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Research and Action on Intimate Partner Violence: Interdisciplinary Convergence of Cultural Community Psychology and Cross-Cultural Psychology

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An analysis of the respective organizational histories, missions, and scholarly activity of the International Association for Cross-cultural Psychology (IACCP) and the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) indicates many points of shared values and actions, as well as some important differences. Both scholarly organizations developed out of a similar historical and cultural zeitgeist in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Our missions emphasize the role of culture/diversity in psychological phenomena, adopting an interdisciplinary orientation, the value of collaboration, the importance of research methods and ethics, and the value of action research. However, community psychology generally lacks an adequate treatment of cultural phenomena, while cross-cultural psychology often fails to draw on community and participatory methods useful for understanding culture in context. In this chapter, we examine these common roots and differences and then briefly present a study¹ of intimate partner violence (IPV) in a community of Latinos in the United States that illustrates the benefits of an interdisciplinary, cultural community psychology. Finally, we propose several actions to develop further an interdisciplinary collaboration between the two fields.

Cross-cultural and community psychology took root as professional scholarly fields in the mid 1960s and early 1970s from much of the same sociopolitical soil. Both fields were established based on two, core ideas characteristic of the cultural zeitgeist of the time –that the individual must be understood in sociocultural context, and that this context gives rise to a great diversity in human experience and behavior. In their efforts to test these ideas, both fields have grappled with how to define and assess person-environment relationships and how different levels of analysis can be used to study these relationships.

Despite these commonalities, however, cross-cultural and community psychology have not integrated valuable knowledge and skills that each field has to offer the other (O'Donnell, 2006; Trickett, 1996; Watts, 1994). For example, cross-cultural psychology offers community psychology more sophisticated theories to guide the study of culture and cultural diversity, knowledge about how to form culturally diverse teams of researchers, and useful concepts for understanding cultural values, processes and practices in research on diverse communities. On the other hand, community psychology offers to cross-cultural psychology a set of values and conceptual frameworks useful for studying the relationship between social problems and individual functioning among diverse communities, practice strategies for conducting social systems intervention and change, and research methods useful for evaluating these efforts.

Given the unfulfilled potential created by the tension of these similarities and differences, the purpose of this chapter is to attempt to spur the development of an integrated cultural community psychology. First, we will present a content and bibliographic analysis of the common roots and unique differences in the historical narratives and organizational values of the two fields and their respective scholarly associations. Next, we will briefly present a research and action project on intimate partner violence that illustrates the potential value of an

¹ This work was partially supported by NIH/NINR R01 NR08771-01A1 (9/04-5/08).

integrated cultural and community psychology. Finally, we will describe several concrete actions that leaders and members of the respective fields can take to develop further this collaboration.

Common roots of IACCP and SCRA

As Cliff O'Donnell (2006) noted in his Presidential Address to the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), the International Association for Cross-cultural Psychology (IACCP) and the SCRA, which is the Division 27 of the American Psychological Association, both were formed during the fertile period of the mid 1960s and early 1970s.² These were the “catalytic years” (Lonner, 2004, p. 126). During this time, context -cultural, political, social, and environmental- was regaining attention in the overly individualistic focus of psychologists' efforts to understand human behavior and improve living conditions. In the U.S., we saw during this time increasing growth in civil rights, women's equality, and sexual liberation, –all indicative of and a challenge to the view of people as equal and the same, regardless of context and environment. In particular, community psychology grew out of society's increasing recognition of the failure of mental health policies and practices to, among other things, address the mental health needs in society (Bennett, Anderson, Cooper, Hassol, Klein, & Rosenblum, 1966). The main response was to segregate individuals who were different from the prevailing cultural norms, or were ill, in hospitals, and isolate them from their communities. Lonner (2004) asserted that cross-cultural psychology developed at this time for some of the same reasons –an emergent idealism after WWII and the civil rights movement, among others such as the cold war and increasing global migration, travel and communication that brought cultures together in conflict and harmony. In short, both fields trace their roots to sociopolitical developments that highlighted the importance of context in understanding and creating psychological well being.

During the past 50 years, a more formal history has developed, marked by the establishment of scholarly organizations and all of their associated structures, namely the IACCP and the SCRA. Influential accounts within each organization trace their birth to a pivotal, energizing conference (or set of conferences, in the case of IACCP) held during the mid 1960s. For IACCP, these were held in Istanbul³, Nigeria, Hawaii, and Thailand (Lonner, 2004; Segall, Lonner & Berry, 1998), and for SCRA, it was the Swampscott, Massachusetts conference on the Education of Psychologists for Community Mental Health (Bennett et al., 1966).⁴

Following these seminal conferences, at roughly the same time, organizations formed and established academic journals, namely the *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology* (JCCP) and the *American Journal of Community Psychology* (AJCP). They began hosting biennial research conferences that are attended by roughly 500-600 participants each. Since this founding, both disciplines have contributed an almost identical number of research publications to the body of scientific knowledge, as indicated by the number of articles in the PsychInfo

² Of course, both disciplines trace their histories much further back than these formal, modern beginnings, especially cross-cultural psychology. Cross-cultural psychology existed for hundreds, if not thousands of years, in philosophical and anthropological ideas about human nature and human diversity (Jahoda & Krewer, 1997). Similarly, community psychology links itself to ideas about and reforms in society's treatment of individuals throughout the ages who did not fit into 'normal' definitions of human behavior and mental health (Levine, Perkins, & Perkins, 2005; Rappaport, 1977).

