As I complete my term as president I cannot help but think about what I along with the officers and the executive committee, and all the committees, councils and task forces have accomplished during such a historic year in the United States and around the world. I continue to be amazed that in some capacity we all kept working on our assigned tasks for SCRA despite the COVID-19 and racial reckoning pandemics. As a nation we are still in the center of vaccinating the country while other countries like India continue to struggle with death and despair as COVID-19 continues to rapidly kill vulnerable populations. This circumstance is not to imply that as a country we have health care covered for vulnerable populations. On the contrary, too many Black people and people of color have received poor healthcare access and delivery including information and access to COVID-19 vaccinations. Many of our Black community members and people of color have died at disproportionately large rates in comparison to our white counterparts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also do not have racism, white supremacy, and structural violence covered and yet as community psychologists we continue to stand for racial justice and social change.

I believe that now is an especially important
time for all of us to take extra care of our own psychological/mental health and wellbeing. As I think of how to make sense of all of this and continue to function and create, I am reminded of a mediation exercise that I particularly love. In this exercise you as the participant are asked to think of a mountain. Once you have a vision of that mountain in your mind’s eye you are asked to think of how that mountain despite changes in the earth or changes in the seasons the mountain just keeps standing steady in place and rooted to the earth, unmoving. This idea of just standing in place despite anything is powerful. This practice is what I have attempted to do as president. I keep standing for what I believe is the right thing to do even when it may not be popular. And in this standing some changes occurred.

One of the changes that occurred is that we hired a new executive director. After a long process we hired Dr. Amber Kelly. I could not be more thrilled as I know Amber has great enthusiasm and dedication to SCRA. Amber has quickly become the center of all of the tasks that we are completing as an organization. She came in and began her tenure with hosting virtual welcome meet and greets so that our members could chat with her and she has a well thought out plan to make sure our members feel included and acknowledged. One of the strategies in this plan is to host quarterly welcome sessions that will focus on welcoming our new members that will also include some entertainment. Amber has become a key player and thinker in every arena that we are managing as a society. For example, she stepped up as soon as she came in and began to heavily support whatever needed to be done to have a great first virtual biennial conference. Amber is just like a mountain; she continues to stand for what she believes is the right thing to do. I am happy she is here. I know we will see the impact of her work for many years to come. Welcome Amber.

Another change that is in the process of happening is that we are in the final stages of hiring a diversity, equity, inclusion and access consultant group. The hiring of this consultant group has been a long and slow process and we are almost there. We anticipate that this consultant group will assist us in reviewing the call to action on anti-Blackness and the executive committee’s response to the call to action and provide a plan/feedback about how we can move forward and address many of the issues raised by the call to action. We also anticipate that this consultant group will assist us in getting us into a space where we can begin to articulate a theory of change that we can agree upon so that we may build a new strategic plan for the society. Finally, we also anticipate that this consultant group will assist us in developing a more comprehensive implementation plan to address racism and white supremacy in all areas of our society including leadership roles, transparency and how we implement community psychology in teaching and practice.

Moreover, last year as Susan Torres-Harding completed her presidential year and I began mine we decided to use the 2020 American Psychological Association (APA) SCRA presidential address platform to have a panel of women of color address how two public health crises: Anti-Black Racism and COVID-19 was impacting their professional and personal lives as community psychologist. And change occurred. The Division 27 2020 Presidential Address was transformed to a panel that was called "Subverting White supremacy, centering Black lives amidst two public health crises: Anti-Black racism and COVID19." (Watch here: https://vimeo.com/442572845/e3f60d3e71) This format was a change from previous years where the president typically uses this space to give a final address as a solo event. Therefore, the address became a panel of seven women of color and Susan Torres-Harding and I served as moderators. The women that participated were: Ireri Bernal, Khanh Dinh, Yvette Flores, Jesica Fernández, Laura Kohn-Wood, Rhonda K. Lewis, and Pamela P. Martin. During the APA conference we also had a talk-back live session on our main SCRA Zoom line where members could come and ask questions and make comments about the panel. This event was well attended and is available for viewing here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rKTjZfEo6SSpxyyfb7uHeOk3cd9W891C/view?usp=sharing
This panel was a catalyst for several of the women on the panel to continue to seek ways to make SCRA more accountable to addressing racism and white supremacy in teaching, research and practice. The following section is an accounting of what occurred when these nine women (including Susan Torres-Harding and myself) decided to continue the conversations raised at these events.

Following the panel, we felt that there was more to address and more that we could do to continue the conversations we had started. The pandemics kept raging in 2020 and things continued to be bleak in the early part of 2021 as the two pandemics slowly settled across the globe underscoring racial discord and disparities. We understand that the subjection of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) for centuries represents the continuous pandemic that has allowed many nations to avoid freedom, liberty, and justice for all individuals especially in the United States. The COVID-19 pandemic involves a once-in-a-lifetime virus outbreak that spread rapidly across the globe. Both pandemics highlighted BIPOC hostilities maligning Asian communities as well as numerous police killings of individuals from Black and Brown communities such as Andrew Brown, Mario Gonzalez, Adam Toledo, and Daunte Wright. All of these individuals were killed by police in the United States either during or immediately after the George Floyd trial. And throughout all this period of time, we continued to hurt, suffer and think of what we could do as BIPOC community psychologists.

We frequently say that community psychologists are trained to understand historical contexts influencing contemporary challenges to figure a way to make change. In our conversations the thought that we are living a Sankofa moment emerged. According to Belgrave and Allison (2019), Sankofa, derived from the Akan people of West Africa and is defined as looking back before moving forward. As community psychologists, we need to utilize previous inflection points across the globe representing our past to comprehend our present and ensure our future. Moreover, our current moment of protests needs to be informed by the failures and successes of our previous protests. For instance, how can community psychologists look to the passing of the 1964 Voting Rights Act during the Civil Rights Movement to inform us about securing access to the ballot box for BIPOC communities, low socio-economic communities in rural and urban areas, and college students? How can community psychologists look to previous Civil Rights Organizations such as National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the late shero Ida B. Wells Barnett that chronicled the lynching of African Americans to the current police shooting of Black and Brown citizens? How can we look to the Japanese internment camps to prevent hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders due to the promotion of racist coronavirus speech? How can we look at previous generations of immigrants such as Irish, Italians, etc. who were stigmatized when they arrived in the United States, noting similarities to current immigrants seeking the American Dream at the southern border coming from some Central and South American countries? How can we look to previous White allies and co-conspirators during three historical periods (i.e., enslavement, segregation, and Civil Rights Movement) to engage as allies or co-conspirators to tackle current societal challenges facing BIPOC communities globally? How can we look at global White supremacist systems and dismantle these systems through research to make a more just society?

All these conversations and questions led us to think that history is what is written, not what is true. As we grappled with this, we understood that one of the ways that we could create an impact in our field was to develop a special issue in our two main journals Journal of Community Psychology (JCP) and American Journal of Community Psychology (AJCP) to memorialize the topics that continue to press heavily on our personal and professional lives. Rhonda Lewis as one of the associate editors of JCP approached the Editor Dr. Michael Blank about featuring a special issue on COVID-19 and Vulnerable Populations. We submitted a proposal and it was approved and the call went out and the first round of abstracts have been submitted. In
reading the abstracts we discovered that the pandemic has unearthed multiple problems such as houselessness, domestic violence, racism, violence which is intensified by the impact of COVID-19. We discovered that there is inequity in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution to BIPOC populations. We believe the COVID-19 has exposed several inequalities in the community. Thus, community psychology and allied fields can use our collective knowledge and expertise to solve these problems together. We are confident that using an ecological, intersectional, and multi-dimensional approach will allow the field to advance. We are excited about the special issue and the knowledge and innovation that will be gained.

Recently, we announced a Call for Papers for a Special Issue of AJCP titled “Racial reckoning, resistance, and the revolution: A call to community psychology to move forward.” Pamela Martin contacted Dr. Nicole Allen, AJCP Editor to discuss the possibility of a special issue and as is evidenced Dr. Allen agreed and approved our proposal. We hope all of these efforts will allow our division to reflect on the past to move us forward as a collective creating social change across the globe – completing the Sankofa moment.

**References**
exchange to increase scholarly impact and inform everyday praxis: forcing a connected critical community psychology.

- **Early Career Interest Group** continues with part two of the conversation on digital access in underserved/resourced communities.
- **From Our Members**
  - Op-ed on exploitation of indigenous peoples through climate change “solutions”
  - Adapting Social-emotional learning for virtual settings during COVID-19
  - How higher education can support immigrant resistance against oppression
  - Community based collaborative effort to reduce loneliness for Latino older adults
- **International Committee** discusses mental health interventions for graduate students.
- **Rural Interest Group** examines the healing power of nature.
- **Self-Help and Mutual Support Interest Group** concludes the 3-part series with Carol Randolph, founder of New Beginnings.
- **Student Issues** focuses on the stigma facing students with learning disabilities and inclusive classroom practices.
- **Living Community Psychology**. Gloria Levin features TCP Editor Dominique Thomas.
- We recorded the 2nd episode of TCP podcast; our guest was Alesha Bond, graduate student at Georgia State University. Real Talk will be a preview of our discussions around mentoring and student organizing. This issue’s Reading Circle includes citations from our podcast episode.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

Dominique and Allana
TCP Editor and TCP Associate Editor

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**Council for Cultural, Ethnic, and Racial Affairs**

*Edited by Jesica Siham Fernández, Santa Clara University and Geraldine (Geri) Palmer, Adler University, Community Wellness Institute*

**Putting Our Intentions to Praxis: A Preview into the GJCPP Special Issue on Racial Justice and Anti-Racist Practice**

*Written by Jesica Siham Fernández, Santa Clara University and Geraldine (Geri) Palmer, Adler University, Community Wellness Institute*

One of my favorite words, and one that my students know I use frequently is PRAXIS. Praxis, in my mind, is a radical word! First, it has an X, which is rare to find in most words. Second, it’s short, catchy and translatable -- easily flows between English and Spanish, and even Spanglish. Third, it means putting knowledge into action, theory into practice; walking the walk, not just talking the talk. Praxis means prACTice: to act with intentionality and consistency.

In other words, as Black Panther Party founding member Fred Hampton unapologetically stated in a 1969 speech, later entitled and published in *You Can Murder a Liberator, but You Can’t Murder Liberation*:

“We sayin’ something like this -- we saying that theory’s cool, but theory with no practice ain’t shit. You got to have both of them -- the two go together. We have a theory about feeding kids free. What’d we do? We put it into practice. That’s how people learn.”

Praxis -- in line with Fred’s call to action -- is the word that I strive to embody, enact and engage as an educator, who is grounded in a pedagogy al estilo bell hooks.

Renowned feminist educator-scholar-activist, heart-centered writer, bell hooks describes teaching is a practice of freedom. A practice that seeks to transgress boundaries of power, difference and
marginalization toward radical, liberatory ways of knowing and being. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), bell hooks writes:

“The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy. For years it has been a place where education has been undermined by teachers and students alike who seek to use it as a platform for opportunistic concerns rather than as a place to learn. … Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions. I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions -- a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is a movement which makes education the practice of freedom.” (p. 12)

Thus, grounded in the words of both Fred Hampton and bell hooks, I strive to approach teaching-learning as an ongoing, active and intentional praxis of reciprocal humanizing recognitions that can help pave paths of transformation, and possibilities for decoloniality and community wellbeing *with and in* radical connection with others. To do so, I am continuously asking myself these questions: How am I practicing what I’m preaching-teaching-researching -- or decolonizing my ways of knowing, being and relating to others, especially students and communities? How am I putting into practice the radical relational care, sociopolitical action, and critically-curious compassion -- my *conciencia con compromiso* (consciousness with commitment) in what I do and pursue? Basically: How is my decolonial feminist anti-racist praxis showing up in my research, practice and pedagogy? Specifically, in my interactions with students and community collaborators, in the “work” that is a labor of love that I engage inside and outside of the academy?

These are the questions that several of our contributing authors to the special issue on Racial Justice and Anti-racist Practice, co-edited by the Council on Cultural, Ethnic and Racial Affairs (CERA) co-chairs Dr. Geri Palmer, Dr. Dominique Thomas and I, observed scholar-activists, teacher-scholars, practitioners and budding community psychologists engage. Because of the variety of experiences and reflections offered by our contributing authors, as well as the multidisciplinarity of their scholarship and writings, we are most excited to see the forthcoming publication of the two-part installation of this special issue in the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice (GJCPP). In what follows we offer a preview of what the special issue will feature, contextualizing this project and process within a much longer history of CERA’s commitment racial justice, as well as support and advocacy for affirming and uplifting community psychologists and practitioners of color, specifically Black, Indigenous, Asian American and Latinx. And, of most relevance to these -- but all times -- our concerted efforts to challenge and deconstruct structures, discourses and practices that preserve whiteness and Western/Eurocentric logics as the norm in community psychology.

The two-part installation of this special issue in GJCPP began in May 2019, and over the past two years we have observed the continuation of racial violence and white supremacy manifest in varied ways both within and outside academia, including our discipline and professional organizations. While it has taken us an anticipated time to see this special issue come to fruition, we are thrilled to soon be sharing it with you -- our community partners, students, and colleagues. The motivations and circumstances that animated this special issue are informed by our disciplinary experiences, intersecting positionalities, and embodied subjectivities as *critical community psychologists of Color*. Therefore, we have crafted this special issue out of a deep commitment that is guided by the love, dignity and respect we hold for ourselves, our communities, and the BIPOC community psychologists, and others with intersecting identities at present and who came before us, who have contributed to the discipline. Despite its imperfections, community psychology is, for some of us, our disciplinary home. And, it is one that we wish to transform and improve!

We encourage all who come across our special issue to consider the guiding questions posed in the opening of this reflection. We invite readers to
consider the papers we feature in relation to their embodied subjectivities, positionalities, academic or professional training, and their practice -- a praxis of every day resisting/existing. The sociopolitical context and hegemonic discourses, characterized by a rise in systemic violence rooted in white supremacy and racism, and heightened racist nativism at the intersections of power and difference, compel us as community psychologists to engage with the present moment. As scholars, practitioners, educators and organizers, we question the presence of institutionalized racism and whiteness within the spaces and places wherein we engage our praxis, and where our communities are located, which often inform how our knowledge is co-constructed and co-produced.

We are turning the lens inward and outward to consider and truly describe what anti-racism and racial justice is, and must be in community psychology. And it is our deep, radical hope that the two-part special issue will be received with a curiosity to reflect, learn and feel that which is written about, challenged and resisted, as well as refused and imagined. We invite readers to consider how the articles we highlight can serve as resources or tools to foster the critical compassion for us to bridge and engage in difficult dialogues about whiteness, white supremacy, racialized violence and colonial power not just within our institutions, community settings, and spaces of practice, but most of all within ourselves, the discipline and SCRA.

