

16th Biennial Conference of the Society for Community Research and Action: Final Report and Recommendations

2017 Biennial Planning Committee

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16th SCRA Biennial Conference of the Society for Community Research and Action

Final Report and Recommendations

The 16th Biennial Conference of the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) took place from June 21-24, 2017 in Ottawa, Canada at the University of Ottawa. After a full day of preconference events on Tuesday, June 20, the conference ran for three and a half days –Wednesday morning the 21st through midday on Saturday the 24th. The conference program featured 87 symposia, 38 roundtable discussions, 12 town hall meetings, 21 workshops, 9 Ignite sessions, 16 Innovative Other sessions, and 2 plenary sessions. There were 173 posters divided into three poster sessions. There were 1050 unique individuals listed as presenting (732) or non-presenting authors on conference sessions as well as 294 discussants and moderators. The overall conference revenue was \$171,218. Conference expenses totaled \$147,900, leaving SCRA with \$23,318 in net revenue.

CONFERENCE PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Committees and Workgroups

The *program committee* was co-chaired by Manuel Riemer and Simon Coulombe at Wilfrid Laurier University and supported by the Centre for Community Research, Learning, and Action. This committee took responsibility for soliciting proposal submissions, setting up the review process online, managing the review process, creating the academic conference program, and communicating with authors related to their submissions. This committee also worked very closely with the local planning committee. There were three student RAs who supported this process over six months. The team met for 8-16 hours per month between November 2016 and May 2017.

The *local conference planning committee* was co-chaired by John Sylvestre and Tim Aubry, and consisted of faculty, staff, and graduate students of the University of Ottawa. The full list of planning committee members are on the cover page of this report. The planning of the conference was supported by the Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services. The committee met regularly (initially monthly but more frequently as the conference approached), and made the majority of decisions related to the conference logistics. The local conference planning committee was divided into the following subcommittees to organize specific aspects of the conference:

- Program (including developing the print/PDF-version, and Guidebook mobile application);
- Social activities;
- Volunteers;
- Shaw Centre events; and
- University of Ottawa events.

Although the full planning committee was involved in making all important decisions, the delegation of specific tasks led to greater efficiency.

Jean Hill, SCRA Executive Director, and Rachel Storace, Administrative Assistant, participated in conference calls over the last months of planning and served as ex-officio members of the planning committee.

Conference theme

The 2017 biennial focused on community psychology in North America and the World. The title of the conference was “Transformative Community Psychology” with the theme of “Rediscovering Potential of Community Psychology for Changing People, Communities,

Programs and Policies.” This theme guided decisions regarding the conference program, most notably the plenary sessions. See below for details about the plenary sessions.

Call for Proposals and Submission Guidelines

The Call for Proposals was posted on the SCRA website and distributed via SCRA-sponsored listservs and through SCRA social media accounts. It was also distributed via the listservs of other professional organizations, and the Canadian community psychology listserv “CP-Loop” hosted by Wilfrid Laurier University. Proposals were due on November 7th, 2016. The call specified the following seven session types: Poster, Roundtable Discussion, Symposium, Town Hall Meeting, Workshop, Ignite Presentation, and The Innovative Other.

In the call, we placed a limit on one first authored paper symposium paper per person. This was to create more space in the program for a greater diversity of individuals and to ensure that the program could be delivered in the three and a half days of the conference, to minimize the number of concurrent sessions, and to reduce the number of conflicts in the program schedule. In order to reduce potential scheduling conflicts, we also limited the number of participants on each group proposal (e.g., Town Hall meetings) to six participants maximum.

Here is the description of each submission category, as described on the All Academic website:

- Poster Presentations facilitate individual and small group conversations through the use of a visual aid. Posters that highlight innovative methods for conference participant interaction are preferred. Poster presentations can emphasize research, practice, action, or other initiatives. Posters will be organized in thematic groups and be presented during designated poster sessions.
- Symposia provide a forum for discussion, debate, and explication of diverse perspectives as they pertain to the conference themes and/or tracks. Symposia may be used to present

practice and/or research topics. Submissions that explicitly describe the process or method that will be used to facilitate audience interaction and dialogue will be preferred. Symposia typically include 3-4 related papers, a moderator, and a discussant.

- Ignite Presentations provide an opportunity to share research and ideas in a brief 5-minute format (20 slides at 15 seconds each) to ignite conversations and discussions between the presenters and the audience. Several speakers will follow each other in rapid transition followed by a time to engage in conversation. This format is ideal for presenting findings from smaller studies (e.g., student thesis projects), a new tool or method, or research that is still in progress. Examples of this type of format can be found at <http://p2i.eval.org/index.php/ignite/> and <http://www.pechakucha.org/faq>.
- Roundtable Discussions should provide a forum for the sharing of ideas by several discussants related to innovative methods for addressing communal thriving; or debate of the issues related to the conference theme. This format is especially appropriate for sessions in which the discussants' role is to facilitate the audience's exploration of the issue. Roundtables should include from 4 to 6 discussants and last 60-75 minutes. One or more facilitators may lead a roundtable discussion.
- Town Hall Meetings feature participants' discussion of critical and current issues or important future directions pertaining to community research and action and the field of community psychology. This format is most appropriate for exploring the broad issues that cut across the conference theme, subthemes, and related topics. One or more facilitators may lead a town hall meeting. These meetings are typically 60-75 minutes long.
- Workshops provide a means to teach new skills of relevance to the field (e.g., specific methods, analytical techniques, community outreach strategies). One or more instructors may teach a workshop.

- The Innovative Other. This format will provide an opportunity to submit sessions that are creative and innovative and do not fit within any of the other categories. This format is especially suitable for arts-based and practice-based presentations.

We would recommend to either include these descriptions in the call for proposals or on the SCRA website. Participants gave us feedback that they would have liked to know about the different types of presentations earlier in the process.

The Ignite Session allowed several speakers to briefly present about their work (e.g., students presenting their research) within a same session. This format proved to be useful in order to accept a larger number of submissions for the conference. It also allowed people to present who don't have their research fully completed yet. Furthermore, it stimulated quite a bit of discussion because there was sufficient time at the end for that (at least if the speakers complied with the 5-minute time limit). While the feedback for this type of session was mostly positive, it seems it would be important next time to better explain what the purpose of the format is and how it works. The Innovative Other was a format that allows for creativity and diversity in types of presentation, especially more artistic ones. Unfortunately, the submissions for this session were not always of high quality leading to quite a few rejections. It will be important to emphasize next time that the expectations for this type of sessions are just as high as for the other type of sessions.

Acceptance Rate

Type	Received	Accepted	Acceptance Rate
Poster	185	173	94%
Round Table Discussion	66	38	58%
Symposium	99	87	88%
Town Hall Meeting	16	12	75%
Workshop	32	21	66%
Ignite Presentation	79	73	92%
Innovative Other	29	16	55%

Online Abstract Submission and Management

The abstract submission process was managed using the All Academic website. The website was set up by All Academic to answer the specific needs of the conference. Dr. Riemer and Dr. Coulombe were walked through the online system by a support staff from All Academics. In addition to this introduction, they spent a significant amount of time throughout the year to get more familiar with the website, which overall was not user-friendly. One student RA also had access to the website, and he also got very familiar with all the functionalities of the website. Once the call for proposals was released, the committee from Laurier regularly checked the number of submissions received in each category, by exporting submission reports from All Academic.

