school. Fortunately, Harrison is the ultimate “remote worker,” able to telecommute to a job from any location that Alexis chooses. Alexis knew she wanted to specialize in clinical services for the deaf population and first considered entering Gallaudet University’s deaf-centered clinical psychology program. However, she recognized that she needed broader clinical training and reasoned that she could choose to specialize after receipt of her Ph.D. At the same time, she was seeking a clinical psychology program that offered a good balance between research and practice.

It was while reading the program description for Bowling Green State University that she first heard of the field of community psychology. BGSU’s clinical program offers four tracks, one of which is clinical/community psychology. “This was an exciting discovery because I realized that all my values were found in community psychology’s principles.” Even though she knew nothing about community psychology when applying to clinical programs, “I’m grateful for how it worked out.”

Alexis was very active in and devoted much time to BGSU’s psychology department, serving as a student advocate and on diversity committees.
Although she intends to pursue community interests, she decided that clinical training would expand her future career options.

BGSU has a small psychology department, so none of the faculty had relevant background in deafness or disability. However, Dr. Catherine Stein offered to be Alexis’ advisor. After a decade of lobbying for another community psychology faculty member, Carolyn Tompsett was hired. Although Dr. Tompsett is officially in the clinical child track, she is an enthusiastic resource in community psychology. Also on the faculty is Ken Pargament, an early community psychologist, but he now concentrates on psychology and religion. Although her family was mostly a religious – her mother is Jewish, her father is Christian – she grew up celebrating both Jewish and Christian holidays. In graduate school, she was affected by the “power of the setting” – Ohio’s religiosity – and she and Harrison joined an Episcopal church in Toledo to participate in programs benefiting people in need.

Alexis was very active in and devoted much time to BGSU’s psychology department, serving as a student advocate and on diversity committees. She was comforted that her fellow students, when taking a required community course, “got it.” They related to basic community psychology principles, such as working collaboratively with the community, rethinking problem definition, doing needs assessments, focusing on strengths and systems level interventions, etc. She observes that once students realize what community psychology is, they continue to be influenced by its concepts. She herself was civically active in Bowling Green, volunteering to work to pass city ordinances protecting housing and employment rights for the city’s gay, lesbian and transgendered residents.

Having learned about SCRA from Dr. Stein, she searched SCRA’s Web site to learn more about the organization. BGSU’s upper level students and faculty encouraged her to attend SCRA’s upcoming biennial conference in order to network with experts in the field, given the small size of BGSU’s faculty. The newer students were promised they’d be invigorated, meeting people working on similar issues and able to make formal presentations of their own work. Alexis attended her first biennial in 2007 at Pasadena, CA, joining in a BGSU presentation there. She subsequently attended the biennial conferences in Montclair, NJ (2009) and Chicago, IL (2011).

When considering a location for her predoctoral internship, she decided to apply only for Veterans Administration internships. Although she has no prior connection or identification with the military, she is drawn to a career within the VA for several reasons. First, she is attracted to the VA’s 40-hour work week and its health benefits because she plans to have children. “I am encouraged that my mother was 42 when she had my younger brother.” Second, included in the VA’s mission is a commitment to train clinical psychologists. Third, being a large system, the VA is amenable to system-wide impact, program development and evaluation. Fourth, the VA adopts the very community-congruent recovery model. Fifth, the VA deals with physical disability, although not much in the deaf area, which has been her passion since college. Since she wants to end up living in California, she was thrilled to have been matched at an internship with the VA at the Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center in Los Angeles. (Although over 20% of intern applicants are not matched in the first year, historically BGSU students have been successfully matched.) During her internship year, she attempted to institute a few innovations and was struck by the slow pace of the system, even when supportive of her ideas. “I have started to recalibrate my expectations for timelines.” Alexis worked on her dissertation, which is based on an online survey of empowerment in the deaf community, looking at their experiences living in a predominantly hearing society. She collected and analyzed the data from 175 respondents and wrote her dissertation in the evenings. She plans to defend her dissertation before the end of her internship. This is possible because the VA is very clear that the work week is (only) 40 hours. To improve her prospects for landing a permanent position with the VA in California, she has decided to pursue postdoctoral training.

A graduate school placement at a psychosocial rehabilitation center prompted Alexis to develop an art for recovery program. She greatly enjoyed the experience and decided to seek postdoctoral training in psychosocial rehabilitation. Undertaking a postdoc would enable her to amass the 1,500 supervised clinical hours needed to qualify for clinical licensure in California. She bemoans a striking lack of knowledge about how to acquire enough licensed supervised hours to apply for licensure without a postdoc. “I have been led to believe that if I do not take a postdoc appointment, preparing for clinical licensure can take longer than a year, the job may pay less than a postdoc, and it may involve large outlays of cash to pay for supervision. Further, the hours you accrue may be subject to more scrutiny than those accrued on a postdoc.” Also, the options for getting supervised hours outside of a postdoc all seem to be focused on 100% clinical work, “which isn’t really where I see myself in my career.”

