



## Overview of Articles in the Special Issues

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Below I provide a brief overview and commentary on each article in these special issues of the *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*. In describing each article below, I have noted the practice competencies highlighted by the authors, and also listed in brackets any other competencies that seemed to me to be especially involved in their work. I also listed any Proposed Competencies specified in each article.

See *Table 1* for a list of articles organized by competencies that each article covers.

**Gabriel Kuperminc, Wing Yi Chan, Scot Seitz, Christyl Wilson**

### **Infusing Community Psychology Practice Competencies into Doctoral Training**

Competencies Emphasized: All

In this article, Gabe Kuperminc and co-authors describes how the SCRA practice competencies are used in the Georgia State University PhD Community and Clinical-Community specializations. The Georgia State program adapted the SCRA competencies to fit its context, including some skills relevant to the training of clinical-community students and for those interested in public health and community psychology.

Kuperminc focuses on practicum fieldwork and on advisement as avenues for development of competencies. Students complete three one-semester practicum fieldwork experiences, in which the student writes a statement of work to build experience and develop skills in as many as four competency areas, through a community setting identified by the student, and

negotiates deliverable products related to this plan. This article includes appendices of documents for students that describe this process.

In yearly progress reports to a faculty advisor, each student reflects on experiences with each competency during the year, and identifies a set of competencies to focus on in the next year. In a conference with an advisor, discussions focus on these learnings and plans. This article includes a survey completed by students for this process.

Kuperminc provides preliminary findings about the usefulness of the competencies for students, faculty, and community partners, and describes successes and challenges in this work.

Two strengths of this article are its detailed descriptions and materials of the practicum fieldwork and advisement processes, and Kuperminc's excellent suggestions for future revisions of the SCRA list.

<b>Foundational Principles</b>	
1. <i>Ecological Perspectives</i>	Clifford et al.; Collins et al.; Henderson et al; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian; Sarkisian & Taylor; Scott ; Arcidiacono
2. <i>Empowerment</i>	Bayaa et al.; Henderson et al; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor; Scaccia et al. [Collins et al.; Scott]
3. <i>Sociocultural and Cross-Cultural Competence</i>	Collins et al.; Henderson et al ; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor; Scaccia et al.; Scott; Underwood
4. <i>Community Inclusion and Partnership</i>	Henderson et al; Collins et al.; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor; Scaccia et al.; Underwood [Arcidiacono; Scott]
5. <i>Ethical, Reflective Practice</i>	Henderson et al; Langhout et al.; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor
<b>Community Program Development and Management</b>	
6. <i>Program Development, Implementation and Management</i>	Collins et al.; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor; Underwood [Scott]
7. <i>Prevention and Health Promotion</i>	Bayaa et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor; Scaccia et al. [Collins et al.]
<b>Community and Organizational Capacity-Building</b>	
8. <i>Community Leadership and Mentoring</i>	Sanchez et al.; Scaccia et al.
9. <i>Small and Large Group Processes</i>	Francescato & Zani; Sarkisian & Taylor [Arcidiacono; Collins et al.; Scott]
10. <i>Resource Development</i>	Sarkisian & Taylor
11. <i>Consultation and Organizational Development</i>	Bayaa et al.; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor [Francescato & Zani]
<b>Community and Social Change</b>	
12. <i>Collaboration and Coalition Development</i>	Bayaa et al.; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor; Scaccia et al.
13. <i>Community Development</i>	Bayaa et al.; Sanchez et al. [Francescato & Zani; Henderson et al]
14. <i>Community Organizing and Community Advocacy</i>	Clifford et. al.; Sanchez et al. [ Francescato & Zani]
15. <i>Public Policy Analysis, Development and Advocacy</i>	
16. <i>Community Education, Information Dissemination, and Building Public Awareness</i>	Clifford et. al.; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor; Scaccia et al. [Faust et al.]

