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**RESEARCHING THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY AND OTHER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT-RELATED FIELDS**

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The mission of SCRA’s International Committee is “to support and promote communication and interaction among community psychologists and practitioners from all nations, facilitate the dissemination of research and programs developed outside the United States, and foster involvement of community psychologists from around the world in SCRA” (SCRA27.org). The Committee is a good resource for international members of SCRA and Biennial Conference attendees, but how do we promote the above goals without full knowledge of where in the world community psychologists are trained and working? To passively assume all community psychologists in every country have already engaged with SCRA would be, not only insular and hubristic, but contrary to fundamental community psychology principles!

Books, special issues, and international conferences have highlighted the wide variety exciting community psychology research in many countries and every continent. Less common are cross-cultural, international comparative collaborations and, especially, any attention to where community psychology has not yet developed or struggled to develop and why. Our field is present on all continents, but it is mostly or entirely missing in many places where needs are greatest and it could have the most impact.

The Global Development of Applied Community Studies (GDACS) Project (<https://www.researchgate.net/project/Global-Development-of-Applied-Community-Studies>) is an ambitious program of collaborative mixed-methods research to comprehensively track the global development of 12 community-based applied social research disciplines in 105 countries, representing over 95% of the world’s population. The project aims to identify both the conditions and barriers for the emergence and growth of each indigenous field of community-based research and action, and to support the development of those fields where they are most needed.

We began by analyzing the international growth of Community Psychology (CP), but we soon realized that countries with limited or no community psychologists may simply address local social (physical and mental health, education), economic, and physical development challenges through other disciplines, such as Community Development (CD), Community Sociology, Community Social Work, Development Economics, Applied Anthropology, Public Health, Urban Planning, Geography, Public Administration and Policy Studies, Popular Education, Liberation Theology, or interdisciplinary Community Research and Action. So we conducted thousands of hours of systematic internet searches to identify indigenous professional associations or conferences, undergraduate and graduate courses and programs, articles, books and journals in each of the above fields in each country. (An ongoing GDACS pilot study examines the validity of our admittedly formal-academic measure through comparative qualitative interviews of academic researchers, professionals, and nonprofessional community volunteers in multiple countries.) We also accessed a variety of social, political, and economic indicators as predictor variables, such as a database of past nonviolent grassroots activism, Freedom House’s political rights and civil liberties indicators, civic engagement, life satisfaction and well-being, government decentralization, and foreign aid received for most of those countries; plus UN Human Development Index (HDI: GDP, life expectancy and education), income inequality, educational infrastructure, and population size for almost all countries, with an eye toward exploring conditions for the local development of each of the various fields and doing comparative qualitative case studies of particular countries or regions.

The conditions for growth of CP in a given country included three that Montero (1996) identified: (1) limitations of mainstream scientific and applied psychology; (2) a liberalizing social climate in society; and (3) either a supportive progressive government or the opposite-- an authoritarian government creating problems to solve. To those “fertile ground” conditions, we initially added: (4) a liberal education system that encourages critical reflection; (5) a public that engages in activism/questions authority; and (6) a strong civil society; and we have continued to seek, identify, and test additional conditions as well as examples and specifications of each. For example, we have considered how the form and prevalence of applied community studies in a country relates to its history of colonization, civil liberties, and grassroots organizing and the current level of inequality and human development.

Country-level Global Quantitative Studies and Comparative Qualitative Case Studies

One of the project’s first studies used mixed methods to test a new model predicting the global growth of both CP and CD as two applied community-based research disciplines aiming to link local knowledge generation with social change (Hanitio & Perkins, 2017). Across 91 countries we found that civil liberties and historical nonviolent grassroots activism predict the emergence and growth of CP and CD, controlling for socio-economic development (HDI) and population. Another critical finding was that CP is clearly weakest in countries with more severe health, education, and economic problems—precisely where CP is most needed. The relationship of HDI and CD is more complex, but CD is weakest in both moderately high and low-HDI countries, again (in the latter case) where CD is most desperately needed. To examine these patterns in more depth, we reported two brief qualitative case studies of CP and CD in Chile and Ghana, finding that as a more applied practice-oriented field, CD has been more strongly promoted by government and international organizational resources and policies in Ghana, which also has more severe development challenges to address. Colonial and postcolonial history also played a role in fostering the different fields in each country. In Chile, civil society and the history of grassroots activism helped establish norms of collective community action as well as CP, which supports our theoretically proposed conditions for the development of our field.