She figures that in this poor economy, she would have a greater chance to obtain a postdoc than a
One needs to acquire more skills through specialized training and build up confidence before going into the field to work after just being a student or a trainee for 22 years.” At the time of this writing, Alexis was in the process of applying for VA and general clinical postdoc positions in California.

Although Alexis is pursuing training for a clinical career at this time, she is committed to combining this with a community psychology perspective. She is an ambassador for the field, continually orienting others she meets to the principles of community psychology. Her organizational involvement is through membership on SCRA’s Practice Council – a great venue for students to participate. She expects her contribution to our field would include promoting more awareness to deafness and other disabilities – “a natural fit for community psychology which lends itself to policy rather than intra-individual solutions and also through messages of empowerment.” Also, sense of community is a key issue for the deaf population. While deafness probably will not be a main focus of her professional career, she is so grateful to this community that she feels impelled to give back to them, even if that means she’ll pursue volunteer, rather than paid, work with the deaf population.

Alexis reflects back on her life: “I believe that I am where I’m supposed to be, even though it may not be where I would have chosen had it all been up to me. I’ve struggled with spelling and math; I’ve questioned my decision to pursue a Ph.D.; I wrestle with my lack of confidence around research, and I still have to push myself to not be the painfully shy person I was growing up.”

On the other hand, she realizes she has had a very privileged, charmed life – healthy, able-bodied, attractive, intelligent, financially stable, supported and loved. “I do what I can to create situations that I can both benefit from and contribute to. I work with people who are quadriplegic, blind, traumatized, living with SMI and histories of drug addiction. So yes, my life is absolutely charmed. My divorced parents are even civil to one another! Ultimately, I feel I can handle the challenges I face, and live a meaningful life. What more could I ask for?”

Public Policy
Edited by Judah Viola
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Formative Research, Community Resilience and Policy: A Case of Underaddressed Youth Problem Gambling
Written by Michea Caye, Antioch University New England

Over the last several years, I have been exploring the question of how to inform community organizations and policy makers about health risks to the community. My most recent project focused on youth problem gambling in Windham County, Vermont, the community in which I am presently living. The study focused specifically upon developing an understanding of a community’s knowledge of youth problem gambling. However, the overall study’s design provides a proxy for addressing any community health issue, whether the origin of the risk is socio-economic, political, cultural or environmental.

The results revealed two different levels of learning. One is relative to gambling as a public health concern. Another is to the larger challenge of engaging a community around public health. This article focuses on two key learning frameworks: 1) the application of Thomas Valente’s (2002) definition of formative research as a methodological approach to engaging community organizations and policy makers around health and well-being, and 2) the global environmental change discourse around community resilience and health.

What does the public health issue of youth problem gambling offer to the discussion of these two frameworks? Youth problem gambling provides a window into dynamics related to community resilience. Ideally, in schools, religious institutions and at home, children are encouraged to develop their talents so they can go to institutions of higher learning to further increase their abilities. This development of their talent, our youth and children are told, is a good “thing” to do, so that they will become fulfilled adults capable and willing to contribute to their communities in positive ways, thus insuring long-term healthy (resilient) communities.

Simultaneously, the business of gambling sends a message opposite to that of “working hard to develop one’s abilities.” The fundamental premise of gambling is to “give a little to get a lot.” The media glamorizes gambling. Gambling venues and their availability are increasing. State budgets are more dependent upon gambling revenues – as well as the revenues from alcohol consumption – another addictive behavior. Gambling as an economic instrument is supported in the secondary stock market. This raises many questions including but not limited to: Are we effectively using gambling as an instrument of community growth and development? Are our decisions enhancing the possibility of a long-term, healthy community from which...
our great grandchildren can benefit? What is the message that our youth are receiving about individual and community health and well-being?

As delineated by Capra’s (2002) eco-system theory, outcomes of systems are indicators of systems well-being. If a pond-system begins producing spotted lilies after years of producing lush, vibrant plants, the solutions lie in investigating the dynamics of the pond system to identify what dynamics are compromising the lilies’ health outcome. Pond systems and human systems both are functions of multiple interdependent dynamics. Like the pond lilies, a primary outcome/indicator of human community eco-systems is production of healthy youth. Challenges in youth well-being become a lens into the health dynamics/resilience of the larger community, providing a perspective for assessing just how effectively - or not - these multiple interdynamics are functioning. This study’s application of formative research provides an approach for engaging and identifying a community’s geographic and cultural specificity relative to a health challenge. The approach premises that engagement around a specific challenge or risk factor can in turn open the door to the uniquely intrinsic motivation which activates and guides the multiple interdependent dynamics that shape and feed vibrant community resilience.

