The Concept of Diversity - CERA's Position

On February 2, 2018 SCRA's Executive Committee (EC) motioned to approve and endorse the following document as SCRA's Position Statement on Diversity, and how the organization will work toward the promotion and enactment of diversity within its organization structures (e.g., committees, councils, interest groups).

Defining Diversity

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect for the full range of human characteristics in their socioecological, historical, and cultural contexts, as well as understanding that each individual, family, community, and societal group has uniqueness that make them different from others. These differences include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, class, gender, disability, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, as well as religious status, gender identity, immigration status, educational background, geographical location, income, language, marital status, parental status, trauma exposure, and work experiences, as well as intersectional positionalities (CUNY, 2017)."

 (CUNY, 2017). The concept of diversity does not mean equality, inclusion or pluralism, but is a separate concept, having its own set of values and practicing principles. However, diversity, equality, inclusion and pluralism are interrelated (Palmer & Watkins, 2018).

Diversity as a Community Psychology Principle

- Diversity is an imperative value and practice within community psychology.
- Diversity is a moral imperative and foundational ethical value necessary to redress injustices, systems of oppressions, and structural/systemic inequities. Without diversity, liberation from systems of power and oppression cannot be redressed, and the co-production/construction of knowledge cannot be achieved.
- Diversity requires the democratization and decolonization of knowledge through the centering of multiple perspectives, voices and lived experiences different from one's own.
- Diversity requires the community psychologist to ethically engage with diverse communities and social groups whose complexities are reflected in their lived experiences.

Diversity as a Value

Diversity is an ethical principle that means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference. Diversity is an active appreciation and affirmation that individuals and communities deserve to be recognized in their uniqueness and differences. By making differences visible, we are able to see, nurture, and utilize the strengths of all persons. It is additionally important to support and protect diversity because by valuing differences we foster a climate where equity and mutual respect are promoted, and where dehumanization and oppression are incompatible. Diversity is a value held by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences.

- Valuing diversity acknowledges that categories of difference are not always fixed but also can be fluid; we respect individual rights to self-identification, and we recognize that no individual, group, community or culture, is intrinsically superior to another.

- Valuing diversity does not minimize similarities or commonalities across groups or among humankind, but rather affirms the co-existence of differences that reflect the full expression of humanity and every hue of skin color having equal value, regardless of race or ethnicity.
- Valuing diversity include intentionally working to relate respectfully to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong.
- Valuing diversity include openness, the acknowledgement of "not knowing" and the realization and commitment to lifelong learning about human diversity and ways to interact with those different from ourselves.
- Valuing diversity include holding ourselves, our institutions and our organizations accountable for working to address ways in which resources and supports are available to ensure inclusivity and equal opportunity.

Diversity in Practice
Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve, but are not limited to the following:
- Acknowledging that people have the right to be different from others.
- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment.
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being, but also ways of knowing.
- Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others, in particular for those who are considered "different" from the majority or dominant social group in any given social context.
- Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.
- Exploring these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment.
- Understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.
- Practicing cultural humility

References

Diversity Vision Statement and Purpose (n.d.) In City University New York (CUNY). Retrieved from http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/hr/diversity-and-recruitment/

Palmer, G., & Watkins, K., (2017, January). *Diversity Isn't equality: Advancing social justice for people of color.* Paper presented at the annual retreat of Adler, University, Chicago.