As an educator, I am affirmed by the praxis -- the projects, values, ethics and intentions, as well as ways of knowing, being and connecting -- featured by all of our invited contributing authors to the special issue. By praxis, I do not only mean the scholarly-activism they engage in, but most of all what they do, and how they do it, and most of all why they do what they do in line with an anti-racist and racial justice praxis. Together, each of these papers provide examples of how community psychologists, and allied professionals and practitioners, are putting into practice what Grace Lee Boggs wrote in *Living for Change (1998)*: “To make a revolution, people must not only struggle against existing institutions. They must make a philosophical, spiritual leap and become more 'human' human beings. In order to change, transform the world, they must change, transform themselves. (p. 153)”

Now, my dear reader -- How are you putting intro praxis racial justice and anti-racist values, ethics, and actions beyond words, deeds and hashtags?

References


invite you to a Global Gathering co-hosted by the Critical CP interest Group in partnership with Community Psychologists in leading and emerging regions of Critical Community Psychology around the world.

**Overview of our year.** First, we hosted a session at the International Conference of Community Psychology (ICCP), digitally hosted by Victoria University in Melbourne Australia. This session proposed a global knowledge exchange project. This session re-energized our group after a lapse due to the pandemic, and we pulled together an end of year Critical CP gathering in December to check in and plan for the future. We published our inaugural TCP column for our interest group in Winter 2020, had an additional 77 SCRA members join our interest group in 2020, with another 70+ members since the beginning of 2021. Further, we populated the Critical CP page on the SCRA website with general information and resources.

**Goals for the Future.** We are excited about our plans going forward and are working to support and fund different components of these goals to ensure a feasible and actionable impact from our work.

- **Goals for the upcoming year:**
  - Launch our global knowledge exchange podcast project (outlined below) to forge a connected Global Critical CP community and build our collective capacities
  - Submit regular interest group columns to the TCP.
  - Hold an interest group meeting at SCRA 2021
  - Promote Critical CP-oriented sessions at SCRA 2021
  - Hold quarterly interest group meetings over Zoom.

- **Longer term goals:**
  - Plan a Critical CP special issue in an open access journal
    - (we currently have one planned for in Community Psychology in Global Perspectives for our Global Knowledge Exchange project)
  - **Ongoing goals:**
    - Develop Critical CP teaching materials for availability on SCRA website.
    - Promote critically-oriented graduate CP programs.
    - Continue to build and engage the interest group membership and relationships with other critically oriented psychologists and applied scholars as we navigate the development of CCP together

**Inviting all Critical Community Psychology students, faculty, and practitioners:**

Global Gathering at July 14th at 7am EST AND 7pm EST

Hosted during two different time slots to accommodate global participation and engagement, we invite all critical scholars and practitioners to join us at our first session in a bi-monthly series of gatherings to build a global knowledge mobilization project titled - Global Knowledge Exchange to increase scholarly impact and inform everyday praxis: Forging a connected Critical Community Psychology.

What we are proposing is a global dialogue and developing a relational network to increase our capacity to mobilize knowledge and develop our capacity.

This global project will include: (1) Virtual CCP Global Gatherings, which will involve facilitated dialogues to identify and synthesize theoretical, epistemological, methodological, and practical advances within and across global regions, and; (2) A 16-episode co-created multi-lingual Podcast Series aimed at mobilizing these advances in an engaging and accessible way. Our gatherings and podcast will focus on: (a) the diverse contexts under which CCP research is undertaken; (b) the theories and methodologies driving CCP praxis; (c) our collective community engagement practices; (d) policy and practice successes, and; (e) identifying areas requiring more empirical and theoretical
work. We have assembled partners representing 7 regions including co-applicants from Canada, Australia, South Africa, Chile, and Indonesia, institutional support from Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States, and a seven-member graduate student collective. Most importantly, throughout the project we have and will continue to center the voices of Black Indigenous, and scholars of colour, emerging scholars and other historically marginalized scholars amplifying their contributions to the discipline and build a rich network of relationships and knowledge mobilization products.

At each gathering, starting in July 2021 and continuing until Fall of 2022, we will focus on a theoretical, methodological, and/or epistemological advancement in Critical CP led by scholars and practitioners representing different global regions where we will co-create content for one episode of our multilingual podcast and focus on skill sharing with those present at the gathering to understand, critique, and build on these advancements and reflect on their applicability in our own praxis.

This project is about making CCP knowledge more connected, accessible, engaging, and less esoteric and abstract. We want to collectively ground our critical framing in our everyday praxis. Further, we want to imagine the world differently and reflect this imagination in our praxis. With this project we will continue our work to unsettle CP, northern hegemony, and the continuing colonizing nature of Psychology, and Community Psychology.

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**Early Career Interest Group**

*Edited by Vernita Perkins, Omnigi*

**Meet the Early Career Members**

Each quarter, we will continue to introduce members of the ECIG, so readers can learn more about our members and explore opportunities for research and practice collaborations.

**Natalie Flaming**

I discovered Community Psychology and joined SCRA last summer. Pre-college, I spent many years actively engaged in community advocacy and was a liaison and representative for families in a high-crime neighborhood. I continued to be actively involved in leadership roles when I began my college journey in 2013, but surprisingly, faculty and textbooks made no mention of this field. I am currently exploring my options for a PhD program, and developing a low-maintenance intervention for K-12 teachers, staff, and administrators to remove systemically oppressive barriers for children who come from backgrounds of chronic low-income/poverty, adversity, and trauma.

**PART TWO: INTERNET INSUFFICIENCY IN RURAL AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES**

Written by Christopher D. Nettles, Tendai Buddhist Institute, Jordan Tackett, Humanitarian, and Vernita Perkins, Omnigi Research

Last quarter, our ECIG column examined digital insufficiency in rural and marginalized communities (Tackett, Nettles, & Perkins, 2021). We explored the challenges we all ultimately face regarding experiences of insufficiency and disparities in internet service, internet access, technological devices, and user capability. We acknowledged the growing awareness of the dependency on workplace and/or institutional digital sufficiency prior to the pandemic, and now the frustrations so many face with the lack of all levels of digital access as so many people navigate use in changing environments. This quarter, we want to continue the conversation, examining and exploring personal narratives on digital access.

**Working from Home**

A year ago from the writing of this article, many cities in the United States were mandated to self-quarantine and shelter in place. The carceral term *lockdown* (which we discourage using) is inaccurate, because although the mandates were imposed, most of us were able to leave our quarantine, unlike incarcerated individuals, even
though there were not many places to go besides grocery stores, gas stations, and hospitals. This situation forced many of us, in the confusing panic, to use whatever laptops or desktops we had at home, and to scramble to set up appropriate workspaces to accommodate the work-from-home expectations. Some companies and corporations in knowledge and virtual service industries found ways to quickly accommodate their employees, but industries that directly served the public found their service and product delivery instantly abbreviated, with no clear information about how to proceed. Coauthor Vernita Perkins found increasing empathy for those employees who lost their jobs or were left frustrated. Why, in a society that already had a growing number of people who telecommuted, was the infrastructure virtually non-existent and digital capabilities lacking? For corporations, there is a bottom line that dictates not expending funds without a proven record of need. We hope corporations will learn from this pandemic and make greater efforts to be inclusive, supportive, and considerate of their most valuable resource, their employees.

The Cobb Mountain Area

Cobb, California is a small, mountain community in Northern California about a two-hour drive from San Francisco, located on the ancestral lands of the Wappo, Pomo & Lake Miwok people. Coauthor Christopher Nettles lives in Cobb, serves on the municipal council, and is intimately familiar with the strengths and challenges faced by the community. One such challenge is access to broadband. According to California Public Utilities data included with the U.S. Census statistics, between 20% and 40% of Cobb households do not have a broadband subscription (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). To understand this issue, it helps to have a portrait of the community.

The Landscape

The Cobb Mountain community sits nestled into the slopes of the California Mayacamas range, a mountain range that stretches across 50 miles of Mendocino, Napa, Sonoma and Lake Counties. At 4,731 feet, Cobb Mountain is the highest peak in the range, tall enough to occasionally receive snow. There are four other mountains within the Cobb area: Mount Hanna is at 4,003 feet, Seigler Mountain at 3,680 feet, and Boggs Mountain at 3,750 feet (home to a “State Demonstration Forest”). While the landscape is in flux due to climate change, in the past, these steep mountains were covered by dense mixed conifer and hardwood forests, that included oak woodlands, meadows, vernal pools, and creek bottomed canyons. The four peaks define the local ecology and geography, dividing the community into well-defined, but semi-isolated neighborhoods.

The Indigenous Peoples

The Cobb area has been inhabited for over 11,800 years by the Pomo, Wappo, and Miwok people. Cobb Mountain marked a prominent boundary between at least five linguistically distinct tribal groups, the Northern Wappo, Western Wappo, Eastern Pomo, Southern Pomo, and Lake Miwok. The Wappo tribes generally occupied an area extending south and west of Cobb Mountain down into the Napa Valley. The Lake Miwok people occupied territory east of Cobb Mountain, known as the Seigler Springs area. The Pomo occupied areas north and northwest of the Wappo and Miwok tribes.

The volcanic rocks of the area included sources of valuable obsidian which was used by the inhabitants to manufacture projectile points and cutting tools. The rich habitat and water resources of the Cobb area also supported excellent food sources. Former hunting camps and villages have been found throughout the area. As a boundary area between numerous tribes and a meeting place for them, Cobb Mountain is known to have held special religious and ceremonial significance. Several ceremonial sites on and around Cobb Mountain have been discovered. Today several local tribal groups trace their lineage back through these initial local residents.

The Resort Town

The development of major mercury mining operations in the region around the end of the 19th century led to increased demand for timber resources from Cobb and Boggs Mountains. Access roads to Cobb Valley used to transport milled timber also brought people seeking hunting and recreation.
Cobb mountain and the surrounding area is home to geysers, fumaroles, and hot springs. The arrival of those seeking recreation led to developing the area’s mineral springs. By 1885, all major springs in Lake County had been located and developed. With more mineral springs than any other area in the United States and probably in Europe, many thought the area would turn into a major resort destination.

Residential and resort development in the Cobb Mountain area increased in the 1920s. During this early period, the Cobb Mountain area contained several small hamlets where groups of colonizer-settlers set up permanent residence. From the 1930s through the 50s, the resort industry flourished, fed largely by the relative proximity to San Francisco.

Despite the mining, logging and resort industries, the railroads in the late 1800s and the highway system in the 1950s and 60s never made it to Lake County, home of Cobb Mountain. The rim of mountains encircling the county has always been a discouraging obstacle to large-scale transportation investments. Mining operations in the area were largely abandoned by the early 1960s. With the interstate system, much of the resort traffic shifted to Lake Tahoe and Reno, Nevada from the 1960s to present day. These issues led to an economic shift for the next 30 years.

Geothermal

The seismically-powered steam fields in the Mayacamas Range are ideal for generating clean renewable power. While the first geothermal plant was used to provide power to a resort in the 1920s; major development of the 30,000 acre geothermal field expanded dramatically from the 1960s though the early 1990s. Known as The Geysers, it is still the largest complex of geothermal power plants in the world, generating 725 megawatts of electricity—enough energy to power San Francisco. Yet, due to a variety of factors, including automation, there has been a tremendous decrease in employment at The Geysers and almost no additional development since the 1990s.

Today

The slow but steady economic decline in the Cobb Mountain area since the 1990s, resulted in a one-third population decrease over the past decade. According to American Community Survey, the area has a high poverty rate of 16%-18% (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Working age adults represent much of the population decline, making adults 65 and over the fastest growing demographic, which pushed the median age in Cobb to 45 years old, compared to 36 years old statewide. The overall lack of investment in infrastructure projects since the 1990s, left The Geysers as the last major infrastructure investment. The Cobb area was most dramatically impacted by the Valley Fire of 2015, at
the time, the State’s most destructive fire in history. Since 2015, over 60% of Lake County has burned during at least 10 major disasters. Aging infrastructure, along with climate change, fueled by multi-year disasters has resulted in depopulation and declining tax revenues for the county, creating an area in significant distress (Huchingson & Scott, 2019).

The devastating 2015 Valley Fire brought the community together in new ways. The Cobb area citizens began organizing around a recovery process in 2016 resulting in the formation of the Cobb Area Council, a municipal advisory board to the Lake County Board of Supervisors. The Council applied for and received a $200K economic development grant in late 2019. Part of the funds from that grant were used to conduct a community wide needs assessment in 2020. The citizens of Cobb identified many of the issues we discussed in the ECIG column last quarter, and determined that access to better high-speed internet is one critical element of the long-term recovery process, and overall community development strategy.

Companies that offer broadband solutions are not willing to invest in the community, largely because of the factors mentioned above. In addition, mountainous landscape combined with recurring fires and wind events make many broadband solutions difficult to implement without significant financial investment, a risk most companies are unwilling to take. Broadband will have to be subsidized or fully funded by money from the state and federal governments as infrastructure investments. The community is in the early stages of determining the next steps for bringing broadband development dollars into the area. These steps are likely to include lobbying state and federal government officials, pursuing public/private partnerships, and strategies for funding broadband demonstration projects. Coauthor Jordan Tackett shared in the newest data from the Pew Research Center (2021), 90% of Americans in rural areas have access to the internet, up from the 85% in 2019. The other 10% of rural inhabitants have a multitude of reasons for insufficient broadband, and infrastructure is one of them. Unfortunately, this is the case for many residents in the former Maidu territory, northeastern lumber town of Chester, California in Plumas County. Although understandable that some communities cherish the separation from technology, this should be a choice not a circumstance of insufficiency.

While Chester has a population of 2,116 residents, based on information from Data USA (2021), there are many communities outside these borders that make up Plumas County and rely on the single grocery store, the Holiday Market, for all their basic food needs. Plumas County is over 2,000 square miles and is 70% national forest, according to the Plumas County website (Plumas, 2021). This expansive county has varying terrains and fickle weather conditions, making driving between towns at times dangerous.

A two-lane, 15 mile drive to the next largest town of Susanville, with a population of about 15,000 residents (USCB, 2019) is Chester’s alternative access to resources. This 15-mile drive crosses Fredonyer Pass and unpredictably closes due to inclement weather, making Susanville unreachable for mountain dwellers. For residents living between Susanville and Chester in the winter months of late November and early April, access to food and gas can be extremely limited; access to other non-convenience store items is nearly nonexistent.