In using formative research as a methodological approach for engaging and informing a community risk factor, Valente (2002) states, “Formative research is conducted before a program is designed in order to understand a population’s existing knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, values, motivations, norms, expectations and practices” (p. 57). The function of formative research is to facilitate understanding of community dynamics and unique knowledge as an autonomous, self-defining topic of research. Several lessons emerged from this formative research study.

I found, for instance, that the health-research literature confirms the necessity and role of community-specific studies in developing effective long-term health policies. In 2006, a National Expert Panel on Community Health Promotion, appointed by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP), convened. Their objective was to examine the appropriateness and thoroughness of health initiatives in supporting the community’s role in maintaining its wellness and vitality. The panel’s primary criticism was that the majority of the health initiatives lacked community specificity in their program designs. The panel concluded that such risk and protective factors as the systemic stressors of poverty and racism, of political and economic decision-making process, and of community competencies and social capital were generally lacking in the research designs. The panel referred to these omissions as “missed opportunities.”

The complex necessities of effective health initiative design and implementation discussed above also reflect critical dynamics of policy-making and evaluation. Guthrie, Louie, David, and Foster (2005), in exploring policy change and advocacy, point out that “effective policy work often doesn’t even involve changing a law” (p.8). Rather, it’s about a broad-based community engagement process that requires—as outlined by the authors—developing a constituency, implementing appropriate research studies to assess policy options and/or awareness campaigns that support the constituency’s desire (Guthrie et al., 2005). Depending upon community dynamics, this desire may or may not be to implement a formally articulated policy relevant to the particular issue.

The focus upon community engagement and the importance of population health as a function of multiple socio-economic, political and cultural factors, as central to effective health initiatives, was framed by the World Health Organization in the 1986 Ottawa Charter. The Charter states that “the empowerment of communities, their ownership and control of their own endeavors and destinies” is the primary objective in developing interventions (Charter 1986, p.3).

This framing has been echoed in numerous studies. Of particular note is Boufford and Lee’s Health Policies for the 21st Century (2001). As stated in the study’s forward:

Boufford and Lee believe that policy should accord higher priority to improving the health of the population and the subpopulations that comprise it. Higher priority for population health requires research, services, and changes in law and regulation to address the environmental and socioeconomic causes of health and illness.

In research that comprehensively assesses federal health policies, programs and processes, this statement reflects the report’s basic finding and advocacy for developing effective health interventions that shift from the traditional biomedical model-individual care approach to an approach that recognizes and
addresses the multiple determinants that impact health and well-being.

However, as indicated in the above referenced 2006 NCCDPHP study, health initiatives have fallen short and have not improved. Although a complete assessment of the results of Healthy People 2010 is still in progress, a report on the status of women’s health by the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) and Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) indicates that the United States failed in reaching the goals related to women’s health and well-being. Failure in women’s health indicators is like the canary in the coal mine; besides being integral and critical across community sectors, the quality of women’s health directly relates to the major function of community which is to create healthy, productive children/future generations. In their recent study, Dr. Murray, Director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, and Dr. Julio Frenk, IHME Chair of the Board and Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health assess the nation’s overall health score as unsatisfactory, ranking US health care system 37th in the world (Murray & Frenk, 2010). How do we arrive at effective policy?

This question brings us to the second learning framework that emerged in this study: the global environmental change discourse around community resilience and health. Community resilience, like Capra’s eco-system framework, is a central construct within the global environmental change discourse. Resilience studies indicate that health initiatives fail when they are not adequately supported by the systems and networks of the community in which the program is implemented. Described as collective efficacy, critical to a program’s success is the willingness of the community to collaborate for the community good (Benard, 2007; Bradley, Deighton, & Selby, 2004; Cohen, Finch, Bower, & Sastry, 2006).

Regardless of definition, community resilience is a function of multiple interdependent dynamics. It is an intrinsic quality that is culturally and contextually defined. The stories specific to the geographic and cultural uniqueness of a community can foster general community well-being, but, critical to effective health and policy initiatives, are rich resources for regeneration and transformation within the community (Bradley et al., 2004; Cohen et al., 2006; Rappaport, 1995).

Adaptive mechanisms are central to the community resilience discourse. Adaptive mechanisms are those processes – also, a function of the community’s interdependent dynamics – through which the community responds to risk factors. Sweeping social and economic reforms, public health initiatives and overarching health policies all represent adaptive mechanisms to community risk factors. They are designed to mitigate risk factors to community well-being – in this study, represented by youth problem gambling.