Table 1: Articles Listed by Practice Competencies  
Continued on next page

Community Research	
17. <i>Participatory Community Research</i>	Arcidiacono; Faust et al.; Francescato & Zani; Sanchez et al.; Scaccia et al.; Scott
18. <i>Program Evaluation</i>	Faust et al.; Francescato & Zani; Sanchez et al.; Sarkisian & Taylor; Scaccia et al.; Wolfe & Price
Additional Proposed Competencies	
<i>Competencies for Community Research</i>	Faust et al.
<i>Ethical Critically Reflexive Anti-Racist Feminist Praxis</i>	Langhout et al.
<i>Financial and Management Skills</i>	Wolfe & Price
<i>Continuing Professional Development</i>	Wolfe & Price
<i>Community Profiling</i>	Francescato & Zani
<i>Participatory Multidimensional Organizational Analysis</i>	Francescato & Zani
<i>Sociopolitical Empowerment Training</i>	Francescato & Zani

Table 1 (cont.): Articles Listed by Practice Competencies

**Regina Day Langhout, Erin Ellison, Danielle Kohfeldt, Angela Nguyen, Jesica Siham Fernandez, Janelle M. Silva, David L. Gordon, Jr., Stephanie Tam Rosas**

**Thinking Through Our Processes: How the UCSC Community Psychology Research & Action Team Strives to Embody Ethical, Critically Reflexive Anti-Racist Feminist Praxis**

Competency Emphasized: Ethical, Reflective Practice

Proposed Competency: Ethical Critically Reflexive Anti-Racist Feminist Praxis

The eight authors of this article, all members of the team named in the title, led by faculty member Regina Day Langhout, have developed a small-group approach to reflective practice that clearly involves a process, practices, and skills for fostering reflection, reflexivity, mutual support, and attention to difficult issues and challenges. In this paper, the authors discuss the SCRA competency of Ethical, Reflective practice,

and propose a more specific concept of Ethical, Critically Reflexive Anti-Racist Feminist Praxis. They describe how the latter approach guides their team meetings, reflection and action. It is based on concepts of relatedness and accountability to team members, other researchers, and community collaborators. An additional basis of their work lies in the emphasis of feminists of color on listening to marginalized groups and experiences of intersectionalities. Their practice within the team (faculty and graduate students) includes personal check-ins, project check-ins, and an additional hour used as the (rotating) facilitator chooses (including research or other professional issues). In this article, student authors discuss the importance of the team’s wide array of topics that can be discussed, and the trust and affirmation of identities that grows from these discussions. Other student authors described how the team together addressed problems in a participatory action research project. Finally, the authors describe how dealing with the hierarchies, power

differentials, and multiple identities still present in the work of the team (always a challenge in academia) is an edge for growth for team members.

Two strengths of this article are its detailed descriptions of a participatory action research team in academia that also functions as a supportive space for its members, and its inclusion of personal student reflections.

**Kelly Collins, Christopher Keys, Martina Mihelicova, Kris Ma, Nicole Colon Quintana, Jordan Reed, Madison Sunnquist, Carolyn Turek, and Christopher Whipple**

## **Addressing the Community Psychology Competency Dialectic through Participatory Pedagogy**

Competencies Emphasized: Ecological Perspectives; Sociocultural and Cross-Cultural Competence; Program Development, Implementation, Management [Small and Large Group Processes, Empowerment, Prevention and Health Promotion]

Kelly Collins and co-authors address a dialectic inherent in considering community psychology practice competencies: *competency vs. context*. There is practical value in a set of consensually-defined skills of community psychologists, presentable in reasonably succinct form to employers, funders, and others outside our field. Yet there has long been a reasonable fear that articulating and publicizing such a defined list of competencies could limit the development of the field, lead to static conceptions of competencies, ignore differences in social contexts, and limit reflection on issues of values and power. This dialectical perspective is a strength of this article, and suggests an approach to future discussions of the practice competencies.

Collins et al. explore this dialectic in the community psychology graduate classroom,

using the approach of participatory pedagogy (originating in the pedagogy of Paulo Freire), and looking especially for areas where partial syntheses of this dialectic might emerge. The course professor, Chris Keys, asked students to suggest modifications in the course syllabus and suggest guest speakers, had students develop class activities and lead class sessions, and promoted an egalitarian classroom climate that encouraged reflection, engagement in learning, challenging of assumptions, and “ongoing development of one’s own imperfect ideas and process-based skills”. The inclusion of student voices in the authorship of the article illustrates one outcome of this approach, and is another strength of this article.

