From the President
Jim Cook
University of North Carolina, Charlotte

Helping SCRA Make a Difference

The work of SCRA occurs in our committees and interest groups (IGs). While some are very active and engage our members, some of our largest IGs or committees had become inactive. I’ve been working to find new chairs, and chairs of committees and IGs are being given the contact information for new members who express interest in their committee/IG, so they can contact and engage them. If you haven’t become involved, there’s no time like the present to be a part of the work of the Society.

One nice thing about being president is that I learn about ways that our members are making a difference. Using the organizing structure your Executive Committee (EC) is using for strategic planning purposes, I want to highlight some of this work.

Supporting and Engaging our Academic Programs

Listed on our web site are 44 doctoral programs, 27 masters programs, and 3 undergraduate programs providing training in community psychology. Compared to the numbers listed in the 2007 TCP there are fewer clinical-community programs, and more programs labeled “community psychology” at both the doctoral and masters levels. To help strengthen our graduate programs, the Council on Education Programs (CEP) and Council on Community Psychology Practice (CCPP) are jointly working to develop “Guiding Principles for Education in Community Psychology,” to help specify core competencies that students can expect to develop. In addition, American University in Cairo and Pacifica Graduate Institute are participating in a pilot consultation effort to help strengthen the development of practice competencies in their students.

To help attract more students to our graduate programs, SCRA members attended Graduate School Fairs across the country sponsored by Idealist.org, informing over 400 prospective graduate students who are interested in making a “positive social impact” about CP. We’re also sending information to Psi Chi members to inform them of graduate training and careers in CP. Talk to your department’s Psi Chi advisor to see if there are ways you can attract undergraduates to CP. Let us know of other ways we can support our training programs.

Supporting our Member’s Career and Professional Development

SCRA should serve as a professional home for our members, providing opportunities to develop and be successful as community psychologists. A new Early Career Task Force has developed a Mentor Conversation Series, and an Early Career Award has been created to foster our newer members’ development. The pre-conference workshops before the Biennial have been very successful, and we’ve had discussions about providing additional training during the “off year,” perhaps as part of the APA convention. As we see increased activity of our IGs and Committees, we should have additional opportunities for our members to collaborate and become more successful. Are there other ways we can support you? Let us know!

Increasing Our Impact, as Individuals and as a Society

We become community psychologists so we can learn a set of skills that enable us to make a difference. We want our Society - SCRA - to make
a difference too, and to help us, as individuals, effect positive change in our communities. To help increase our impact, we’ve developed a policy grant program, which is providing $5,000 for each of three members to support their work on local and state policies. We also have a new Community Mini-Grant program that is supporting up to 10 members’ community change efforts. We’ll see how these pilot efforts work and decide if we want to continue or expand them. SCRA has also signed an “Open Letter to the DSM-5 Committee,” which objects to proposed changes in the DSM that could adversely affect vulnerable populations. We’ve developed processes to facilitate SCRA’s adoption of policy positions, and are currently reviewing policy statements for possible adoption. Think about applying for one of these grants, and let us know about other ways we could effect change.

Increasing our Visibility

We cannot afford to continue as a “stealth” discipline. In addition to informing undergraduates and prospective graduate students about CP, we need to have a better presence at APA and among potential employers. We’ve recently been included in a new version of an APA publication on careers in psychology, that previously included evolutionary psychology and engineering psychology, but not community. We’ve made a concerted effort to have our work highlighted in the APA Monitor. In addition, Beth Shinn is giving a plenary address at the National Institute for Teaching of Psychology, to inform instructors and textbook authors and publishers about CP. We’re working to invite Psi Chi members to our regional conferences, as a way of introducing them to CP. And a “value proposition,” articulating the skill sets that community psychologists can bring to the workplace, continues to be disseminated to help employers see why they should hire community psychologists. We all need to take responsibility for letting others know that we are community psychologists, particularly the press and public officials.

Much is happening to strengthen SCRA and to make a difference. And we want you to be involved. Become part of an IG. Join a committee. Work together with your fellow members to effect change. Let us know how SCRA can be more helpful to you and support your work. Send me a note at jcook@uncc.edu and let me know what you think. We’re starting to engage in some strategic planning efforts, focusing on how we can advance these four foci over the next few years. We’ll be asking for your input. I hope you’ll become an active member of SCRA and help make SCRA work for you.

Jim
Telling the Truth Even If It Hurts

I had been an auditor for close to a decade and met with numerous individuals who had confided in me with their concerns. Many were terrified of the negative repercussions they could have potentially faced for coming forward, even when the information was shared confidentially. They felt so compelled to do the “right thing” that they put themselves at risk. They were brave and I respected them. I never really thought the day would come when I would be placed in a similar situation myself. A few years back, I brought what I perceived as an unethical matter (now resolved) to the attention of upper level management. At first it was met with concern and alarm; I was even supported for bringing the information forward. However, except for a few minor wrist slaps, nothing substantive/systemic was done to address the problem. So, I spoke up again. This time my news was met with dismay. That is when I decided to meet with an outside liaison who encouraged me to pursue the matter at the highest level of management. I was extremely reluctant because of what I predicted would be negative fallout, but the liaison convinced me to do it. The reception was cold with a tinge of annoyance.

A few months later, I was apparently demoted (I say apparently because when I asked about it I was told that my position had not changed; I was imagining things). The actions of others certainly indicated otherwise. I was alienated and even openly mocked. The strain at work began to negatively impact my family and I asked myself if I had made a mistake by speaking up. What surprised me was that despite all this pain, I have never regretted my decision. I feel badly for my family having to suffer during that time, but am extremely grateful that they have forgiven me.

There was some vindication. At the end of that year, others had spoken up about the situation and there was enough of a concern that the proper action was taken to resolve the matter. I was permitted to return to my prior position for the most part and was actually positively acknowledged for what I had done. I credit my training in community psychology as the reason why I feel obliged to speak up when something is not right. With a running social justice theme throughout the columns, the articles in this issue demonstrate other community psychologists’ experiences of a concern that the proper action was taken to resolve the matter.
INTEREST GROUPS

AGING
The Aging Interest Group focuses on the productive role of aging in the community and the prevention of mental health problems in the elderly.
Chair: Margaret M. Hastings, (847) 256-4844 margaretmhastings@earthlink.net

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES
The Children, Youth & Families Interest Group facilitates the interests of child and adolescent development in high risk contexts, especially the effect of urban poverty and community structures on child and family development.
Chair: Richard N. Roberts, (435) 797-3346

COMMUNITY ACTION
The Community Action Interest Group explores the roles and contributions of people working in applied community psychology settings.
Chair: Bradley Olson, (773) 325-4771

COMMUNITY HEALTH
The Community Health Interest Group focuses on health promotion, disease prevention, and health care service delivery issues as they relate to the community.
Co-chairs: David Lounsbury, (415) 338-1440 dlounsby@aecom.yu.edu; Shannon Gwin Mitchell, (202) 719-7812 sgwinmitchell@gmail.com

DISABLES
The Disabilities Interest Group promotes understanding of the depth and diversity of disabilities issues in the community that are ready for research and action, and influences community psychologists’ involvement in policy and practices that enhance self determination, personal choice, and full inclusion in the community for people with disabilities.
Co-Chairs: Kendra Liljenquist, ksliljen@bu.edu; Erin Stack, erinestack@gmail.com

ENVIRONMENT & JUSTICE
The Environment & Justice Interest Group is focused on research and action related to global climate change and environmental degradation. With a focus on environmental justice, particularly how environmental change affects and influences community psychologists’ involvement in policy and practices that enhance self determination, personal choice, and full inclusion in the community for people with disabilities.
Co-Chairs: Monica Adams, madams8@depaul.edu; Derek Griffith, derekgk@umich.edu

LEGAL & TRANSGENDER (LGBT)
The LGBT Interest Group increases awareness of the need for community research and action related to issues that impact LGBT people, and serves as a mechanism for communication, collaboration, and support among community psychologists who are either interested in research/service/polcy related to LGBT people and communities, and/or who identify as LGBT.
Co-chairs: Richard Jenkins, richardj@nida.nih.gov; Maria Valente, valent60@msu.edu

ORGANIZATION STUDIES
The Organization Studies Interest Group is a community of scholars who are interested in community psychology themes (e.g., empowerment, ecological analysis, prevention, sense of community) in organizational contexts, and in importing organization studies concepts, methods, models, and theories into community psychology.
Chair: Neil Boyd, (717) 512-3970 Boyd@lycoming.edu

PREVENTION & PROMOTION
The Prevention & Promotion Interest Group seeks to enhance development of prevention and promotion research, foster active dialogue about critical conceptual and methodological action and implementation issues, and promote rapid dissemination and discussion of new developments and findings in the field.
Co-Chairs: Monica Adams, madams8@depaul.edu; Derek Griffith, derekgk@umich.edu

RURAL
The Rural Interest Group is devoted to highlighting issues of the rural environment that are important in psychological research, service, and teaching.
Co-Chairs: Susana Helm, helms@hawaii.edu; Cécile Lardon, (909) 474-5781 c.lardon@uaf.edu

SCHOOL INTERVENTION
The School Intervention Interest Group addresses theories, methods, knowledge base, and setting factors pertaining to prevention and health promotion in school.
Co-Chairs: Paul Flaspohler, flasp@muohio.edu; Melissa Maras, marasme@missouri.edu

SELF-HELP/ MUTUAL SUPPORT
The Self-Help/Mutual Support Interest Group is an international organization of researchers, self-help leaders, and policy makers that promotes research and action related to self-help groups and organizations.
Chair: Louis Brown, lbd12@psu.edu
with “telling the truth even if it hurts.” For example, Nghi Thai’s article discusses the lack of an Asian/Asian American presence at the Biennial. Livia Dittmer outlines issues regarding global climate change. Gloria Levin documents Toshi Sasao’s experiences in her “Living Community Psychology” column.

Speaking out, however, needs to be done with much careful consideration. It needs to be done responsibly, after all the facts are straight, and with an end goal in mind. Thanks to community psychology for providing role models who demonstrate how we can accomplish this.

Special Section
Edited by David S. Jackson

My Kind of Town, Chicago is...
Written by Kwesi Craig C. Brookins, North Carolina State University

Now this could only happen to a guy like me
And only happen in a town like this.
So may I say to each of you most gratefully
As I throw each one of you a kiss
This is my kind of town.
Chicago is….
And each time I roam, Chicago is,
Callin’ me home, Chicago is….

As sung by Frank Sinatra
and composed by Sammy Kahn
and Jimmy Van Heusen (1966)

This song comes to mind every time I return home to Chicago. That was certainly the case at the 2011 SCRA biennial. And, from the comments both during and after the conference on the SCRA listserv it appears to be a sentiment shared by others. So, I too will throw a kiss to each and all of the organizers for bringing me home. The city was shining, the weather was gorgeous, and the conference was engaging.

But mostly, as I traveled back and forth from the south side to downtown and through the many communities (http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org) of Chatham, Avalon, Hyde Park and Bronzeville, what most came to mind was Lou Rawls’ Dead End Street (1966).

... As soon as I was big enough to get a job save enough money
To get a ticket to catch anything I split
I said one day I’m going to return
And I’m going to straighten it all out
And I’m about ready to go back now
So I thought I’d tell ya about it

This was the 1st conference I had attended for quite some time as I’m usually out-of-the-country during the early summer months. So, along with the opportunity for a meeting and reunion with the Michigan State University Ecological-Community Psychology folks, I was thrilled to see old friends and colleagues as well as a new generation of students and young professionals. This was perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of the experience. I was apparently having a better time than I realized since some of our students gave me the nickname of “SCRAllywood” (I hope only temporarily).