Understanding both the risk factor and development of the appropriate health intervention initiative/policy requires a comprehensive understanding of a community’s complex of interdependent dynamics. Formative research designs are intended to develop this comprehensive understanding. (See Fig.1 below)

The language of policy, as illustrated in Gutherie et al.’s (2005) thoughtful and constructive critique of health policy, does not seem to recognize this critical construct of community as an autonomous, self-defining entity. Rather, the language frames policy-making as a top-down approach to change:

Policymaking involves the executive and legislative branches, a variety of influential stakeholders outside the government, and, at times, the judicial branch. The DHHS, as the federal government’s lead health agency, is charged with initiating or shaping, then implementing and monitoring the legislation that Congress passes and the president signs. The department does this while working with the White House and consulting with Congress, state governments, regulated industries, beneficiaries, providers, and other interest groups.

People are resources, not problems. Community health, like individual health, is driven by an intrinsic motivation. The role of formative research is to facilitate engagement of this intrinsic motivation. Health initiatives and policies are effective to the degree to which this quality is engaged and mobilized.

The first phase (of a two phase
formative research design) of the study results produced three specific steps towards policy change: 1) eleven of the twenty-two adult interview participants, completely unaware of youth problem gambling as a health concern, and all key stakeholders in areas relevant to youth problem gambling are now informed about youth problem gambling as a public health concern both in general and in their community; also, sixteen youth participants have now actively contributed to and increased their knowledge about this public health issue; 2) all of the participants are now familiar with local, national and international research studies and resources relevant to the topic; 3) the majority of the adult participants identified readily available resources for creating interventions based upon existing local individual/community experience and knowledge. Given present economic shortfalls in social services, it was important for the participants to recognize that existing programs could be adapted with no additional cost. In addition, information about the study was requested by and provided to three legislators who were not interview participants. Finally, the majority of both the youth and 21 of the 22 adult participants perceive “knowledge as power” in terms of addressing the issue.

References


Regional Update

Edited by Susan Dvorak McMahon, DePaul University

I have taken several opportunities in the last couple of months to promote community psychology to different audiences. I had the pleasure to discuss community psychology, research, and SCRA with students and faculty at Dogus University in Istanbul, Turkey in November. A couple of weeks ago, I was speaking with a textbook representative, from Pearson, about the lack of community psychology in introductory psychology textbooks. She initiated conversations with her editor, and it now appears we have a variety of ways that community psychology may be represented in our introductory psychology textbooks. Last weekend, I was attending the annual COGDOP conference in Austin, and I had the opportunity to debunk a myth that community psychology was a dying field, highlight our growth, and connect our field with the NIH funding focus on prevention over the next five to ten years. If every SCRA member takes the opportunity to spread the word about how his or her work is connected with community psychology as a field, through contact with students, faculty from other disciplines, the media, community-based organizations, government, and other settings, it will help us to grow and develop our field. A lot of great work is being done to promote community psychology by our Regional Coordinators and International Regional Liaisons, as well as our Council of Education Programs, Practice Council, and SCRA Executive Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank several Regional Coordinators for their service and leadership, as they move on to other roles: Liesette Brunson, Lauren Bennett Cattaneo and Michele Schlehofer. I also welcome new student leadership in the Middle East, Hana Shahin, and in Asia, Kota Tamai. We are always looking for new students, faculty, and practitioners to volunteer for regional leadership roles in SCRA. Please contact me or your local representative if you are interested in becoming involved!
The conference will be bilingual.

Indian Communities. Indigenous Therapeutic Traditions: Culture as Treatment in American Community Psychology: Justice and Social Change. The Community Psychologist, Dr. Joseph P. Gone addresses his research to a key dilemma confronting mental health professionals who serve Native American communities, namely how to provide culturally appropriate helping services that avoid the neo-colonial subversion of indigenous thought and practice. He has published articles and chapters concerning the ethno-psychological investigation of self, identity, personhood, and social relations in American Indian cultural contexts vis-à-vis the mental health professions, especially as these pertain to therapeutic processes and practices such as psychotherapy and traditional healing.

Cindy Blackstock, our second keynote speaker, is Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, which provides research, policy, and professional development services to First Nations child and family services agencies in Canada. Ms. Blackstock worked in front-line child protection for provincial and First Nations child welfare agencies for over 13 years before moving on to her current position. She believes that ethics are the foundation of social work—they give life and shape to our relationships and skills. She has been recognized by OASW as a leader in the social work community during National Social Work Week. She also serves as Co-Convenor of the Working Group on Indigenous Child Rights for the UN-based NGO Group on the Rights of the Child.

We are looking forward to an exciting program with these keynote speakers, as well as site visits, workshops, poster presentations, mentoring sessions, and an innovative session format: three-minute thesis presentations, which will allow participants to connect and engage with others with similar research interests.