³ The Istanbul Congress in 1971 was also a “pre-IACCP” meeting, and resulted in a book entitled “Mental Tests and Cultural Adaptation”, edited by L. J. Cronbach and P. J. D. Drenth (The Hague: Mouton, 1972).

⁴ Importantly, from the beginning, cross-cultural psychology conferences have been international in name and location. The first international conference on community psychology was held only just earlier this summer (2006), in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

database that are indexed by the terms “cross-cultural psychology” (1,095) and “community psychology” (1,134) as of July, 2006.

To further evaluate the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration between cross-cultural and community psychologists, we conducted a content analysis of the mission statements of our respective organizations, which revealed further similarities, as well as some important differences in the emphases of each field. In particular, five themes were found in both organizations’ mission statements and associated documents on their websites: the role of culture/diversity in psychological phenomenon, an orientation toward interdisciplinarity, the value of collaboration, the importance of research methods and ethics, and a value on action research (Table 1). Notably, both mission statements address the importance of culture, although it appears to be more assumed and unstated in the IACCP statement. Both statements express the importance of interdisciplinary work and speak about the value of collaboration, though SCRA’s statement is concerned with collaboration among researchers, community members and practitioners; IACCP’s statement is focused on collaboration among cultural researchers themselves. In terms of methodology, IACCP is most concerned with validity whereas the theme in SCRA is about diversity and plurality of methodologies. Finally, both societies are concerned with using research to address social problems, though this value seems more elaborated and central to the SCRA mission.

Finally, we reviewed several bibliographic analyses of our respective journals (Brouwers, Van Hemert, Breugelmans, & Van de Vijver, 2004; Martin, Lounsbury, & Davidson, 2004), which provided further insight regarding the shared roots and differences of community and cross-cultural psychology. In JCCP, from 1970 to 2004, 79% of the publications were cultural comparative studies. By contrast, only 25% of the articles in AJCP in the more recent period from 1993 to 1998 (and only 13% in an earlier, 1988 review of related journals) addressed diversity. Half of these used a within group design, similar to a cultural psychology or cultural relativism approach. Community psychology has not yet addressed culture to the extent that its stated value of diversity and context would command.

Another difference in the published scholarship was the treatment of methodology and the characteristics and relationships between the researcher and the researched. Qualitative methods and the characteristics and community affiliations of the research participants and the researchers were central topics of discussion in the AJCP review, whereas these topics went unanalyzed in the JCCP review. Community psychologists may hold a greater interest in the relationships between the researcher and the researched as it informs the nature and use to which research is put in changing society; community psychologists are more self-reflexive in our use of theory and how we relate to those with whom we conduct research and intervention (Watts, 1994).

Rather than viewing these differences as barriers, it is more useful to understand them as sources of complementary strength that represents the potential value in collaborative, interdisciplinary interaction between cross-cultural and community psychology. As an illustration of this potential, in the next section, we present part of a larger community-based, participatory research project that addresses the cultural context of workplace intimate partner violence.

Cultural community psychology:

An illustrative research and action project on intimate partner violence (IPV)

Project development and overview

Galvez, Mankowski, Ruiz, McGlade, Rollins, & Glass (2006), are engaged in a community-based, participatory research project that attempts to follow some of the principles and recommendations suggested by community and cross-cultural psychologists (Segall, Lonner, & Berry, 1998; Trickett, 1996; Watts, 1994) about the study of diversity and culture

Table 1. Similarities and differences in the mission statements of cross-cultural (IACCP) and community (SCRA) psychology

| Value | IACCP | SCRA |
|---|--|--|
| Role of culture/diversity in psychological phenomenon | <i>Study of the role of cultural factors in shaping human behavior.</i> | <i>Research and action require explicit attention to and respect for diversity among peoples and settings; Human competencies and problems are best understood by viewing people within their social, cultural, economic, geographic, and historical contexts.</i> |
| Interdisciplinary orientation | <i>Draw the attention of other psychologists and scientists in related disciplines to the dynamic interactions between culture and behavior; the Association encourages relationships and possible formal affiliation with other organizations or associations that have similar aims.</i> | <i>SCRA serves many different disciplines that focus on community research and action; bring together people from various disciplines and contexts.</i> |
| Collaboration | <i>Provide a vehicle for communication and cooperation among its members and a means of drawing the attention of other psychologists and scientists in related disciplines to the dynamic interactions between culture and behavior.</i> | <i>Community research and action is an active collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and community members.</i> |
| Methods | <i>Development of valid measurement techniques and research methodology in cross-cultural psychology.</i> | <i>Change strategies are needed at multiple levels; use of multiple methodologies.</i> |
| Action research | <i>Knowledge for the amelioration of social problems.</i> | <i>Social action...to promote health and empowerment, enhance well-being, prevent harmful outcomes and liberate oppressed peoples.</i> |