During the call for proposals period, members of the community psychology community were also invited to register on All Academics if they wanted to act as abstract reviewers. On the website, people registering were invited to check keywords corresponding to their area of expertise, using the same list of keywords as the list presented to submitters to describe their submissions.

Concerning the list of keywords, we later realized that several submitters checked a large number of keywords from the list, as there was no maximum number of keywords that could be checked. In order to facilitate the next step of the review and selection process, we suggest in the future that organizers consider restricting the number of keywords that submitters can check, so this would more clearly identify the *main* topic of the submission.

Proposal Reviews

Once the deadline has passed, the Laurier committee had several working sessions of several hours each (approximately 3 to 7 hours each).

The first task was to assign two reviewers (from those pre-registered in the website, see above) to review each proposal. The website allows this to be done in a simple manner. However, the process needs to be done one-by-one, for each submission. On the website, based on the keyword(s) associated with each submission, we assigned each submission to two reviewers who indicated expertise related to the same keyword(s). Some of us assigned the reviewers for the symposia, others were in charge of the round tables, others were responsible for the workshops, etc.

Each time a submission was assigned to a reviewer we noted this in a spreadsheet so we evenly distribute reviews to the reviewers. We did not do any screening of the list of reviewers that registered (i.e., all interested people were accepted as reviewers). Because of the large number of submissions, we reduced the number of reviewers to two per submission this year (previously it was three). Based on our experience, we would recommend going back to three reviewers because at times the reviewers had differing views of a submission and it would have been useful to have a third perspective in those cases. This time, it was our team who discussed and came to a decision on discrepant cases. However, adding another reviewer for each submission will also significantly increase the workload for reviewers. This is a trade-off that must be considered.

Also, in order to reduce the burden on reviewers, our team of five people decided to review ourselves the Ignite session as well as the posters. Given the possibility to group several Ignite papers and posters within a same session, we performed a more general review of these types of papers, since our goal was to accept a very large proportion of them. We rejected only a few posters and Ignite papers; those that clearly lacked rigor or for which there was no fit with community psychology values and principles.

Before sending out (through a functionality of the website) the assigned reviews to the reviewers, we revised the rating criteria and the rating form that reviewers were asked to fill out online (the rating form was already prepared from the previous conference; we just updated it). We provided a relatively short delay (i.e., few weeks) for reviewers to review the proposals. The online system allows to send bulk emails to reviewers and we used this function to send out reminders to reviewers. Once the reviews were all performed, as indicated on the website, we exported the content of the review forms into an Excel spreadsheet, including all submissions as well as the quantitative ratings and comments from each reviewer. This export process was done through the *Report* functionality of the website.

Using the spreadsheet, for each submission, we created an average of one of the scores provided by the reviewers (the most general question asking them to rate the extent to which they think we should accept the submission, e.g. with or without reservation). For each category of submission, the submissions were then ordered so that the ones with the highest score on this question appeared first, followed by submissions that received mixed reviews, and submissions with the most negative reviews. By default, the submissions that were highest in the list were considered likely to be accepted, while the lowest submissions on the list were considered to be good candidates for rejection.

For each category of submission, a team composed of two people (student RAs and/or Dr. Riemer or Dr. Coulombe) went through the Excel spreadsheet, reviewing all submissions, but focusing mainly on the ones that have received a mixed review. The team assigned the submission a label: “yes” (accept), “no” (reject), and “maybe” (potentially accept). As the committee was reviewing the submissions and notes/grades from the reviewers, they also noted the main topics that seem to be addressed in each submission.

After all this work, the committee looked at how many submissions were considered to be good potential for acceptance, also comparing that to the number of available rooms (and sessions) at the conference. The committee also discussed the topics that they identified for each submission, performing a thematic analysis of these topics, regrouping them in larger more manageable themes. Before accepting the proposals, we wanted to make sure that the conference represented a wide array of different themes. We also made sure that several research groups/universities and geographical locations were represented, and that the work from a diversity of scholars and leaders in the field was accepted.

Briefly, if the review and acceptance process was based on reviewers' scores, making the final selection among those submissions that received mixed or low reviews was not a linear process. With the above considerations in mind, the list of potentially accepted submissions (as noted in the Excel spreadsheet) was reviewed several times, as well as the acceptance/rejection rates for each category. Once finalized, the acceptance/rejection status was assigned to each submission on the website. This process needs to be done individually for each submission, necessitating a significant amount of time and concentration.

Development of a Conference Schedule and Program

In order to develop the conference schedule, we first discussed the targeted number of concurrent sessions (based on room availability). We wanted to provide a significant amount of choice for attendees in terms of available concurrent sessions, but at the same time, we wanted to avoid having too few attendees in each session (if too many sessions would have been offered concurrently). We then designed a hypothetical agenda, trying to assign each of the accepted session to a time slot in the schedule. When creating the schedule, we made sure that several sessions addressing a same theme (e.g., homelessness) were not allocated to the same time slot. We also made sure that there was a balance in the categories of sessions allocated to the same

time slot (e.g., not all workshops assigned into the same time slot; only one Town Hall meeting per time slot).

These steps were conducted using Excel spreadsheets as well as a white board. However, once the general agenda became clearer and room availability was clarified, we assigned each accepted session to a time slot on the All Academic website. Note that the general schedule and room names need to be added to the website before scheduling sessions, although this can be modified later if needed. One of the challenges with scheduling was to avoid conflicts (e.g., assigning at the same time two or more sessions involving the same participant). The fact that several presenters/moderators/discussants submitted more than one proposal made the scheduling challenging. However, the All Academic website highlighted those potential conflicts as we were assigning the sessions. *Important:* for this functionality of the website to work properly, it is important that participants' names are written exactly the same in all submissions (i.e., it needs to represent the exact same participant [account] on the website) when people submit their proposals. If not, uniformization (i.e., merging) of the participants' identities needs to be performed by the committee.

For Ignite papers and posters, it was necessary to group them in multiple sessions before assigning those sessions to a time slot. For Ignite papers, once we decided the number of Ignite sessions there would be during the conference, we divided the accepted submissions across those sessions, considering their topics and the availability of participants (i.e. avoiding scheduling conflicts). For posters, given that only three sessions were available, we decided to simply regroup them in a way that scheduling conflicts were avoided, which finally required to also move around other sessions (e.g. symposia).

Once the schedule was finalized, the general overview of the sessions scheduled for each day (day by day schedule overview document), as well as the detailed description of each session

(formatting information directly going into the program) were exported from the All Academic website by the Laurier committee. These documents were transferred to the local planning committee, in charge of creating the hardcopy program as well as the content of the program app.

Plenary Sessions and Invited Addresses

The local planning committee determined early in the planning process to invite plenary speakers that would both align with the conference theme, and would also highlight some unique aspects of the Canadian context. Thus we organized our two primary plenary sessions around the themes of 1) issues related to Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples, and 2) the Canadian healthcare system.

