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Edited by Olya Glantsman

The Launching of the Community Psychology Practice Council

In 1992, the 4th SCRA Biennial meeting in Williamsburg VA hosted Tom Wolff and David Chavis' well attended community meeting titled "Ten Demandments for Action: Community Psychology's Failed Commitment to Social Change." The phrase "Ten Demandments" was 'borrowed' from a group Black ministers in Boston who were calling for change. This meeting demanded that SCRA honor the word "Action" in its title. One of the attendees' was Kelly Hazel who, when asked about the meeting noted: "I had been at the 4th biennial meeting where they presented [the ten demandments] and it stuck with me throughout my career." Another attendee that deemed this meeting crucial was Greg Meissen: "This Town Hall Meeting was insightful and energizing as it validated the action in my work but what surprised me was the push-back of so many other academics who also practiced community psychology."

Following the meeting, Tom Wolff and a 27 person international task force worked in designing and implementing a vision process at the 10th Biennial at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana in 2005. The title of the workshop was *Creating a Vibrant Vision for Community Psychology's Next Forty Years* (Wolff, T., Cheng, S. T., Hazel, K., & Schwer-Ca.). Cliff O'Donnell, SCRA President, supported this process and helped the revised SCRA vision and mission that emerged to be endorsed (See *TCP* Vol. 38(4), pp. 36-49).

The findings from this meeting further solidified the group's commitment to addressing the concerns of SCRA's practitioners. Greg, Kelly, Jessica Snell-Johns and Tom met on the last day of the Biennial and decided that although the Visioning was great, no group emerged to carry forward to Vision especially the prominent component of the practice of community psychology. Jessica, who was a student at that time, helped us hear from students who were feeling that their desire to be practitioners (rather than academics) was being met with

disdain or just not supported by their mentors/advisors. The students also expressed concern about not getting the skills they thought they needed for practice. Finally, there was a concern about SCRA losing members who do "practice." At this time, the four decided to take action. They committed to a monthly conference call with each other and others who were interested in practice. During the first conference call in October 2005 they laid out a plan to recruit practitioners, practice oriented academics, and students to join them in a concerted effort to expand the support for Community Psychology practice and practitioners within the SCRA. By the January 2006 conference call, Bill Berkowitz, Vince Francisco, Adrienne Paine-Andrews, Marizaida Sanchez-Cesareo, David Chavis, David Julian and Raymond Scott had joined the group. One of the first tasks was to establish the vision and mission of the group.

Vision: To promote the visibility, connection and support for Community Psychology practice and Community Psychology practitioners.

Mission: To expand the visibility, reach and impact of community psychology practice through opportunities for connection, support and professional development through the SCRA, academic community research and action graduate programs, other professional organizations and communities (Jan. 20 minutes of Practice Group).

It was important for the group to get the word out about the new efforts being undertaken in support of community practice to the SCRA membership. Consequently, Kelly, Greg, Jessica, and Tom wrote a piece for *The Community Psychologist* and then solicited commentary (which was published with the article) from a number of prominent Community Psychologists and students.

Hazel, K., Meissen, G., Snell-Johns, J., & Wolff, T. (2006). Without practice, where art thou Community Psychology? *The Community Psychologist*, 39(2), 42-44. [Commentary, pp. 44-52]

Additional tasks included planning for "think tanks" on practice issues and a "Tool" poster session at the First International Conference on Community Research and Action in Puerto Rico and a pre-conference workshop, which would later be titled the *First Ever Community Psychology Practice Summit*, at the SCRA Biennial Conference in Pasadena, CA. in 2007.

- *Where art thou Community Psychology Practice? (2006, June). Invited panel presentation at the 1st International Conference on Community Research and Action, San Juan, Puerto Rico (with T. Wolff, K. Hazel, D. Julian, R. Scott, D. Chavis, J. Ornelas).*
- *Defining Community Psychology Practice (2006, June). Invited think tank session presented at the 1st International Conference on Community Research and Action, San Juan, Puerto Rico (with T. Wolff, D. Julian, K. Hazel, R. Scott, D. Chavis, J. Ornelas).*
- *Putting practice back into graduate education in Community Psychology: Why and what are our options? (2006, June). Invited paper/think tank presented at the 1st International Conference on Community Research and Action, San Juan, Puerto Rico (with K. Hazel, P. Garza, T. Wolff, D. Julian, R. Scott).*

In the minutes of the November 2005 meeting, the group noted "there is not a definition of the practice of community psychology, nor a compendium of tools, skills and practices."

David Julian volunteered to draft a short “starting paper” on a definition of community psychology, Ray Scott volunteered to draft a paper on competencies and skills, and Kelly Hazel would draft a paper on community practice and graduate education. These papers were presented at the conference in Puerto Rico and then revised and published in *The Community Psychologist* (TCP) prior to the 2007 Pasadena Biennial.

Tom Wolff and David Chavis' 1992 "10 Demandments" were referenced during the early process of the Council's founding. Greg had just been asked by SCRA to get the Council of Directors of Graduate Programs reestablished resulting in the Council of Education Programs (CEP) and Kelly had just finished analyzing and presenting data from the most recent survey of graduate programs, so the group felt there was some synergy to these efforts. Greg and Kelly both joined the CEP (Greg was chair, and then Kelly served in that role) and deliberately and intentionally worked to link/synergize “Education” and “Practice.” To this day, the CEP and Practice Council collaborate on multiple projects including jointly carrying out a survey of graduate programs that includes questions related to practice/competencies results of which have been published in TCP.