For Plumas County, which is spread across multiple towns and communities, broadband efficiency would aid in servicing individuals with a myriad of health issues. Last quarter, the ECIG article highlighted the internet insufficiencies in rural and underserved communities around telehealth (Tackett, Nettles, & Perkins, 2021). According to the CDC, the five leading causes of death in the United States are “heart disease, cancer, unintentional injury, chronic lower respiratory disease, and stroke” (CDC, 2020, p. 1). Telehealth communication can provide care to individuals who are unable to reach a specialist, or temporarily until help is available.

Another way telehealth would benefit rural communities is providing more specialized care for mental health treatments. Based on research by the Rural Health Information Hub (2021), some
barriers rural residents face when seeking mental health support are: anonymity of care, stigma for receiving care, and access to mental health professionals, among others. Providing these areas with telehealth technology would allow rural residents the peace of mind to seek out mental health support privately thereby decreasing the stigma around mental health, and allowing access to a wider range of professionals who can provide the appropriate care. These improvements are only possible if broadband networks can be expanded to reach rural communities. With the help of local and federal governments, this personal and integral connection can be made to increase our communities’ life expectancy, decrease the debilitating stigmas around mental health, and ameliorate our neighbors quality of life.

Conclusion

Much of the insufficiencies we addressed in this article are tied to socioeconomic systems and perhaps a lack of other awareness. At times it can seem natural to be self-focused when it comes to technology. The thinking that as long as my internet and mobile devices work, then all is well with the world; but realizing the insufficiencies across the spectrum of location, access, economic resources, digital infrastructure, and device resources gives a deeper glimpse into the complex challenges individuals and communities can face when considering digital insufficiency. So what can we do as community psychologists focused on serving communities, and particularly underserved, under-resourced communities? The first step is being aware of the issues and organizing the community, the second step is clarifying the need in a participatory needs assessment; then lastly, bringing solutions into the community through a variety of means from lobbying policy-makers to government/non-profit/industry partnerships, and more.

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References


By Dominique Thomas, Independent Scholar

Exposing Climate Change “Solutions”: Preventing Exploitation of Indigenous Peoples Through Op Ed Publication

Written by Christopher Corbett, Independent Researcher

Introduction

As community psychologists, we are called upon, and trained, to intervene at the highest levels of systems to address the greatest problems communities face. Given the harsh realities of climate change and complexities it presents, how can we, as community psychologists, begin to address this existential threat to the U.S. and planet?

What Actions Can We Take?

Two avenues that come to mind include, first, through action at the ballot box, and secondly, through community education, information and dissemination, Core Competency # 16 [The Community Psychologist, 45(4), Fall, 2012]. Powerful ways to build public awareness include by written word through books, Op Eds and Letters to the Editor. Also, greatest opportunities often lie closest to the communities within which we live--where we may see problems, and based upon our values and training, develop solutions ideally through second-order change.

Purchase of “Green Energy”?

With this background, and located in Albany N.Y., I became aware of intense controversy over...
the proposed purchase of ostensibly “green energy” from Hydro-Quebec by New York State in its unbridled zeal to shift to renewable energy. Unfortunately, the lands flooded to create the dams generating the “green energy” to be sold by Hydro-Quebec, were confiscated from seven indigenous tribes, in violation of their treaties and Canadian Constitution, as exposed by pending litigation. Also, to obtain such “green energy,” a new 330 mile transmission line would need to be built from New York City to Quebec, through the Hudson River and Lake Champlain, creating much environmental damage.

**What About “Environmental Justice”?**

As noted, action at the voting booth has profound implications. Elections have consequences. With the election of President Biden, the country embarked upon a new approach to climate change and energy policy as detailed in President Biden’s Energy Plan, available at: [https://joebiden.com/clean-energy/](https://joebiden.com/clean-energy/). A major premise of this Plan, upon which the President was elected, centers on “Environmental Justice” which addresses the exploitation of communities, with specific commitment to protecting tribal or indigenous interests.

**What Action to Take?**

The purchase of ostensibly “green energy” by any U.S. State, generated from confiscated tribal lands, violates both the letter and spirit of Biden’s Energy Plan. It was, and is, my conviction that incremental purchases from Hydro-Quebec, and building of the required transmission line, are clearly contrary to “the public interest.” My first step was to notify elected officials located in the regions of the proposed line construction to request Zoom meetings and secondly, to publicize my conclusions through Op Eds to multiple sources.

**Is Stopping Hydro-Quebec Feasible?**

Assessing feasibility is necessary and my view is there is both clear legal precedent and moral obligation for cancellation of the Hydro-Quebec line. That is, President Biden has clear legal authority to cancel Hydro-Quebec, as demonstrated by the precedent of his widely publicized Executive Order canceling the Keystone Pipeline. The moral burden to cancel follows directly from his written commitment to “Environmental Justice”. The cases have similarities except with Hydro-Quebec, the exploitation of indigenous peoples is from their energy generation from tribal lands, rather than Keystone’s pipeline construction through tribal lands.

While New York Times publication was my goal, it declined my submission. I submitted a revised version to The Daily Gazette, Albany NY, where it was published as a “Guest Column.” After publication, I re-contacted elected officials providing the published Op Ed, requesting they support cancellation of Hydro-Quebec—which could readily be done by President Biden though Executive Order, given the Keystone precedent. Such action enables President Biden to satisfy his “Environmental Justice” commitment— and protection of indigenous peoples, fulfilling the premise, and promise, of Biden’s National Energy Plan. My requests remain pending with elected officials.

**Conclusion**

In the bigger picture, New York State is doing what other Northeast states, including Massachusetts and Vermont, are doing. That is, they are displacing the harmful societal consequences of energy from fossil fuels and nuclear energy, shutting down such sources— and replacing it with “greenwashed” energy from Hydro-Quebec, harvested on the backs of the indigenous peoples of Quebec. It’s not merely “not in my backyard”— the environmental consequences are being shifted by, and from, the United States over international borders, into another country. This is not “Environmental Justice” and clearly violates Biden’s Energy Plan. This is morally and ethically heinous— and neither Republican nor Democratic hands are clean. However, it need not continue and President Biden has the power, and now obligation, to stop it by Executive Order and fulfill his promises of “Environmental Justice.” The key question is: Will President Biden’s Energy Plan, and commitment to “Environmental Justice” be lived up to in both letter and spirit? Or alternatively, will it merely provide...
window dressing, enabling our country’s energy imperialism, further exploiting the indigenous tribes of Quebec--to burnish the “green credentials” of U.S. elected officials?

Given President Biden’s Energy Plan, he has the opportunity, and obligation, to stop construction of the Hydro-Quebec line by Executive Order, as he did with Keystone. New purchases from Hydro-Quebec are clearly not in “the public interest”--they can and must be stopped to comply with President Biden’s Energy Plan, if his promises of a national energy policy grounded in “Environmental Justice” are to be fulfilled.

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact the author at chris_corbett1994@hotmail.com.

Christopher Corbett, MA Community Psychology, is an independent researcher with a focus on ethics and governance, and is author of Advancing Nonprofit Stewardship through Self-Regulation: Translating Principles into Practice.

Social-Emotional Learning Behind a Screen

Written by Theodore Lee IV, Allison C. Goodman, Stacy L. Frazier, Team NAFASI, Florida International University

SEL Support

Building social and emotional competencies is essential to youth development, and limited understanding and practice can be maladaptive, leading to challenges such as depression, interpersonal conflict, and miscommunication. This knowledge has led to an increased emphasis on common and essential skills such as communication, problem-solving, and emotion literacy, central to social-emotional learning (SEL; Boustani et al., 2014). In schools and after-school programs (ASP), providers often learn how to incorporate SEL skills into their work with youth.
through group trainings and on-site coaching. As an undergraduate research assistant for Nurturing All Families Through Advances in Services Innovation Research (NAFASI; which means opportunity in Kiswahili) at Florida International University (FIU), I received support and supervision from my graduate student mentor, Allison Goodman, and NAFASI director, Dr. Stacy Frazier. As a team, our ultimate goal is to facilitate healthy trajectories for underserved communities by partnering with community-based organizations and providing workforce support. These past two years, I have contributed to a long-standing and ongoing project to develop, manage, and organize activities targeting the SEL skills mentioned previously online at http://nafasipartners.fiu.edu.

The purpose of this project is to provide ASP providers with an organized variety of activities – we call these Skills Drills – they can use to facilitate the development of SEL skills among adolescents. However, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shifting landscape of education broadly and ASPs specifically, providers were no longer able to facilitate these Skills Drills with their students in person, since they were initially designed for use during sports and recreation. Therefore, in response to COVID-19, we began to adapt our Skills Drills for virtual programming so that interested providers could continue facilitating SEL with their students.

**Why Social-Emotional Learning Skills Drills?**

Previous studies have demonstrated that increased SEL skills are associated with a range of positive outcomes for adolescents. For instance, in one study, researchers reviewed four meta-analyses from the United States and Europe, and they found that students enrolled in an SEL program showed significantly more positive outcomes such as improved academic achievement compared to their counterparts who were not enrolled in an SEL program (Mahoney et al., 2018). NAFASI focuses on improving outcomes for youth in neighborhoods where systemic inequities create barriers to care, specifically through workforce support of frontline youth service ASP providers. One of the ways we support frontline ASP providers is by maintaining this library of Skills Drills on our website as an online resource. Skills Drills are organized into “buckets” that include community building, communication, problem-solving, and emotion literacy – skills corresponding to interpersonal conflict management (Boustani et al., 2014). Providers are encouraged to engage their youth in debriefs or “huddles” following the drills to reflect on both positive and negative examples (e.g., examples of calm and respectful communication; examples of angry and reactive communication) and consider how skills generalize to interpersonal interactions in other settings (e.g., with teachers at school; peers in the neighborhood). In this way, we hope to indirectly impact every youth enrolled in a program that looks to our website for recommended activities and SEL drills.

**After-school Care Programs**

School is a traditional setting where students can learn essential skills and explore new topics of interest. While the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way classes are taught traditionally, many students continue learning and exploring through virtual instruction. However, this transition may include limited opportunities for SEL, which already was diminishing in classrooms, as demand for improved standardized test scores and academic performance grew (Frazier et al., 2019). This is where ASPs play a unique and critical role; these programs, where youth may spend 5-15 hours a week, offer substantial opportunities for SEL and mental health promotion outside of the traditional classroom space. As virtual instruction has become routine, at least temporarily, across education systems, it remains essential to aid after-school providers and programs as they continue to educate students from behind digital screens.

**Challenges during Transition**

Many of our recommended activities were designed for live programming. Thus, adapting them for distance learning presented several challenges. Zoom video conferencing software and other similar platforms have become essential pandemic tools. However, these require families to have reliable internet service and a digital device to access meetings (Blank, Boustani, Chou, Frazier, & Helseth, 2020). Additionally, designing or modifying
activities to build SEL skills — when youth cannot interact directly and in-person with one another — was especially challenging. Moreover, some activities required equipment or additional resources that kids would not ordinarily have at home. As a team, we may not have expected an event such as this one, but it has encouraged us to think creatively about our work amidst a shifting landscape. Hopefully, these new and adapted Skills Drills will be helpful to youth service providers now and for any future virtual needs.

**Methodology and Adapted COVID-19 Activities**

**Skills Drills.** We selected 10 Skills Drills to adapt for virtual use. Initially, we looked for activities that required limited materials and ones that could be found in most homes, such as paper and pencils. For instance, *Scribble* (e.g., Hansen, 2017; Liza, 2017; Team Building, 2019) requires students to guide their partner in drawing a picture that their partner cannot see, using only verbal instructions. *Scribble* is designed to facilitate a discussion about clear and effective communication. Each Skills Drill is described in a one-page resource sheet divided into three sections: (1) “What to Say”: brief and simple introduction about the importance of the practiced skill; (2) “What to Do”: materials, rules, and set up, and (3) “What to Ask”: huddle questions to guide reflection and discussion after the activity.

Altogether, we have adapted thus far 10 Skills Drills for distance learning. Although some families may not currently be able to join virtual programming, efforts remain underway in many cities to connect families with internet providers offering free and lower cost internet service during the pandemic (Blank, Boustani, Chou, Frazier, & Helseth, 2020). ASP providers could get creative about dissemination if they are inspired to do so, for instance, by sending paper versions through the mail so that families can engage in the activities together with their children at home. This could also be a way to facilitate family bonding during this unprecedented time. Additionally, we learned unique ways to utilize the features of virtual

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**SCREIBBLE**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT TO SAY</th>
<th>WHAT TO DO</th>
<th>WHAT TO ASK</th>
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<tr>
<td>There are different styles of communication, and we all switch between these styles based on what we need, who we’re communicating with, and how we feel. Assertive communication means speaking clearly and calmly to express yourself respectfully. Aggressive communication means expressing yourself without being respectful of the listener, and passive communication means not expressing your needs clearly or directly. Balancing these styles can be tough! Good teamwork relies on clear, assertive communication, but sometimes that can be difficult based on how well the task goes, how your listener responds, and how you feel.</td>
<td>In Scribble, students work in pairs. One student is given a place, thing, person, or idea and gives clues to the other student, who tries to draw based on the clue-givers instructions. The student drawing is trying to guess what the place, thing, person, or idea is within a set time limit. The clue-giver can only give verbal instructions without pointing or using gestures. The artist can make guesses at any time, and can ask for clarification on instructions when the artist has guessed correctly (or the team gives up), trade roles so that the clue-giver becomes the artist for round 2, and the artist becomes the clue-giver.</td>
<td>What went well, and what didn’t go well? Why? Who had more trouble as the clue-giver? What did you find difficult about that? Who had more trouble as the artist? What did you find difficult about that? Did anyone notice a difference in their communication as a clue-giver when the artist was doing well, versus when the artist was doing poorly? Did anyone feel frustrated as the clue-giver? How did that affect your communication? Who received feedback (positive or negative) as the artist? How did that make you feel, and how that affect your performance?</td>
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platforms such as Zoom to facilitate SEL learning, such as by using the video layout adjustment feature (moving participants to specific places on the screen). This allows for a group to create a puzzle, with each individual setting their profile picture or virtual background as a puzzle piece, with the goal of fostering teamwork and communication. Regardless of when the pandemic ends, we will continue to add adaptable activities to our ever-expanding resource library.

Relaxation. In addition to our library of Skills Drills, we highlighted tools for relaxation given the elevated stress associated with stay-at-home routines for both staff and youth. Also designed as brief, single-page resource guides, we provide several scripts for guided meditation. For example, one script focuses on high school graduation and encourages youth to think reaffirming thoughts and visualize receiving their diploma through detailed imagery. We are currently exploring ways to include an audio recording alongside each script. The final resource we added is called Seeking PEACE and CALM during COVID-19, highlighting the role and function of emotions, the dynamic interplay between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and a few simple strategies – via easy-to-remember acronyms – for deep breathing, body scan, and remaining present-moment aware with a Mindful Minute (Example 1: CALM = Close your eyes, Attend to your breath, Let go of your thoughts, Muscles Relax; Example 2: YES = Your peaceful place, Ease your muscles, Slow your breath). A more expanded version of these resources was developed for workforce support efforts around emotional literacy, and we abbreviated and modified them to be available and digestible during current circumstances. We hope these activities will allow families and programs to find feelings of connectedness and reduce stress amid this public health crisis.