Opening Plenary: Natan Obed. The opening plenary was held at the Shaw Centre and featured words of welcome from Planning Committee Co-Chair John Sylvestre (Director, Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services, University of Ottawa), Karen Cohen (Chief Executive Office of the Canadian Psychological Association), a statement read by Darren Thomas (Wilfrid Laurier University, member of the SCRA Indigenous Interest Group) in recognition of National Aboriginal Day in Canada, and the opening plenary talk given by Natan Obed. Mr. Obed is the President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national voice of Canada's 60,000 Inuit. Mr. Obed spoke about challenges facing Inuit people Canada, and the role that research can play in improving their lives. Following Mr. Obed's talk, a video was shown in celebration of the 40th anniversary of Wilfrid Laurier University's community psychology program. Following the presentations there was a reception.

Second Plenary: Danielle Martin. The second plenary was hosted by biennial co-chair Tim Aubry (Chair, School of Psychology, University of Ottawa). The featured speaker was family physician, national media commentator, and author, Danielle Martin. She practices in the Family Practice Health Centre at Women's College Hospital where she is also the Vice-President of

Medical Affairs & Health System Solutions. Dr. Martin spoke about the basic income initiative in Canada. Following the second plenary the Presidential Address was given by Dr. Susan McMahon, the Seymour B. Sarason Award was given to Dr. Brinton Lykes who also gave a talk.

Conference Program

There were three versions of the conference program that were shared with conference attendees: 1) a full PDF version of the program that was available on the SCRA website, 2) a shorter version of the program; a printed program distributed on site that did not include individual session details (i.e., titles, abstracts and authors); and 3) a conference application available for download onto smart devices.

The Full Program – PDF version on the SCRA website

The full conference program included information about conference basics (i.e., conference overview, registration details, accessibility information, maps of conference venues, information about meals, transportation details, city information, and emergency contact information). The program also included sponsor ads (more information about sponsorships is provided in the Sponsorships section).

The full program included details related to the conference program (including details about plenaries, awards, a schedule grid, a list of poster sessions) and included conference abstracts, presenter information, presenter index, and a subject index - produced by the All-Academic software. The resulting program was 272 pages long. While the program committee provided all of the text for this program, it was formatted by the coordinator of Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services at the University of Ottawa. A PDF version of the full program was available on the website about one week before the conference began. An improved version was reissued just prior to the conference.

Print Program – Shorter Version Distributed to All Attendees

While the previous Biennial committee had asked people to indicate whether they wanted a hard copy of the program when they registered, we opted to print a shorter version of the program to hand to all participants with their registration kit. The shorter version was 36 pages long and included all the same information about conference basics, details about plenaries, awards, a schedule grid as in the longer PDF version, all the advertisements from the larger program and list of sponsors. It did not include lengthy details related to the conference program (titles, authors, and abstracts of all presentations and presenter information). This shorter version was printed by the Docucentre, a University of Ottawa campus printing company.

Our impression is that the conference attendees appreciated having access to different version of the program.

Conference App – Guidebook Smartphone App

Following the precedent of the 2013 and 2015 Biennials, we contracted with Guidebook to produce a conference program app that participants could download on their mobile devices or laptops. In addition to accessing the conference program, users could create a personal schedule, search by interest group, title, or author. We purchased a Silver Package for a total cost of \$3150. This package allowed for unlimited downloads of the app. It also included additional functions, such as push messaging, multiple tracks, and other features that we did not use. It was relatively simple to organize information in a format required by the app since spreadsheets produced by All-Academic were in Guidebook format, only minor adjustments were needed.

The app was downloaded by 496 users. Generally, feedback on the app was very positive.

CONFERENCE LOGISTICS

Registration

There were a total of 673 registrations for the conference. Of those, 54 were either free or discounted registrations for volunteers, staff and some SCRA award recipients.

	Early Registration	Late/Onsite Registration	Total
Professional (US and Canada)	201	46	247
Student (US and Canada)	201	64	265
Non-Members	4	8	12
International Professional	41	7	48
International Student	14	4	18
Professional One Day		15	15
Student One Day		14	14
Free and Discounted (volunteers, staff and award recipients)	54		54
Total	515	158	673

Pre-Registration

The large majority of attendees pre-registered for the Biennial (515 of 673 total registrations or 76.5%). Registration categories were mostly carried over from the 2015 conference, though fees were raised by an average of 5%. Transactions could be made either via credit card or check.

Category	Early Fees	Late Fees	One Day Fees
Professional SCRA Member	\$350	\$400	
Student SCRA Member	\$130	\$150	
Non-Member	\$425	\$475	
International Professional	\$140	\$190	
International Students	\$100	\$120	
Non-Student One-Day			\$200
Student One-Day			\$100

On-Site Registration

There were 47 onsite registrations, 18 of them from new members to SCRA. This number of onsite registrations was unexpected and caused delays at the registration table. Several of the on-site registrants apparently believed that when they received their acceptance email for their proposal submission that meant they were registered for the conference. They showed their acceptance email as proof that they were registered. To avoid this for future Biennials the proposal submission acceptance email should clearly indicate that all presenters were required to register for the Biennial and give instructions for doing so. We should also communicate to our members that it is easier to pre-register than to register on-site.

There were also at least one or two people who attended the conference who did not register at all. They indicated that they needed to go to a session and would be back to register later but never did, even though they were still there and taking lunches.

International Attendees

We had more international professionals than in 2015 (48 professional registrants vs. 26 in 2015) and fewer international students (18 student registrants vs. 24 in 2015). Given that the conference took place in Canada, individuals were considered to be international professionals or students if they were from outside Canada or the United States. This makes it difficult to meaningfully compare these numbers to past conferences, as individuals coming from Canada were previously considered to be international. Our 66 international attendees came from Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom.

Venues

All concurrent sessions and most meals were on the campus of the University of Ottawa. The majority of the conference activities were in one campus building (the Faculty of Social

Sciences Building). A number of sessions were also held in the adjoining Vanier Building with additional two other buildings on campus, all within (0.12 miles) of the main conference site.

Due to the lack of sufficiently large space on the University of Ottawa campus, the plenaries and the banquet were held at the Shaw Centre, located centrally in Ottawa about 1 kilometer (0.62 miles) from campus and close to the hotels reserved for conference attendees.

Accommodations

Regarding lodging, we reserved rooms at three hotels (Courtyard Marriot, Novotel, and Les Suites) and residence rooms on campus. We were financially obligated to fill the rooms at the Courtyard Marriot and Novotel. At the Courtyard Marriot, located 1 kilometer (0.62 miles) from the main campus building, we reserved 35 discounted rooms. At the Novotel, located 800 meters (0.50 miles) from the main campus building, we reserved 50 discounted rooms. At both hotels, all reserved rooms were booked by conference attendees. We were not financially obligated to fill the rooms at Les Suites. At Les Suites, located 750 meters (0.47 miles) from the main campus building, we reserved 100 discounted rooms and 28 of these rooms were booked. We also reserved 123 rooms at the University residences, all of which are located on campus. The rooms that were not booked by mid-April were released. Ultimately 44 residence rooms were booked. We received no communications from conference attendees concerning a lack of availability of hotel and residence rooms and believe that a sufficient number and range of options were made available. Some attendees complained about the university accommodations believing them to be uncomfortable.