Collins et al. present three examples of topics addressed in the course: Thinking Ecologically about Community Programs; Starting Community Program Development; A Diversity Game to Experience Systemic Inequity [I have shortened titles]. Each student-led class session had defined purposes and goals, activities to foster experiential learning, and reflection on outcomes. This approach clearly involved critical reflection as well as fostering development of some of the process skills and critical perspectives central to the identity of a community psychologist in practice. The authors include an extensive appendix with resources for applying these approaches in class, and their discussion section provides reflection on limitations of their work as well as issues to be addressed for a truly dynamic, “open-system” approach to developing concepts of community psychology practice competencies. The authors’ conceptualization and exploration of this dialectic is a strength of this article.

**Dawn X. Henderson, Jameika R. Matlock,  
DayQuan Garrett, and Christopher Clark**

## **What Does It Mean to Use Competencies in “Praxis” with Undergraduate Students in Historically Black Institutions?**

Competencies Emphasized: Community Inclusion and Partnership; Ecological Perspectives; Empowerment; Sociocultural Competence; Ethical, Reflective Practice [Community Development]

Dawn X. Henderson described how she designed an undergraduate course in community psychology, at Winston-Salem State University, an historically Black university, around the five Foundational Principles on the practice competencies list. A key element of the course involved working with her students and other faculty in community development initiatives in Waughtown, a racially diverse, low-income neighborhood near campus. In class, her students discussed learning about their own status in terms of power and privilege. In Waughtown, Henderson and her students learned about social and economic forces affecting the neighborhood, attended neighborhood events, co-facilitated focus groups, and conducted a video project on sense of community there. She used a praxis approach: community experiences enriched student discussion and learning in class, which in turn enriched further community work.

One key theme involved the importance of narratives in understanding both one’s own growth and that of a neighborhood. Henderson notes how her own time and her students’ time in Waughtown was limited, and community change is a slow process, yet the student narratives included in the paper make it clear that for these students, this was a transformative learning experience. In addition, their work illustrates steps toward learning another competency: Community Development.

A strength of this article is the primacy of Henderson’s personal experiences and voice, and those of her students.

**Victoria Scott**

## **Leveraging Community Psychology Competencies to Advance Medical Education and Improve Obesity Healthcare**

Competencies Emphasized: Participatory Research; Sociocultural and Cross-Cultural Competence; Ecological Perspectives [Empowerment; Program Development, Implementation and Management; Small and Large Group Processes]

Victoria Scott described her work with health care providers and patients in the South Carolina Initiative for Quality Overweight/Obesity Care. The Initiative sought to develop new ways of providing medical education for patient-centered, culturally competent health care. Scott’s team developed participatory action research processes for two primary-care settings in urban South Carolina. Each process involved exploratory assessment, a more structured needs assessment, and then an intervention phase in which researchers and providers worked together to develop and implement specific interventions to improve obesity care, tailored to each setting.

This approach fostered genuine partnerships with staff and patients, and greater staff awareness of socio-emotional and socio-cultural challenges in care for persons with obesity-related concerns. Scott’s team worked to foster a group climate in which everyone’s implicit assumptions and biases about obesity and weight, as well as issues of race and social class, could be discussed and worked on together. Both the assessment phases and the intervention phase illustrated how these three competencies dovetail nicely in practice. In addition, their work seems to me to actively involve at least three other

practice competencies: Empowerment, Program Development, Implementation and Management, and use of effective Small/Large Group Processes.

Scott's use of participatory processes in research and pedagogy, especially in health care, is a strength of this article.

**Jacqui Akhurst, Carolyn Kagan, Rebecca Lawthorn, and Michael Richards**

## **Community Psychology Practice Competencies: Perspectives from the UK**

Competencies Emphasized: All

From a perspective informed by critical community psychology, Jacqui Akhurst and co-authors critique the philosophical and political underpinnings of concepts of competencies in higher education. Further, they question whether participatory practice and learning, and ideals of social justice, can thrive alongside initiatives that break the complexities and processes of community psychology work into specific competencies. Akhurst et al. predict: "Whilst SCRA may not intend they [the practice competencies] be used for evaluation of accreditation standards, they will not be able to prevent this happening." Moreover, they are concerned that explicit recognition and discussion of values will be lost among discussions of competencies. Akhurst et al. also argue that the complexities of dynamic, participatory, egalitarian work within communities can be presented to employers and others in ways that provide alternatives to the SCRA list.