For more information about the conference, please visit http://ccpclaurier.wordpress.com/

2012 Canadian Community Psychology Conference

A reminder to register for the 2nd Biennial Canadian Community Psychology Conference Canadian Community Psychology: Justice and Social Change. The conference will take place at Wilfrid Laurier University, in Waterloo, Ontario from May 4th to 6th, 2012. Sponsored by Wilfrid Laurier University, in partnership with the University of Ottawa, Université du Québec à Montréal, Université Laval, and the Adler School of Professional Psychology, the conference is designed to forge connections and share knowledge among community psychology programs across Canada. The conference will be bilingual in Canada’s two official languages (French and English), with a special focus on aboriginal issues.

We are pleased to announce our two keynote speakers for the conference. Dr. Joseph P. Gone, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and the Program in American Culture at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, will be speaking on Reclaiming Indigenous Therapeutic Traditions: Culture as Treatment in American Indian Communities. As a cultural psychologist, Dr. Gone addresses his research to a key dilemma confronting mental health professionals who serve Native American communities, namely how to provide culturally appropriate helping services that avoid the neo-colonial subversion of indigenous thought and practice. He has published articles and

Canadian Research Showcase

In this issue of the TCP, we continue a series of short profiles show-casing community psychology research and practice efforts in Canada. This issue highlights a Partnership Research Chair being established at the Université Laval in the area of child abuse prevention (Chair de partenariat en prévention de la maltraitance). Headed by Marie-Hélène Gagné, Full Professor in the School of Psychology at the Université Laval in Québec City, Québec, the Chair is at the center of efforts currently underway to develop an integrated strategy to prevent child maltreatment in Québec.

The Chair de partenariat en prévention de la maltraitance is building a university-community partnership around the goal of increasing collective capacity to reduce the incidence of physical abuse, psychological abuse, and child neglect. The partnership involves university researchers, government decision-makers, public institutions, and provincial associations. Co-researchers come from five other French-speaking and bilingual Canadian universities and four different research centres. Current community partners include two major child protection agencies, both designated as academic and social research institutes. These agencies are principal partners in an evolving provincial network of social agencies offering comprehensive, innovative, and evidence-based services to children, adolescents and their families. This collaboration among university and community partners will ensure synergy between scientific rigor and sensitivity to community context, two elements that are both essential to any effective prevention strategy.

The chair and its partners believe that child maltreatment prevention initiatives should adopt a population approach, adjusted to the level of risk presented by families. Such an approach calls for the implantation of a multilevel strategy, starting with the general population and then focusing on an increasingly restricted number of high-risk families, with intervention intensity

Canada
International Regional Liaisons
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Robb Travers, rtravers@wlu.ca, Wilfrid Laurier University
increasing according to level of risk. One particular program stands out for its integration of many levels of prevention as well as for the amount of scientific evidence demonstrating its efficacy: the Australian program *Triple P – Positive Parenting Program* (Prinz, Sanders, Shapiro, Whitaker, & Lutzker, 2009; Sanders, 1999). This program will inspire the chair and its partners as they seek to implement and evaluate a multilevel prevention strategy in Canada.

The specific objectives of the chair include: 1) mobilizing university and institutional partners around child maltreatment prevention by establishing knowledge exchange regarding effective preventive practices; 2) accompanying the development and implementation of such practices; and 3) planning and evaluating a global, multilevel strategy to prevent child maltreatment to be implemented in multiple sectors of Québec’s child welfare, public health and educational service delivery systems. The ultimate goal is to develop and test strategies, adapted to the Canadian reality, which can then be disseminated more widely, supported by scientific evidence for their effectiveness.

For more information about the Chaire de partenariat en prévention de la maltraitance, please contact Marie-Hélène Gagné at Université Laval (marie-helene.gagne@psy.ulaval.ca).

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**Europa/Middle East/Africa**

**International Regional Liaisons**

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Serdar Degermencioglu, serdar@oguzkese.edu, Cumhuriyet University

José Ornelas, jornelas@ispa.pt, Instituto Universitário, Lisboa, Portugal

**International Regional Student Liaison**

Hana Shahin, hshahin@aucegypt.edu, The American University in Cairo

**News from the Middle East**

**Written by Amy Carrillo and Hana Shah**

The Middle East region welcomes one new student representative! Hana Shahin (master’s student at The American University in Cairo) will replace Shehab Abdel-Rahman as student representative. Hana enjoys speaking to undergraduate and graduate students about community psychology and encourages interested students to become SCRA members. We are excited to have her as part of our team!

Due to the ongoing transition period, we are still in the planning phase of our colloquia for community psychologists and colleagues with interests in community-based prevention, intervention, and evaluation. However, we are currently assisting community psychology masters students at The American University in Cairo with developing a Web site for community organizations that will be user friendly, provide relevant information, and introduce community psychology practices and views to organizations working in Cairo. As part of the launch, we are working to help bring community organizations together to share these useful resources and facilitate social networking.