Transportation

Shuttle service was provided by 417 Bus Line LTD, a local charter bus rental service. Service was provided between the Faculty of Social Sciences building and the Shaw Centre, running a loop for one hour before each Shaw event (opening plenary, second plenary, and

banquet) and for another hour after each event on a loop. The walking distance between both locations was one kilometer, (0.6 miles) and the shuttle distance was 1.5km (0.9 miles). We placed direction signs outside on the route to guide those who chose to walk and had volunteers direct attendees along the way. Most attendees walked, yet some chose to take the bus; two yellow 47 passenger buses were used to shuttle individuals. No problems were reported although generally buses were generally under-used.

Individuals who indicated they had accessibility needs when filling out the registration form were contacted prior to the conference and informed that they could be provided with taxi chits to take accessible taxis to and from the Shaw Centre events. They were instructed to come to the registration desk to obtain these taxi chits (so as not to have to pay for the taxi rides themselves). However, no conference attendees opted to do so, and none claimed reimbursement for these taxi rides after the conference.

Food and Entertainment

An opening reception was held on Wednesday, June 21st following the opening plenary talk. It featured hors d'oeuvres, cheese and crudité stations and all participants were given one drink ticket. At the second plenary talk on Thursday, June 22nd, a breakfast was provided. A banquet was held on the evening of Friday, June 23rd. At this event, awards were given and there was a D.J. and dancing following the meal.

Each day of the conference we offered breakfasts, and morning snacks. Lunches were provided on the first three days of the conference. On-campus meals were provided by the University of Ottawa catering company (Infusion Catering). The reception, one breakfast, and Banquet were catered by the Shaw Centre.

There were quite a few left over meals each day. On the second day of the conference, a group of conference attendees brought leftover food to a local not-for-profit agency serving homeless individuals. This was done for the other days of the conference.

Breakfasts

A continental breakfast of fruit, pastries, juice, and coffee/tea was offered at the Faculty of Social Sciences building on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday mornings from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM. The Thursday morning breakfast was held from 8:00 to 8:30 at the Shaw Centre in advance of the plenary session and included fresh cut tropical and in-season fruit, muffins, cinnamon rolls, European Danish and butter croissants, first press apple and orange juice, and Starbucks coffee and Tazo Tea. Given lighter attendance at the beginning and end of the conference, orders were placed for 350 people on Wednesday, 405 people on Thursday, 525 people on Friday, and 200 people on Sunday. This was more than enough food. Breakfasts were buffet style, and set up in the main lobby of the main conference building and in front of the plenary room in a lobby at the Shaw Centre.

Lunches

Boxed lunches, including assorted wraps, salads, juices/pops, and dessert were offered at the Faculty of Social Sciences building on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Orders were placed for 400 people on Wednesday, and 500 people on Thursday and Friday. Although we took the recommendation from the 2015 Biennial, and ordered additional vegetarian meals, there were not enough vegetarian meals on the Wednesday. In addition, the catering company made an error when packing the vegan meals, so there were no complete vegan boxed lunches offered on Wednesday. Given that many conference attendees prefer vegetarian options we recommend that future biennials order more than strictly necessary. Unexpectedly the caterers packed the lunches

in clamshell plastic packaging rather than in cardboard boxes as was expected. This created unnecessary waste.

We provided vegetarian and vegan lunch options. For individuals with more specific dietary requirements (e.g., nut free, gluten free, etc.) boxed lunches were prepared with their names on them. Because conference attendees were not explicitly told they would be receiving boxed lunches matching their specific dietary requirements, many people did not pick up their individualized lunches. If this is done at future biennials, these individuals should be informed about it prior to the conference. Conference attendees who signed up within 2-weeks of the conference were unable to obtain lunches meeting their dietary requirements, as the catering company required advanced notice. Additionally, some individuals took vegetarian lunches even though they had not ordered them. At subsequent plenaries, announcements were made to request that only those who had requested special or vegetarian options should take those lunches. Additionally, on the remaining days of the conference we stationed volunteers at the lunch tables to ensure that people got those lunches they had requested.

Snacks

Morning snacks included tea, coffee, juice, and fruit. Afternoon snacks also included pastries. Morning snacks were served on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday at the Faculty of Social Sciences building. Orders were placed for 400 people on Wednesday, 500 people on Friday, and 200 people on Saturday. Afternoon snacks were served on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Orders were placed for 400 people on Wednesday, and 500 people on Thursday and Friday. There was more than enough food for all snacks, and additional food was taken to a local not-for-profit agency serving homeless people.

Opening Reception

An opening reception was held on Wednesday, June 21, the first full day of the conference, and after the opening plenary talk. This event was attended by a large number of participants. It was hosted at the Shaw; hors d'oeuvres were served and each attendee was given a drink ticket, redeemable at one of two cash bars located at the back end of the hall, which opened after the talks and opening remarks concluded.

Banquet

The Banquet event was held on Friday evening, June 23rd, at the Shaw Centre. We accepted a free upgrade to the Shaw's Trillium Ballroom, a beautiful 1768 sq. m. (19000 sq. ft.) venue overlooking the Rideau Canal and Parliament buildings. Banquet tickets were sold online in advance (a total of 341 were sold); sales ended several days before the event. Round tables with 10 seats were used (one with 11) fitting a total of 341 seats. Additional tickets were not sold at the door and tickets were checked as attendees entered, as the catering company required the final number of attendees prior to the event. Those who did not have tickets were turned away, unfortunately a number of attendees did admit they had not purchased tickets but tried to get in anyway. We therefore recommend future Biennials either have additional tickets available at the door or have someone check tickets at the entrance.

The event started at 5:30pm with a cocktail hour. There were two cash bars, both in the Trillium Ballroom where the banquet was held. There were long lines for cocktails, especially as participants arrived; we recommend at least two bars, possibly more. The following is a schedule of events for the evening:

6:45pm – 7:15pm – Welcome

- Introductory words from conference co-chairs Tim Aubry and John Sylvestre

- Presentation of awards from Division 3 (Community Psychology) of the Canadian Psychological Association, by section president Julie Beaulac
- Presentation of SCRA awards by SCRA Present Susan McMahon

7:15pm to 8:15pm – Three-course dinner served

8:30pm -11pm – Dancing, socializing

A three-course dinner was served starting at approximately 7:15 PM starting with a cream of asparagus soup, followed by honey and thyme glazed chicken with a side of mashed potatoes and vegetables, followed by chocolate cake for dessert. Alternative foods were offered to those who requested them (pasta for vegetarians, red onion and chickpea bahji for vegans). We hired a DJ and offered dancing in a designated dance floor area, in front of the stage (where the DJ was set up) in the middle of the banquet hall. This was very well received and went on till 11pm. We recommend that future planning committees also consider doing this, as it appealed to many conference attendees.

Social Events

Various social events were organized for the conference. On Thursday, June 22, a 5km group run was held along the Rideau Canal and Ottawa River with 15 participants, free of charge. Later in the day, a free walking tour of Ottawa took place with 40 participants through the historic downtown area, including sites such as the Rideau Canal, Parliament buildings, Supreme Court of Canada, and Sparks Street.