The shine of Chicago is always bittersweet. Although born and raised in the city I have not lived there for more than 30 years despite returning often to visit family and friends. I love the city and in many ways it has changed in both benign and unimaginable ways from the time I was what my uncle would call a “Kadiddlehopper.”

I heard it said more than once at the conference that Chicago is a “city of neighborhoods.” Where the conference was held, however, in the heart of downtown, was less one of those neighborhoods but, rather, the “safe” place where residents of all those neighborhoods and the tourist could come together to share and participate in this grand city’s heritage.

I’ve had the privilege of traveling those neighborhoods in recent years and did so as well this time. The mostly disconnected diversity of the city is quite impressive. Moving about the city, particularly via public transportation, reveals not just the diversity of the people and neighborhoods but the rhythms of both the connections and disconnections.

I wish there were a way we could have had a mobile conference. One in which each session would have been held in a different
neighborhood, or on the buses and trains and in the parks, community centers and churches. The closest we got, I think, was the session in which a small group of us traveled to the Teamwork Englewood (TE; www.teamworkenglewood.org) center to have a chat with the organizations executive director, Jacques Conway, a few staff members. Our group was led by Dan Cooper, a doctoral student at Vanderbilt University who is currently working at the Adler School’s Institute on Public Safety and Social Justice in Chicago (Great job, Dan!). The excursion included a few graduate students (mostly from NC State University) and a group from Barcelona (a few of whom are involved in the organizing of the International CP conference in 2012). We learned about TE’s many initiatives and, among other things, discussed the challenges of urban farming and economic redevelopment.

The journey to Englewood was eventful if for no other reason that we got to experience as much of the fullness of the city as one could get in a three hour period. The vibrancy of public transportation (including a reggae-hip-hop balladeer), the evolutionary history of a once diverse and vibrant economic neighborhood, the starkness of urban renewal, the challenges of a home grown community organization, and the realities faced by change agents for whom the community is their life.

While in Chicago I stayed at “home” in the neighborhood in which I grew up and traveled daily from the southside, an area of historically (at least the last 70+ years) African American communities. The changes and contrasts are particularly acute as represented in the Historic Bronzeville and Englewood communities. The first is an area under recent rejuvenation and gentrification although it is difficult to tell if the primary benefactors are the long term residents. This is also the area to which both my parents moved and met during the immediate post-WWII era. They were part of a great second 20th century migration of Blacks fleeing a violently segregated Mississippi and seeking economic opportunity and mobility. And indeed, that is what they found. A place, unlike the south, where it mattered less how high up the ladder of success you got (not too high of course), as long as you didn’t get too close. Thus, the neighborhoods of Bronzeville, Englewood and my eventual childhood community of Chatham were born. In the process, the city of separated neighborhoods was entrenched and, indeed, continues to this day in both interracial (Ahmed and Little, 2008 - http://darnelllittle.com/clips/2008/12-26-08.pdf) and intra-racial (http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/11604/black_chicago_divided) ways.

No Place To Be Somebody
No place to groove and grow
No place is where life got me
that’s for sho

Oscar Brown Jr, No Place To Be Somebody (1965)

All of these things came to mind during the conference and I wish the attendees had an opportunity to feel them as I did. Yet, I, too, have been mostly physically absent from the city for more than 30 years. Indeed, many of us who were shaped by the city have not returned. I’ve been of the belief for quite some time that big cities are no place to be somebody. While Chicago officials are often proud to pronounce it as the city that works, the reality is that is often only applicable for those residents with the resources to shelter them from the harsher aspects of the landscape. For most residents, large urban areas are too often simply places to habituate, tolerate, and survive. They seem to me to be places of seemingly intractable social problems embedded within layers of dense urban complexity. The types of problems one must have lived through to have a chance of changing. Ironically, I’m sure this contributed greatly to my journey to community psychology.

Big cities continue to be what they were for my parents’ generation and what they are for millions of people across the globe. They serve as symbols and places of diverse opportunity despite the many social and psychological costs. So the workers of Teamwork Englewood

I encourage SCRA hosts to figure out how to take full advantage of their people and places at future biennials

and the thousand other citizens and community-based organizations who have hung around and engaged in the healing and change work of the city are to be admired and respected. While we’ve captured some of what they can teach in our shaping of community psychology, the dynamics of ever changing urban (and other) environments continues to bring new lessons on how to build on the strengths and opportunities of people and communities, particularly those embedded within severe circumstances of oppression.

In recent years at NC State, we’ve heard often from our students about not having enough opportunity to critically engage with communities outside of the campus. We’re working to correct that and perhaps there are
While recognizing the challenges of our peers and colleagues in a setting different from what most of us likely experience in our home locations. Such an opportunity should not be lost, particularly when it can only occur every two years (unless you attend the international conferences). While recognizing the challenges of not making such engagements a “tour of problems,” I encourage SCRA hosts to continue to figure out how to take full advantage of their people and places at future biennials.

Yeah, Chicago is still my kind of town and it is one town that won’t let you down. And, although I’m not quite ready to go back….

A small boy walked down the city streets
hope was in his eyes
as he searched the faces of the people he’d meet
for one he could recognize
Brother where are you
they told me that you came this way
Brother where are you
they said you came this way
Oscar Brown Jr.,
Brother Where Are You (1965)

Community Ideas
Edited by Amanda Archer

An Introduction
Written by Bill Berkowitz,
University of Massachusetts Lowell

With this issue of TCP, we launch a new column called Community Ideas, designed to showcase the best ideas we have to offer. Here’s a prologue on what we hope to accomplish, and how you can – and hopefully will – contribute.

Community psychology, we believe, needs to engage more with the social and economic challenges of our times. The times demand it. For right now, more budget cutbacks seem like a pretty sure bet, cutbacks that will impact services and programs at a community level. Communities will then need to find new ways for maintaining their quality of life and for providing the social supports we all need. As community psychologists, we should be able to help.

How best to do so? We don’t have great numbers or much formal power. But in addition to our skills we do have ideas. We know this because we collected dozens of them at two New Community Ideas sessions at the recent Chicago Biennial. Who better than community psychologists to have ideas for making our communities better places to live?

To continue that work, we aim to solicit your ideas, publish them, and encourage their practical application. What type of ideas? We’re especially on the lookout for your ideas that are innovative and effective, as well as small in scale, low in cost, practical, and replicable. For example, a city surveys its residents’ happiness; a town creates a Board of Play; Shakespeare shows up at a neighborhood park; citizen innovations get mini-grants. It’s not that tall of an order since we think just about every community has put some distinctive ideas into practice. We’ll bet you know at least one.

So this is a forum for ideas of your own. Amanda Archer will be your Editor. Below, Amanda presents a sample community idea and puts out a call for others; we hope you’ll send them her way. We’re looking forward to publishing your ideas in future issues and to highlighting our creative capacity to make a positive difference in communities everywhere.

Written by Amanda Archer,
Chicago School of Professional Psychology

As Bill mentioned, we’re looking for innovative and easily replicable ideas that we, as community psychologists, can implement in our own communities. Below is one such example.

The Perpetual Food Drive

During the holiday season, it’s common to see food drives intended to provide holiday meals for the food insecure in any given community. The problem with these food drives is that they neglect to address the problem of food insecurity year round. According to a 2011 Feed America survey, 17.4% of the population in Los Angeles County California suffers from food insecurity. This alarming statistic created a desire by one community psychologist to combat food insecurity in her community.

Dr. Sylvie Taylor, founding director of the Applied Community Psychology (ACP) program at Antioch University Los Angeles (AULA), decided that the most efficient and effective way to combat food insecurity in her community was to launch a perpetual food drive. Sylvie and the ACP program collaborated with AULA’s Education Department to launch the food drive. The idea was to collect staple foods such as rice, beans, legumes, and baby cereal, in an effort to provide nourishing meals to the food insecure in Los Angeles County. These staple foods would not only provide nourishing meals, but are inexpensive and can be stretched to last longer than food typically found in food banks.

Sylvie partnered with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank to launch this community idea. The food bank provided large barrels to be placed throughout the university to collect food donations. A launch party was held. Each attendee was...
asked to pledge that as long as they experienced food security in their own lives, they would contribute to the reduction in food insecurity for those members of their community who experienced it. This pledge could be fulfilled simply by purchasing rice, beans, legumes, or baby cereal each time one visited the market. Along with this pledge to give, Sylvie asked each attendee to take the perpetual food drive into their places of work, schools, and any other social networks in which they were involved.

On May 5, 2011, students, faculty, alumni, and friends of the university pledged to raise 2,000 pounds of food by October 16, 2011, which was World Food Day. The University exceeded this goal by 6 pounds and has since set a goal of raising 1,000 additional pounds of food each academic quarter to continue the fight against food insecurity in the community. This food drive has no end in sight and will continue as long as there is a need in the community.

A Call to Action

This community idea was simple, inexpensive, and can easily be replicated throughout the nation. These are the types of ideas we’re looking to share with readers of TCP. We are convinced that there are many ideas out there that, if shared, have the potential to make a dramatic impact on our own communities. This is where you come in.

Some of the best ideas come from people doing the work every day; people like you. We are looking for your ideas, whether they’ve been implemented or not. Whether you wish to write your own summary of ideas or you would like us write it, we want to hear what you have to say.

Submissions can be sent to amandalarcher@live.com.

Cultural & Racial Affairs
Edited by Rhonda K. Lewis

Are Asians/Asian Americans Invisible to Community Psychologists: The Lack of Asian/Asian American Presence at the Recent SCRA Biennial Conference

Written by Nghi D. Thai,
The Consultation Center,
Yale University School of Medicine

The Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) Biennial conference brings together community psychologists in the United States and those from other countries to share and discuss cutting-edge research and programs in the field. Consisting of about 600 participants, the SCRA Biennial is intended to reflect the diversity of our field. However, this past summer at the 13th Biennial Conference in Chicago, I was disappointed by the lack of representation of Asian/Asian Americans in attendance and in research presentations. For example, I was struck that there was not a single panel, workshop, or symposium focused exclusively on Asians/Asian Americans (out of almost 190 sessions). Why are Asian/Asian American community psychologists not attending the Biennial? And where are the research studies or programs about Asians/Asian Americans?

It would be an exaggeration to say that there was no research on Asians/Asian Americans at the Biennial, as there were posters and talks within symposia. However, it was obvious that while all other groups (e.g., African American, Latino American, Native American, LGBT, and migrant, etc.) had at least one dedicated panel or symposium, this was not true for Asians/Asian Americans. Clearly, there are Asian/Asian American researchers and practitioners in SCRA. A review of articles from the American Journal of Community Psychology (AJCP), the Journal of Community Psychology (JCP), and The Community Psychologist highlight numerous contributors of Asian descent. Yet, researchers and practitioners are not attending the Biennial or submitting presentations about this population. Below are some recommendations for understanding and addressing the lack of presence of Asians/Asian Americans and research or programs involving this population.

Recommendations

Ask Asian/Asian American SCRA members about their reasons for attending/not attending the Biennial.

I was struck that there was not a single panel, workshop, or symposium focused exclusively on Asians/Asian Americans.