This perspective needs to be considered; it represents one pole of a dialectic that Collins et al. (in these special issues) call the "competency-context dialectic." I don't agree that the practice competencies will inevitably lead to accreditation of programs or licensing of individuals. SCRA is clear on this point. Yet I also believe that all of us in the field would agree that the usefulness of these

competencies very much depends on the contexts of their use, and that community psychology practice is indeed a set of dynamic processes, involving many factors besides skills (especially values and power). To me, there is a practical need to recognize important skill areas for practice, *and* a need to address the importance of values, assumptions, and contexts of practice. There is room for paradox and synthesis here.

Some areas of synthesis in this dialectic appear in these special issues. For instance, articles by Collins et al., Henderson, and Scott provide examples of participatory practice and pedagogy integrated with selected SCRA competencies, and Langhout et al. examine the SCRA principle of Ethical, Reflective Practice from the perspective of a critical, reflexive, anti-racist feminist praxis.

**Isidro Maya Jariego**

## **Competencies for Community Psychology Practice in Spain: Standards, Quality and Challenges in Social Intervention**

Competencies Emphasized: All

Isidro Maya Jariego, a community psychologist in Spain, presents a set of community psychology practice competencies developed at the Universidad de Sevilla, and used with graduate students there. This set of specific competencies follows the generic format of the European Federation of Psychological Associations (EuroPsy). Maya Jariego also compares the EuroPsy and Seville approach with the SCRA practice competencies in the U.S.

The EuroPsy system is oriented to accreditation of professional psychologists across all specialties. It is thus generic in focus. Its competencies include: needs analysis; goal setting; assessment of individuals, groups, organizations, or situations; development of services to be offered, planning and implementation of person-oriented, situation-oriented, or other

interventions; evaluation of interventions; and communication of outcomes. Maya Jariego presents examples of reports in this format for fieldwork projects by students at Universidad de Sevilla, which includes community and organizational interventions. Those examples resemble similar fieldwork projects in community psychology by students in the U.S. Maya Jariego notes that the EuroPsy approach “is particularly useful to promote student reflection on the professional role. However, it is an exercise in meta-cognition and sometimes students find it difficult to identify what skills are involved in the development of certain specific activities.” Maya Jariego concludes that both the specific approach to competencies by SCRA, and the generic EuroPsy approach, modified to include community and organizational assessments and interventions, can be useful for community psychology.

This article is valuable for its international comparison of approaches to defining practice competencies. A strength is that it recognizes both the differences and the convergences of the EuroPsy and SCRA approaches.

## **Tabitha Underwood**

### **A Career on the Fringe of Academia**

Competencies Emphasized: Ecological Perspectives; Empowerment; Sociocultural and Cross-Cultural Competence; Program Development, Implementation and Management; Community Inclusion and Partnership

Tabitha Underwood describes her 13 years of work in higher education civic engagement positions and university-community partnerships, which have provided her with a career involving teaching, research, and practice. Civic engagement in higher education includes community service, service learning, internships, community-

based research, co-curricular service, political advocacy, and other forms of university-community partnerships. (The actual nature of this work varies by university.)

Underwood compares recent descriptions of the most common professional roles of persons holding these positions with the SCRA competencies for community psychology practice, finding five areas emphasized or widely noted in both fields (Sociocultural/Cross-Cultural Competence; Community Inclusion and Partnership; Program Development, Implementation and Management; Empowerment, Ecological Perspectives). However, she also describes how a number of other SCRA practice competencies are inherent in higher education civic engagement work. Two SCRA competencies have been especially valuable for Underwood in her work: (a) Ecological Perspectives; and (b) Community Education, Information Dissemination and Building Public Awareness.