**Asia**

**International Regional Liaison**

Toshi Sasao, sasao@icu.ac.jp; tsasao1@gmail.com, International Christian University

**International Student Liaison**

Kotae Ikeda, kotae.harp@gmail.com, Ochamomizu Women’s University

Kota Tamai, tamaikota@gmail.com, International Christian University

**News from Asia**

**Written by Toshi Sasao**

The regional meeting in Asia, *Innovative Social Change Efforts and Well-being in East Asia*, originally scheduled in October 2011, has been re-scheduled to take place in late May 2012 at International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan. Once again, if any SCRA member happens to be in the region, he or she will be more than welcome to join us. Details will be announced on the SCRA listserv shortly. This date change will hopefully draw more participants to this networking event in the Asia Region including China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and other East Asian countries. Inexpensive (but very comfortable) campus housing may be available on a first come, first serve basis, but a request needs to be made immediately by contacting Toshi Sasao at the above address. Another news item is that Kota Tamai has been recruited as a new student rep in the region. He is about to obtain his Ph.D. at International Christian University as this TCP goes into press. Kota will be a post-doctoral student at the same institution for a year.
Midwest Region, U.S.
Regional Coordinators
Nathan Todd, ntodd@depaul.edu, DePaul University
Andrea Flynn, aflynn1@depaul.edu, DePaul University
Ray Legler, rlegler@depaul.edu, DePaul University
Student Regional Coordinator
Abigail Brown, abrown57@depaul.edu, DePaul University

News from the Midwest
Written by Nathan Todd

The Midwest Region is gearing up for the SCRA affiliated meeting at the Midwest Psychological Association on May 4th, 2012. The SCRA affiliated meeting will include 20 roundtable/symposia presentations and over 40 poster presentations. Following the MPA presidential address, the Midwest region will be hosting an informal dinner. Dinner details will be sent on the SCRA list-serve, or contact Nathan Todd (ntodd@depaul.edu) for more details. We hope to see many of our colleagues for a lively evening! Undergraduate and graduate students are particularly encouraged to attend.

Announcements or information for inclusion in future Midwest updates should be sent to Nathan Todd (ntodd@depaul.edu).

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Regional Coordinators
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Dyana Valentine, info@dyanavalentine.com, DyanaValentine.com
Student Regional Coordinator
Danielle Kohfeldt, mkcal1@yahoo.com, University of California, Santa Cruz

News from the Bay Area
Written by Danielle Kohfeldt and Regina Langhout

The network of Bay Area community psychologists and colleagues from other fields with interests in community-based research and intervention continue to meet once a semester for an informal colloquium. Our Spring colloquium will be held April 27th, 11:30-1:30pm, at UC Santa Cruz. Cindy Cruz, Assistant Professor of Education at UC Santa Cruz, will be speaking about her work. She is currently interested in violence in and outside of the schoolyard and the schools-to-prisons pipeline. We will also hear from one more speaker. If you are interested in attending and/or presenting, please contact Danielle Kohfeldt or Gina Langhout (see emails below). The goal of our network is to provide a forum to informally discuss work in progress, network with other community practitioners, and provide an exchange of ideas related to community intervention work. The larger group meets twice a year, alternating between University of California at Berkeley and University of California at Santa Cruz, while encouraging smaller groups to form around particular interests. If you would like to be on our mailing list, please email Danielle Kohfeldt (dkohfeldt@ucsc.edu) or Gina Langhout (langhout@ucsc.edu).

Northeast Region, U.S.
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News from the Northeast
Written by Michelle Ronayne

We are gearing up for our annual program held in conjunction with the Eastern Psychological Association Conference. We spent the Fall planning and putting together an exciting day of programming and we look forward to seeing the results of all the hard work on Friday, March 2, 2012.

We have a variety of exciting programming, including keynote speaker Dr. Ed Mulvey, who is speaking on community psychological approaches to youth violence. Additionally, our day features a panel comprised of Richard Garland, One Vision One Life, Dr. Wendy Etheridge Smith, Higher Achievement Program, and Frederick W. Thieman, Buhl Foundation, who will speak about strategies for addressing social issues with at-risk youth. We will have a symposium led by Joseph Ferrari...
School Intervention Interest Group

Edited by Paul Flaspohler, Miami University and Melissa Maras, University of Missouri

Greetings from the School Intervention Interest Group! In this issue, we present an article on support systems for professional development related to school improvement. Joni Splett, a school psychologist trained at the University of Missouri, presents a conceptual model for supporting and sustaining new practices in schools along with identification of limitations and areas for future research. The article provides guidance for successful collaboration for community psychologists working with and in schools.