An online survey from the Cultural and Racial Affairs Committee asking members why they did or did not attend the Biennial may be a first step in determining potential barriers to participation. It would be important to ask whether Asian/Asian American community practitioners and researchers feel welcomed or valued within Division 27 and if research on Asians/Asian Americans is also valued within our field.

Increase visibility about the importance of research by and about Asians/Asian Americans. Interested members within SCRA should initiate concerted efforts to organize panels and symposia that focus on Asians/Asian Americans. Community
psychologists of both Asian and non-Asian descent should be encouraged to address these issues so to represent the breadth of knowledge about this population.

**Increase mentoring opportunities.** Recruit both Asian and non-Asian mentors and mentees interested in research on and about Asians/Asian Americans. More formal and informal outreach should be conducted to increase representation.

**Increase SCRA’s connection with other divisions of APA that have diverse representation.** Networking and making connections with other divisions within APA who have a better representation of Asians/Asian Americans should be a priority of SCRA (Division 27). Two divisions worth connecting with in this regard include Division 45 (Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minorities Issues) and the Asian American Psychological Association.

**Make a concentrated effort to invite Asian/Asian American scholars to the Biennial.** Invite Asian/Asian American scholars to give keynote addresses or invite researchers to participate in research symposia featuring research about Asians/Asian Americans. These outreach efforts will likely increase SCRA’s inclusion of Asian/Asian American researchers and show that SCRA is concerned about this population. It will also increase the visibility of Asian/Asian American researchers who are doing community based work and feature research that focuses on the issues that are relevant to this community.

**Conclusion**

Although this is not an exhaustive list of recommendations for increasing the visibility of Asians/Asian Americans and research on Asian/Asian American populations within SCRA, perhaps this will stimulate further discussion and reflection on the relative lack of representation among Asians/Asian Americans at the SCRA Biennial. As members of an action-oriented field with a commitment to diversity, we owe it to ourselves and to SCRA to promote inclusion of all groups among us. ☞

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**Disabilities Action**
*Edited by Tina Taylor-Ritzler*

**How to Take Your Research Lab from Able-bodied Drab to Disability Fab in Three Easy Steps**
*Written by Adena Rottenstein, University of Michigan*

**Introduction**

Historically, students with disabilities have been excluded from the realm of higher education (Konur, 2006). However, the population of college students with disabilities is steadily increasing. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 11% of college students are people with disabilities (Horn & Nevill, 2006; Horn, Peter, & Rooney, 2002).

With the steady increase of students with disabilities, many scholars and activists have called for significant changes in the structure and climate of postsecondary institutions, arguing for a more “universally accessible” pedagogy (Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2011). To that end, scholars have applied principles of Universal Design (Connell et al., 1997) to student assessment (Thompson, Johnstone, & Thurlow, 2002), instruction (Scott, McGuire, & Shaw, 2003), and learning (Rose, Harbour, Johnston, Daley, & Abarbanell, 2006).

However, little attention has been paid to creating universally accessible research spaces, despite findings which indicate that research experience is vital to the development of undergraduate students in the sciences, particularly in psychology (Landrum & Nelsen, 2002; Seymour, Hunter, Laursen, & Deantonii, 2004; Wayment & Dickson, 2008). The purpose of this essay therefore, is to offer a few brief recommendations for how to increase accessibility, to the benefit of all students, in a research lab.

**Step 1: Space Planning**

People who use wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids need space to move and maneuver. ADA guidelines state that the minimum clear width for single wheelchair passage is 36 inches, and the space required for a wheelchair to make a 180-degree turn is a clear space of 60 inches (ADA, 2002). If space is limited, consider adding casters to tables and chairs so that lab furniture can be moved around the room with little physical strain.

Flexibility in the set-up of workstations is also important. Ideally, the height of the chair, desk, and computer monitor should all be adjustable to make sure that each student is able to make ergonomic modifications. This will not only benefit students with musculo-skeletal conditions, but all students, as it will decrease the strain of computer work on the neck, shoulders, and back (Wahlström, 2005).

Lastly, when holding meetings, arrange seating in a circle or other configuration which enables attendees to clearly see one another. This will enable all attendees to communicate more clearly with one another, and it will especially benefit students who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing as they may wish to supplement verbal communication with attention to facial expressions and/or lip-reading (Scherich, 1996).

**Step 2: Embrace Technology**

Recent studies indicate that the vast majority of postsecondary students with disabilities, like their able-bodied peers, utilize computer technology (mostly personal computers) in their everyday learning (Fichten, et al., 2001; Fichten, Barilee, &
Asuncion, 2003). This is possible, in part, by various adaptive computing technologies available for use by individuals across disability types.

Two pieces of particularly useful adaptive technology can be easily installed in most laboratory computers. The first is dictation/voice-control software, e.g., Dragon Speech, which will recognize a user’s voice and execute commands, such as “file,” “open,” and “save as,” and typing instructions, which types what the user says. Voice-recognition software frees the user from the keyboard, and while it is meant primarily for those with mobility/fine motor issues, many individuals (regardless of disability status) find the act of speaking rather than typing to be more intuitive and efficient.

The second piece of recommended adaptive technology is screen-reading software, e.g., JAWS or Windows-Eyes, which will read out loud text displayed on a monitor. While screen-reading software was originally developed to aid individuals who are blind or have visual impairments, research indicates that students with various learning disabilities, e.g., dyslexia, can greatly benefit from its use (Fichten, Barilee, et al., 2003). Moreover, any student, regardless of disability status, can benefit from the ability to receive information through both visual and auditory channels.

**Step 3: Be Flexible**

In a recent meta-synthesis of disability in the workplace, Gewurtz and Kirsh (2009) found flexibility/autonomy in task completion to be one of the most effective and valued accommodations provided across organizational settings. These considerations are especially relevant to individuals with chronic illness or mental health conditions who may experience a waxing or waning in the severity of their symptoms. To that end, it is recommended that research assistants be given some freedom in both their work schedules and assigned duties.

With regard to work schedules, it is recommended that students be given freedom in start/stop times, duration of a work shift, frequency of breaks, and the ability to take time off when necessary. For example, a student may be required to complete nine hours of work each week, but given the autonomy to decide when those hours will be completed. If a more structured schedule is desired, it is recommended that students schedule an optional work shift as back-up in case they are unable to complete their routine hours. This will be of benefit not only to students with disabilities, but to all students in the lab as academic demands outside of lab will fluctuate in their intensity throughout the semester.

With regards to assigned duties, many routine lab tasks can be altered to increase flexibility in completion. For example, most research labs require students to attend weekly/bi-weekly lab meetings. Allowing students to attend the meetings virtually, e.g., via Skype, will be of great assistance to students who have difficulty navigating the physical/architectural barriers common on a college campus. It would also benefit any lab member who needs to travel out of town for professional or personal needs.

**Conclusion**

While the above recommendations are not meant to be exhaustive, they are meant to be thought-provoking. Many of the challenges students with disabilities face stem not from structural obstacles, but from attitudinal barriers (Lombardi et al., 2011). By considering the needs of students with disabilities, and taking the time to self-educate on accommodation possibilities, scholars will better equipped to reap the benefits of a diverse research lab.

**References**


I am grateful that my awareness about environmental issues has grown within a community psychology context. A topic frequently mired in individualistic concerns, global climate change (GCC) may otherwise have never been more to me than recycling weekly, buying organic products, and perhaps purchasing carbon offsets when I fly. Instead, by learning about this as a social issue in the context of community psychology, I have gained an appreciation for its complexity; not only is it a material issue of global temperatures, it is a social issue that involves our behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and values at all levels of society.

Several questions have percolated in my mind regarding this topic and community psychology: What role does community psychology have to play in GCC? What is the framework that guides individuals’ and societies’ interactions with our natural environment? How does respect for and preservation of limited resources become a priority for individuals, communities, and social institutions?

As a youth and student myself, one question has come to dominate my research: What are the characteristics of a pedagogical model that fosters in youth critical awareness of and action in the area of environmental change? In this article, I first describe a few of my ongoing efforts to engage youth in environmental change through education and then offer a few insights gained through these experiences.

My research over the last four years has helped me explore several questions about community psychology and environmental change. In 2008, I worked with Reduce the Juice (RTJ), a youth-led environmental project in Waterloo Region, Ontario. In partnership, we developed and conducted a series of workshops with high school students in order to raise critical consciousness of GCC as a social justice issue and build capacity for environmental activism. These workshops contributed so significantly to RTJ that they used the workshops again in the summer of 2009 and integrated the workshop content into their yearly training materials.

In my masters degree program, I explored the impacts of a university-level course offered at Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU). This course, called Psychology, Environment, and Action was developed in collaboration between community psychology faculty at WLU, the Laurier Centre for Community Service Learning, and four environmental organizations in Waterloo Region. Through this collaboration, this innovative course engages students in cycles of theory, action, and reflection to foster attitudes, beliefs, and actions that reflect a consciousness of the physical and social implications of GCC. Pilot research I conducted in 2010 explored the nature of this collaboration and its impacts on all stakeholders and the course structure; further research I am currently conducting focuses on the students’ experience in the course and the long-term impacts of their participation.

As a doctoral student, I am building on each of these projects to explore the dynamics of youths’ involvement in environmental activism on an international scale. Through a partnership among six countries, three that are particularly affected by GCC (Bangladesh, India, and Uganda) and three that contribute a great deal to GCC.
(Canada, Germany, and the USA), a series of workshops for university-aged youth has been developed. These workshops focus on themes of environmental justice, environmental activism, and the links between local and global efforts for change. My doctoral research will assess the impacts of this education program on the students who participate, the universities in each country that host the program, the community partners in each country who provide the students with space for action, and the youth advisors who will be facilitating the program in each country.

Several features have characterized my exploration of pedagogy for environmental engagement throughout these various projects.

**What are the characteristics of a pedagogical model that fosters in youth critical awareness of and action in the area of environmental change?**

In particular, many aspects of community psychology have become integrated into my vision of strong pedagogy. As a student at WLU, I have been exposed to several impressive educators and have gained many insights through their example. For example, the strongest form of education seems to be one that helps students learn how to learn; this stands in contrast to approaches that seek to provide information to be memorized or inculcate a conceptual framework that reflects the dominant model of thought on a topic. Instead, community psychology has trained me to be a critical protagonist in the learning process. In my efforts to apply this principle with other youth I have gained a much deeper appreciation for the teachers who make these efforts with their students. Although, in my experience, youth appreciate opportunities to share their thoughts and opinions, it is extremely challenging to elevate this participation to a level wherein the youth feel empowered as active agents for their own learning.

I have learned two key lessons in this regard. The first is to engage youth in issues related to real human experience. Framing issues within stories makes it much more difficult for them to detach from the real-world implications of the topics at hand. There is no shortage of such examples with GCC - whether it is the story of toxic air quality in the Aamjiwnaang First Nations reserve in Sarnia, Ontario, the poisoning of Love Canal in Niagara Falls, New York, or the rising sea levels covering the small village of Satabhaya, India, young people connect to these stories in a way that they do not connect to facts and theories. What should be avoided with this technique, however, is the tendency toward fear-mongering so common in society; not only does this have the potential to stigmatize communities by focusing on their weaknesses, it also seems to reflect a disrespect for young people’s ability to authentically relate to reality. Bringing youth in contact with the real, unvarnished truth about issues of environmental justice can confer new meaning to the material and often bridges their individual experience with a wider perspective. This has the potential not only to deepen their understanding of the topic, but also to inspire in them a personal interest. I have seen this engage otherwise disinterested learners in thoughtful reflection, motivate otherwise directionless participants to explore concepts through independent study, and transform a passive and detached conversation into a passionate and enthusiastic discourse.