The early efforts were focused on getting SCRA to better support practitioners, increase the numbers of practitioners who join (we wanted to find them and get them to join) and retain them in SCRA (by creating "supports" such as the "Community Practitioner subsection of TCP and the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice (GJCPP) that would keep them as members), and to get graduate programs to support student desires to become practitioners (not just academics) by encouraging a focus on practice competencies. At this time, the group also urged the creation of The Community Practitioner Column in the TCP with Dave Julian stepping forward to edit.

A few years later these efforts led to the Pasadena Biennial Community Psychology Practice Summit in 2007 (see summary TCP winter 2008 p. 40). First of its kind, summit on Community Psychology practice was a pre-conference meeting that had over 100 participants. This summit was followed by town hall meetings during the conference to report out on the Council's efforts from the past 2-3 years. Work groups emerge from the Summit focusing on: Graduate Education, Community Practice Publications, Establishing Promoting and Supporting Community Psychology Practice.

Meissen, G., Hazel, K. L., Berkowitz, B., Wolff, T. (2008). The Story of the First Ever Summit on Community Psychology Practice. *The Community Psychologist*, 41(1), 40-41.

A lot of the early effort was also geared toward getting the word out through organizing conference sessions at the 1st International Conference in Puerto Rico (e.g., Spring 2006 TCP Vol 39 no 2 p. 42 *Without Community Psychology Where Art Thou Community Psychology* by Hazel, Meissen, Snell-Johns, Wolff and commentary by many; *Defining Community Psychology Practice* with Tom, Kelly, David Julian, Raymond Scott, David Chavis, Jose Ornelas and *Putting Practice Back into Graduate Education In Community Psychology: Why And What Are Our Options* with Tom, Kelly, P. Garza, D. Julian, R. Scott) and 2nd International Conference at Lisbon (e.g., Tom Wolff's pre-conference workshop, and two session roundtable *Training For Community Practice* with an international cast of characters including Tom, Greg, Kelly, T. Shagott, J. Ornelas, D. Miranda, D. Hodgetts, D. Snell, A. Youg-Hauser,

D. Francescato, H. Gridley, A. Fisher, C. Sonn, L. O'Grady, G. Pretty, M. Elias), and the Pasadena, CA biennial conferences. Furthermore, Summit's Publications Work Group lead to the creation of the GJCPP with Vince Francisco taking over the editorship.

- *Training for Community Practice (2008, June) was a two session Roundtable at the Second International Conference on Community Research and Action, Lisbon, Portugal (with K. Hazel, G. Meissen, T. Shagott, J. Ornelas, D. Miranda, D. Hodgetts, D. Snell, A. Young-Hauser, D. Francescato, H. Gridley, A Fisher, C. Sonn, L. O'Grady, G. Pretty, M. Elias, T. Wolff)*

Other notable publications included 2007 TCP Vol. 40 no 2 articles by Kelly on *Infusing Practice into Community Psychology Graduate Education* - with commentaries by many (this paper was the result of the conference in Puerto Rico); 2008 Fall TCP Survey Results of full SCRA membership on practice; 2009 Fall TCP more research with the CEP from the 2008 data on the skills.

Hazel, K. L. (2007). Infusing practice into Community Psychology graduate education. *The Community Psychologist*, 40(2), 81-86. [Commentary, pp. 87-105]

Francisco, V., Cook, G., Brunson, L., & Hazel, K. (2008). Results of the Society for Community Research and Action practice survey. *The Community Psychologist*, 41(3/4), 52-56.

At the Montclair, NJ Biennial in 2009 Tom and Greg visited the CEP meeting and furthered the on going partnership with CEP and focused on the Community Psychology Practice Competencies. In the Fall 2012 issue, Dalton and Wolfe publish the Competencies (See TCP 2012).

Finally, in 2008, after a long 'battle' Community Practice Group becomes Community Psychology Practice Council (CPPC) with a voting Representative on the SCRA Executive Committee.

Over the years, the vision and mission of the group has evolved:

Vision and Mission

To expand the visibility, reach and impact of community psychology practice through opportunities for connection, support and professional development in the Society for Community Research and Action, academic community research and action graduate programs, other professional organizations and communities.

The Practice Council works to create a legitimate community psychology practice. We do that by helping to:

- define what it means by practice,
- designate the required skills and competencies,
- demonstrate effectiveness of our work,
- increase opportunities to be seen as legitimate and acknowledged,
- increase the visibility of Community Psychology practice and

- provide individual and institutional support.

The CPPC continued to hold its monthly teleconferences. Twelve regular meetings were held in 2014 and a total of 51 different individuals attended; 22 were new members



in 2014. Teleconference meeting attendance had an average of 20 members and Practice Council emails, meeting notes, and agendas are regularly sent to 181 individuals. In terms of diversity, the Practice Council has a strong history of welcoming and engaging SCRA student members. Within the Practice Council, students are given full rights and responsibilities to participate and actively take on leadership roles. We have also worked to recruit and accommodate international members by ensuring calls are accessible via Skype, and that they understand our mission and vision. Currently 2 of our international members hold a leadership position. Additionally, the Practice Council's mission to engage Community Psychology practitioners, and bring them back into the "fold" of division 27, serves to increase the professional diversity of the organization as a whole.

The success of the group can be attributed to the tenacity and vision of the founders. Timing may also have had something to do with it as students wanted to work full time in the practice of Community Psychology with a passion to make their communities better. Just as clearly, there's much more work to be done, and with the leadership of the new generation of Community Psychologists along with the continued active engagement of the seasoned practitioners who did not give up their vision, the group will continue to grow and provide support to current and future Community Psychologists