Conclusion

SEL skills are essential to healthy trajectories, enabling youth to perform well across settings and engage in healthy relationships. We know that these skills correlate positively with academic success and lead to better life outcomes and greater life satisfaction, in part by expanding and strengthening one’s social networks (Taylor et al., 2017). We also know that teachers have mounting demands and competing priorities leave limited classroom time for explicitly nurturing SEL skills. However, social-emotional goals are central to most ASPs which represent a critical space for growth and learning, especially for students and families. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators rushed to find solutions that rely on transitions to online platforms for virtual instruction. Correspondingly, to maintain our support for ASP providers who are similarly working hard to continue engaging youth, we will continue building and modifying our library of resources, including SEL skills drills and relaxation tools, for...
an online learning format. We hope our work promotes health and hope for after-school programs, providers, and the youth and communities they serve.

Have any ideas for our transition to virtual learning or SEL activities? We would love to hear from you at nafasipartners@gmail.com.

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https://www.ventureteambuilding.co.uk/blind-draw-team-building-activity/#.XtKtpjkKhPY


Conversaciones con los Abuelos: A Community-based Collaborative Effort to Reduce Loneliness Among Latino/a/x Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Written by Paige Reohr, JoAnna Sendejo, Pacific University, Seferina Dale, Maria Caballero-Rubio, Centro Cultural of Washington County and Ruth Zúñiga, Pacific University

Social Disparities During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be widely disruptive to social functioning, however, the toll is not equally felt. Older individuals, already susceptible to isolation, are faced with social disparities stemming from loss of connection and social isolation (Kotwal et al., 2020; Tyrrell & Williams, 2020; Wu, 2020). Conversely, experiences of loneliness and isolation among older adults are detrimental to physical and mental health (Miyawaki, 2015; Perissinoto et al., 2012). Loneliness among older adults during the pandemic is especially threatening, as it results in compounded risk factors for worsening health
outcomes (Krendi & Perry, 2020; Van Orden et al., 2020).

Due to the loss of community associated with retirement and social role shifts during older adulthood, community during this developmental period is often sought at local community centers or senior groups. Senior centers or groups offer a place for reliable social support from peers, an estimated half of whom live alone (National Council on Aging, 2013). Subsequently, when the pandemic forced community centers to shut down for safety precautions, older adults, like most people, experienced a loss of routines, community, and regular social interaction. While many individuals have found ways to adapt over the course of the pandemic through socially distanced in-person interaction or embracing the utility of technology, it has not been as easy for older adults. The technology that enables remote connection is not available to all, due to financial, accessibility, or value-based barriers to engagement and lack of familiarity with the technology (Kotwal et al., 2020; Pywell et al., 2020). Simultaneously, persistent warnings about the vulnerability of and posed risks to seniors exposed to COVID-19 may leave many older adults fearful to leave their homes.

Given the barriers to social connection for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, isolation and loneliness are critical social disparities for community-oriented psychologists to address. In regards to ways in which these barriers can be mitigated, mental health professionals can make efforts to meet the community where they are and promote psychological wellness broadly through community-based initiatives.

Program Description: Conversaciones con los Abuelos

Centro Cultural, a non-profit cultural center serving the Latino/a/x community, Oregon is a well-known and trusted community-based organization. Centro Cultural supports individual growth, community leadership, cultural connection, and social relationships in the community. One of Centro Cultural’s programs, Edad de Oro (Golden Age), serves Latino/a/x elders by providing a space for them to share their wisdom and acquire new skills as they build self-confidence and learn to self-advocate (Centro Cultural, n.d.). Most participants are monolingual Spanish speaking immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries, who worked in farm labor and have aged into caretaker roles within their extended families. Now in their fourth year, Edad de Oro elders have co-created their own learning environment and have found their voice in the greater community.

Like other senior and community-oriented centers during the COVID-19 pandemic, Edad de Oro participants lost access to daily peer connection due to building closure and social distancing precautions. To continue addressing the need for connection among the community, Centro Cultural’s team shifted their focus from in-person programming to contacting older adult participants regularly via telephone.

Shortly after pandemic-related closures were in effect, graduate psychology students of Pacific University’s Sabiduría: Latinx Psychology Emphasis, a program focused on training clinicians to work with the Latinx community, began supporting the Edad de Oro team’s efforts. Collaboratively, Edad de Oro leadership and Sabiduría developed Conversaciones con los Abuelos (Conversations with Grandparents), a program with the mission of providing social and emotional support to vulnerable older adults and guiding elders through navigating barriers to getting specific needs. Conversaciones con los Abuelos fosters social and emotional wellness by connecting graduate psychology students with Edad de Oro older adults for weekly phone conversations.

Since the beginning of the program in June 2020, through December 2020, 17 graduate student volunteers engaged in approximately 225 calls with the Edad de Oro elders, amounting to approximately 40 hours of provided support. Student volunteers also provided items of correspondence (i.e., letters, holiday cards) and identified and supported needs (i.e., community resources, essential needs such shoes, heaters, etc.) to the elders throughout the entirety of the program’s duration as an additional means of support. Older adults shared their wisdom, stories, and also helped many students improve their
cultural competencies and linguistic skills. Elders further received information and resources on emotional health through delivery of emotional health care kits created by graduate student volunteers, which was funded by a state organization (Trauma Informed Oregon). Emotional health care kits highlighted items that elders can use to practice culturally appropriate self-care and to start conversations about emotional and mental health. Additionally, many of the products were bought from local and/or Latino/a/x-owned businesses.

The partnership between Centro Cultural and Sabiduría has benefitted broadly. Volunteering to alleviate loneliness among community-dwelling older adults not only offers a way to find meaning, feel rewarded, and often act in accordance with one’s values (Sundström et al., 2020), but it also, addresses health disparities by fostering social and emotional wellness among vulnerable populations. Additionally, during times of disaster, such as the current pandemic, giving back to and supporting others are ways to promote hope, resiliency, and wellbeing (Piliavin & Siegl, 2007). Through this program, both elder participants and graduate student volunteers have reported reciprocal gratitude for the opportunity to connect during a time of isolation and appreciation for the genuine relationships that have formed as a result of this partnership. For graduate student volunteers in Sabiduría, the ability to provide support to the elders has been rewarding, as providing outreach and community service to vulnerable and marginalized communities is a shared value. These opportunities for communication have also given students insight into the unique experiences and wisdom of this vulnerable and yet resilient population, which has positively impacted the students greatly at personal and professional levels. For the seniors, supporting the new generation of psychologists may be another way to aid their wellbeing, as literature points to the protective effects of volunteering for older adults (Guiney & Machado, 2018).

**Implications and Recommendations**

Conversaciones con los Abuelos is a collaborative initiative between a graduate psychology training program and a community-based organization focused on supporting social and emotional needs of older adults. Through this collaboration, students have experienced the significance of stepping into our communities with the intent of “sharing psychology”, helping communities reclaim their emotional health, and supporting social-emotional wellness (Evans, 2020). Additionally, this collaboration has the potential to meaningfully mitigate negative outcomes associated with the abundance of risk factors posed to older adults during the pandemic and to support elders from historically marginalized groups who may be isolated from social connection and service utilization and culturally responsive programs (Dumbeck, 2019; Schneider et al., 2014). Partnerships can also serve to foster health equity among a historically marginalized population by “ensuring older adults’ effective access to community-based services [and] fostering their social participation” within their own communities (Turcotte et al., 2020, pg. 417).

Community-based collaborative efforts that empower communities and support community
leaders’ agendas are a valuable tool to address the health disparities present within our communities (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2020). As such, the times call for psychologists to become involved in community-based interventions and outreach focused on supporting our communities’ vulnerable populations (Kuy et al., 2020). Creative interventions, like Conversaciones con los Abuelos, can be easily implemented as a way to engage trainees with community-based work and to practice culturally responsive work and serve their communities. We recommend psychology professionals and trainees connect with organizations serving their communities to discuss and collaborate on addressing gaps in social, emotional, and mental health care. This is a valuable opportunity for students to see the promotion of psychological wellness as efforts that exist both in and outside of a therapy room and to get creative in developing innovative interventions to promote health and wellness. Further, students involved in the collaborative program development process, working directly with the community of interest, could benefit from exploring the potential to empower historically marginalized or vulnerable communities.

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References


Many immigrants experience oppression in their communities. Oppression occurs as those with more power exercise dominance over those with less (Prilleltensky, 2003). Oppression is woven into norms and dominant narratives in organizations and institutions (Shpungin et al., 2011), and is revealed through laws, customs, and practices (Kelly & Varghese, 2018). Immigrants resist oppression by taking actions that undermine oppressive power structures. Resistance can be undertaken individually or collectively; targeted at individuals, groups, policies, structures, or systems; active or passive, organized or unorganized, and overt or covert. For example, immigrants might resist by forming counterspaces where they can develop a sense of community with one another and heal from their daily experiences of oppression. They may live in ways aligned with their beliefs and values in spite of demands for assimilation. They may create movements, organize rallies, and participate in acts of civil disobedience.
The Immigrant Justice Interest Group examined how settings can support immigrants’ resistance to oppression. We grounded our literature review in diverse frameworks: A social settings framework posits that settings can take a systems-level approach to social change, attempting to change policies, role relationships, power imbalances, and/or their direction (Seidman & Tseng, 2011). Empowering settings can support social change through their culture of growth and community building, opportunities to take on meaningful roles, peer-based support, and shared leadership (Maton, 2008). A healing justice framework was created by mostly Black feminist and radical organizers in response to Hurricane Katrina to address ongoing harm perpetrated on Black, Indigenous, and communities of Color (Page, 2013); it focuses on liberation and calls for structural solutions while attending to suffering in a cycle where people build community, develop vision, heal, and act (Ginwright, 2018). Decolonization involves centering western ways of knowing to resurface truths, attending to intersectionality and allyship to resist colonialism (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

One type of setting we explored is education. Given that many of us are embedded in colleges and universities, in this column we describe ways higher education may facilitate resistance to oppression and make recommendations we can employ in our institutions. While at their best colleges and universities should serve as empowering settings that support students to grow and develop, to raise awareness of injustice, and to catalyze change, too often systems of higher education in the U.S. marginalize immigrant students and serve to assimilate students to white, Euro-American cultures. Higher education can play a critical role in facilitating resistance by aiming to dismantle oppression inside and outside of academe. Higher education can provide empowering spaces that help students develop courageous vision, foster their growth and action, and attend to their suffering caused by oppression. Some departments and programs have counterspaces in both their curricular and co-curricular arms, developed by and for immigrants to find a sense of community with one another and heal from their daily experiences of oppression (Case & Hunter, 2012; Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). Such counterspaces allow for immigrant students to give and receive social support; learn critical information and develop skills needed to navigate oppressive spaces, including within the college/university itself; learn how to challenge dominant deficit narratives and oppressive structures; and both gain and maintain cultural resources and assets. Curriculum can facilitate resistance by centering western ways of knowing (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). For example, programs may utilize pedagogical strategies, such as popular education, that center immigrant students’ everyday experiences. Such strategies have students critically analyze experiences to facilitate learning and social change. Further, colleges and universities present opportunities for solidarity with immigrant and non-immigrant peers who are also facing oppression.

Those of us in academe must attend to systems of oppression within and around our higher education institutions, and advocate for systemic and intersecting solutions. To create opportunities for resistance and system transformation, our students should have opportunities to take on meaningful roles, provide and receive support, develop skills, share leadership, and build community. Our institutions can create and allocate resources to facilitate resistance, both within and outside of the institutions. Universities can go beyond internal work to connect with families and communities, transmitting key information, supporting community development, and shaping the space in ways that facilitate resistance (Yoshikawa, 2011).

Different educational institutions may take divergent approaches; there is no one way to support resistance. Although not an exhaustive list, below we provide ways to get started:

**RECOGNIZE OPPRESSION:** Oppression is carried out individually, collectively, institutionally, and structurally. It can be disguised as the status quo. Therefore, we must stay alert, listen, and look for oppression.
LOOK FOR RESISTANCE: Some resistance may be easier to see than others. We must stay alert to resistance already taking place in our colleges and universities, as well as the surrounding community, to support resistance efforts.

LISTEN AND LEARN: We must look to those resisting within and outside an institution to identify how we might best facilitate resistance and institutional change. We must center the knowledge, experience, skills, and hopes of those engaged in resistance to determine next steps.

LOOK TO MODELS: We should look at educational institutions similar to ours to explore how they have facilitated resistance and institutional change. We must keep in mind that no educational institution is perfect and all are developing.

PROVIDE RESOURCES: Our institutions can support resistance by providing resources our students need. We can build on existing assets and skills of those in institutions, particularly those experiencing oppression. We can think about the unique resources we can offer in our roles as faculty, staff, students, or administrators. These may include legal aid, housing, or health care; education or skills development; technical or fiscal support; and/or emotional and social support.

USE POWER WISELY: We must recognize and use the unique power and strengths our colleges and universities hold to work toward dismantling oppressive systems. We can use curriculum, programming, and structures to facilitate resistance.

MAKE SPACE: We must make sure all voices are heard and their existing knowledge, experiences, and skills are harnessed and valued. We should decenter western ways of knowing and challenge structures of white supremacy. We must make space for those often ignored.

HONOR DIVERSE ROLES: Our institutions must provide opportunities for all members to take on meaningful roles, to share leadership, and to grow individually and together. We should create ways for members’ contributions to evolve over time. We need to honor and value the diverse roles members undertake, particularly those historically undervalued.

ACT IN SOLIDARITY: Those with more power and privilege in our institutions must be allies, accomplices, and partners to those being oppressed, resisting any narrative that pushes them to be saviors and to see others through a passive victim lens. We should change common individual oppression actions, such as privilege-splaining.

LOOK IN THE MIRROR: We all should reflect on our institution’s structures, processes, and practices to examine ways our institution may be upholding systems of oppression. We must actively work toward dismantling oppression in higher education and ensure we are not reproducing the cycle of oppression.

BE WILLING TO REFLECT AND CHANGE: In our work, we will likely make mistakes. We must be open to feedback from those whose resistance we seek to support. We should continuously reflect on what we are doing and why, and be ready to own our actions and make changes accordingly. When we are “called in” by those who are oppressed, we should view the intervention as an act of love, designed to help us do better.

To learn more, please read the full statement at https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12515.