My observations of the impacts of stories are supported in the academic literature. Steslow and Gardner (2011) draw a parallel between stories and metaphors; the use of metaphor through stories has the potential to develop “a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our work generally” (p. 251). Although these authors were discussing storytelling in the context of law school, this concept is applicable to education for GCC as well; presenting environmental issues through stories of injustice frames students’ thinking of GCC as a social justice issue. In terms of critical thinking, stories have “tremendous potential to engage students in sustained social critique if they are heard and considered” (Enciso, 2011). My aim has been to create conditions in which students hear and consider these stories by situating them within ongoing engagement in action, reflection, and discussion. Storytelling can also be used to help youth generate a vision of the healthy world environmental change seeks to create. These stories “serve as the manifestation of an alternate reality or a not-yet-realized present that only enters into the imagination through the interaction with new and authentically liberating words” (Morrell, 2008, p. 115). Imagination is particularly important in this regard: “Because a story describes another place and time (either real or fictional) and not something we are presently experiencing, it engages our imagination by inviting us to supply the details” (Steslow & Gardner, 2011, p. 251). The practice of envisioning a new world through stories can enrich learning experiences and help youth conceptualize the impacts of the actions.

The second insight I would like to offer is regarding the role of action in educational models that seek to engage youth in environmental
issues. As argued by Paulo Freire (1970/2008), cycles of action and reflection create dialogical experiences that are conducive to raised critical consciousness of social conditions; an overemphasis on reflection at the expense of action, however, can become what he calls verbalism, which “lacks a commitment to transform” (p. 87) and, therefore, contributes little to social change. The implications of this are clear: capacity for systematic and effective action cannot be built in an educational system void of opportunities for action.

In my own experiences, youth are keen to act on issues of environmental concern - and not only to act, but to pursue challenging lines of action that require sacrifice but have great implications for the environment. With RTJ, for example, the high school students participating in our series of workshops chose the action project that would accompany the workshop sessions. Through critical discussion and reflection, the youth chose to coordinate with the school board and local transport authorities to try to make discounted bus passes available to all local high school students. This audacious plan was not feasible in the amount of time available to our group, but the act of choosing this project and researching the ways in which it could be accomplished was found to be, in their own words, “a good way to start learning the channels to go through for [social change].” In the Psychology, Environment, and Action course I am currently researching, there is significantly more time and space for such ambitious projects. In my field observations of the class, students have told me that finishing their community service-learning projects, which already require significant commitment and dedication, has only whetted their appetite for bigger and more challenging work with environmental issues. Several students have been in contact with local environmental organizations to continue their volunteer work even after the course ends. The role of action is an important consideration for efforts to create a dynamic and fruitful education experience in the area of GCC.

Although these are only a few initial thoughts, they provide an important starting point for educators seeking to integrate material related to GCC into their teaching. The relevance of this topic to many areas, including law, human rights, social work, and immigration means that educators from many backgrounds can consider the ways in which to raise students’ consciousness of environmental issues in the context of their respective fields. Students can also play a role in creating educational spaces for environmental discourse. By bringing topics of GCC into class discussions and calling on professors to consider the connections of GCC to the field, many more students could be exposed to this topic as I did, within the meaningful context of my chosen field. In this way, the students of today will have spaces to build an understanding of environmental issues that will be integrated into their future roles as professionals, academics, and community members.

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**References**


"Living Community Psychology" highlights a community psychologist through an in-depth interview that is intended to depict both personal and professional aspects of the featured individual. The column offers insights into community psychology as it is lived by its diverse practitioners. For this installment, we feature a bilingual, bicultural community psychologist who is in the forefront of developing an internationalized field. Dr. Toshi Sasao was originally interviewed at SCRA’s June 2007 biennial conference, updated at the June 2011 biennial conference and finally as of November 2011.

**Featuring:**

**Toshi Sasao, Ph.D.**

Professor of Psychology and Peace Studies  
International Christian University  
Tokyo, Japan  
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Toshi Sasao attended highly competitive schools in Hokkaido, Japan and sought out the most rigorous courses, being academically ambitious and competitive. His parents’ expectations for his future were very high. Typical of Japanese parents at that time, they lavished him with time and attention, as the only son. Sons were Japanese families’ “primary investment.” His sister, older than him, was resentful that Toshi was favored, although she eventually graduated from a prestigious university.

In 1975, a teacher who had studied in the U.S. encouraged Toshi to leave Japan to continue his studies. His participation in a student conference in South Korea “opened my eyes to another culture,” he recalls. Nevertheless, his parents wanted him to continue his studies in the U.S., not Korea.

Starting college at a Jesuit school in Seattle, he transferred to the University of Washington, Seattle in his sophomore year, majoring in psychology. There he met Stanley Sue, then an assistant professor of clinical psychology “but (already) a go-getter.” Toshi and three other Asian friends worked for Dr. Sue, calling themselves the Gang of Four. Toshi was drawn to experimental social psychology and research methods, and Dr. Sue encouraged him to apply to graduate school.

Toshi earned a B.S. degree in Psychology from the University of Washington in 1979 but was unable to gain acceptance into the psychology doctoral program he wanted so he instead studied for a M.Ed. (obtained in 1981) in educational psychology from the University of Washington, majoring in evaluation and psychometrics. His major challenge at that time was his lack of fluency in English; he was the program’s first foreign student.

At the same time that Dr. Sue left Seattle for a position at UCLA (1981), Toshi was accepted into a Ph.D. program at the University of Southern California (USC), both in Los Angeles. He was a research assistant for Brian Flay and Mary Ann Pentz (on her NIDA grant) at USC’s Institute for Prevention Research. He took a break from his doctoral studies, pursuing a second master’s degree, in biostatistics, through USC’s Medical School. He returned to his (delayed) doctoral studies at USC in social psychology, with a minor in quantitative psychology. Before finishing his dissertation, he landed a postdoctoral fellowship (1988-1989) with Dr. Sue at UCLA, working in Asian American mental health.

Over time, his career increasingly migrated to community psychology. He had joined SCRA as an undergraduate and became increasingly active in the field, especially contributing to SCRA initiatives pertaining to cultural and racial affairs. A single event in April 1992 – race-based riots in Los Angeles involving African Americans and Korean Americans – was an eye opener for Toshi. At the time, he viewed this as two minority groups fighting over scarce resources. That brought home to him that intervention at the systems level was more important than on the individual level. His thinking turned to how (frequently hostile) immigrants could be integrated into society when living in a culturally diverse environment. These experience-based learnings turned the course of his professional life to community psychology from his prior career emphasis on lab-based experimental social psychology. (He discussed this career transformation on video for the *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice* at http://vimeo.com/7362577)

He had been teaching community psychology but was shuffling various soft money positions, postdoctoral fellowships and part-time jobs. After a few years, his mentor, Dr. Sue, challenged him, advising “it’s time for you to look for a real job.” While Toshi was not explicitly looking for a community psychology job, nor had he been formally trained in the field, he realized that he was most attracted to the field. He
interviewed for tenure track positions at a number of programs around the U.S. but consistently was the runner-up candidate. Not finding a job he wanted, he applied for and received a Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) grant. He added, to his work as a research assistant professor at UCLA, a fulltime job as Project Director for WestEd, an educational think tank, overseeing a statewide drug abuse prevention program for Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Through a church group in Pasadena, CA, Toshi met (and in 1989 married) Masami (“Melissa” in English), also Japanese. The Sasaos bought a house, and he was awarded a NIDA grant in 1994, followed by the 1995 birth of their daughter, Michelle. Melissa worked as a teacher when Dr. Sue announced he was recalling. “Rough time for me personally,” he estimated, “so Toshi was important mentor,” so Toshi was both disappointed and worried for his future. He continued as co-PI on the CSAP grant but with a different colleague. However, recognizing that he did not want a career of writing grant applications, being on “soft money,” he jumped at the offer of a ten-year contract with the University of California at Irvine (UC Irvine). There, he supervised medical residents and ran projects related to the care-takers of Filipino and Vietnamese schizophrenic patients. During that time, Toshi had positions at three locations -- UCLA, UC Irvine, and WestEd -- commuting three to four hours a day among them. “Although professionally fulfilling, this was a rough time for me personally,” he recalls.

Toshi began seeking more stability, searching for a tenured job, and – via a web search -- identified one at the International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo that “perfectly fit my qualifications. The position was for a bilingual, bicultural person to teach multicultural psychology in English.” ICU paid his travel expenses to Japan to be interviewed in 1996. He had to sell their house and two new cars and uproot his daughter from her American friends. However, Toshi (an active Church member) increasingly felt the move was “God’s calling” for him to return to Japan.

His decision to accept the position in Japan came only three months after his arrival at UC Irvine, but he gave the university two months notice that he would be leaving. UC Irvine was not happy, claiming they were constructing a new building to house his project. But the Japanese offer was too tempting to reject. His wife wanted to return to Japan to live, and the Sasao family would be provided faculty housing on campus which is a major issue in expensive Tokyo.

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He had originally planned to begin a community psychology program at the new job so was happy to learn that an informal community psychology network had already been established in Japan twenty years before his return home. With the founding of the Japanese Society for Community Psychology (1998), “I had found my ecological niche,” he says. He developed a curriculum in community psychology and was very pleased with the high quality of course content and ICU students, most of whom eventually went on to graduate study in the U.S. He is proud of his students’ accomplishments.

After six years at ICU, he took a sabbatical year (2003-4) at the University of Illinois at Chicago, bringing his family with him. The Sasao family lived in Oak Park, chosen so his daughter would have the opportunity to study in a high-quality American public school. There, he was on an NIMH postdoctoral research fellowship with Roger Weissberg’s prevention training program, specifically for urban children’s mental health and HIV prevention research. He taught a course there and also taught multi-cultural psychology at nearby DePaul University. Simultaneously, he obtained a prestigious fellowship from Japan to teach anywhere in the world, paying him a salary in addition to his postdoctoral stipend.

Toshi had planned to seek a federal grant during his fellowship year in Chicago, but he did not have sufficient time. He had been assigned to teach a large number of students at UIC, in addition to teaching at DePaul. His heavy teaching schedule left no time to prepare a grant application. Through these teaching experiences, he began to notice the new phenomenon, later widespread -- that many students lacked motivation. “They wanted degrees more than they wanted to study,” he remembers.

When Paul Toro (a community psychologist at Wayne State University) obtained a fellowship grant from the Japanese government (2005), Toshi served as his host. In contrast to Toshi’s sabbatical experience in Chicago where he was warmly supported, ICU did not extend itself beyond providing Paul office space, housing and an academic title. Toshi’s colleagues did not involve Paul in their activities, as Americans had done for him. Since then, many community psychology colleagues have visited his campus, presenting lectures, workshops or consultation.
He encourages SCRA members to contact him if they are planning to visit Japan, offering the enticement of a stay in ICU’s new guest-house for overseas researchers, located in a forest-like setting.

When the Sasao family left Japan for the U.S. sabbatical, they lost their faculty housing. Facing a three-year waiting list, they bought a house instead. In the meantime, the curriculum he left behind at ICU had been challenged as “too rigorous” by his colleagues who reminded Toshi that he was “no longer in the U.S.” While the number of applicants to the program had increased, Toshi was concerned that the qualifications of applicants had diminished. However, his best students appreciated the rigor of the program he had designed and taught.

