



SCRA
SOCIETY FOR COMMUNITY
RESEARCH AND ACTION



[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

[MEMBER LOGIN](#)

- [Who We Are](#)
 - [SCRA Strategic Plan](#)
 - [Leadership](#)
 - [Committees and Councils](#)
 - [Interest Groups](#)
 - [Regional Activities](#)
 - [Students](#)
 - [Interorganizational Collaborations](#)
- [What We Do](#)
 - [What is Community Psychology?](#)
 - [Education](#)
 - [Research](#)
 - [Practice](#)
 - [Policy](#)
 - [Get Involved!](#)
- [Publications](#)
 - [American Journal of Community Psychology](#)
 - [The Community Psychologist](#)
 - [SCRA Book Series](#)
 - [Other Journals Relevant to Community Psychology](#)
 - [Other Community Psychology Books](#)
- [Resources](#)
 - [Call to Action](#)
 - [Antiracism / Anti-oppression Email Series](#)
 - [COVID-19 Resources](#)
 - [Document Library](#)
 - [Resources for Community Members](#)
 - [Resources for Community Psychologists](#)
 - [Job Board](#)
 - [Videos](#)
 - [Webinars](#)
 - [Podcasts](#)
 - [Using This Site](#)
- [Events](#)
 - [APA Convention 2020](#)
 - [Biennial Conference](#)
 - [Regional/ECO Conferences](#)
 - [International Conference of Community Psychology](#)
 - [Online Events](#)
 - [Events Calendar](#)
- [Membership](#)

- [Join / Update Membership](#)
- [SCRA Awards and Fellows](#)
- [Member Directory](#)
- [Listserv Communication](#)
- [Reimbursement Form](#)
- [Student Membership Circle](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
 - [Donate to SCRA](#)
- [Current Events](#)
 - [SCRA Actions](#)
 - [Resources](#)
 - [Personal Stories](#)



The Community Psychologist

Volume 53, Number 4
Fall 2020

- [American Journal of Community Psychology](#)
- [The Community Psychologist](#)
 - [President's Column](#)
 - [From the Editors](#)
 - [Special Feature: Racial Capitalism, COVID-19, and Compounding Inequalities](#)
 - [Community Psychology Practice in Undergraduate Settings](#)
 - [Early Career](#)
 - [International Committee](#)
 - [Prevention and Promotion](#)
 - [Public Policy](#)
 - [Regional Updates](#)
 - [Research Council](#)
 - [Rural Interests](#)
 - [Self Help and Mutual Support Interest Group](#)
 - [Student Issues](#)
 - [SCRA Member Spotlight](#)
 - [From Our Members](#)
 - [SCRA News](#)
- [SCRA Book Series](#)
- [Other Journals Relevant to Community Psychology](#)
- [Other Community Psychology Books](#)

Public Policy

Edited by Amber Kelly, Community Engagement Collective

The Coronavirus Pandemic: Policy Implications for Community Psychologists and Training

Written by Christopher Corbett, Albany, NY

Given the coronavirus pandemic, there could hardly be a more compelling reminder, or stronger demonstration, of the profound role of *public policy*. It is increasingly clear: public policy decisions made at all levels, whether international, national, regional, state, county, city, village or local neighborhoods, have profound implications for the public health and welfare.

The tragic consequences of the coronavirus have gravely impacted the globe, from least resourced and developing countries, to richest and most developed. No countries are risk free; all remain at risk for continued or further outbreaks. Any disregard for sound public health practices even at the local street level, endangers fragile health systems and communities, and threatens the public welfare. Clearly, current public policies, or lack thereof, at all levels, expose the public to grave risks given the connectedness of nations and communities.

The purpose here is to identify certain implications for community psychologists (CPs) and benefits of new CP competencies with a specific policy focus. It is proposed that expanding CP competencies at master's and doctoral levels, with specializations in policy, will increase CPs' capacity to positively impact health and well-being of all citizens, a foundational goal of the field (Heller et al. 1984, p. 4). Not only will public policy specializations increase usefulness and utility of CP graduate training, but policy specialized competencies will increase the value proposition of CP training, and in turn, expand the marketability and employability of CPs, especially relevant to government and nonprofit sectors. *Both sectors require public policy expertise*. Coupled with advocacy and intervention skills and related core competencies, CPs can tailor their interests and skill sets most compelling to their sector and employer of choice.