References:
Introduction

In Portugal, we have had psychological services within higher education institutions for about 20 years, mainly in public institutions. Initially, interventions and activities of these Psychological Services were mainly focused on Counselling and Clinical approaches for individual students. However, throughout the years, these services have increased their interventions to not only support other actors in these institutions—namely teachers, non-teaching staff and administrators—but also expand their psychological approaches through collaborative, consulting, and empowering methods.

In addition, there has also been increasing change of intervention modalities of Psychologists in Higher Education, centered not on only solving individual problems in the field of mental health but trying to be preventive and focused on the whole person, in which the psychological, emotional, and social health are intertwined, and in which interaction with others and with the organizational environment plays a determining role for development and well-being.

One of the groups that have been targeted for a more preventive approach are Ph.D. students. Why are Ph.D. students important?

Across OECD countries, the number of new Ph.D.s grew from 158,000 in 2000 to 247,000 in 2012, a rise of 56% (OECD, 2014). Although
universities were traditionally regarded as low stress environments, research on occupational stress among academics indicates that it is alarmingly widespread and on the rise (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011; Reevy & Deason, 2014); and it is more prevalent in younger academics (Kinman, 2001), a group that typically faces high levels of job insecurity. In addition, there are increasing reports of depression and anxiety, burnout, and emotional exhaustion among Ph.D. students.

However, the prevalence of mental health problems as shown in official registries remains low. Reluctance to seek help is often caused by fear of stigma, retaliation, or the expected negative impact on one’s future career (OECD, 2015).

The work of Ph.D. students themselves constitutes a major source of scientific advancement, as a doctoral dissertation requires an original contribution to the scientific knowledge base. As most Ph.D. students are part of larger research teams, whose composition determines scientific impact (Lee et al., 2015), students with mental health issues may pose a considerable cost to research institutions and teams.

Mental health problems of Ph.D. students impact both the supply and entrance to the research field. Organizational policies that are linked to mental health problems will lead individuals to quit their doctoral studies or leave the research industry altogether (Podsakoff et al., 2007). Several studies of Ph.D. students suggest that the dropout numbers range from 30 to 50 percent, depending on the scientific discipline and country (Stubb et al., 2012).

On the other hand, in the past year, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the dynamics developed in the higher education institutions and the way in which Psychology Services operate in them, passing many of the activities to be carried out remotely. The demand for Psychological Services in universities and institutes was already increasing for students and educational staff when demand increased in a very prominent way with the pandemic, doubling the number of requests for psychological consultations in 2020 in some higher education institutions, and Ph.D. students were one of the targeted groups.

The “Ph.D. – The last kms of a marathon” Program

The decision to do a Ph.D. involves an investment that is not only scientific, but also involves time and emotional demands. Several studies demonstrate the impact that the academic path has on physical health and mentality of students, as is the case of a recent article published in the journal Nature Biotechnology (Evans et al, 2018). The Psychology, Inclusion and Equality Services (PsII +) of NOVA FCSH promote, in each semester, online / face-to-face sessions to support students who are attending the Ph.D. program, and who want to develop emotional management skills during this process. The participation is free and optional. "PhD - The last kilometers of a marathon", divided into ten sessions held fortnightly, runs every semester with groups of 6 to 8 students. Enrollment in the program occurs at the beginning of each semester.

This last semester, the program was held for the first time online due to Covid-19. Before we had only face-to-face sessions.

The ten sessions are themed and can be run independently as workshops. However, results show that participation in the whole program increases sense of community, well-being, and sense of connectedness as self-reported by the participants. The session themes in order are:

Session 1 - I am here, now what? Prospects from the program
Session 2 – Who am I and how am I?
Construction and definition of a road map
Session 3 – Aid station 1: discomfort and avoidance
Session 4 – Aid station 2: difficulties in decision-making and commitment
Session 5 – Aid station 3: how do I organize myself? Time management
Session 6 – Aid station 4: anxiety and high stress
Session 7 - Aid station 5: external evaluation and control challenges
Session 8 - Aid station 6: the relationship with the advisor and other support sources
Some preliminary results

This year’s program being held online was one of the challenges, namely the involvement with the group and the development of a sense of connectedness. To address this issue, we introduced different ice breakers (more suitable for online sessions) in the first three sessions.

The program’s assessment was produced by self-report questionnaires with questions related to each session (e.g., topic, time length, methodology) and the program as a whole. There was also the possibility to give suggestions for improvement.

One of the themes that appeared most often in eight of the ten sessions was the relationship with one’s supervisor which seems to be one of the main sources of stress, as confirmed in the literature.

Another theme the participants report was very important to them, even in the online platform, was to be able to participate and share their feelings and emotions about the Ph.D. process and the awareness of others feeling the same: “I felt I was not alone in this process.”

Another theme that emerged was the perception that the mental health of graduate students is not really addressed or considered in their training program. According to the literature, this lack of visibility is problematic because feeling isolated can cause students’ mental health to deteriorate even further.

These are still preliminary results but they already emphasize the need to address mental health issues of graduate students in order to reduce drop-out and appreciate the work produced by this community.

Conclusions

The adjustment for online intervention was a challenge and, as a community psychologist, it was a time to revisit our involvement both in service delivery to the community and research (theory based) on social ecological practices. Technology-based interventions could transform mental health in higher education. With new approaches, colleges and universities can envisage new intervention paradigms that build on traditional models to improve mental health and well-being in the lives of their students.

References


OECD (2015). Fit Mind, Fit Job: From Evidence to Practice in Mental Health at Work, Mental Health at Work. OECD. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/ 9789264228283
“Living Community Psychology” highlights a community psychologist through an in-depth interview that is intended to depict both personal and professional aspects of the featured individual. The intent is to personalize Community Psychology as it is lived by its diverse practitioners. Most of the prior columns (which date from the late 1980s) are available online at
http://www.scra27.org/publications/tcp/tcp-past-issues These past columns contain a wealth of life advice gleaned from over 65 profiled community psychologists, from graduate students to retirees, representing an invaluable resource for the field.

For this installment, we feature Dominique Thomas, an early career community psychologist, 3 years after earning his Ph.D. from Georgia State University. Unlike many people in our field who work with and/or study minority and often poor communities, he brings to his work lived experience, both as a black person and raised within a lower-income family. Surrounded by a supportive village of nurturing teachers and a determined grandmother, and being named “gifted” early, he has been able to succeed academically. Nevertheless, his early disadvantages can bedevil him as he endeavors to secure a stable foothold in life and to make a valuable contribution to persons who are not blessed by a village such as his.

When community psychologists name the individuals who have most influenced their achievements, they typically identify teachers and work supervisors. In the case of Dominique Thomas, the heroine of his life story is—hands down—Ella Thomas, his family’s matriarch who had an eighth-grade education and an employment history that included household domestic work. She had retired on Social Security, concentrating on raising Dominique and heading her 3-generation household. As you’ll read, other women— all teachers— from kindergarten through graduate school, also went “beyond the call of duty” to support his development.

Dominique was born and raised in Gulfport, Mississippi, a small city of about 72,000 people located on the Gulf of Mexico, approximately 80 miles east of New Orleans. A majority of the population is White, and over 1/3 are African Americans. Mississippi resisted desegregation for years; his high school was not integrated until 1978. Dominique lived in a neighborhood on the west side of town, called “The Quarters,” the historic home of Gulfport’s black population; the name derives from its “slave quarters” legacy. Gulfport is a tourist destination, offering sandy beaches and casinos, but few good job opportunities.

Dominique was his mother’s first child, born when she was a 22-year old, single high school graduate. After living with Ella initially, his mother moved out to live on her own, but his grandmother kept him with her. (His mother later raised his two siblings, Darius and Destiny, with whom Dominique...
Dominique first “met” his father over the telephone at the age of 8, followed by their first in-person meeting 3 years later. His father visited him periodically beginning in his teenage years.

Dominique was raised as the only child in a small house by Ella and two of her adult sons – uncles Ray and Steve, both of whom had left high school early. Dominique is especially close to Uncle Steve, so much so that many people thought they were father and son. Somewhat hyperactive, from an early age he was fascinated by electronics, “how things work.” The only child in his kindergarten class who was able to read, his kindergarten teacher, Miss Suzy, targeted him early for special attention. He was identified as gifted as a first grader and skipped a grade in elementary school.

Dominique excelled in school, especially in math and sciences, with physics being his favorite subject. He was bused to Gulfport High School, located in the more affluent side of the city. The school was split 50/50 racially, but Dominique quickly noticed that he was the only black student in his Advanced Placement classes. “It did not make sense to me that my classroom didn’t look like my neighborhood.” He did not feel connected with the other kids in his classes, due, not only to race, but also on the basis of socioeconomic class. One incident at his senior picnic impressed on him the class difference between him and his (white) classmates: a group of his classmates rolled up to the event in a big boat, in stark contrast to his transport in his mother’s old and borrowed car. And he did not apply for admission to the National Honor Society, knowing that he could not fulfill the extracurricular activity emphasis because he was unable to stay after school, dependent on the school bus for his transportation.

Financial struggles and housing insecurity have been constants in Dominique’s life. One eviction, in 2003, was the result of nonpayment of rent due to a dispute with the landlord. Uncle Steve had withheld rent to protest the landlord’s refusal to repair a plumbing lead that resulted in excessive water bills. Two years later, Hurricane Katrina slammed the Gulf Coast and the apartment complex to which they had moved. Although the family “got off easy” compared to the devastation suffered by their neighbors, Ella and Dominique were relegated to couch surfing.

The adults in Dominique’s life viewed education as his only way out of Gulfport. His grandmother would gently but insistently prod him with homework reminders. Although the adults had to scrape together their rent money, he was not expected to contribute financially with an after-school job. His “job” was to study hard, undistracted by television or video games, so he would excel academically and attend college eventually. His guidance counselor, Dr. Catherine Newkirk, advised him of the availability of (and assisted him in applying to) a six-week summer STEM academy for low-income black children from the South, held at Morehouse College in Atlanta. “I was happy to escape the water shutoffs and evictions back home.” At the Morehouse program, he had the opportunity to discover practical scientific solutions in building a solar oven and in robotics. The summer at Morehouse introduced Dominique to college-level work and the social experience of dormitory living. Another significant benefit from the summer was in meeting Anthony McQueen, his forever friend.

Back home, Dominique prepared for college applications. He qualified for fee waivers for standardized tests as a low-income applicant, and his English teacher, Mrs. Sarah Miller, footed the bill for an AP test. As Dominique says, “it took a village.” He applied to 3 colleges – Yale (rejected); Old Miss (offered small scholarship assistance) and Morehouse (a full scholarship including room and board). Yet, the admission offer required $500 to reserve a space – “a lot of money to us, but my grandmother worked her magic, calling in favors from our village again.” No one in the family could take off time from work, so his father, located in Augusta, GA, picked him up and transported him to Morehouse.

Dominique declared a psychology major, with a secondary interest in the law, influenced by his exposure to police brutality in his hometown. He took courses in research methods and community psychology with Dr. Sinead Younge on Morehouse’s faculty. Like prior teachers who had
recognized and nurtured his talents, Dr. Younge brought Dominique to his first SCRA biennial conference in 2011, paying his travel expenses. She remains a significant mentor in his life to this day.

Living again in Morehouse’s dormitories, he participated fully in college life, including leadership in residential hall life. Dominique organized academic enrichment programs as well as social activities for fellow students. He was honored with Psi Chi and Phi Beta Kappa memberships. And notably he enrolled in Morehouse’s McNair scholars program – set aside for high achieving undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds who are promising candidates for science Ph.D’s. In addition to the enrichment opportunities for research, McNair provides financial resources that allow the potential scholars to apply to graduate schools.

Dominique applied to several graduate programs that emphasized social justice and empowerment. He was accepted into the community psychology program at Georgia State University (GSU) in Atlanta, matriculating in 2011. At GSU, he was again a leader and organizer of efforts to mentor college students and taught courses and labs as a graduate teaching assistant.

The training at GSU was primarily oriented to academic careers, but Dominique became less enamored of academia once he experienced it up close. Although he enjoys teaching, he also observes that academia has become increasingly caught up in the capitalistic trap of grants and awards. He fears becoming an “academic grifter making a profit off of people’s suffering.” One student project he worked on at GSU gave him the satisfaction of having made a tangible contribution to a community, i.e., consulting with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta to create an evaluation questionnaire. The students’ product, rated “impressive,” was used for an organizational evaluation. His doctoral degree was awarded in 2017; his dissertation was titled Black Scholars Matter: Development and Validation of a Campus Racial Climate Measure for African American College Students.

A mutual friend introduced Dominique to Josie, a GSU graduate student in communications. Having moved in together, Dominique was able to stay in Atlanta through a visiting lectureship at GSU (2017-2018). He had applied for a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan’s (UM) National Center for Institutional Diversity (NCID) which supports early career diversity scholars. Although he was not selected for the fellowship, NCID’s director, Dr. Tabbye Chavous, took note of his having received, in 2018, SCRA’s award for best dissertation that was highly relevant to her own interest in the relationship between diversity and higher education climate. She invited him to apply for a different NCID fellowship program. Josie was still enrolled at GSU’s graduate program but gave Dominique her full support to live separately (by then, they were renting a house in Decatur, GA) so he could pursue the great opportunity offered by UM’s fellowship. “August 2018, I packed my belongings into my Mazda hatchback and drove to Ann Arbor,” a 12-hour drive that he made regularly between Ann Arbor and Decatur. The couple were married in October 2018.

Never having lived outside the south before, his regular visits to Georgia were necessary because of the isolation and culture shock he experienced up north. “I knew no one and was sometimes the only black person around, even though I worked in an office devoted to diversity.” Michigan’s long, cold winters only added to the misery, as did the long distance from family and friends. “When I lived in Georgia, family members from the south could usually scrounge enough money to visit me but that was not possible for the long trip to Ann Arbor.” Dominique drove into Detroit to feel more at home, often hanging out at that city’s public library. In addition to the racial isolation, Dominique was uncomfortable with class differences (“the median family income of UM students was $150,000”) and the fact that he was the youngest person in his workspace. “I did not feel like I fit in; the staff did not invite me to hang out with them.” Add to these factors Dominique’s general tendency to introversion. “When I worked once at a Foot Locker store, I preferred working in the back, stacking boxes, rather than being up front, in direct sales.”
Nevertheless, Dominique was productive during his postdoctoral stint, helping coordinate a 2019 black graduate conference in psychology and carrying out a survey (The Black Scholars Matter Project, patterned after his dissertation) and presenting the findings at conferences. The fellowship allowed him to fully exercise his considerable writing skills. “I consider writing an art, and I like art in general, including editing and playing with design.” He wrote and edited essays and made numerous presentations. At the same time, 2018-2020, he served as Associate Editor of The Community Psychologist (TCP), a part-time position, apprenticing under the Editor, Susan Wolfe, gaining editorial and production experience to prepare him to assume the editorial helm at the end of Susan’s term (in 2020). (His “lab-twin,” another graduate student at GSU, Allana Zuckerman, is now his Associate Editor at TCP.)