While still on his sabbatical in Chicago, Toshi was notified that he would receive funding that could be used to organize three Japan-Korea seminars in community psychology. This was the product of a collaboration he established with a South Korean student (Ansuk Jeong) he met in Illinois. The first seminar was held in South Korea in 2004. From this, developed his close relationship with South Korean social and community psychologists that has resulted in more conferences and teaching stints. The Japan-Korea Seminar in Community Psychology drew approximately 50 psychologists from Japanese and Korean universities. An organization of Asian Community Psychology is being planned; however, Toshi says the field is not well known in Asia outside of Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong. He has taught at several universities around the world on visiting and adjunct appointments while keeping his fulltime position in Japan. “In Japan, it is prestigious for academics to teach outside of Japan, while having a home base in Japan.”

After a short visit to the U.S., Yamamoto Kazuo, considered the father of Japanese community psychology, had encouraged his colleagues in Japan to modernize their field. When he suggested the creation of a Japanese handbook for the field, the Executive Committee of the Japanese Society for Community Psychology published one, intended to parallel Rappaport and Seidman’s Handbook of Community Psychology. Toshi observes: “community psychology in Japan seems more clinically oriented than ecologically based.” Toshi translated into Japanese Jim Dalton’s community psychology textbook, providing another teaching resource.

Toshi’s own research interests have included the development and evaluation of preventive interventions for children and adolescents in Japan, Korea, and the U.S., especially those in multicultural contexts. He uses both quantitative and qualitative (field) methods in program evaluation in schools and communities, both of which he employs in his research on correlates of psychological sense of community in multicultural schools; social justice issues in workplaces; and Asian American mental health issues.

Toshi is a major player in international community psychology circles. He has served on the executive boards of the Japanese associations for community psychology, social psychology, group dynamics and educational psychology. He reviews for several professional journals and is an Associate Editor for the Asian Journal of Social Psychology. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and has served on multiple editorial boards, in Japan and in the U.S. He chaired SCRA’s International Committee for 3 terms, was SCRA’s liaison to APA’s Committee on International Relations and has served on the Organizing Committees for the (biennial) International Conferences of Community Psychology.

Despite the high regard in which he is held in international circles, Toshi’s career in Japan took an abrupt turn when he was dismissed from the ICU faculty in 2007 – “wrongfully,” he contends. A professor in another department recognized the injustice of his firing so introduced Toshi to attorneys who specialize in academic human rights. They agreed to advocate his legal case. Therein ensued a three and a half year battle to be reinstated in his job, with his legal case proceeding at a snail’s pace through Japan’s legal system. During this time, his health suffered -- he lost considerable weight, developed diabetes and had difficulty concentrating on tasks. Although he was not directly affected, Japan’s tragic earthquake, the tsunami in the north which claimed over 24,000 lives, and the nuclear disaster, all in March 2011, were additional stressors.

During this time, Toshi received considerable support from his community psychology colleagues around the world including other ICU professors. In Japan, a support group of his former students and many ICU faculty members assisted the Sasao’s, financially and emotionally. When the family lost their faculty housing, members of his church found and furnished a very nice, old missionary house with reasonable rent in Tokyo. His pre teen daughter’s expensive school offered scholarship support so she could remain in the school, with her friends. A senior SCRA member wrote a consequential letter to the judge, and 15 other colleagues around the world flooded the court with...
letters of support. Notable were Abe Wandersman and Sharon Telleen who both arranged for him to work on projects at the University of South Carolina and the University of Illinois, Chicago, respectively, during this time. SCRA members mobilized after Japan’s tsunami, sending Toshi relevant resource materials for disaster assistance. Throughout his ordeals, Toshi has been impressed by the importance of feeling valued, trusted and respected so his community psychology colleagues’ support has been invaluable.

Eventually, two Japanese courts ruled that his dismissal was wrong and suggested that the university fully reinstate him. An official public apology was extended to Toshi and his family who are now back in faculty housing. Being a small university (150 faculty), a return to the psychology department was the only option. Although relations are strained with his colleagues, his goal is to resume working together in a collegial manner.

During Toshi’s period of unemployment by his own university, in addition to Melissa’s employment (she teaches fulltime at a junior college and is in social work practice), he cobbled together small adjunct teaching stints in Tokyo, South Korea and Poland. In July 2011, while teaching in Korea at Yonsei University (a continuing summer position), he suffered a heart attack. It was discovered that all his arteries were blocked, 70 to 80 percent. “The Korean cardiologist was able to open one artery, and I survived!” Back in Japan, he underwent an intensive rehabilitation program. Considering his extensive travel schedule, he researched the availability of modern technology for cardiac procedures around the world and was surprised to learn that only a limited number of countries are adequately equipped. His doctor has advised that he will need heart bypass surgery within a year.

Toshi says his appreciation to his colleagues in South Korea (for their support after his heart attack) and Poland (who arranged for a Foreign Professorship at the University of Opole, teaching during school breaks) “defies description.” Also invaluable is his strong Christian faith. Toshi’s parents (now in their 80s) are Buddhists, but he was always curious about Christianity. At the University of Washington, he was recruited by a Christian campus ministry, became a born again Christian and lived in a Christian fraternity house. Later, he co-founded and was lay minister of a bilingual church in California. Toshi is active with the small, ecumenical West Tokyo Union Church which mostly serves expatriates from the U.S. At first, he was the only Japanese on the Church’s Executive Committee but has always felt very well accepted by the congregation. He is a Lay Eucharistic Minister and Outreach/Member Coordinator at the church.

When asked what he thought would be his most significant contributions to community psychology, Toshi listed three. First, a greater awareness of minority and cultural issues in the U.S. Second, scientific methods for evaluating services, both quantitative and qualitative. And third, the training of community psychologists in Japan and throughout Asia. In the latter case, he sees marked improvement in that many more community psychology courses are being offered, involving more professors and students. Toshi feels a greater commitment than ever to repay the field which has given him “a lot of support and for having retained a sense of justice for all.”

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The Community Psychologist’s Role in the Primary Prevention of Obesity: Opportunities and Obstacles
Written by Suzette Fromm Reed, National Louis University

SCRA’s prioritizing of policy (Corbett, 2011) opens the door for the field to consider ways of addressing obesity prevention from Brief Policy Committee Update
Our monthly conference calls (first Tuesday of the month 9:15am EST) have been very productive. In the past five months we have:
1) distributed our first round of (three $5,000) SCRA Policy Grants;
2) developed two distinct systematic processes (rapid and deliberative) by which SCRA can promote and evaluate proposals to take a stance (or some other action) on current and future policies that affect communities around the world (for full details on how to submit a proposal, contact the committee);
3) reviewed and made recommendations concerning three proposals for a Rapid Response policy stance (e.g., Hydrofracking, APA’s PENS report annulment, and the Occupy Movement);
4) explored partnerships with the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) and the APA Public Policy Directorate;
5) begun to draft a survey of SCRA membership policy efforts.
If you have an update or are interested in writing a policy-related article to be featured in the column, please contact the new policy committee chair and column editor - Judah Viola at judah.viola@nl.edu.
The CPPW grants in 44 communities

While some prevention efforts have focused on increasing affordability and access to locally grown health foods (Schwarte et al., 2010), most documented prevention and intervention approaches have focused on the practical aspects of changing eating patterns and physical activity levels as opposed to attempting to change the production, marketing and distribution systems. Prevention researchers and programmers have for the most part focused on the social and environmental determinants of being overweight and having ill health, using such information to build and evaluate programs that attempt to impact physical activity and eating habits among individuals and families (Fromm Reed, Viola, & Jackson, in press).

In a few cases prior to 2010, local governments became involved in obesity-related efforts through policies and coordinating efforts across agencies. Even more recently, in 2010 and 2011, the CDC funded community government collaboration grants under the title Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW). The CPPPW grants in 44 communities require local governments to work together with community coalitions and school systems and coordinate their obesity prevention efforts (CDC, 2010). As the crisis continues to worsen and becomes more costly, it is expected that the role of government will continue to be examined. Policy mechanisms are being explored for prevention, including new taxes on sugar sweetened beverages, banning trans fats, expanding food labeling laws to restricting advertisements to children, and investing in infrastructure to support more walking, public transit, and bicycling. Community psychologists should be part of this discourse.

To better understand the state of obesity prevention efforts and their relation to community psychology and policy, it is critical to understand that schools are key settings for public health strategies to lower or prevent the prevalence of obesity or simply being overweight (IOM, 2005). It is not likely that childhood obesity rates will decrease without the cooperation of schools, which will have to implement new policies concerning nutritious eating and physical activity.

Johnston, O’Malley, Terry-McElrath, Freedman-Doan and Brenner (2011) offer one of the most recent and comprehensive examinations of middle and high-school policies and practices related to obesity prevention. They surveyed over 900 middle and high school administrators, most often principals, in 2007 and 2008. Four key areas were examined with regard to policies, practice and impact: 1) school meals, 2) food and beverages in competitive venues, 3) physical activity and physical education, and 4) wellness policies.

Within the arena of school meals, while schools were making an effort to offer healthier choices, non-healthy alternatives were also readily available. Many of the decisions being made were at the community level. Policy implications most related to community psychology included increases in the number of schools providing menus with caloric information to parents. The dissemination of such information would not only empower parents to make better choices for their children, but also educate parents, which is a critical step in bringing healthy eating practices into the home. Another policy opportunity for community psychologists within the realm of school meals is to advocate for adequate funding and expansion of school breakfast programs. A significant proportion of students do not eat breakfast prior to attending school. This number is larger in low SES communities and seems to have a significant impact on their educational success (Terry-McElrath, O’Malley, & Johnston, 2009). Community psychologists could also work with schools and families on the promotion of healthy foods and beverages utilizing some of the same marketing techniques that industry groups are using to promote unhealthy choices (e.g., give healthy choices attractive names, place the salad bar at the beginning of the line).

Food and beverages in competitive venues include vending machines, school stores and a la carte food lines within schools. By 2008, most schools in the Johnston et al. study had no nutritional guidelines for what was offered in these venues while nearly all high schools and two-thirds of middle-schools had vending machines available. In addition, community psychologists can advocate for policies at the local level that are in line with current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. We can also work at a more macro level to ensure that IOM guidelines serve as the basis for the USDA’s updated guidelines for all food sold in schools.

Within the arena of physical activity and fitness, there is much room for improvement in the school setting. “While about 90 percent of middle school students and one half of high school students actually took physical education classes in 2008, it is likely that many did so for only one semester or trimester” (Johnston et al., 2011, p. 13). Rates of participation in school sports were nearly 30 percent,
while the numbers for intramural sports and physical activity clubs ranged from 10 to 24 percent. More discouraging is the fact that the low SES communities and the majority of African American and Latino schools had even lower rates of participation. Significantly, girls were also less likely to participate in intramural and physical activity clubs.

Opportunities for community psychologists to promote more effective physical activity-related policies include: promoting walking and biking to schools through safe routes to schools, or working within the community to increase joint-use agreements, which would allow schools to utilize available space of municipalities for physical activities. Community psychologists could also advocate for Congress to ensure every child has adequate physical activity in their day. This is particularly important while Congress re-examines the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for re-authorization based on Obama’s blueprint for reform released in March 2010 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Community psychologists can additionally work at the local level to advocate for physical education requirements by increasing the awareness of the connection between physical activity and academic performance (See Hillman, Erickson, & Kramer, 2008; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008).