This article proposes that new CP degree specializations, namely *public policy tracks* and *certificates*, will increase the value proposition of the field and training in CP. Such offerings stand to expand the "social action" emphasis of CP theory and training, as called for by Price and Cherniss (1977) and Corbett (2012). Secondly, this should increase employability of master's and doctoral degrees by better serving government and nonprofits who require multi-skilled trained professionals well suited to successfully navigate complex and varied public policy related roles.

Expanding CP's Value Proposition Through Public Policy and Related Competencies

Given the foundations of CP, coupled with training in the core competencies, CPs are well suited to play critical roles helping communities both during, as well as post, the coronavirus pandemic. The evolution of training to identify specific core competencies (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012), includes many that *prepare CPs to be multi-skilled professionals critically needed now, and will be needed in the foreseeable future, even in a post-pandemic world*.

While eighteen core competencies are identified, several are highly relevant to addressing current and future community needs beyond the fundamental Public Policy Analysis, Development and Advocacy. Other highly relevant competencies include: Empowerment; Sociocultural and Cross-Cultural Competence; Ethical Reflective Practice; Prevention and Health Promotion; Resource Development; Collaboration and Coalition Development; Community Education, Information Dissemination, and

Building Public Awareness, and Program Evaluation (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012; p. 10-13). These skills in tandem illustrate the potential power of the value proposition of the graduate degreed CP, where *Public Policy* is fundamental and justifiable as its own dedicated track or freestanding certificate supplemental to a master's or doctoral degree. As noted previously, public policy intervention fits a community psychology agenda and an increased emphasis on public policy and practical skills will substantially expand and improve the future trajectory and state of the field (Julian 2009, p. 34). The time is ripe to bolster CP graduate training with new policy specific credentials in both track and certificate forms.

Tracks, Certificates or Both?

For CP programs considering policy tracks or certificates or both, there are advantages of each. One advantage of a public policy track for master's or doctoral programs is the ability for students to identify interests and core competencies that align with personal, professional and employment goals based on electives in their foundational coursework. A disadvantage of the track approach: it is limited to existing and future matriculated CP students.

This illustrates one certificate advantage; it can be an added competency not only available to current and future students but as a credential upgrade, open to all graduates in CP, or related bachelor's, master's or doctoral programs, from any institution, from any prior years.

Another advantage of a supplemental certificate: it is highly suited to online offering, providing flexibility to reach candidates currently employed, those with day or evening schedule restrictions, or transportation limitations. Finally, due to efficiencies for institutions, costs may be lower, attracting more candidates to support a certificate program.

An Illustration

The addition of new policy focused training opportunities, such as through certificates in public policy, or through policy tracks, could well meet the training needs and expectations of policy-oriented students and also align with employer needs. One illustration of a policy specialization that would provide a powerful supplement to basic CP training would be: *Public Policy Advocacy and Intervention* which could be, by certificate, or as an additional track in new or existing master's and doctoral level trainings in CP.

Such a specialization would likely appeal to government sector organizations as public policy is integral to government operations at all levels. It would also likely appeal to nonprofit organizations where it is well recognized that the sector, at least in the United States, has neglected its advocacy role essential for its health and survival (Corbett 2011a). Different combinations of core competencies could be tailored to meet either, or both, sectors' needs.

Potential Policy Roles

There are many Policy roles needed by government and nonprofit sector employers. One example is policy research and formulation. This would include the ability to research various local, state or national legislation to identify current model legislation and how it may be adapted or improved. These skills and abilities serve both government and nonprofit employers. Another example is the ability to perform advocacy roles, especially the ability to lobby in compliance with state and federal requirements that are often complex. This is often neglected by nonprofits (Corbett 2011a) and would satisfy a keen and growing need for increased advocacy at the federal level, as has become increasingly apparent from failures by nonprofits to access the recent multi-trillion dollar stimulus funds, approved by the federal

government in the aftermath of the coronavirus. Programs could be tailored to meet students' specific training and professional employment goals to obtain the necessary experience and competence in the strategies and roles they seek. Such strategies are many and include: *research, media advocacy, direct lobbying, grassroots lobbying; public events, judicial advocacy; public education; coalition building, administrative lobbying, voter registration and education and expert testimony* (Gao & Saxton 2010). Training in these strategies has high potential value in either, or both, government and nonprofit organizations, though this will, however, vary by nonprofit depending upon by-law requirements and congruence with mission (Corbett 2011a, p. 10).

These strategies enable and empower CPs to act in a wide variety of roles such as including policy and legislative research, lobbying, policy development and policy implementation of federal or state legislation. Another powerful CP policy role: all nonprofits should have at least one CP on the board, with others in management and/or staff (Fromm Reed 2012, p. 10).