A recent article by Lyew, Perkins and Sohn (2020) analyzes how receiving foreign aid and other factors influence the presence and strength of CP in 67 low-and-moderate-income countries (LMICs). Although professional human resources capacity is a major focus of international development donor agencies, we are the first to study the relationship of aid to the strength of applied social research training in recipient countries. As predicted by dependency theory, aid significantly explains the strength of community psychology at the country level over and above the influence of GDP per capita, income inequality, the number of universities, civil liberties, and historical grassroots activity. Also, the less aid received, the more strongly political activism predicts the strength of community psychology. Our findings support the observation that aid is provided in ways that exclude locally trained researchers and practitioners. We are working on a paper modelling aid and other predictors of *all* applied community studies disciplines in LMICs. We aim to explore problems with foreign aid systems and how to change them to support the development of CP and other community disciplines.

Another study by Ozgurer and Perkins uses data on 105 countries and GIS to map and analyze the global growth of CP based on geographic proximity and socioeconomic and political indicators. Our theoretical framings were knowledge transfer and knowledge spillover. The results of hot spot analysis and cluster and outlier analysis spatially confirmed our hypothesis, revealing statistically significant hot spots of CP in countries sharing borders. The strength of CP in neighboring countries significantly predicted the growth of CP beyond the influence of population size, HDI, freedom score, and a history of grassroots activism. We explored implications for theory, research, and international professional and student exchanges.

A new study by the same authors investigates the relationship between government decentralization and the development of urban and regional planning in a country. Fiscal, administrative, and political decentralization are key determinants of the delegation of power to local communities (Falleti, 2005), which is required for the development and effectiveness of local planning. This project employs GDACS data to examine whether government decentralization and localization predict the development of urban and regional planning in a country beyond the influences of grassroots activism, political rights, civil liberties, higher education infrastructure, and social and economic indicators in that country. Social movements and political theory will be used to analyze conditions for the development of the field.

We have two papers in progress using China as a case study. One builds on a Chinese-language article (Yang & Perkins, 2012) and analyzes the prospects for CP development in China based on the six societal conditions identified above. But it may become moot as there is already a Chinese CP scientific/professional association and other signs of growth. The other paper by Zhang, Perkins, and Huang is on the recent development of (adult) Community Education in China, but as always creating it “with Chinese characteristics.” We propose a new empowerment model of community education and examine two case examples in Shanghai.

Finally, student theses from the project provide examples of the kinds of research one can do by analyzing country-level data or doing an in-depth qualitative case study of a single country. For example A.S. Tankwanchi (2018; et al. 2015) systematically and, from a liberatory and ecological perspective, analyzed a serious human resource capacity problem—“brain drain,” or recruitment and migration of healthcare workers from sub-Saharan African to the West. Nikolay Mihaylov and Ronald Harvey are attempting to introduce community psychology to Bulgaria, a former Soviet-bloc country that is simultaneously experiencing both capitalist oligarchy and grassroots community-level resistance and intervention. Dominique Lyew’s thesis analyzed the concept of epistemic justice in various applied community disciplines in the post-colonial context of Jamaica. She is completing a dissertation on the connection between epistemic justice and political participation in Jamaica, the Caribbean and Latin America. Eunice Sohn expanded the prediction model for community psychology and community development to also include community sociology, social work, development economics, and liberation theology and found grassroots activism to partially but significantly mediate the relationship of both HDI and civil liberties with the strength of those community-based research disciplines in 94 countries. Hannah Haecker examined the strength of development economics as a field and again found grassroots activism to be a positive predictor and foreign aid received a negative predictor and traced the historical development of the field in brief case studies of Niger and Ethiopia. Hans Braunfisch compared Northern and Southern European differences in development as an empirical test of Max Weber's classic *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* theory.

Conclusions

Some of the broader contributions of the GDACS Project are: 1. They are the first empirical studies of conditions for establishing and growth of community-based applied research disciplines internationally, beyond just one country, region or continent. 2. It is also the first to quantitatively measure the strength of community studies disciplines at the national and global levels. 3. We proposed and confirmed a new model for the development of CP and community-based research in general. 4. We found multiple pathways to the development of community studies disciplines, but a history of civil liberties and grassroots activism are especially important conditions. 5. We must support countries with the greatest poverty and human development needs to develop their own applied community studies resources in order to use aid in a less dependent way; that is the only just and viable way to achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>). International comparative research helps collaborators from each country learn from each other, develop indigenous human resource capacity and remove barriers of mutual ignorance and misunderstanding.

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