On Friday, June 23, a free one-hour yoga event led by a certified instructor was unfortunately canceled due to inclement weather. Later in the evening the SCRA Banquet was held at the renowned Shaw Centre, with admission for a fee including a night of dinner and dancing, with a DJ. Finally, on Saturday, June 24, 35 conference attendees participated in a tour of Canada's Parliament buildings to learn about Canada's history and political system.

Mentoring

There were 16 small group mentoring sessions conducted, with registration for the sessions available at the registration desk. Mentors came from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including students, early career, researchers, practitioners and academicians. Mentoring topics included developing a CP practice career, obtaining research funding, negotiating early careers in an academic setting, balancing career and family, being a person of color in community psychology, getting published, and working with specific research populations such as schools. Based upon feedback from previous mentoring programs the orientation session was not included this year. All mentors wore mentoring ribbons during the conference to indicate their availability for spontaneous conversations.

Evaluation questions regarding the mentoring program generated a large amount of positive feedback from the mentors themselves and those who attended a mentoring session. However, a striking number of comments stating that they wish that they had known about the mentoring program (both to attend a session and to be a mentor) and indicate that this activity was not promoted widely or effectively enough to reach everyone who attended the conference. Thirty-two (11.19%) of 286 participants indicated that they had participated in the mentoring program.

Staffing and Volunteers

During the conference, the registration desk served as the main point of reference for attendees. Two SCRA staff (Jean Hill, SCRA Executive Director, and Rachel Storace, SCRA Administrative Assistant) ran the registration desk throughout the conference, handling on-site registration. Volunteers also helped staff the registration desk, and several planning committee members were available to answer questions and problem-solve throughout the conference.

Volunteers were recruited through the conference registration page. Conference attendees could indicate their interest in volunteering when registering. They were then emailed by the planning committee. Volunteers from the University of Ottawa were also recruited through a number of ways (emails distributed to graduate students in the School of Psychology, word of mouth, and announcements in select courses). Ultimately, 53 conference attendees volunteered before and/or during the conference. Volunteers could sign up for different roles and times throughout the conference using a Google Drive Excel document. They were reimbursed 10% of their registration fee for every hour they volunteered (i.e., 10 hours was equal to full reimbursement for their conference registration). This did not include the SCRA membership fee. The discount for individuals who had already registered was provided in the form of a reimbursement following the conference. Individuals attending the University of Ottawa (who were recruited before the registration page became active) were given a discount code, and registered for free using this code; all these volunteers committed to the full 10 hours, and thus received a full discount. Volunteers wore hats with the SCRA logo that made them easily identifiable.

Volunteers who assisted prior to the conference were involved in tasks related to developing the program, organizing social events, and managing communications (e.g., emailing SCRA listserv and managing a Twitter account). During the conference, volunteers supported the event in at least one of the following five roles: welcoming attendants, registration desk attendants, conference session attendants, meal distribution attendants, and ushers.

The welcoming attendants welcomed conference attendees outside the main campus building; they answered questions and directed conference attendees toward the registration table. This role is not necessary for every conference venue. However, given that the main entrance of our main conference building on campus was under construction, we put this role in

place to help conference attendees locate the venue. Registration desk attendants provided conference attendees with registration materials and fielded general questions about conference happenings. Conference session attendants attended sessions to provide audio-visual support when using projectors and microphones. Meal distribution attendants assisted the catering company when setting up lunches, made signs indicating what boxed lunches contained, and informed conference attendees where specific meals were located. Finally, ushers provided directions to conference attendees travelling between the University of Ottawa campus and the Shaw Centre.

Volunteers who were students at the University of Ottawa attended one of three training sessions, during which they were informed of what was expected of them within each volunteering role. The volunteer coordinator also emailed out a training manual, the final volunteering schedule (on which volunteers had indicated their preferred roles and availability), and instructed all volunteers to check-in at the registration desk prior to beginning of any volunteer shifts. The training manual and final volunteer schedule were also available at the registration desk.

Volunteers signed up for a total of 410 hours allocated to different support tasks. 10% of these hours were allocated to welcoming attendants, 25% of these were allocated to registration desk attendants, 47% were allocated to conference session attendants, 15% were allocated to meal distribution attendants, and 3% were allocated to ushers. We assigned more volunteer hours than required, due to concerns about the construction of the main conference building, and due to problems with the catering company at prior events. These roles are likely unnecessary at future conferences. In line with the 2015 biennial, it is suggested that closer to 300 volunteer hours will suffice.

SPONSORSHIPS

A number of organizations sponsored the 2017 biennial.

The conference benefits for each level of sponsorship are outlined below:

Conference Benefits	Sponsorship Levels		
	Gold \$3,000	Silver \$2,000	Bronze \$1,000
Name and logo featured on the conference website with level of sponsorship	✓	✓	✓
Logo on slide at plenary & concurrent sessions with level of sponsorship	✓	✓	✓
Recognition in conference program	1 page advertisement	½ page advertisement	½ page advertisement
Sponsor materials made available to participants at registration table	✓	✓	
Conference registration	✓	✓	
Verbal recognition at Opening Plenary	✓		
Exhibitor table at conference	✓		

The organizations that provided sponsorship at each level are as follows:

Gold (contributed \$3,000):

- Canadian Psychological Association
- Office of the Vice Dean of Research Faculty of Social Sciences, uOttawa
- Office of the Vice President of Research, uOttawa
- Pacifica Graduate Institute
- Wiley

Silver (contributed \$2,000):

- Oxford University Press
- School of Psychology, uOttawa

Bronze (contributed \$1,000):

- Binghamton University
- Faculty of Science, Wilfrid Laurier University
- Office of Research Services, Wilfrid Laurier University

An additional \$7500 was received in sponsorships for the launch of the APA Handbook of Community Psychology.

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA AND WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

The organization of this biennial conference involved a partnership between the Centre for Research on Educational Services (University of Ottawa) and the Laurier Centre for Community, Research, Learning and Action (Wilfrid Laurier University). This partnership was beneficial in that it enabled each partner organization to focus on a particular aspect of planning the biennial. Whereas a committee at the University of Ottawa focused primarily on local planning issues, a committee at Wilfrid Laurier University focused primarily on developing the conference program. Despite these divisions, there was also some overlap in their work and the group communicated regularly to ensure that the program developed by Wilfrid Laurier University could be delivered within the space and resources available at University of Ottawa. The main benefit of this arrangement was that it significantly reduced the burden of planning the biennial that was typically laid with one local planning committee. Whereas the bulk of Wilfrid Laurier University's work lasted from June 2016 to January 2017, the bulk of University of Ottawa's work lasted from September 2016 to June 2017 (although both teams were involved in planning activities preceding or following these time periods). The two teams collaborated well together and few significant problems arose.

There were some minor issues that arose that planning groups with similar arrangements may wish to consider. First, the program planning committee did an initial assignment of

sessions to rooms based on expected attendance at each session and the room capacity. In general this worked quite well, though the uOttawa local planning had to do some room reassignment to reduce travel between sessions and reduce the number of rooms overall that would be used for the conference (thereby also reducing costs). The Wilfrid Laurier University program planning committee had sole access to the AllAcademic system. This meant that any changes made by the uOttawa team had to be communicated to Wilfrid Laurier University team to update that system as well so that a complete and updated output could be provided to the uOttawa team for publication in the Guidebook app and the conference program. This led to some delays in getting the conference program finalized.