Policy implementation also creates book publication opportunities due to the broad impact on the public interest. One example of policy implementation of federal legislation is described by Cleveland & Wineburg (2011). Their book details a case example of a successful university-community partnership, implementing the American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009. The book also demonstrates the successful application of many related core competencies including: Public Policy and Advocacy; Empowerment; Community Inclusion & Partnership; Consultation and Organizational Development skills; Community Education; Small and Large Group process skills; and Resource Development (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012; Corbett 2011b).

Another example: the implementation of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, which legislatively imposed certain ethical and governance requirements on all nonprofit organizations in the U.S. (Jackson & Fogarty, 2005). As detailed by Corbett (2011c), the implementation of this federal legislation at the nonprofit level illustrates the application of various core competencies such as including: Public Policy; Empowerment; Prevention; Resource Development; Consultation and Organizational Development; and Community Education.

Another factor supporting book publication: the policy implementation of legislation, due to its complexity and with serious implications of force of law and enforcement, creates grave risks of non-compliance. This is of great interest to government officials and regulators, who are responsible to enforce legislation, as well as nonprofit leaders and board members legally culpable and exposed to the consequences of violation, or malfeasance, as executives of Enron, United Way and American Red Cross found (Jackson & Fogarty, 2005, p. 2). This also opens the door to prevention oriented CPs with policy related solutions by applying CP principles, and "behavior setting" theory, to prevent organizational failures (Fromm Reed 2012; Corbett 2011c).

Potential Track and Certificate Content

While further potential course content is beyond the scope here, there is much policy related scholarship already created by many SCRA scholars and fellows, waiting to be tapped. Policy tracks and certificates could readily be constructed from many published texts, journal and TCP articles, workbooks, SCRA session and workshop materials, including various texts that address employability of CPs in government and nonprofit sectors. While not all inclusive, various CP authors of much policy and employment relevant scholarship include: Balcazar, F., Campbell, R., Cherniss, C., Dalton, J., Ferrari, J., Glantsman, O., Howe, S., Jason, L., Langhout, R., Maton, K., McMahon, S., O'Donnell, C., Shinn, M., Toro, P., Viola, J. and Wolfe, S. to name a few.

Conclusion

Institutions willing to consider adding policy specific tracks and/or certificates, either on campus or online, could use these authors and scholars as a starting point to develop new policy related credentials, thereby increasing the value proposition of CP training and the employability of CPs, especially to meet the urgent needs of both the government and nonprofit sectors.

References

- Cleveland, O. & Wineburg, R. (2011). *Pracademics and community change: A true story of nonprofit development and social entrepreneurship during welfare reform*. Chicago: Lyceum.
- Corbett, C. (2011a). Increasing public policy advocacy and influence: A priority whose time has come. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action held November 17-19, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Corbett, C. (2011b). Book Review of *Pracademics and Community Change: A True Story of Nonprofit Development and Social Entrepreneurship during Welfare Reform*. *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice* Vol. 1(3), 1-5.
- Corbett, C. (2011c). *Advancing nonprofit stewardship through self-regulation: Translating principles into practice*. Sterling, VA.: Kumarian Press.
- Corbett, C. (2012). SCRA's Golden Opportunity: Modifying MOOC and Certificate of Mastery Concepts to evolve CP into a Profession. *The Community Psychologist* 45(4), 14-17.
- Dalton, J. & Wolfe, S. (2012). Joint Column Core Competencies. *The Community Psychologist* 45(4), 8.
- Fromm Reed, S. (Ed.) (2012). Applying community psychology knowledge in nonprofit settings, by C. Corbett. *The Community Psychologist* 45(3), 8-12.
- Guo, C. & Saxton, G. (2010). Voice-In, Voice-Out: Constituent participation and nonprofit advocacy, *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, Vol. 1: Iss. I, Article 5. Available at: <http://www.bepress.com/npf/vol1/iss1/5>.
- Heller, K., Price, R., Reinharz, S., Riger, S., & Wandersman, A. (1984). *Psychology and Community Change*. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press.
- Jackson, P. M. & Fogarty, T. E. (2005). *Sarbanes-Oxley for Nonprofits*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.
- Julian, D. (Ed.) (2009). The Community Practitioner. Advocating for Federal Stimulus Funds to Advance Social Justice: Pursuing Funding from the American Recovery & Investment Act of 2009 by Christopher Corbett. *The Community Psychologist* 42(3), 31-34.
- Price, R. & Cherniss, C. (1977, May). Training for a New Profession: Research as Social Action. *Professional Psychology*, 222-231.