The final arena within the school setting involves wellness policies. The Child Nutrition Act of 2004 established some mandatory provisions that are not being met in the majority of the schools examined, including “…having nutritional guidelines for all foods, goals for physical activity or an implementation plan” (as cited in Johnston et al., 2011, p. 14). Low and medium SES schools, as well as those attended primarily by African American or Latino students, had policies/practices that were least likely to meet these requirements. Those students who are in the most need, by virtue of being the most likely overweight, have the weakest policies and practices in place.

The school setting provides an entry point to better understanding the community psychologist’s role in the prevention of obesity. However, no surprise to community psychologists, childhood obesity prevention programs appear to be most effective when multiple levels (i.e., individual, family, institutional, community) are addressed (Power, Bindler, Goetz, & Daratha, 2010). Policies impacting the schools show promise, but other levels need to be considered as well.

Complicating the landscape further is the difficulty in determining a policy’s impact. Brownson, Chriqui, and Stamatakis (2009) note the profound impact that public health policy has on the overall health of our nation noting that policy was influential in 10 of the most notable public health achievements of the 20th century. The difficulty arises when attempting to determine the sources of the data used to analyze any given policy. The authors distinguish between “big P” policies and “small p” policies. “Big P” policies are what we typically think of when we think policy, formal laws, or regulations voted on by an elected body. “Small p” policies may include norms, memos, website information, or other guidelines. The two often do not coincide (Chriqui, 2011). Furthering this confusion is the fact that it is often hard to assess public “Big P” policies. Chriqui notes the frequent need to submit Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to obtain the necessary details to understand school policies in some states and large cities. Adding even more complications, “Big P’s” often have exemptions, or nuances embedded in fine print, deep within a policy, many of which are hundreds of pages long. For instance, there is a “Big P” policy in Illinois requiring students to have daily access to physical education (PE). However, one-third of students have far less access because the schools can use an exemption to opt out of the “requirement.” Frequently, both advocacy work and policy research miss such exemptions. In the case of research, qualitative coding schemes may overlook such fine print. If, for instance, analysis of a State’s policy on physical education is recorded dichotomously (yes, policy; or no, policy), one would believe that all students already receive PE.

Community psychologists are in a position to make an impact on public health policy, specifically obesity-related policies. Some of the barriers to implementing effective public health policies noted by Brownson, Chriqui, and Stamatakis (2009) are in line with the values of our field. Barriers we can address immediately include those that reflect a lack of value being placed on prevention, and on insufficient evidence on the effectiveness of interventions. These barriers fit with our values and skill sets. Yet other barriers exist that need to be addressed. As we progress with training the next generation of community psychologists, we can address many of the remaining barriers. This includes the incorporation of more training on policy-related competencies, and utilizing transdisciplinary approaches to better understand the policy-making process as a whole. We can also ensure our student researchers are not isolated from the

...policy was influential in 10 of the most notable public health achievements of the 20th century.
policy process by providing more personal contact between researchers and policymakers. In these ways, community psychologists can work with youth, families, schools, and larger communities to bring about more reasonable and effective policies (and to promote and help implement these policies) toward increasing the health and well-being of this and future generations.

References
Chriqui, J. (2011). Health in all policies: Determining relevancy, content and impact. Drawing from obesity policy-related examples of federal, state and local levels. Presentation given at the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children. Chicago, IL.

Regional Update
Edited by Susan Dvorak McMahon

I am delighted to welcome seven (7) more people into new leadership roles for SCRA this winter! We have new energy in the Southeast region of the U.S., with a new Regional Coordinator, Ciara Smalls, from Georgia State University, and two (2) new Student Regional Representatives: Chris Langeler from Vanderbilt University and Rebecca Rodríguez from Georgia State University. Way to go, Southeast region, and thanks to Jim Cook for helping with recruitment efforts! We have another new Student Representative in the Northeast, Sarah Brunelle, from Nashua Community College. We also have growing interest in International Regional Liaison leadership, with Nelson Portillo from San Salvador and Tesania Velázquez Castro joining our team in Latin America. In addition, we have a new International Student Regional Liaison from The American University in Cairo, Shehab Abdel-Rahman. Welcome to all of you, and we look forward to interacting with you through community psychology and SCRA-related discussions and activities.

There have been many exciting efforts going on within each region, so I encourage you to take a look and connect with others in your region. Feel free to contact your Regional Coordinator or Liaison to learn more about the regional SCRA-related events, share your ideas, and become more involved in SCRA. If you are interested in serving as a Regional Coordinator, Student Regional Coordinator, or International Regional Liaison, please contact me or a coordinator from your region. ☞
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News from the Middle East
Written by Amy Carrillo and Shehab Abdel-Rahman

It’s been an exciting year in the Middle East! The political transition has provided an opportunity for community psychologists to highlight the relevance of their work and generated renewed enthusiasm for strengthening communities and addressing social problems. Inspired by our friends in the Bay Area, we are planning two informal colloquia for community psychologists and colleagues with interests in community-based prevention, intervention, and evaluation. If you are interested, please contact Shehab Abdel-Rahman.

This year, we are lucky enough to have visiting with us a fellow SCRA member, Dr. Carie Forden from Clarion University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Forden is actively working to make connections with community psychologists in the region as well as helping to continue the collaboration between community psychology students and the community.

In additional updates, Amy Carrillo begins as a new Europe/Middle East/Africa Coordinator. Amy Carrillo is a Post-Doctoral Teaching Fellow in the Psychology Unit at The American University in Cairo, Egypt. Her research interests focus on education and resilience in marginalized communities. Shehab Abdel-Rahman begins as a student coordinator. He is a graduate student in the International Counseling and Community Psychology (ICCP) Program at The American University in Cairo, Egypt. Shehab’s research interests focus on the ecology of addiction, such as elements that produce and reinforce addictive behaviors.

Announcements or information for inclusion in future Europe/Middle East/Africa updates should be sent to Amy Carrillo.

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Australian Community Psychology and Global and Local Inequities
Written by Katie Thomas

On September 29th, 2011, local SCRA members joined with UCPSAR (University Community Partnerships for Social Action Research) and MHPN (Mental Health Professionals Network) fellows for a STAND UP against poverty event in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to end poverty. Fijian members also celebrated the event with a University STAND UP organized by Professor Kamal Kishore. The eight MDG goals include:
1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2) achieve universal primary education;
3) promote gender equality and empower women;
4) reduce child mortality;
5) improve maternal health;
6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7) ensure environmental sustainability; and
8) develop a global partnership for development.

Participants discussed the effects of poverty and increasing disparities between the rich and the poor at local, national and international levels. Much discussion centered around the limited service access available for those in lower SES areas and the workload and health corporatisation issues faced by practitioners who work with disadvantaged populations. At a global level, poverty and the increasing disparity between the wealthy and the bottom billion of the world’s poor was highlighted as a community issue which must be addressed for the “human community” to sustain itself. The Millennium declaration states, “We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently
The increasing vulnerability of women and children was raised as a local issue and a global issue. A short discussion of the MDGs highlighted that health programs are cut back because of financial difficulties created by the “wealth generation for the few” policies of the nineties and early 2000s. Globally, lifesaving programs for women and children are being defunded. If contraception was provided to the more than 215 million women who currently want, but lack, access to it, an additional 53 million unintended pregnancies would be averted each year; an additional 90,000 women’s lives would be saved; and nearly 600,000 newborn deaths would be averted – no small issue in a global population that has now reached 7 billion. Participants reflected on the increased community solidarity needed by activists who are to address these issues at all levels.

The Stand Up activity was registered as a Professional Development activity to assist practitioners in maintaining their obligations as psychologists under the new national regulations administered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and the Psychology Board of Australia. These bodies have legal and regulatory powers over all health practitioners and health service provision within Australia. Psychologists must complete 30 hours of approved and recorded Professional Development activities on an annual basis to maintain their registration. SCRA will continue to offer PD activities on a regular basis. Regional members who would like to propose or organize a Community Psychology PD activity are encouraged to contact their State representative.

### Canada

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#### 2012 Canadian Community Psychology Conference

Mark your calendars! We are excited to announce the second national Canadian community psychology conference, to be held on May 4-6, 2012 at Wilfrid Laurier University in the Waterloo region of Ontario, Canada. Join us as we gather community psychology students, faculty and community partners from across Canada to share, learn from, and mobilize knowledge from our collective research, teaching and action efforts. The conference theme will be “Justice and Social Change,” with a special focus on Aboriginal issues.

The conference is sponsored by the Community Psychology section of the Canadian Psychological Association and the Society for Community Research and Action of the American Psychological Association.

This will be our tenth anniversary of coming together in Canada as a community psychology community. Our first meeting was back in 2002, where community psychologists from four Canadian universities with community psychology graduate programs (Wilfrid Laurier University, Université d’Ottawa, Université Laval, and Université du Québec à Montréal) decided to hold an Ontario-Québec Community Psychology conference on the alternate years of the US Biennial Community Psychology conference. Ontario-Québec Community Psychology conferences were held in 2002 (Ottawa), 2004 (Laval), 2006 (Laurier), and 2008 (UQAM). In 2010, the first national Canadian Community Psychology conference was held in Ottawa.

For the 2012 conference in Waterloo, there are both national and local planning committees that began their planning in September, 2011. The conference will be bilingual in Canada’s two official languages (French and English), with content focused on the theme “Justice and Social Change.” The conference website will be available in January. Watch for more details as they become available!

### Canadian Research Showcase

In addition to announcing our national conference, in this issue of TCP we would like to begin a series of short profiles show-casing community psychology research and practice efforts in Canada. The goal is to highlight some of the interesting work going on across Canada, as well as to facilitate connections among students and researchers working in similar research areas.

We begin with the Project **Wasena/Waseya : Suicide prevention in Aboriginal communities** headed by Michel Tousignant at the Université du Québec à Montréal and Gilles Bibeau in the Department of Anthropology at the Université de Montréal. **Wasena/Waseya** is a research project whose goal is to examine suicide in Aboriginal communities, particularly among young people between the ages of 10 and 30. The project, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research from 2006 to 2012, seeks to explore the dynamics of suicide, suicide prevention, and family and community issues in Québec Aboriginal communities.

One major goal of this project is to develop an ecological model for understanding suicide by referring to the concept of family. To accomplish this, interviews were conducted with Aboriginal families living in three types of communities: villages, small
The objective was to explore how parents are coping with parenting and child-rearing in these three environments and how communities facilitate the parenting role.

A second research axis, Nokitan II, is based in Attikamekw territory north of Mauricie in Québec. Notikan II is implementing a school-based suicide prevention program developed around a collection of local legends. Facilitated discussions that take place around these legends permits students to discuss topics such as emotions, conflict, death, social support and community. Younger students in early primary school also participate in artistic creation, while older students engage a philosophy curriculum, based on Aboriginal principles, that was developed at the Université Laval. Evaluation results to date demonstrate that the program is well received and generates a great deal of enthusiasm among students and community members.

Several doctoral research projects are also associated with Project Wasena/Waseya. Arlene Laliberté’s doctoral work at UQAM involved psychological autopsies of thirty cases of suicide, documenting the events that led to the suicide and any family vulnerability present in these cases. Nibisha Sioui’s doctoral research at UQAM focuses on resilient families and the long-term processes that lead to parental resilience. Livia Vitenti’s doctoral work at the Université de Montréal involves an in-depth anthropological analysis of the phenomenon of suicide in three Attikamekw communities, seeking to understand the role of suicide contagion and trans-generational trauma related to family violence and residential school experiences.