The uOttawa and Wilfrid Laurier University teams each set up email addresses specific for the conference. Some email messages related to the program were sent to the uOttawa address which then had to be relayed to the Wilfrid Laurier University team, and some messages sent to the Wilfrid Laurier University team had to be relayed to the uOttawa team. In the future, it would be helpful to have one email established for the planning of the conference.

When the uOttawa team began developing communications for conference attendees, there was some delay in sending them through the AllAcademic system to conference registrants. The uOttawa team also did not have direct access to the SCRA website to make updates there. Overall the delays or challenges were not significant, but these issues should be considered by planning groups with similar partnerships in the future.

CONFERENCE COMMUNICATIONS

In the months leading up to the conference, the University of Ottawa team began to receive a number of emails related to the conference (e.g., location of registration, local travel, etc.). To stem such emails, and with the concern there may be a delay in issuing the conference book, the University of Ottawa local planning committee took a proactive approach to

communicating with conference attendees with weekly updates. The purpose of the updates was stem the tide of email inquiries by anticipating the information needs that attendees might have. Soon after we began these communications we received suggestions for additional information we could include. We received very positive feedback concerning these communications, though some thought they were excessive. One issue that arose is that University of Ottawa team initially was only sending out the communications through the SCRA listserv and not through the AllAcademic system to which it did not have access.

CONFERENCE FINANCES

The conference generated registration revenues of \$152,467.50 (includes registration and banquet ticket sales). The planning committee also secured \$13,000 CAD in sponsorships from Canadian sources and \$9,000 in sponsorships from U.S. sources. Total revenue for the conference was \$171,218. Conference expenses totaled approximately \$147,900 USD. This left SCRA with net revenue of about \$23,318.

CONFERENCE EVALUATION RESULTS

The 16th Biennial Conference of the Society for Community Research and Action was held in Ottawa, Canada, June 21-24, 2017 and hosted by University of Ottawa (uOttawa), Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services, in partnership with the Community Psychology program and the Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action at Wilfrid Laurier University. Drs. John Sylvestre and Tim Aubry from uOttawa's Centre for Research and Educational and Community Services, with Drs. Manuel Riemer and Simon Coulombe from Wilfrid Laurier University's Centre for Community Research, Learning, and Action, served as co-chairs of the 2017 Local Biennial Planning Committee.

The evaluation team consisted of the SCRA administrative staff who developed the evaluation survey and then distributed it to the 16th Biennial Local Planning Committee Co-Chairs, lead graduate student organizers (Casey Fulford and Konrad Czechowski) and SCRA President (Dr. Susan McMahon) for their feedback. The primary purpose of the evaluation survey was to

collect feedback about the conference in order to inform and improve future Biennials. This document reports on the results of the 16th Biennial evaluation.

Method

Instruments

The 2017 SCRA Biennial Evaluation Survey was developed from past evaluation surveys by the evaluation team. In order to save paper, the survey was only available online via the Survey Monkey website. There was a total of 19 questions on the survey that collected information about the participants, their perceptions of the conference's arrangements, activities, and program content, and their opinions of the conference overall.

Procedure

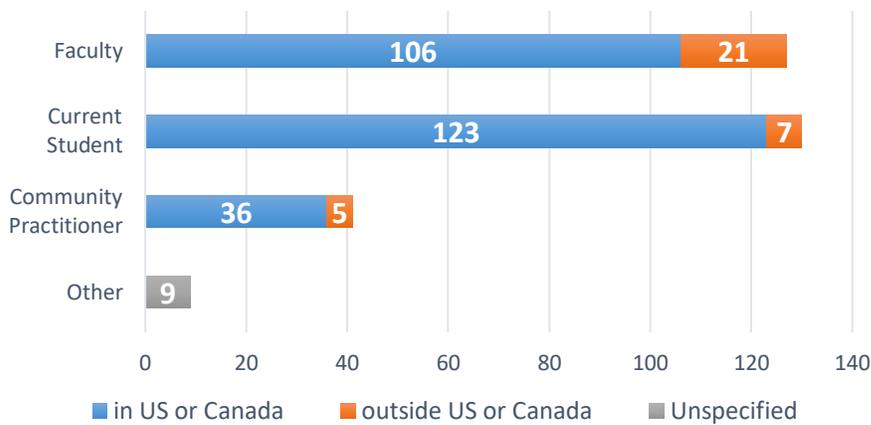
Since the survey could only be completed online, a sticker was placed on the inside flap of each attendee's conference packet directing them to the website where the survey could be completed. All conference registrants were sent an email from the evaluation team a few days after the conference reminding them to complete the survey.

Results

Participants

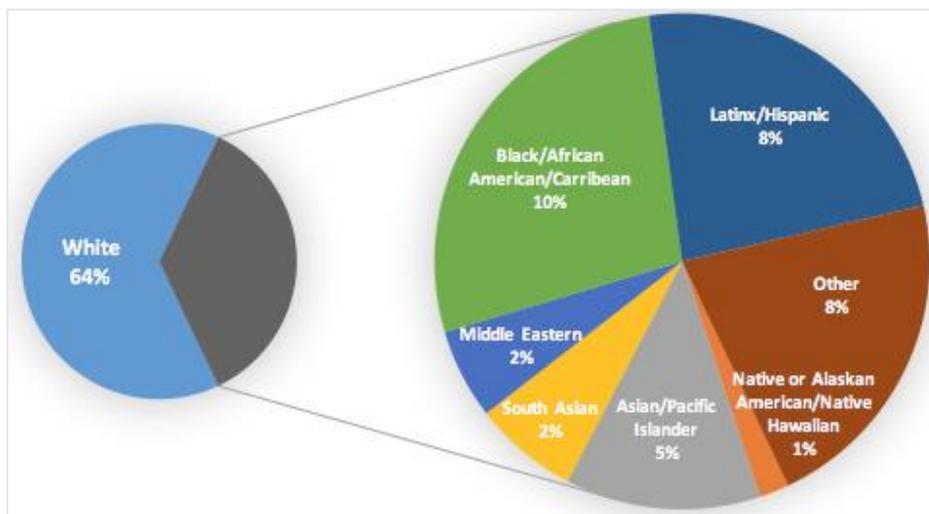
Of 678 total conference registrants, 286 (42%) provided feedback for at least a portion of the survey. As shown in Figure 1, a large majority of the respondents reside in either the United States or Canada. Additionally, the majority of respondents are faculty members and students.

Figure 1- Country of Residence by Profession



The race/ethnicity of most survey respondents was white (182/284) followed by black/African American/Caribbean respondents (28/284). Figure 2 shows the distribution of racial/ethnic backgrounds represented by all survey participants.