Dominique has been active in SCRA since his student days. He was elected a Southeast Student Regional Coordinator (2014-2017), served on the planning committee of the 2016 Southeast Eco Conference and recently co-chaired the Council on Cultural, Ethnic, and Racial Affairs (CERA, 2019-2021).

And then arrived the COVID pandemic, an event that upset all our lives. Coincidentally, Dominique’s 30th birthday was March 12, 2020; determined not to spend that milestone alone, he had driven to Decatur to celebrate with Josie and friends. His visit coincided with the national shutdown, and he was quarantined, working remotely but relieved to be with Josie. COVID was not finished with Dominique -- although he had a year left on his fellowship, he was subject to a Personnel technicality that caught him in a hiring freeze, ending his UM appointment July 30, 2020. Dominique retrieved his belongings from Ann Arbor and resettled in Decatur to wait out the pandemic.

Long beleaguered by financial hardships and even with a Ph.D., Dominique has been applying for jobs in a particularly tough market and is disheartened by the nonresponsiveness of the potential employers who fail to even acknowledge applicants with any feedback. “The pandemic has thrown everything into chaos. Everything is piling on at the same time,” he observes.

In addition to actively seeking employment, ever-productive Dominique has used his shutdown time to complete or initiate significant projects including co-guest editing special issues of the American Journal of Community Psychology and the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice and developing a podcast for TCP. Dominique refers to this period as “taking a breather” (!)

When asked what lies ahead that could constitute his future legacy, Dominique has in mind authoring a book whose approach he mulls over often. “I want to break down colonialism with real experiences, but I want it to be approachable and accessible, communicating scholarship to the general population.” His aims for his book include locating structural inequities in history and treating people as the complex beings they are rather than as objects of study. For now, he is contributing, orally and in writing, to SCRA’s conversations about systemic racial inequities. But having the unique perspective of a black community psychologist who was raised in a lower economic class, he offers much more to the dialogue -- of race AND class inequities, especially in higher education. He asserts that college admissions’ diversity initiatives tend to favor minority applicants from affluent families. Dominique cites data showing that the more socially conscious, radical ethnic minority applicants are often screened out, and the kind of financial assistance needed by applicants without any family safety net is neither extended nor even recognized. “Educational institutions can be cruel reminders of your class. People tend to get uncomfortable when you connect race and class. Real social mobility involves having to do extra work to compensate for a rigged game. I could go on all day about how race, class, and education are all intertwined and the mess it creates.”

“IT is highly unlikely that someone from my neighborhood would ever end up earning a Ph.D.,” Dominique says. Yet, we have seen in the arc of his life story that several teachers recognized and nurtured Dominique’s prodigious inborn talent. He
even sports a tattoo that honors lifelong learning which he calls “the core of my life.” However, herein lies what Dominique terms the “cruelest joke”: His grandmother, Ella Thomas, died in his last semester at Morehouse, before he earned his B.A. (much less his Ph.D). During Christmas break in his senior year at Morehouse, he made his last visit to her, caring for her for a month, and she died shortly after. Nevertheless, Dominique more than fulfilled his promise to his cherished grandmother, by going as far as he could educationally.

Real Talk
Edited by Dominique Thomas, Independent Scholar and Allana Zuckerman, Mesa Community College

Community psychology graduate students occupy several roles in their institutions. This gives graduate students unique vantages to some of the underlying issues in higher education. Disparities in graduate programs, student mental health, and mentoring are key issues that graduate students may organize themselves around. In our time as graduate students, we walked the various tightropes of scholar/student-activist, student-researcher, lecturer, junior mentor, and student organizer. The typically isolating experience of graduate school is improved when students can find common cause to advocate for and with each other.

For our newest episode of The Community Psychologist Podcast, we invited Georgia State University graduate student Alesha Bond. Alesha is a doctoral student in the Cognitive Sciences program in the department of psychology. She previously co-wrote a TCP article discussing the organizing students engaged in to address issues of diversity and mentoring. We talked about the necessity of student organizing to push for change and the intersections of her research and organizing. Alesha shares some accomplishments, discusses the challenge of navigating power differentials, and provides advice to graduate student organizers.

We are always looking for additional topics and guests for future episodes. If there is a topic you would like to be featured in a future episode or if you would like to be a guest, please email tcp@scra27.org

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

The Rural IG column of TCP highlights rural resources as well as the work of community
psychologists and allied professionals in their rural environments. As of summer 2021, the column editor will transition to a new person to be identified at the SCRA virtual biennial.

**Brief Report: Rural as Healer**

*Written by Susana Helm, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa*

**Rural Rescue**

*Written by Susana Helm, University of Hawai‘i, HelmS@dop.hawaii.edu*

Rural spaces are healing spaces according to global sustainability initiatives (see the UN), in spite of the fact that rural and remote areas internationally remain medically underserved and rural people consistently rank higher in physical and mental health ailments. I continue to grapple with this juxtaposition – that (sub)urbanites withdraw rural assets to sustain life in the metropolis, and later deposit themselves in rural spaces to heal from urban ills without addressing the rural-urban inequities.

Rural as Healer is a social movement to elevate the value of forests, mountains, oceans, and lakes to rebalance the global climate crisis, and to save ourselves. Rural as Healer in contemporary society counteracts stress related to the past century of global mass migration from the symbiotic bucolic lifestyles possible in the countryside to industrial-urban centers. The pace and demands of (sub)urbanicity separate us from nature and encourage natural resource excesses. For overviews with an emphasis on shinrin-yoku: Florence Williams’ *The nature fix. Why nature makes us happier, healthier, and more creative* (2017); and from the Japanese Society for Forest Medicine Chairperson Dr. Qing Li’s *The Japanese art and science of shinrin-yoku, forest bathing. How trees can help you find health and happiness* (2018).

In prior Rural IG columns (see *TCP* 50-1, 51-1), I wrote about seeking refuge in rural areas by camping and hiking for extended periods. I have since realized that my fascination with nature is partly a product of awe, as described by Keltner and colleagues (Anderson, et al. 2018; Yaden et al. 2019; Zhang et al. 2016). My treks mirror the goals of montagnaterapia, a relatively intensive activity in which groups gain confidence and camaraderie via alpine hiking (Calzolari, 2020; Finelli, 2020; Giuliani, 2020). Montagnaterapia has gained popularity in Europe – for example it has been adopted by the medical service branch of the Club Alpino Italiano. Montagnaterapia improves the lives of people dealing with a variety of health challenges, ranging from youth with diabetes (Fontana, 2020) to adults recovering from substance use (Frigerio, 2020). Montagnaterapia appears to be less rigorously empirically validated relative to approaches like shinrin-yoku, though it builds on traditions of nature and adventure therapy.

A consequence of the past year pandemic lockdown was a rapid pivot to working in the zoomosphere. Early March 2020 our Research Division of about 25 faculty, students, and staff did a blitz purchase of laptops so everyone would be able to work from home. Prior to this we were ‘hot racking’ our desktops. With Spring 2021 bringing an easing, I wanted to kick-off a progressive “return-to-office” to coincide with Earth Day. Montagnaterapia was a bit extreme, so we opted for a shinrin-yoku inspired social distancing mini-retreat in the back of the valley in which our university resides. For my
final contribution as column editor, my colleagues and I share our experience with "rural as healer."

Psychiatry Research Division Mini-Retreat with Forest Bathing Hawai‘i.


Mahalo to our certified guide, Phyllis Look, from the Association of Nature & Forest Therapy Guides & Programs for hosting us at Lyon Arboretum in Mānoa from April 21-23, 2021. Over three days we organized in small groups of 5 to 9 people to abide by our state’s social distancing rules. We embarked on 2-hour restful jaunts in which Phyllis settled us in a series of invitations to immerse ourselves in the healing properties of nature - by bathing with all five senses in the ambience of the forest. Some of us were familiar with the science showing shinrin-yoku has numerous psychological benefits, ranging from improved cognitive functioning, less stress as measured by cortisol and blood pressure, to reduced depressive symptoms in subclinical populations, to improved functioning among veteran’s experiencing PTSD (Anderson et al. 2018; Bettmann, et al. 2020; Stier-Jarmer, et al. 2021, Tsunetsugu et al. 2010). Developed in the 1980s simultaneously to promote forest preservation and prevent urban office-related stress, shinrin-yoku has risen in prominence in the health care system of Japan (to the extent that some businesses opt for employee insurance packages inclusive of preventive forest therapy, see http://www.toppankenpo.or.jp/foresttherapy/ https://kyosainara.jp/pdf/sukoyaka/253/pdf/2018_04_11.pdf).

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<th>Post-Survey Question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Selected Quotes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking about the past month and any stress-anxiety-depressed mood, how has today's FBHi experience improved your feelings of wellbeing right now?</td>
<td>a sense of grounding, stress relief and calmness, and a sense of togetherness</td>
<td>● Before today I was feeling very 'in my head,' second guessing myself and my experiences and decisions. I feel returned to my body now.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research shows a single forest bathing encounter improves feelings of openness &amp; self-awareness. How did this aspect contribute to your wellbeing today?</td>
<td>Responses ranged from a minimum of “it helped a bit” to my “internal activities went through transformation”</td>
<td>● It reminded me to be present and still. To slow down my thoughts, observe my surroundings, and absorb the sounds, smells, colors, and feelings around me.</td>
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| In what ways might we incorporate shinrin-inspired activities in our work for our collective wellbeing? | Mindful/meditative practices; meeting in nature, regular nature retreats; place-based experience of nature; get outside & move; bring nature into office | ● Team meetings in nature (psst, we don't need computers all the time).  
● Being together outdoors for meetings if feasible – [our office building] is next to the ocean!  
● Dedicate a room to forest noises, smells, and visuals for meditative stress relief. |

Table 1. Reflections on Forest Bathing
Our group clearly benefitted from the FB experience as reflected in post-survey comments (N=17, see Table 1), as well as in the one-hour talk story debriefs about how to transfer these principles to our regular home and work life. In fact, several of us who “turn to nature & the outdoors for recreation/restoration/rejuvenation” on an annual or monthly basis have decided to be in relationship with nature each week as a result of the mini-retreat. The FB mini-retreat served to inspire us in two ways – gratitude and relationships. We collectively expressed gratitude for the experience of forest bathing in the moment and for sharing time in-person with co-workers and friends who have scarcely been seen since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Congregating safely in a natural setting improved our moods, leaving us to reflect on the importance of strengthening relationships - with one’s loved ones, one’s self, or the natural world. The theme of reconnecting was important to us, as expressed in our desire to spend more time with loved ones in the great outdoors, the importance of self-care and taking breaks from work, and wonderment and admiration for the beauty of the natural world.

Overall, the forest bathing experience illustrated the importance of our bond with one another and with the natural world. At the time of this writing, one month since our FB mini-retreat, we have held walk-n-talks in the park rather than zooming from home, organized meetings in outdoor spaces on campus, and have ordered hotspots so we can untether from our desks for designated work-at-wa`ahila (state forest) days.

References
Regional News
Submitted by Regional Coordinators

News from Canada
Written by Natalie Kivell, Wilfrid Laurier University

As the new Canada regional chair, I am ready and excited to support and grow our longstanding Community Psychology community in Canada! In this new role I will be re-launching our TCP regional updates and directing energy towards amplifying and reconnecting our vibrant network of Canadian practitioners, faculty, students, and alumni!

Since taking on this position in 2020 I have been in conversation with faculty at our three long standing CP programs in Canada (Wilfrid Laurier University, Université du Québec à Montréal, and the University of Ottawa) and have been able to connect into work that is already happening and co-imagine what it will look like going forward. In the coming year we have plans to:

- **Identify graduate and undergraduate student representatives from each program** to develop and sustain a Canadian CP student network. If you are an undergraduate or graduate student in a CP program and are interested in getting involved please connect with at nkivell@wlu.ca
- **Host a regional gathering in summer 2021 (Date TBD).** This gathering will bring together students, practitioners, and faculty in a digital social hour, with networking and relationship building opportunities along with space for planning and skill sharing. More information will be shared on the SCRA listserve and through Canadian networks.

- **Share quarterly updates and news from the Canadian region.** If you, your CP program, research institute, community-based organization, or other community network has news, updates, awards, or knowledge and projects to be mobilized please connect at nkivell@wlu.ca

It is with pleasure that we look to grow our Canadian network, along with our connections and relationships with the global CP community.

Self-Help and Mutual Support Interest Group
Edited by Thomasina Borkman, George Mason University and Ronald Harvey, American University in Bulgaria

New Beginnings, Part 3: Membership Declines with Internet growth
Written by Carol Randolph, New Beginnings, Thomasina Borkman, George Mason University

[Carol Randolph, founder of New Beginnings (NB) continues her narrative (story) of how the group became organized, grew and evolved in functions over the last 41 years in this second installment. The third and final installment will discuss how the internet affected New Beginnings as well as other self-help support groups and relate New Beginnings’ journey to that of other similar groups. Contact: NewBCarol@verizon.net and www.newbeginningsusa.org]
This third installment about New Beginnings, the now nearly 42-year-old self-help support group for people undergoing divorce describes growth and changes in the organization between the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s before the Internet and as the Internet became accessible and pervasive. This installment is presented as a conversation between the founder Carol Randolph and Thomasina Borkman.

Carol: As membership grew in the late 1980s and early 1990s, so did the number of discussion meetings to accommodate the demand. With 40+ meetings/month, all in different members’ homes, the newsletter became unwieldy. We divided the group into two separate chapters, Maryland/DC and Virginia. Each chapter had its own committee structure and newsletter.

We also created Supplemental Support Groups—special interest groups (e.g., men, women, people under and over 50) to help people identify other members with specific shared concerns. Supplemental Support Groups were member-initiated and member-driven, and only members could attend.

In 1986 a group of members separated or divorced longer than three years created the Supplemental Support Group, 3+. It grew in popularity with its own newsletter and separate membership until its end in 1997 due to a decline in participation. Discussion topics were actually much the same as our regular programming, but because participants were farther along in their healing, the perspective was different. They were beyond the raw, early stages and ready to move on in life.

In 1987, we created ONE+ONE, a couples’ group for past and present NB members that offered the same NB format of discussions and social events, with the goal of fostering healthy relationships. At least one member of the couple had to be or have been a member of NB. It was a novel concept to have both partners in the same room at the same time, talking candidly about issues affecting their relationship. I consulted with a local psychologist to help us create a safe and supportive framework for couples to engage in peer support. It lasted 16 years, ending in 2003.