Across all of its research areas, Wasena/Waseya researchers seek to document and facilitate local community initiatives that have been developed to address the phenomenon of suicide and suicide attempts. For more information, please contact Michel Tousignant (Co-PI, tousignant.michel@uqam.ca) or Nathalie Morin (Project Coordinator, morin.nathalie.3@uqam.ca).

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News from the Southeast
Written by Virginia Johnson,
Christopher Langeler,
and Sarah Suiter

The Southeast Region welcomes a new regional coordinator and two new student representatives! Ciara Smalls, assistant professor at Georgia State University, will be joining Sarah Suiter of Centerstone Research Institute in the Southeast Regional Coordinator role, and Rebecca Rodriguez (doctoral student at Georgia State University) and Christopher Langeler (doctoral student at Vanderbilt University) will be joining Virginia Johnson (doctoral student at University of North Carolina at Charlotte) as student representatives. Along with welcoming new representatives to the southeastern division, SCRA sponsored a breakfast at the Southeastern ECO Conference in Atlanta, GA in October.

At breakfast, SCRA President Jim Cook spoke about his journey of becoming progressively more involved with SCRA and the advantages of becoming a student member. Additionally, Virginia Johnson discussed the new SCRA student grant and asked for feedback about what barriers there are to becoming involved and what future directions students would like to see in the southeast region. Feedback from students at the breakfast centered around three different themes.

First, students were interested, but unsure, of how to become more involved in SCRA. For example, students wanted more basic information about how to register for SCRA, what the membership fees are, and how to get on the SCRA listserv. Many students who were already members wanted to become involved with some of the interest groups but were uncertain of the process.

Secondly, students would like to see active efforts to “get the word out” about the field of community psychology. Many students remarked anecdotally that most undergraduates are unaware of community psychology programs when they are applying for graduate school. Ideas about how to do this ranged from discussing community psychology in undergraduate classes to hosting prominent community psychology speakers at public events.

Finally, students would like to see more “community” among community psychology graduate students. For example, many students said they would be interested in joining online graduate student groups or attending SCRA sponsored student events in the region.

In an effort to respond to students and requests, we are working to develop new tools for the SE Region of SCRA to help bring our members together and help us share resources and information. We will be launching a Facebook group for all regional members as a way to facilitate informal communication and social
They are intended to meet the needs of members of the SE region and will evolve as necessary. Please feel free to contact any of the regional coordinators with your ideas, or share them on the Facebook group that will be live soon!

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News from the Northeast
Written by Samantha Hardesty

The Northeast region is busy finalizing plans for our yearly SCRA program, which will be held at the 2012 Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (EPA). This year EPA will be held in Pittsburgh, PA at the Westin Convention Center from Thursday, March 1 to Sunday, March 4, 2012. We have an exciting program planned with a number of distinguished invited guests.

The regional coordinators are very pleased to announce that the keynote speaker for SCRA’s program will be Ed Mulvey, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of the Professional Counseling and Psychology Program (PCAP), at the University of Pennsylvania. He has been an active researcher in community psychology for over 30 years and his research interests include the prevention of community violence, juvenile delinquency, and the prediction of violence among psychiatric patients. His talk will touch on community psychological approaches to address youth violence and how these approaches differ from traditional, clinically-oriented approaches.

We are also thrilled to announce that we have identified a great group of diverse professionals in the Pittsburgh area to serve on an invited panel. Participants will bring their unique perspectives from the fields of psychology, law, and social work to discuss how they do applied community psychology in the Pittsburgh area. The talks will highlight community collaborations among interdisciplinary professionals, and, as part of the symposium, these professionals will offer expertise to graduate and undergraduate students to aid in the pursuit of career goals outside of academia.

In addition to all the planning we have been doing for the conference, the NE regional coordinators are also undertaking a number of changes. First we want to take a minute to welcome our new undergraduate student representative, Sarah Brunelle. Sarah is a student at Nashua Community College and her interests include media and religion. Her most current research projects include the impacts of reality television on communities. We are very happy to have her on our team! Finally, as we look ahead to next year, we prepare to say goodbye to Lauren Bennett Cattaneo and Michele Schlehofer who will be rotating off as Regional Coordinators in August 2012. Lauren and Michele have been instrumental in keeping the northeast coordinators connected and in the planning and preparations of SCRA programming at EPA. We are looking to bring on board two additional people to replace Lauren and Michele. If you are interested, please email Michelle Ronayne at mronayne@ccsnh.edu.

We hope that you will be able to join us in Pittsburgh this spring! Please keep an eye out for more details regarding SCRA conference programming at EPA in our next newsletter, and messages sent via the listserv. Or, for general information about the upcoming conference, please visit the EPA website at www.easternpsychological.org. If you have any questions concerning the SCRA program, please contact Michele S. at mmschlehofer@salisbury.edu, or Michelle R. at mronayne@ccsnh.edu.

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

The network of Bay Area community psychologists and colleagues from other fields with interests in community-based research and intervention continue to meet once a semester for an informal colloquium. Our Fall colloquium will be held November 18th at University of California at Berkeley (UC Berkeley). Dr. Jean Phinney, Professor Emerita, California State University, Los Angeles, will speak on Restorative approaches to school discipline: What do we know? Yolanda Anyon, Doctoral Candidate in the School of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley, will speak on Racial disparities in school-based health and social services: An exploration of the role of referral routines. If you are interested in attending and/or presenting, please contact Danielle Kohfeldt or Gina Langhout (see emails below). The goal of our network is to provide a forum to informally discuss work in progress, network with other community practitioners, and provide an exchange of ideas related to community intervention work. The larger group meets twice a year, alternating between UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz, while encouraging smaller groups to form around particular interests. If you would like to be on our mailing list, please email Danielle Kohfeldt (dkohfeld@ucsc.edu) or Gina Langhout (langhout@ucsc.edu).

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News from the Midwest
Written by Nathan Todd

The Midwest Ecological-Community Psychology conference was held in Chicago this past October and was sponsored by DePaul University. The conference theme was, “Research for the People: Bridging Academics and Communities” and included a keynote address by Dr. Susan Wolfe. Thank you to everyone who attended and presented and to the graduate students at DePaul University for organizing the conference. We had over 100 participants.

Please mark May 3 to 5, 2012 on your calendars for the SCRA meeting at the Midwest Psychological Association conference held in Chicago. Plan to join others from the Midwest Region on Friday May 4th for an informal dinner near the conference, details to follow.

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

Midwest Region Community Psychology Showcase:
Dr. Sabine French

Dr. Sabine French is an assistant professor in the Community and Prevention Research Department at the University of Illinois Chicago. She received her undergraduate degree from Yale University and did her graduate work at New York University in the community psychology program with a developmental psychology concentration and a minor in quantitative psychology. Dr. French then accepted a faculty position at the University of California Riverside where she worked as an assistant professor of Social/Personality in the psychology department. However, she desired to pursue community rather than social psychology and accepted an offer at the University of Illinois Chicago in 2004 to develop her community psychology interests.

Dr. French’s research interests are in ethnic and racial identity development, especially for adolescents of color. She has longitudinally examined ethnic identity development in this population through various projects. Her research also examines factors which promote and hinder adaptive ethnic identity development as well as how ethnic identity is associated with other adaptive outcomes, such as mental health and academic achievement. She also is interested in how academic achievement may be
hindered among adolescents of color. Dr. French follows her community psychology values by focusing on the strengths and positive aspects of each community. She notes that she does not compare ethnic groups but rather examines them in their own within-group context because she believes that each group is unique and contributes their own values to the community.

As she described how her research interests have changed over time, Dr. French notes she was always interested in ethnic identity because she is a person of color. Over time her research has evolved from trying to understand basic identity processes to more complex ideas about mediators and moderators and how processes may depend on context. She also is interested in the implications of racial identity for students in oppressive contexts over time. Her research interests also have evolved as she now incorporates qualitative methods. She feels that an important component was missing from her work by only gathering information with pencil and paper measures and therefore began incorporating qualitative methods such as focus groups. However, this shift to qualitative work has not been without obstacles due to the time-consuming nature of transcription and coding of qualitative data. However, Dr. French feels that qualitative and mixed-methods approaches will be the most “well-rounded” way to understand racial and ethnic identity.

Currently Dr. French is working on two interesting projects related to ethnic identity. The first examines conceptions of ethnic identity for various ethnic groups (i.e., African Americans, Latino Americans, European Americans and Asian Americans). She has done a four-wave study where she measured ethnic identity development in college students from freshman to senior year. She is not only interested in the concept of ethnic identity but in how it develops and manifests over time. Dr. French’s research aims to dismantle the oppression of minority groups through promoting positive aspects of racial identity emphasizing strengths in each ethnic group.

Another more recent study explores Hip-Hop music and African American youth. Dr. French is a longtime fan of Hip-Hop music and notes how this genre has roots in raising social consciousness. She also notes that over time many lyrics now contain elements of violence or misogyny. Thus, she is interested in understanding how children may internalize these lyrics. More broadly, she is curious how internalization of this music may influence what one thinks about what it means to be an African American. She began this research wanting to develop an intervention which teaches positive messages about African Americans to promote mature ethnic identity and bolster racial pride. The second aim of this intervention is to teach children how to treat this music as entertainment rather than internalizing it. To inform this intervention and to learn what current African American youth think about being Black and Hip-Hop, she conducted focus groups with 160 African American youth ages 9 to 22. Participants who were 9 to 18 were part of community centers or early outreach programs and older participants were college students. Dr. French is now coding these data and notes that although qualitative data are very rich and informative, analysis is very time consuming which may discourage researchers from using qualitative methods. Dr. French, however, has not been dissuaded from this work and is excited to pursuing this and other research projects to understand and promote positive racial and ethnic identity.

See Dr. French’s Faculty Webpage for more information: http://portal.psch.uic.edu/sezfrench.aspx

**School Intervention Interest Group**

Edited by Paul Flaspohler and Melissa Maras

Greetings from the School Intervention Interest Group! For this issue we continue to explore the complexity of interdisciplinary collaboration in school mental health from the perspective of graduate students preparing to be future leaders in the field. In previous columns we have highlighted the shared contributions of colleagues focused on interdisciplinary collaboration and quality pre-service and in-service training in school mental health. Organized around a common mission, this group has evolved as a “Community of Practice” comprised of faculty and students from diverse disciplines engaged in research and action in the field. Our colleagues in school mental health and community psychology share many values, including a commitment to facilitating innovative and high-quality training experiences for the next generation of researchers and practitioners. We also espouse principles of empowerment and leadership that guide our efforts to include students as key stakeholders in their training and education. In turn, we also struggle with the best way to create the conditions necessary for students to take ownership of their training experiences and guide our fields in new directions for pre-service preparation. These ideals and tensions prompted students and faculty in our Community of Practice to develop a 2-day meeting intended to provide opportunities for this type of networking and community building. Sharing their experiences of the meeting, the authors provide invaluable insight on graduate training that we believe all our colleagues will appreciate.

An Innovative Student Summit
Professionals from multiple disciplines are needed to meet the varying mental health needs of today’s youth. The President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003) highlights the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and calls for improvements in the pre- and in-service training and preparation for the children’s mental health workforce. Likewise, professional associations and accreditation organizations in a variety of disciplines require competency in interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g., American School Counselor Association, 2010; National Association of Social Workers, 2002).