Figure 2- Race & Ethnic Backgrounds Represented

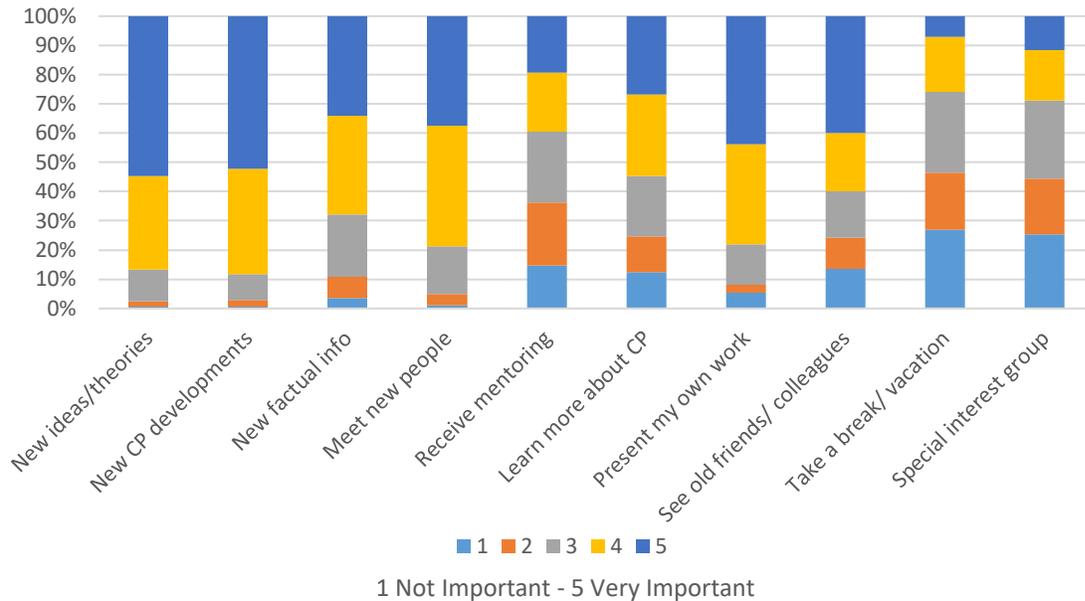


Most of the participants had graduate-level degrees. Over half of all respondents (51.42%) had earned a doctorate-level degree and approximately 30% had earned a masters-level degree. Sixteen percent had bachelor’s degrees and less than 3% selected “Other.” A majority of participants (57.5%) indicated that they had attended a SCRA conference before.

Reasons for Attending the Biennial

Participants were asked to indicate how important certain aspects of attending the conference were to them. Participants gave each item a score from 1- Not important to 5- Very important. Figure 4 shows how participants ranked each aspect.

Figure 3 –Reasons for Attending the Biennial by Level of Importance

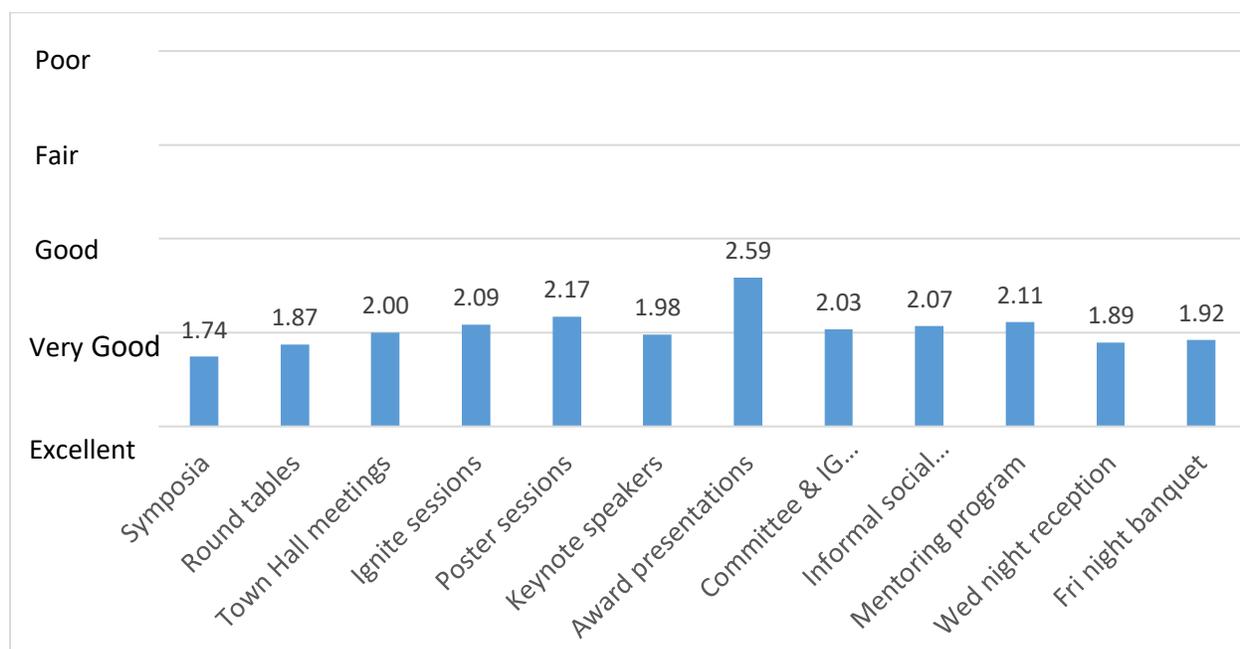


Learning about new ideas and theories (4.38) and about new developments in the field of community psychology (4.37) yielded the highest average ratings, followed by meeting new people (4.1) and presenting their own work (4.08). The two reasons with the lowest average levels of importance were taking a break/vacation (2.6) and special interest groups (2.71).

Conference Arrangements

Participants were asked to provide feedback regarding various conference arrangements. Figure 5 shows the average ratings on a scale from 1-Excellent to 5-Poor for each arrangement. “NA” was also an available selection as some participants may not have utilized or experienced each of the arrangements they were asked to rate. Average ratings for all arrangements ranged between good and excellent, with most arrangements receiving average ratings of close to “very good” or better. The exception was the food, which received an average rating of just “good”, with 10% of respondents rating the food as “poor”.

Figure 4 – Average Conference Arrangements Ratings



Of the 134 comments provided regarding conference arrangements, most criticisms and/or suggestions pertained to conference food, meeting rooms, and the conference programs. There were a number of concerns with the meal packaging being environmentally hazardous and the breakfast options having too much sugar. The size and accessibility of the meeting rooms were an issue for some either because the room was too small to accommodate everyone who wanted to attend a given session or the layout and seats made maneuvering about the rooms difficult for “larger bodies.” There were also issues among participants with limited vision not being able to read the text on presentation slides.

Conference Programs The 2017 biennial was the first which did not provide full printed copies of the conference program to all participants. Instead, all participants were given a shortened printed program, with an electronic version of the full program available online in both pdf and Guidebook app formats. Most respondents (75.52%) were fine with this change. Approximately 23% indicated that they would have liked the option of having a printed copy of the full program and the remaining 2% of respondents thought that everyone should have been provided with printed versions of the full program. Given the qualitative feedback concerning the conference programs, it is possible that more people would have indicated that they were okay with the change had the formats of the conference programs been easier to use.