By 1992, we were running eight meetings on three topics each in MD each month (24), plus 16 meetings/month in VA. In 1995, we offered a total of 42 meetings/month, often MD and VA on the same night, sometimes an “upstairs/downstairs” to accommodate the numbers if the host had space, and if we could book another facilitator. In 1997, we were still mailing printed newsletters; we had “mailing parties” each month to collate, fold, staple and label over 1500 newsletters and prepare them for bulk mail; our first email newsletter was Jan 2007. Membership peaked in 1997 at 1450; today it is under 100.

Certainly, people are still getting divorced; they still want to connect with others. We continue to hear “NB saved my life.” But the exhilaration of the 1980s and 1990s is gone. I’m curious why this happened and whether similar changes occurred in other self-help support groups.

Thomasina: Thank you, Carol, for giving me the opportunity to present your data and discuss it within the context of research on other self-help support groups. As you just indicated, NB could have specialized groups when the numbers were large—a typical characteristic of specialization. I’m often struck by how many generalists there are in rural areas—not enough people to have specializations. Rural areas are also more likely to have self-help support groups for general
categories such as cancer or arthritis rather than specialist groups for breast cancer or juvenile arthritis.

I compiled your data on average number of attendees per year and average number of discussion meetings in both Northern Virginia and Maryland/DC per year into four time periods (1991-1994, 1995-1999, 2000-2004, and 2005-2009) and Ron Harvey made it into charts. Let’s look first at the changes in the number of discussion meetings.

In 1991 there were 433 discussion meetings between Northern Virginia and DC/Maryland which declined to 79 meetings per year by 2010. As you see from the chart, the number of discussion meetings did not decline much during the 1990s but fell precipitously around the end of the century and then continued a sharp decline until 2010. The number of attendees at meetings per year followed a similar pattern of decline as the number of meetings as shown in the following chart.

Again, one sees a small decline during the 1990s followed by a sharp decrease at the turn of the Century and then a continuing decline to 2010. These declines are the obverse of the rise in access, reach, and prevalence of the Internet and the introduction and rise of social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Carol, I am interested in your opinion of how the Internet and social media affected NB --both the benefits and downsides.

**Carol:** Somewhere in the late 1990’s, everything changed. Online dating sites fueled the notion that “All I need is a new partner; the problem with my marriage had nothing to do with me.” People could bypass the hard work of recovery by jumping into a new relationship. Unfortunately, without knowing what happened in the marriage and learning the skills necessary to keep it from happening again, unhealthy patterns are likely to repeat. So membership in NB became an either/or with online dating sites. It’s really a both/and: support to grieve and heal from the end of a marriage before entering a new relationship.

The Internet made it possible to meet people, a lot of people, without leaving your house. People were busy. They didn’t have TIME to get dressed up, go somewhere and spend several hours where they were likely to meet only one or two people if they were lucky. Email made it easy to connect quickly, to put together a group to do something on short notice. People didn’t need a membership organization to do that for them.

**Thomasina:** Your experience seems to coincide with comments in the self-help support research community, stating that in-person groups were losing members who joined groups on the Internet...
after 2000. Can you talk some more about the impact of the Internet?

Carol: Our first website was launched in 2003, the second in 2008, and the current one in 2013. Our Facebook page was created in April 2009. In 2007 we joined Meetup, an online site that allows anyone to set up a group of any kind, often at no cost for members. It was intended as a portal to the parent organization. Only some of our events were listed, without actual locations since those were in members’ homes; people had to contact me for details. Membership grew to 400+ by 2014, but few ever RSVPed to anything, and those that did were often no-shows. One person belonged to 87 Meetup groups; no one could actively participate in that many groups. As soon as I instituted a $5 annual membership fee in 2014—mainly to help cover the cost of maintaining the site—the number of members plummeted to under 10. It is extra work, and the income doesn’t cover the cost (now $200/year), but it remains another avenue of promotion.

The Internet has created an abundance of possibility—so much of it that it is increasingly difficult to keep up. Where once I printed and mailed one newsletter/month, now I am doing the equivalent of 5—a monthly one followed by weekly “reminder” emails of coming events. People used to mark their calendars and plan ahead. Now telling them once is not enough; they need to be told over and over again. A definite plus about email, though, is the virtual elimination of printing and postage costs. Bulk mailings for fundraising or major events can be done by one person and cost little or nothing.

Promotional opportunities have also exploded—Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Alignable, to name just a few. Larger nonprofits have full-time staff devoted to maintaining and promoting their presence on social media.

Thomasina: Another hypothesis I have is that as divorce has become more commonplace since the 1980s in the US, it is less stigmatized (see Gerstel, 1987) and there are more people who have been divorced. These people are families and friends of others undergoing divorce now and can be supportive to them, thereby somewhat reducing the need for a special divorce support group. So fewer divorcing people may seek out a support group.

Carol: Actually, I think there will always be a need for support groups of all kinds. Cancer is widespread, and almost everyone knows at least
one person who has had it, but when it happens to you, it’s all new and terrifying. If those people are lucky enough to have survived it, they may not be actively dealing with it now. The professionals they consulted may not even be practicing anymore. A support group is a community of others who are actively wrestling with the same issues, seeking the same professional help, and—in the case of divorce—navigating the same laws and court systems. They are eager to help each other and rarely tire—as even the best-intentioned friends and family may—of listening and offering their own wisdom in response.

I don’t have a definitive answer as to why interest has declined. If we had more money, would we be able to do more publicity and outreach? If we had staff, could we do more with social media or pursue grants? Is the interest still there, and we just haven’t been able to tap it, or is there a bigger social movement at work?

Thomasina: Tell me about the public education program you created.

Carol: Divorce 101 is our signature public education program—a 6-week series about the divorce process in Maryland, offered twice a year since 2013 and targeted for people contemplating or in the early stages of separation. I’m very proud of it and expect it to last even if the discussion meetings stop.

Each session is two hours and covers some aspect of the process—grounds for divorce, approaches (like litigation, mediation, Collaborative Divorce), spousal and child support, the marital home and retirement accounts, therapy, and support groups. For $10/session or $50 for all six, participants have access to 13 of the top family law professionals in the area. They can choose which sessions interest them, and there is time between to digest the material. We are so lucky to have the full support of the professional community to make this happen.

Thomasina: I would like to end by complimenting you, Carol! New Beginnings is remarkable for its unusually long longevity—nearly 42 years! The little research I could find about the longevity of what are called “Life Stress” support groups, of which NB is one, was two to three years. Life stress refers to relatively short-term problems such as breastfeeding/infant care, grieving widowhood, or divorce that people work through in several years (see Maton and others, 1989). In contrast, addictions such as alcoholism or other substance use disorders are chronic diseases that last for decades, which is the case with their self-help support groups such as AA or Women for Sobriety. Research found that member-initiated life stress groups usually lasted two or three years and then disbanded or turned into a social club (see Chaudhray and others, 2010). NB as a founder-initiated and maintained support group that has had your devoted attention for nearly 42 years and has far surpassed the predicted lifespan! Congratulations on totally breaking longevity records!

References
Many believe that the best way to “help” people with disabilities is to give them a separate space where their specific needs can be met. It was only in 1975 that the Education for Handicapped Act guaranteed all people with disabilities the right to public education (Kirby, 2017). By 2014, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 132,000 students with disabilities were receiving assistance from the federal special education program (Rogers & Johnson, 2018). Despite this law, stigma and inequality persist and contribute negatively to the learning of students with learning disabilities (LD). Inclusive classrooms provide meaningful and accessible education for students with disabilities consisting of appropriate accommodations that allow students to gain access to the general education curriculum (Agran et. al., 2014). Within general classrooms, stigma continues to harm the social-emotional health and academic ability of students with LD and has stalled the implementation of instructional and classroom-environmental changes that would produce a truly inclusive classroom setting for all students.

Background

There is strong empirical evidence to support that inclusive classrooms are more conducive to the social, behavioral, and academic success of students with LD. A study in which eight matched pairs of students with LD were cross-examined in general and special education classrooms concluded that students observed in general classrooms displayed significantly higher levels of communicative interaction than their matched peers in the special education classroom (Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, & Pascoe, 2004). Furthermore, their levels of communication increased with classroom aides and their peers, which facilitated positive connections and the building of social skills. These findings are corroborated by Fisher and Meyer’s two-year longitudinal study conducted in 2002 which looked at 40 students with LD. It was found that when in a general classroom, students with LD achieved higher levels of social competence and social-emotional wellbeing (Rogers & Johnson, 2018). Based on this evidence, inclusive classrooms support the social-emotional learning of students with LD to a greater degree than special classrooms.

However, we continuously see arguments against inclusive practices based on the faulty assumption that inclusive classrooms are not conducive learning environments for students with LD. This has been shown to be false, as students with LD were found to be more awake, alert, and report higher levels of conceptual activity (i.e., academic tasks such as literacy and numeracy) when in inclusive classrooms (Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, & Pascoe, 2004). Additionally, when in an inclusive classroom, students with LD scored higher in math, science, language arts, and social studies compared to students with LD attending a school where special education classrooms were used (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). Despite the evidence supporting inclusion, general education classrooms fail to meet the proposed definition of an inclusive classroom. This can be partially attributed to the unwillingness of administrations to restructure classrooms, ongoing stigma, and the labeling effect.

Why General Classrooms Are Not Inclusive Classrooms

There is a general consensus among the literature examined that inclusive classrooms are beneficial for students with LD. The pressure from disability activists pushed policymakers to pass laws requiring that “students with disabilities (a) are provided a free appropriate public education (b) are educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate, (c) participate and make progress in the general education curriculum, and (d) are educated in the least restrictive
environment” (Agran et al., 2020, p.6). With this said, why does there continue to be a lack of inclusive classrooms and limited success of students that are in general classrooms? Agran and his colleagues discuss and dissect the determinants that inhibit the success of inclusive classrooms and the lack thereof such classrooms. Despite the evidence suggesting the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms, “policymakers are either uninterested or unwilling to make substantive changes in placement practices” (Agran et al., 2020, p. 5). This unwillingness comes from the assumption that students with LD are inherently flawed, and policymakers falsely assume that they must be kept in special education classrooms to compensate for their disability (Kirby, 2017).

Agran et al. (2020) identified six determinants of classroom placement of students with LD; we will be focusing specifically on perceptions of competency and resulting placement policies, and biases. Perceptions of competency lead to struggles with placement policies. It is implied that students with LD require specialized settings and teachers in order to succeed. This results in people not treating “students as individuals but rather as members of a generic category” (Agran et al., 2020, p.6). This falls in line with what is known about labeling theory, “that labels produce stigma by altering others’ perception and legitimizing stratification” (Shifrer, 2013, p. 463). In other words, labeling causes people to only see students with LD as their learning disability, meaning they are no longer viewed as part of the general population but a separate group, and as such should be kept separate. Thus, separate classrooms reinforce the faulty assumption that a learning disability is a negative attribute that requires separation from the general population.

Even within general classrooms, students with LD are affected by how they are labeled. Biases held by parents and teachers shape the perceptions and labels of students with LD. Some educators actually fear needing to teach and accommodate students with LD under the assumption that these students are not capable of academic achievements (Downing, 2008). Once a child is labeled as disabled, the student is treated differently from non-LD peers. Parents and teachers have lower academic expectations for students with LD than their peers who achieve similar academic success (Shifrer, 2013). Comparing higher education goals, 82% of teachers had lower expectations for students with LD predicting that they would achieve no college education, with parent’s expectations being 43% lower (Shifrer, 2013). According to labeling theory (Shifrer, 2013), perceptions of others, including parents and teachers, cause the labeled group’s behavior to align with what the label portrays them as. In the case of students with LD, this manifests in lower levels of academic achievements as expected by teachers and parents. This results in unsatisfactory grades and test scores that are by default attributed to the learning disability. The biases possessed by teachers and parents negatively impact the academic achievements of students with LD and prevent teachers from looking at the student’s potential instead of just their disability.

Because learning disabilities continue to be stigmatized, students with LD have worse mental-emotional health than students without LD at the same level of academic achievement even in general classrooms (Lackaye & Margalit, 2006). Students with LD reported significantly lower levels of hope, self-efficacy, and a less positive mood compared to their peers (Lackaye & Margalit, 2006). How students with LD are treated in schools and the stigma that exists not only impacts academic abilities but also emotional health. Lackaye and Margalit (2006) found that social-emotional profiles, including self-efficacy, act as significant predictors for the effort investment of students with LD which is linked to their academic performance. This shows that self-efficacy has been linked to effort investment, meaning that when students with LD perceive themselves to be incompetent (which according to Shifrer (2013) can partially be attributed to the low expectations of teachers and parents), students with LD invest less effort into the assignment resulting in lower academic performance. The stigma surrounding learning disabilities affects how these students perceive themselves and can be damaging to
mental health and self-efficacy. When parents and teachers fail to recognize the stigma affecting students with LD, it prevents them from facilitating a truly inclusive classroom setting in which students with LD can succeed.

**Proposed Interventions**

Moving forward, there are clear evidence-based instructional practices that have shown great success and accommodation for students with LD. These practices are recommended by the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion. They have distinguished five evidence-based practices that have been effective for accommodating students with LD in general classrooms: (1) Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices, (2) micro-switches, (3) embedded instruction, (4) specialized instruction, and (5) wait time (Rogers & Johnson, 2018). These strategies align with three overarching psychosocial mechanisms: identity, competence, and experience of body and mind. These practices allow for students with LD to be autonomous in the classroom. They are able to develop competence and fully participate in the learning experience just like their non-LD peers. These interventions alone are not enough to create a fully inclusive classroom; rather, they should be supplemented by the five key environmental aspects: structures and organization, peers, adults, space, and objects (Arakelyan, et al., 2019). It is imperative that the practices reflect positive psychosocial skills and are conducted in a safe supportive environment for both students with and without LDs. These components take into consideration what implementations will best support students with LD, changing general classrooms into inclusive classrooms.

Keeping with the practices, mechanisms, and environmental aspects, here are a few accommodations that uphold these standards. First, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices are small tools that allow for other modes of communication by students whose disabilities make it difficult for them to communicate in traditional forms of verbal language. This practice works best with a highly qualified paraprofessional to help facilitate both the student and their peers, helping them understand how these accommodating devices work (Rogers & Johnson, 2018). Similar to AAC devices are micro-switches. Micro-switches are another simple practice that gives students with LD the opportunity to participate and respond in class through an alternative, such as eye movements or cues that give the students control of their environment to the extent to which they are comfortable participating (Roger & Johnson, 2018). Both of these practices would fall under objects vital within the environment for learning and within the psychosocial mechanism of identity and competence. It is imperative that students with LD are able to communicate and participate in a way that not only makes them feel valued as a member of the classroom but equally as capable as their peers. Identity and competence go hand-in-hand with how well students perform. It has been noted that both students with LD and non-LD students perform and behave better when they feel like they are capable of doing so (Arakelyan et al., 2019).