Higher education community engagement positions provide a career alternative for community psychologists. From her seasoned perspective, Underwood discusses the engaging and challenging aspects of this field for community psychologists. Her first-person account is a strength of this article.

## **Gregor Sarkisian and Sylvie Taylor**

### **Challenges and Strategies in Promoting Empowering Academic Settings for Learning Community Psychology Practice Competencies**

Competencies Emphasized: all Foundational Principles; Program Development, Implementation and Management; Prevention and Health Promotion; Small Group Processes; Resource Development; Consultation and Organizational Development; Collaboration and Coalition Development; Information Dissemination and

## Building Public Awareness; Program Evaluation

Gregor Sarkisian and Sylvie Taylor, faculty members in the master's program in Applied Community Psychology at Antioch University Los Angeles, describe opportunities for learning the SCRA competencies in their program, as well as the challenges involved. Students in the Antioch program are primarily adult learners with prior experience in community work, principally women, often identify as a member of an ethnic minority group, and are usually employed outside the program (55% full-time).

Through courses and supervised fieldwork, students have opportunities to develop to the Experience level in most areas of the practice competencies, as students choose. These areas include the "Competencies Emphasized" list above, which are mostly in the categories of Foundational Principles, Community Program Development and Management, and Community and Organizational Capacity-Building. Coursework prepares students to the Exposure level in other competencies. Four of the core courses have a fieldwork component; a required fieldwork course follows these. A theme of their article is that master's programs can help students achieve the experience level of many competencies, leaving the expertise level to doctoral programs.

Students in the Antioch program often face challenges in learning at the master's level. An especially valuable part of this article is that Sarkisian and Taylor describe these challenges and faculty strategies for addressing them. The challenges for faculty include: (a) recognizing and embracing diverse student learning styles; (b) facilitating space for respectful academic dialogue and debate; (c) deepening understanding of human diversity and social oppression, especially for students with little lived experience with these issues; (d) raising

awareness of the paradoxical nature of organizations, social systems and institutions; (e) enabling students to articulate an ecological perspective; (f) enabling students to become effective collaborators. Sarkisian and Taylor provide a variety of teaching, learning, and supervisory strategies for addressing each of these challenges.

A strength of this article is its detailed descriptions of fieldwork experiences in a master's program, and its attention to pedagogy.

## Nuria Ciofalo, Susan James, and Mary Watkins

### Reflections on the Assessment of Practice Competencies

Competencies Emphasized: All

Additional Emphasis: Qualitative Assessment of Competencies

Nuria Ciofalo and co-authors teach in the Pacifica Graduate Institute's Depth Psychology program, in its Community Psychology, Liberation Psychology, and Ecopsychology specialization that integrates these three fields. In their article, these authors describe their work of integrating the SCRA practice competencies with their program's emphases on depth psychology and ecopsychology. These multiple emphases envision well-being at individual, family, community, environmental, and cultural levels.

In their article, Ciofalo et al. focus on the issues in developing qualitative assessments of student learning, using the SCRA practice competencies along with capacities based on depth psychology and ecopsychology. The program developed these assessments to reflect the program's core values, and to recognize the complexities of cautiously assessing learning that is to be transformative, sustainable, and interdisciplinary. They used qualitative

research methods, including content analysis and narrative analysis, to assess students' self-reflective essays, narratives that students provide in a yearly program newsletter, e-portfolios, and video documentaries. Faculty retreats periodically evaluated the meaning of these assessments, refined them for future assessments, and used findings from continuing assessments over time to refine the design and teaching of courses and fieldwork experiences. The authors describe and provide examples of the qualitative and quantitative assessments and analyses, and discuss the usefulness and limitations of this approach for the program's mission.

A strength of this article is its use of qualitative assessments and concern with using the SCRA competencies in ways consistent with program orientation and values.

**Notes:** The articles by Akhurst et al., Arcidiacono, Ciofalo et al., Kuperminc et al., Maya Jariago, Meissen et al., and Wolfe & Price concerned the competencies list as a whole, and I only listed them here if they also emphasized specific competencies. If I believed that any article was especially relevant to a specific competency, but the authors did not explicitly include that competency in their discussion, I included it above in brackets.