Support System Models of Professional Development to Create Lasting and Systemic School Improvements

Written by Joni Williams Splett, Richland Two School District and University of South Carolina School Psychology Intern

Many educators and mental health practitioners have grown very weary of one-stop, drive-by professional development “opportunities” offered by researchers, program developers,
and their employers. Professional development delivered in this format has not shown significant positive impacts, nor has it been found to drive quality implementation or promote sustainability (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Odom, 2009). In fact, in a review of nine rigorous, empirical examinations of the impact of teacher professional development on student learning, Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) found three studies involved five to 14 hours of training while the other six involved 14 to 100 hours, including follow-up training and support. Those studies with limited hours of training showed no effect, while those with more than 14 hours showed a positive and significant effect on teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

Beyond time limitations, most current professional development efforts are also limited in focus. Most professional development in schools only concentrates on a specific program or practice. This innovation-specific focus likely creates fragmentation within the school system because the new processes and language it brings are not integrated into the system’s existing culture and practices (Flaspohler, Duffy, Wandersman, Stillman, & Maras, 2008). After years of innovation-specific professional development initiatives, seasoned educators and mental health professionals have become understandably uninterested and unengaged in, and even resistant to, new efforts. Despite anecdotal and empirical evidence as to the ineffectiveness of short-term, innovation-specific training practices, these methods continue to dominate efforts (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Their ineffectiveness prevents true, lasting and systemic improvements from occurring.

Several initiatives have offered a more sustained and intensive approach that most research suggests effectively improves the implementation and sustainability of new programs and practices. Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), as well as other programs such as Reading First (Elish-Piper & Allier, 2011) and Multisystemic Therapy (Henggeler, Schoenwald, Liao, Letourneau, & Edwards, 2002), provides ongoing training, supervision, and technical assistance to their local implementers. PBIS implementers also learn more general capacity skills such as data-based decision making, fidelity evaluation, and problem solving (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008). The PBIS model of professional development is similar to the Prevention Support System included in Wandersman and colleagues (2008) Interactive Systems Framework (ISF). The American Journal of Community Psychology has devoted two special issues to the ISF, the first published in 2008 (Volume 41) and the second due out in the near future. In addition to the Prevention Support System, ISF includes two more components (see Figure 1). Research is readied for dissemination in the “Prevention Synthesis and Translation System” and implemented in the “Prevention Delivery System.” These two systems are linked by the “Prevention Support System,” which supports the implementation of best practices through training, coaching, technical assistance, and supervision (Wandersman et al., 2008).

**PBIS and the Prevention Support System**

PBIS is a systems approach to improving academic and behavioral practices across its three-tiered model (i.e., universal, targeted, and intensive). Currently, PBIS is one of the most widely adopted and implemented educational practices in the nation (Spaulding, Horner, May & Vincent, 2008). A large portion of its successful adoption is likely due to the local coaches and multilevel support network PBIS has developed (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008). The multilevel PBIS support system includes a national center (www.pbis.org), state-level networks (including Illinois, Maryland and Missouri), regional centers, and school leadership teams. Most regional centers are connected to state networks and employ coaches or consultants who serve as a support system to local school districts and school buildings implementing PBIS. Coaches provide technical assistance in general capacity skills such as planning, decision-making, problem-solving, implementation monitoring, data collection, and data interpretation. However, despite the growing popularity of PBIS, the effectiveness of its support system has yet to be empirically evaluated. Further, the general capacity skills PBIS implementers have learned have not been transferred to other domains of practice such as school mental health or instruction.

**Keys to Success**

Despite limitations that should be addressed in future research, PBIS and the Prevention Support System have
shown that professional development in schools does not have to continue to be short-term, fragmented, and dreaded. Instead, there are a few key ideas that we can take away from this review to improve future professional development efforts.

*Familiarize yourself with the organization (school) and its members first.* Through their sustained coaching models, PBIS coaches get to know the people and contexts within which they are working before making recommendations. Get to know the culture, beliefs, policies, language, and programs of the school in order to identify and design strategies that fit. Schools and education, in general, have their own language. Be prepared to learn a new language and new acronyms when working with schools and be willing to translate your language into their language. Take time to get to know the current programs and practices of the school, as well as previous programs and practices. Schools are continuously implementing new programs and the history of their implementation will be brought to their current experiences. Understand that history will help to better communicate your message and integrate your efforts.

**Professional development is a process. Plan strategically and stay awhile.**

Professional development is a process. Plan strategically and stay awhile. After getting to know the school and its members, it is important to make a professional development plan based on what was learned and what the goals are. In light of the schools’ culture, beliefs, systems, programs, and language, determine learning objectives (do you hope members of the school gain knowledge, learn new skills and/or change their affective beliefs about a topic?) and make a plan for achieving those objectives. Consider organizational and adult learning theories when designing a plan. Also consider the time needed to be fully effective. The sustained, consistent, and intensive professional development offered through PSS models such as PBIS illustrate a (most likely) more effective alternative to the short-term, one-stop shop workshops traditionally promoted as professional development in schools. Get to know the characteristics of the school and its members, make a plan, and pack your bags. To achieve our learning objectives, it is likely we need to be available beyond initial introductions.