In addition to AAC devices and micro-switches, teachers should implement embedded instruction, in which teachers adjust their method of giving instructions to ensure that all students can understand what is being taught and what is expected of them (Rogers & Johnson, 2018). Here, the psychosocial mechanism of competence is enhanced by structural and organizational changes in the environment through the implementation of embedded instruction (Arakelyan et al., 2019; Rogers & Johnson, 2018). Students with LD typically have difficulty learning and understanding instructions that have been standardized. Embedded instruction works with paraprofessionals or support staff to provide “multiple trials of the skill throughout natural routines rather than all at once within the context of the subject” (Roger & Johnson, 2018, p. 6). This practice is specifically structured to be ‘embedded’ and prevent disruption of ‘normal’ flow within the class, disputing claims of disruption and lack of flexibility for such implementation. Specialized design instruction is similar to embedded instruction, as it targets adjusting the context of the material to be more relatable. This works to change the learning experience with the
support of adults and peers. Material is also flexible within these more specialized contexts so that each student may do what is best for their learning style in the general classroom environment (Rogers & Johnson, 2018).

The final evidence-based instructional practice is wait time. Wait time requires that the teacher simply provide students with LD a moment to process and formulate their response without feeling the pressure to respond quickly, giving them the chance to participate. This also prevents learned helplessness, a common effect when students with LD are unable to respond to questions in a timely manner and become accustomed to not participating due to their slow response. There is abundant evidence suggesting that adults (i.e., teachers and staff) are fundamental players in creating opportunities for participation and in shaping the quality, regularity, and range of the student’s role by showing positive attitudes and being sympathetic to their needs (Arakelyan et al., 2019). This is a technique that works to change the learning experience with the support of adults and peers.

Conclusion

These recommendations can make an immediate impact, but for true change to occur, the structure of the special education system in the United States will need to change. The stigma surrounding people with LD is deeply ingrained and will take time and conscious effort to change. The first step in this process is acknowledging what research has already shown—inclusive classrooms are necessary and wholly beneficial for students with LD. Stigma continues to harm students with LD within general classrooms, limiting their academic abilities and harming their emotional health. For these classrooms to become truly inclusive, instructional practices and environmental aspects need to be altered, allowing students with LD to utilize their accommodations to the full extent and participate in a manner that is equal to that of their non-LD peers. It must be understood that people with LD are not the problem in need of solving, it is the systems held in place by the stigma that must be fixed. Only by addressing this stigma can the United States public school system finally achieve full inclusion of students with learning disabilities.

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References


**SCRA News**

*Edited by Dominique Thomas, Independent Scholar*

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**John Lamont Peterson (1949–2021)**

Professor Emeritus John Lamont Peterson died unexpectedly of natural causes May 23, 2021, at the age of 72. He had served on the Faculty of Georgia State University’s Department of Psychology until his retirement in 2015. Born April 22, 1949, in Orlando, Florida, he was the only child of John Sheppard Peterson and Maggie Peterson, now deceased. His domestic partner, Lupin Loughborough, died in 1993. He is survived by his cousins Tracy Anderson and Julia Diggle and other relatives in Florida, Georgia, Michigan, California, Pennsylvanian, New York, and New Jersey.

He graduated with honors from Jones High School in Orlando and attended summer studies at Harvard University. He graduated from Florida A & M University in 1970 and earned his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1974. His mentor was James Jackson, one of the most eminent African American psychologists of the last half century, known for his studies on the impact of racial disparities on minority health and for his many professional contributions.

John likewise had enjoyed a long and distinguished academic career and was known for his many contributions to understanding the predictors of HIV/AIDS risk reduction, the effects of behavioral interventions to reduce this risk behavior, and the social determinants of racial disparities in HIV infection, primarily among Black men who have sex with men. He was a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and of the Society for Community Research and Action, included in Florida A & M University’s Gallery of Distinction, a Horace H. Rackham Prize Fellow at the University of Michigan; and he served as a member of the National Academies of Science–Institute of Medicine’s Committee on LGBT Health Research.

After teaching at Claremont’s McKenna College and Graduate School in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and realizing in particular the growing impact of the early AIDS epidemic on African American men, he joined the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS), a key program of the AIDS Research Institute at the University of California, San Francisco, where he served as a Research Scientist from 1986 to 1993. In 1994 he joined the Department of Psychology’s Community Program at Georgia State University, first as an Associate Professor, then as a full Professor from 2003 until his retirement. He leaves a record of over 70 publications, nearly 20 books and book chapters, and over 100 conference presentations,
many with students he mentored. He collaborated widely, not just with his colleagues at CAPS, but also with colleagues at the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, and on projects with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He was known for his active mentoring of Black social and behavioral scientists and was among the most respected researchers on the Black HIV experience, influencing protocols on how to pursue outreach and reduce infection among African American men.

He leaves behind a wide circle of friends in the academic research community nationally; many friends in the HIV/AIDS and gay activist community in Atlanta; friends in Black and White Men Together, especially the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Atlanta chapters. The National Association of BWMT had planned to present John its Lifetime Achievement Award at its 40th Convention in New Orleans this July; it will now do so posthumously.

He also leaves behind all those who loved Leontyne Price, spirited conversation, and an orderly, kempt desk as much as he did.

APA Election Results

The following message is sent on behalf of Susan Torres -Harding.

Dear SCRA members:

We are pleased to announce the results of the SCRA elections for the offices of president-elect and member-at-large.

Yvette Flores was elected to be our next president-elect, and Dawn Henderson was elected to be our newest member-at-large. Both will start their terms in August during the annual APA convention. Yvette is a professor of Chicana/o Studies at the University of California Davis. Dawn is the Director of Research at Village of Wisdom, a community-based organization that supports family organizing and advocacy to eliminate racial injustice in schools. Please see their candidate statements (attached) for more information about their professional backgrounds and exemplary accomplishments to date. Congratulations to Yvette and Dawn, and we look forward to having them join the SCRA leadership!

Susan

SCRA Reparations Interest Group

On the heels of Black Maternal Health Week and Infertility Awareness Week, I recently shared a personal story of financial trauma and racial-gender health disparities experienced by Black Americans battling infertility. Racial-economic oppression is the cornerstone of mass inaccessibility to high quality, culturally responsive health care and it’s killing Black Americans. As America continues to collectively experience the impact of COVID-19 and police brutality, Black Americans still struggle to pay for resources to address past and present health and racial trauma in today’s socio-cultural climate.

I challenge the members of this great organization to offer community, collaboration and conceptualization of US reparations alongside the Biden Administration with the formation of a US Reparations Study Interest Group. Community Psychologists looking to ‘uproot white supremacy’ are essential to the study of financial, health and educational equity opportunities for descendants of African slaves, specifically within the higher education institutions we serve. To focus the SCRA community on multiple dimensions of Black diversity, personal wellness, and access to related resources, a comprehensive, ecological US reparations recommendation plan should materialize; the kind of plan that only a Community Psychologist coalition could design. Liberation is hard to maintain for Black communities because America financially benefits from Black oppression and labor. Its citizens have historically, deliberately and repeatedly destroyed what was built by these communities. A SCRA Reparations work group could be helpful in dismantling this American oppression and would support advancement of the Biden reparations study.
In brainstorming with other Community Psychologists and in processing the deaths of unarmed Chicago 13 year old Adam Toledo, 20 year old unarmed father, Daunte Wright along with processing the televised trial of Derek Chauvin and conviction for the murder of George Floyd, we realize that America can no longer afford to avoid, escape or postpone the urgency of racial justice at the expense of the most targeted. It was clear that broader conversations inclusive of more SCRA members for community collaboration, participation and a sense of empowerment would be most helpful. As Community Psychologists with privileges, resources, global perspective and empirical analysis skill sets in self-determination, community strength and resilience, who better to lead this work?

I do realize that just saying the WORD reparations is somewhat taboo for some, uncomfortable for others and representative of a stigmatized government handout. On the contrary, centering US reparations truly focuses on decentralizing colonialism and white pathology by dismantling the most powerful tools and resources for those that have been systematically snuffed out. Researchers, professors, NFP leaders and policy changers within our organization cannot shrink away from the current socio-cultural climate and the US economic system is rooted in white supremacy, brutality, and educational-economic oppression of Black Americans. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness has remained unnavigable for many African descendants and liberation and equity actions have already been deferred or defeated with violent opposition. If not now for US Reparations, when?

SCRA has the power to create a sense of connectedness, accountability and conceptualization of US reparations for ecological, comprehensive, sustainable and ATTAINABLE recommendations. We have seen evidence in both public and private Black wealth and opportunity policies. I believe Community Psychologists are more equipped than private conglomerates or government entities to do this task.

US Reparations is not a pipe dream meant to be invalidated by the privileged for the disregard of the marginalized. It represents potential freedom and accessibility for Black communities if US reparations are defined in our lifetime and not left to yet another generation due to silence, fear, capitalism, and misogyny. Community Psychologists could be sharing grounded research and innovative work in a dedicated workspace tasked while defining the components of US reparations, alongside the HR40 coalition.

I am reaching out to our Listserv to determine if there are other interested members willing to provide signatures and participate in the establishment of a SCRA ad hoc US reparations Study work group. Please join me in becoming the type of change that provides Black Americans with true investment in social justice and freedom from American slavery and oppression.

Here is the link to sign up:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfGHjMwv6CuYWheb-kwD2l6GBFGVlzRhyD7i895-8FpFlUwp/viewform

In Solidarity,

Vanessa Goodar
PhD Candidate, National-Louis University

SCRA Finances Info Session

Did you miss the SCRA Finances Info Session for Members hosted by our Treasurer Jim Cook? Log in to www.scra27.org to review the video and presentation. Here is the link

https://www.scra27.org/who-we-are/leadership/budget-and-finance/
Book Club Discussion Invitation - Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?

The Andrew Young Center for Global Leadership, in collaboration with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection-Morehouse College, invites you to join a timely discussion on Dr. King’s text, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* This book remains relevant more than fifty years after it was written. We have an incredible lineup of thought leaders and look forward to an inspiring and productive conversation. If you are able, please read the book or check out the audible version, in advance of the session. The virtual event will take place on Tuesday June 29th at 7p EST. Please register here [https://bit.ly/3uQOSbb](https://bit.ly/3uQOSbb).

Call for Papers for a Special Issue
Racial reckoning, resistance and the revolution:
A call to community psychology to move forward

The American Journal of Community Psychology (AJCP) will accept manuscripts for a special issue of the journal, to be published in 2022. The rationale of the Special Issue for AJCP underscores the need for community psychology and other allied disciplines to address two pandemics facing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The first pandemic, represents racial reckoning, which is defined as the subjugation of BIPOC to racial hierarchies and subordinate groups that influence health, educational, financial, physical, and social outcomes across the developmental lifespan as well as generations (Corral, 2020; Kwon & Kposowa, 2017; Xu & Lee, 2013). The second pandemic, Coronavirus (COVID-19), cast light on the lasting healthcare disparities, with BIPOC communities representing a substantial percentage of infections and deaths (CDC, 2020a; 2020b; Egede & Walker, 2020; Novacek et al, 2020; Price-Haywood, et al., 2020; Rodriguez-Diaz, et al, 2020; Thakur, et al., 2020). To address the two pandemics, Bernal and colleagues (2020) stress the importance for community psychologists and allied fields to discuss and confront how racial hierarchies and supremacy manifest within community psychology and the broader society.
More specifically, this special issue will focus on centering BIPOC amidst two pandemics: Anti-BIPOC and COVID19. The special issue will address the following questions: How does the concept of racial hierarchy obstruct community psychologists from investigating racial inequalities and the differential experiences of BIPOC? How do tenets of community psychology unknowingly promote racial hierarchies in teaching, research, and practice? In what ways and why did two pandemics ignite the field of community psychology to examine anti-BIPOC racism in teaching, research, and practice? What are the political implications of claims made about anti-racism and community psychology? What role does the idea of White fragility play in community psychology and allied fields moving forward and healing from historical inequalities?

We invite you to contribute your research to our Special Issue on Two Pandemics: Racial Reckoning and COVID-19. Submissions can fall into one of these five categories:

1. Original empirical research on either Racial Reckoning and/or COVID-19
2. Review articles conducting a systematic review and/or meta-analysis on either Racial Reckoning and/or COVID-19
3. Personal Narratives and Reflections on either Racial Reckoning and/or COVID-19
4. Teaching pedological papers on either Racial Reckoning and/or COVID-19
5. Community practice successes on either Racial Reckoning and/or COVID-19

To be considered for the special issue, interested authors should send a 1000-word abstract to Pamela Martin (ppmartin@mailbox.sc.edu) by August 6, 2021. Submissions should contain a title, author(s) name(s), affiliation(s), and an abstract. Please note identifying information (i.e., name and affiliation) should be submitted as a separate document. All final submissions should follow the journal’s author guidelines and submit manuscripts using the authors’ portal https://www.editorialmanager.com/ajcp/default.aspx

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References


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**SCRA Membership**

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

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

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**TCP Submission Guidelines**

TCP is published four times a year. Articles, columns, features, and announcements should be submitted as Word attachments in an e-mail message to Dominique Thomas and Allana Zuckerman at [TCP@scra27.org](mailto:TCP@scra27.org). Submission deadlines are:

- February 15th – Spring issue
- May 15th – Summer issue
- August 15th – Fall issue
- November 15th – Winter issue

Authors should adhere to the following guidelines when submitting materials:

- **Length:** Five pages, double-spaced
- **No cover sheet or title page.** Please be sure to put the article title and author names and organizational affiliations at the top of the article.
- **Graphs & Tables:** These should be converted and saved as pictures in JPEG files. Please
note where they should be placed in the article.

- Images: Images are highly recommended, but please limit to two images per article. Images should be higher than 300 dpi. If images need to be scanned, please scan them at 300 dpi and save them as JPEGs. Submit the image(s) as a separate file.
- Margins: 1” margins on all four sides
- Text: *Times New Roman, 12-point font* – this includes headings and titles and subheadings.
- Alignment: All text should be aligned to the left (including titles) with a .5” paragraph indentation.
- Punctuation Spacing: Per APA guidelines, make sure that there is only one space after periods, question marks, etc.
- Do NOT include footnotes or endnotes.
- References: Follow APA guidelines. These should also be justified to the left with a hanging indent of .25”.
- Headers/Footer: Do not use headers and footers.
- Please put your email information and an invitation to contact you into the article.
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