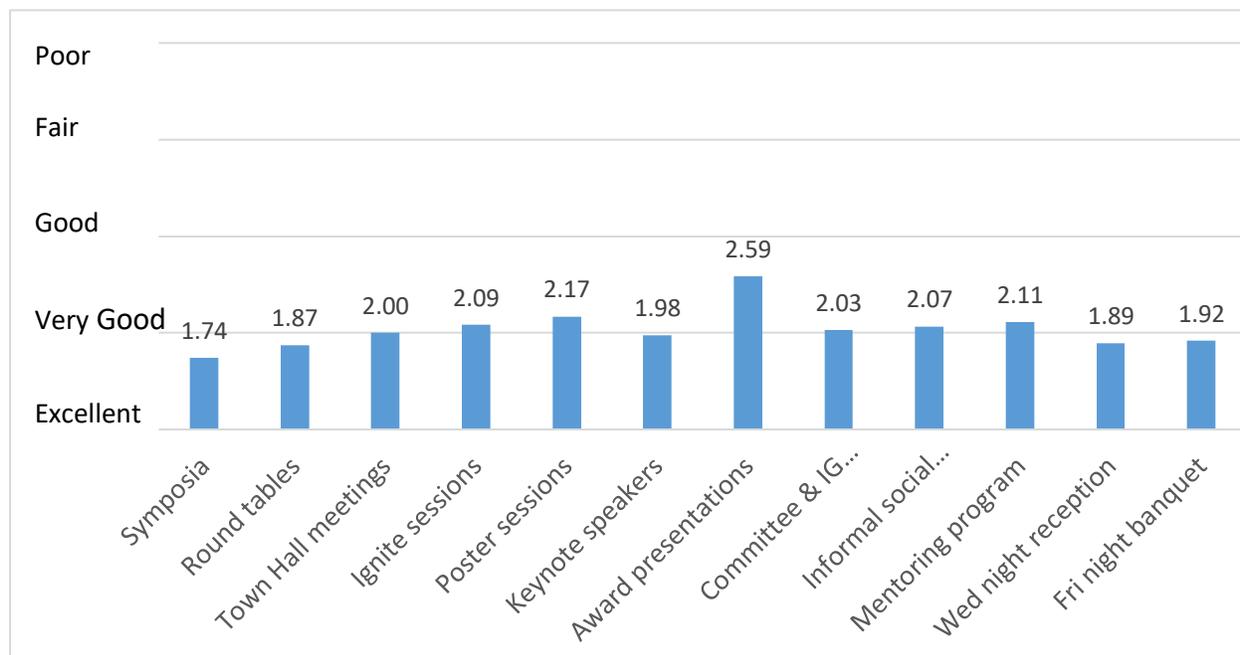
While most people indicated that they were happy to save paper by moving to a more “green” conference program, it was clear that the formatting of the programs provided this year was difficult to navigate. A large portion of the comments concerning the programs requested that presenter names be listed along with the titles of the sessions and that a function be made available so that attendees using the mobile app could search the program by key word. Participants also indicated that it was difficult to determine the exact content of each session from viewing the conference program schedule.

There was some positive feedback about the Guidebook app including the function that allowed attendees to add sessions to “My Schedule” and some participants found the app to be a useful companion to the program booklet. However, there were also comments from respondents who did not find the app helpful or who were not using their mobile phones and, therefore, were not able to use the app. Most of the criticisms of the full conference program, which was available in PDF, had to do with how information was organized within the document. Several participants mentioned having spent a lot of time bouncing between the “At a Glance” and “Conference Program” sections of the program in order to find information about the sessions and then being confused by the order of information in the “Conference Program.”

Conference Activities & Program Content

Average ratings for all the activities listed were between “Excellent” and “Very Good”, except for Award Presentations which had an average rating of 2.59.

Figure 5 – Average Conference Activity Ratings



Of the 107 comments provided about the conference activities, most of those pertaining to Award Presentations stated a preference for holding the awards at a time when there are not sessions scheduled as well. There was also a large amount of feedback concerning participants’ social experiences. Among the comments concerning social opportunities, some were from new conference attendees who mentioned having a difficult time meeting new people and getting connected. The other group of comments include requests that an intentional effort be made to increase “dynamic dialogue” and collaboration throughout the conference, i.e., “opportunities to ‘play’ together not just to stand around and sip wine, but some fun community-building activity or activities that strengthen the personal bonds between us.”

Other comments include requests for more “dynamic” keynote speakers, larger space(s) for poster sessions, and improvements in scheduling sessions so that the same topic is not being covered in multiple sessions at the same time. The majority of participants who mentioned the Ignite sessions in their comment stated that they liked the idea of them but that they needed to be better organized and have a clearer theme. The mentoring program generated a large amount of positive feedback from the mentors themselves and those who attended a mentoring session. However, a striking number of comments stating that they wish that they had known about the mentoring program (both to attend a session and to be a mentor) and indicate that this activity was not promoted widely or effectively enough to reach everyone who attended the conference.

Thirty-two (11.19%) of 286 participants indicated that they had participated in the mentoring program.

Overall Assessment and Recommendations

The results of the survey indicate that the majority of respondents were quite pleased with the 2017 Biennial conference. As indicated by participants' feedback, particular highlights include the mentoring program, town hall meeting, and dancing during the banquet. The feedback also identified the need for improvement in the following areas.

Social Opportunities

Meeting new people For a large percentage of survey participants (42.5%), the 2017 Biennial conference was their first SCRA conference. Additionally, "meeting new people" is one of the top interests among participants for attending the conference. Therefore, efforts should be made to facilitate more opportunities for attendees to network and connect, especially for those who are new to SCRA. Included in the comments was a suggestion to have a social event toward the start of the conference specifically for new attendees and "opportunities for facilitated networking (like academic speed dating)."

Increased interaction and collaboration A number of participants requested that the presentations and keynote addresses incorporate more room for dialogue; "We need more deliberative dialogue on topics that interest us like what our values are... Instead of having plenaries that just have people lecturing to us we need to have more interactive sessions where the expert engages the audience and gets us going" and be more dynamic by having "panels of scholars and activists." There were also suggestions to offer drinks and/or snacks in the same room during the poster sessions in order to provide a space casual interaction among attendees, which could also encourage more people to attend the poster sessions. Respondents also expressed interest in learning more about and collaborating with local practitioners and - organizations; "I would have loved to learn about the local community-university work or initiatives where we could do a site visit."

Environmental Consciousness

Efforts to make the conference as environmentally friendly as possible were generally appreciated by survey participants. Therefore, improvements to the organization and formatting of the electronic and shortened print copies of the conference programs should be made for their continued use in the future. Additionally, more attention should be paid to the materials used during the conference, i.e., material and excess packaging used for meals.

Conference Sessions and Program Organization

Incorporate “topic tracks” into sessions Based on the comments, participants experienced frustration with there being multiple sessions on the same general topic scheduled during one timeslot while there were then none (on that same topic) scheduled during other time slots. Respondents suggested establishing topics which each session would be grouped into and then ensuring that each topic is represented during each time slot. This would also serve the purpose of making the conference schedules more informative and allow attendees to identify sessions by topics that they are interested in.

Conference program formatting and organization Making the names of presenters/authors for each of the sessions easy to find and reference was frequently requested by participants. Placing this information on or near the conference schedule seemed to be the most preferred location. While the app was a helpful resource for some, alternatives for those who are not using their mobile devices during the conference should be provided and the functionality of the app itself improved, i.e., searching by key word. Regarding the PDF, corresponding information between sections should be easier and quicker to find and identify. Additionally, the format should be compatible for those accessing from their mobile phones.