**Help generalize.** Like the professional development offered by PBIS, general capacity skills are likely a part of most Prevention Support System efforts. However, they are not easily transferred outside of the innovation specific professional development. Engagement in a process such as PBIS does not in and of itself create learning that is easily transferable without continued support and intentionality. Communicate early on that generalization is expected and will be supported. Target learning objectives that promote and facilitate generalization. Help partners identify opportunities to generalize what they are learning to other areas of practice and provide resources and incentives for doing so. Helping school members generalize will reduce the fragmentation that often occurs following new professional development opportunities and likely supports school-wide and system-wide improvements.

**Conclusion**

With the emergence of a new model of professional development in schools comes additional issues and questions that need to be addressed. Most pressing seems to be determining the effectiveness of such models, including PBIS. Future research should not only evaluate the outcomes of these models, but also their cost-effectiveness as compared to traditional methods of professional development (Blonigen, Harbaugh, Singell, Horner, Irvin, & Smolkowski, 2008). As more intensive and sustained models of professional development emerge, more research is also needed as to what best practices are for coaches, consultants and similar providers (Saul et al., 2008).

Future research is also needed to explore methods of helping schools and members of schools transfer the general capacity skills they have learned through implementing PBIS to other areas, including instruction, achievement, and school mental health (Odom, 2009; Winton, McCollum, & Catlett, 2008). Understanding what general capacity skills schools have learned from successfully implementing PBIS seems like a logical first step. Then, evaluating and sharing applied experiences exploring how to best help schools transfer these experiences will be needed. One initial strategy that will likely be needed includes developing an integrated data management system across all school domains. The implementation and use of PBIS has likely benefited from a data management system that helps schools enter and analyze data more easily (Barrett et al., 2008). If schools are asked to generalize these skills to other areas of their practice, similar systems must also be developed and, more importantly, integrated with existing systems.

Finally, as this work is conducted and policies, processes, resources, and strategies for transferring knowledge are developed, it will be vital for schools and researchers to share their knowledge. Through efforts such as communities of practice where practitioners are linked by common interests and collaborate to provide support and share information, we
should seek to build partnerships with and learn from schools who have figured out how to implement PBIS effectively and are able to transfer what they have learned to other domains of practice. As professional development in schools continues to evolve, and we seek to integrate and improve entire systems, sharing and learning from each other will be our best tool for continuing growth.

References


Announcements

Dear Community Psychology Friends:
The Community Psychology Topical Interest Group (CP TIG) of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) cordially invites you to attend this year’s AEA annual conference, to be held October 24 to October 27 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We believe this year’s conference theme - Evaluation in Complex Ecologies: Relationships, Responsibilities, and Relevance - is particularly well-suited to community psychologists, specifically in regards to Ecological Frameworks; the assets/ strength-based approach; person-environment fit; issues of diversity and context; social justice; and value-driven evaluation methods. We ask you to consider serving as a reviewer of conference proposals submitted to the CP TIG. This is a great way to find out about the cutting edge evaluation work being done by community psychologists or from a community psychology perspective. You can volunteer to be a reviewer by writing our program co-chairs Rachel Becker-Klein and Jim Salt (contact information follows) before March 26, 2012. We look forward to a great year of putting our mission, values, and goals into practice, and to seeing you in Minneapolis!

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If you are interested in becoming a member of American Evaluation Association and the Community Psychology TIG please go to http://www.eval.org/ to join and select the CP TIG during your registration. 

29 SPRING 2012 THE COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGIST
Society for Community Research & Action
Membership Application

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

Primary Job Title: _________________________
Secondary Job Title: _________________________

*** Please complete the following information ***

APA Membership Status:  _____ Not an APA member

_____ Fellow  _____ Member  _____ Associate  _____ Student  _____ Lifetime Member

APA Member Number (if known): _________________________

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

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

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

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

Sex:  _____ Female  _____ Male

Race/Ethnicity (check all that apply)

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

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

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

What year did you graduate?  __________
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<tr>
<td>SCRA International Travel Grants Fund: Your contribution will help bring international members to the Biennial Conferences. If most members gave $10, this fund would gain $10,000 to support international travel to future Biennials.</td>
<td>$5.00 $10.00 $15.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL $ ________ . ____

Payment by:

☐ Enclosed check (made out in United States dollars, paid to the order of SCRA)

☐ Charge to my credit card: _____ Visa _____ MasterCard

Name on Card: ____________________________________________
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SCRA (Div 27), 4440 PGA Blvd #600, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410.
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Annual membership is based on a calendar year, January 1st through December 31st.
One year’s dues are payable in full with application.
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