Expanded School Mental Health (ESMH) approaches include a broad set of services designed to address children’s mental health needs using school-based models, including assessment, linkage and referral, and school-family-community partnerships (Weist, Evans, & Lever, 2003). ESMH maximizes the skills, knowledge, and experiences of multiple disciplines (e.g., school and community psychology, social work, counseling, education, and nursing) to broaden efforts and create common practices (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). Wenger and colleagues (2002) note that much of the competency required for sound clinical practice is learned through the informal social relationships formed in the workplace, rather than through more formal training methods (e.g., attending lectures, workshops). CoPs are distinct from formal workgroups or project teams in that they specifically emphasize the development of members’ capabilities and exchanging knowledge through informal social learning. Barwick, Peters, and Boydell (2009) found that practitioners who were part of a CoP demonstrated greater satisfaction with professional support, improved implementation of an evidence-based tool, and increased knowledge of the same tool as compared to a practice as usual group.

By definition, CoPs cannot be forcefully or deliberately constructed. Rather, a CoP must be driven by the organic desire of its members to continue interacting and knowledge building independently of requirement or obligation (Wenger et al., 2002). CoPs can be facilitated, however, by providing a framework.
noted that informal networking opportunities led to appreciation for the passion and knowledge displayed by both individuals and the collective Summit group. It seems likely, based upon pre-selected disciplines related to ESMH and reactions to the Summit experience, that this group of students shares a common interest and displays a passion for the subject matter.

The Summit also included a variety of opportunities for shared learning, such as problem solving, didactic presentation, unstructured discussion and informal networking on a variety of topics including training, research, and practice. The second day of the student summit was designed to facilitate active interdisciplinary collaboration through problem-based learning. Problem-based learning models typically include activities that require participants to structure and organize their knowledge through problem-solving. In turn, participants are more equipped to apply their knowledge to practice settings (Brown & Duguid, 1996). Further, research indicates that problem-based learning is particularly effective for improving participants’ application of knowledge to real-life practice settings over time (Dochy, Segers, van den Bossche, & Gijbels, 2003; Norman & Schmidt, 2000).

At the Summit, attendees used vignettes to participate in collaborative discussion of potential interdisciplinary approaches to the assessment and treatment of children in need of school-based services. A clinical psychology graduate student attendee reported that he “enjoyed hearing other professions’ perspectives and thought it led to meaningful discussions.” Other attendees noted how useful and interesting they found learning with students and professionals of other disciplines by discussing varying approaches to hypothetical situations that could involve interdisciplinary action.

Finally, a CoP requires that the newly formed relationships of like-minded professionals must endure beyond formal meetings and involve continued learning, independent of formal structure. It cannot yet be determined if this assorted group of graduate students and young professionals will have found the Summit to be an experience worthy of lasting relationships. At this point, the Summit’s collaborative design provides a scaffold for such a network to develop.

Summary

The Summit provided graduate students with an opportunity to learn and interact with students and professionals of disciplines related to ESMH. The Summit involved an activating learning environment, training sessions, and problem-based learning to achieve the goals of: (1) providing opportunity for students across professional programs to develop and benefit from a network of interdisciplinary colleagues at other programs and universities, and (2) exploring individual graduate training models across professions with emphasis on how interdisciplinary collaboration is addressed and how ESMH is conceptualized and addressed. The event utilized a framework that facilitated network and relationship building and laid the groundwork for graduate students to develop a CoP. For a CoP to emerge, however, student attendees must exhibit continued investment in knowledge gathering and skill building, and utilize the expertise of distinct, yet interrelated disciplines, in a sustained collaborative effort.

References


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**Student Issues**

*Edited by Todd Bottom and Jesica Fernandez*

**Updates from the 2011 SE Eco Conference**

*Written by Rebecca Rodriguez, Georgia State University*

The community psychology graduate students of Georgia State University hosted this year’s Southeast Ecological Community Psychology Conference on October 14th and 15th. The conference theme this year was “Community Research and Action: Rising to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century.” Over 95 guests attended to hear Dr. Isaac Prilleltensky’s keynote address, “Wellness as Fairness.” In his talk, Dr. Prilleltensky gave a dynamic speech where he discussed essential characteristics of social justice that lead to various levels of wellness. Exceptional poster awards of $100 Visa gift cards were given to Silvia Gozzini and Lora Haynes from University of Louisville and to Helen R. Herrera and Satoko Chika from North Carolina State University for their poster. We offer our congratulations to next year’s conference host, North Carolina Central University. Thanks to all for attending and making this conference a success. We hope the energy from Eco is still going strong! See you next year!

**Updates from the 2011 MW Eco Conference**

*Written by Andrew Martinez, DePaul University*

Nearly 120 people attended the 2011 Midwest Eco Conference at DePaul University in Chicago on October 22-23. This year’s student-led conference opened with a lively morning discussion entitled “A 30-year Update on the History of the Community Psychology Ecological Conferences,” consisting of seventeen panelists. Attendees were privileged to hear many long-time community psychologists describe personal stories from the first Eco conferences over three decades ago. The theme of the MW Eco was *Research for the People: Bridging Academics and Communities*, and the Keynote Address was titled *Doing and Reporting Community Psychology Practice Work: What They Don’t Teach in the Classroom*. We are pleased to announce that the 2012 MW Eco will be held at Michigan State University, and we look forward to seeing many of you there!

**Emphasizing the “Community” in Northwest Ecological-Community Psychology Conference**

*Written by Colleen Kidney, Erin Stack, and Joyann Song*

On October 29th, 2011, the 6th annual Northwest ECO conference was held on the beautiful campus of Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Graduate students at Portland State University and Lewis and Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling organized this year’s conference, which was themed *Bridging Community and Academic Voices to Create Social Change*. Over 50 attendees enjoyed 26 individual presentations, symposia,
roundtable discussions, posters, and workshops on a variety of community-centered research projects and action initiatives.

A keynote session led by Beth Burns and Joy Cartier inspired us to think about positive and creative ways to contribute to the lives of homeless and transitional youth in Portland. This year was special for the organizers due to Portland State / Lewis and Clark collaboration in organizing of Eco, because this year marks the first interschool organization. This collaboration resulted in a greater diversity in the interests and backgrounds of attendees and presenters, and an opportunity for us to work with individuals outside our own universities and get to know graduate students in another field. Feedback from the attendees was positive; a common theme from the feedback was that the presentation topics were diverse and engaging.

The Community Student
Edited by Jesica Fernández and Todd Bottom

In an effort to recognize the hard work of Division 27 students, we are happy to publish this list of many students’ publications and grant awards from the past two years. Thank you to all who submitted references and for your commitment to the values of Division 27 and to the communities that you serve. Congratulations to our student members for their publications and grant awards listed below!

Publications


Reed, S.J., & Valenti, M.T. (in press). It ain’t all as bad as it may seem’: Young Black lesbians’ responses to sexual prejudice. Journal of Homosexuality.


Grant Awards


Beasley, C.R. (2010; $300). APA Travel
**The Voices of Survivors of Sexual Assault**  
*Written by Emily Dworkin, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

In January 2011, I was awarded the SCRA student research grant. Planning the project for which I was funded included having a series of conversations with key informants who work to prevent and respond to sexual assault. From these discussions, it became evident that there was a diversity of narratives about the nature of sexual assault in the local community, best practices for preventing and responding to sexual assault, and the success of collaborative efforts in this community. Simultaneously, these key informants were interested in 1) better understanding how other local key informants approached the problem of sexual assault, and 2) understanding how their services were experienced by survivors of sexual assault. Thus, the current study aimed to address two questions in an exploratory manner: 1) What does the system’s response to sexual assault look like in the local community, and 2) How do recipients of services experience the system’s response to sexual assault in the local community?

As an initial step, I conducted five interviews with key service providers (i.e., informants) and 11 interviews with survivors of sexual assault. These interviews were conducted using open-ended, qualitative interview protocols developed in collaboration with the key informants with whom I initially spoke to develop this study. Interviews with key informants were critical to developing an idiographic understanding of the “lay of the land” with regards to sexual assault services. Local institutions that respond to sexual assault include a rape crisis center that provides a crisis hotline, short-term counseling, and medical and legal advocacy; two community-
based and one campus-based police departments; and a forensic nurse program at one of the two major local hospitals. As expected, key informants reported a disparity of resource availability between the campus and the greater community. Some concern was raised among key informants that prevention efforts were not coordinated across agencies, but were largely piecemeal. Indeed, community-based responses to sexual assault are often fragmented, which can have negative consequences for the experiences of the recipients of such responses (Campbell & Ahrens, 1998).

A notable theme that emerged from these interviews was that key informants said that they had to be careful in their framing of issues related to sexual assault in the course of their work. One police offer noted intentionally avoiding framing rape prevention around feminism in presentations, and a prevention educator said that she discussed bullying alongside sexual assault in an effort to make the topic more palatable to school administrators and parents. These tensions around framing and marketing the issue of sexual assault have been a struggle in the anti-sexual assault movement, so it is not surprising that they were replicated here.

Many key informants said that relationships across agencies had affected their efforts to enact best practices around preventing and responding to sexual assault. However, when cross-agency relationships were good, they supported efforts to address sexual assault. One such challenge that became evident from these interviews was the lack of individual relationships between the advocates from the rape crisis center and the officers from two of the three local police departments. Several key informants expressed feeling that building personal relationships would be useful, and they were interested in doing more networking to foster such relationships.

Eleven survivors of sexual assault were interviewed for this project. Survivors ranged in age from 20 to 61 years old, three were students who had been sexually assaulted on campus, and eight were non-students who had been assaulted off-campus. Most were assaulted by someone with whom they had been acquainted prior to the assault, and most assailants had no contact with the criminal justice system as a result of their crime. At least four of the assaults occurred in the context of drug or alcohol use by the survivor, and two of these were believed by the survivor to involve a so-called “date rape drug.” Many participants asked if their experience “counted” as sexual assault when calling to inquire about the study. The research staff described how we defined sexual assault and asked them if they felt that what happened to them fit into that definition. If they said yes, they were considered to meet the study criteria.

Survivors typically turned first to informal support providers, as documented in the literature (Ullman, 1996; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). Informal support providers often connected survivors to formal support providers. Most commonly, formal support providers were therapy or counseling services, indicating that survivors often waited past the point when they perceived police or medical services to be useful. Many survivors were concerned about the implications of reporting to authorities, and some felt reluctant to go to the hospital because they felt that getting a forensic medical exam would be embarrassing and intrusive. Others believed that it was not necessary to go to the hospital if they were not injured. Most survivors were unsure of the community resources that are available to support them and the interview became a space to alert survivors to the presence of these resources.

My next steps include thematically coding the interviews to identify emergent themes. I intend to collaborate with interview participants to elicit their feedback on the themes I identify to inform the next steps for this project. Depending on the feedback I receive, and the needs expressed by key informants, next steps could include quantitative components designed to assess the nature of cross-agency connections (i.e., through a social network analysis) and/or a broader survey of survivors of sexual assault. Long-term, I see this project as an integral piece of my development as a student researcher. In the future, I hope to continue to explore system’s responses to sexual assault, particularly around medical advocacy, using mixed-method approaches.

Most survivors were unsure of the community resources that are available to support them.

References


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- **Margins:** 1” margins on all four sides
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- **Alignment:** All text should be aligned to the left (including titles).
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