Note: Adapted from www.iacpp.org and www.scra27.org

as they inform our understanding of gender and intimate partner violence. The project, sponsored by the U.S. NIH/NINR (National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Nursing Research), is an interdisciplinary partnership of people from diverse institutions, disciplines, and sectors in society, including nurses, organizational psychologists, community psychologists, domestic violence advocacy programs, and labor unions. Like many projects conducted by community psychologists, it developed from the principal investigator's (third author's) long-term engagement with the local community and community organizations. The principal investigator, a Euro-American, female, public health nurse, provides services to survivors of intimate partner violence through local, community based health advocacy organizations in Portland, Oregon, USA. In listening to the stories of many of the Latina survivors, she learned that the available resources to assist survivors in the health care and legal systems were inappropriate and inaccessible to them, for several reasons (Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004). The services could require them to disclose information that would jeopardize their legal status as immigrants to the United States. The service providers may not speak Spanish or other native languages that the women spoke. Many of the service providers and the Latina women held different views about women's roles in the family, the meaning of family and of intimate partner violence, and the importance of separating or continuing to live with their abusive partner. This was true particularly if the family resided in the U.S. without documented status, which often made the partner much more financially and socially dependent on her abusive partner.

The principal investigator gradually realized that the women needed more appropriate and accessible services. She began to wonder whether because many of them were working

outside the home, in service sector jobs (e.g., migrant farm work, hotel/motel service staff, food service) that the workplace might be an organizational system in the women's ecology in which culturally appropriate services could be made more accessible. After further investigation, she also learned that men who abuse and stalk their partners often do so at their workplaces, as well as in the home, and that these forms of abuse often interfere with the women's employment and ability to leave abusive relationships. For example, the leading cause of death to women in U.S. workplaces is homicide by an intimate partner (Riger, Ahrens, & Blickenstaff, 2000; U.S. Department of Labor, 1997). In addition, in the course of our work, we learned that employers often respond in unhelpful ways when hearing about abuse experienced by their employees, for example, by offering to contact the police, which could have negative consequences for the family due to their documented status in the country.

The investigator brought together a culturally and linguistically diverse, multidisciplinary team of psychologists, nurses, labor organizers, *promotores* (community-based Spanish health advocates) and other community based workers, including domestic violence shelter staff to study this problem and develop an intimate partner violence preventive intervention program for service sector employers. It is noteworthy that some of the team members are survivors of intimate partner violence who brought valuable experiential knowledge to the design and implementation of the project.

In Phase I of the project, we focused on collecting data from multiple sources to inform the development of the intervention, including employers and employees (some of whom are also survivors of intimate partner violence or coworkers of survivors), as well as men who had been arrested for abusing their partners, and facilitators of batterer intervention groups that the arrested men were ordered to attend by court judges. In phase II, two additional years will be spent to develop, implement and experimentally test the effectiveness of a workplace IPV preventive intervention focused on changing how employers respond to employees who are survivors or perpetrators of abuse in the workplace.

As part of this research and action project, separate focus group interviews were conducted with Latino men living in the United States who have abused their partners, and with facilitators of the batterer intervention groups attended by the men. The interviews were guided by three research questions that we developed from an ecological model of IPV (Edleson & Tolman, 1992) or which we formulated based on responses to our first sets of interviews: 1) What abuse tactics, strategies and workplace resources do men use to perpetrate IPV in the workplace? 2) What workplace policies and norms address IPV in the men's jobs? and 3) How does cultural context inform men's experience, understanding and perpetration of IPV?

Study samples and method

A total of six focus groups were conducted. Twenty-two men from batterer intervention programs (BIPs) participated in one of four focus groups. All participants were Latino. They ranged in age from 19 to 45, and had been attending the BIP between 1 and 31 months. Ninety percent of the men identified as Mexican (1 identified as Cuban and 1 identified as Puerto Rican); all spoke Spanish fluently. Two additional focus groups consisted of eight male and one female BIP facilitators, and four male and two female community mental health professionals with experience in IPV among Latinos. Thirteen participants were Latino/a and two were Euro-White. They ranged in age from 27 to 56, and had between 1 and 10 years of work experience that informed their participation in the focus groups. All spoke Spanish fluently.

Focus groups were facilitated in Spanish by the second author, a bilingual/bicultural male graduate student, assisted by the first author. One group was co-facilitated by a bilingual/bicultural female Latina community leader. Audio recordings were transcribed in Spanish and then translated to English by a team of bilingual/bicultural research assistants. The team of bilingual/bicultural researchers jointly conducted descriptive content analysis of the groups.

Findings

The cultural context of workplace IPV

Although not originally a focus of the research, we quickly learned that the men had a great deal to say about their employers' responses to their violent and abusive behavior. The men's narratives situated their violence in the context of their experiences with the U.S. criminal justice system, their immigration to the U.S., acculturative stress, and aspects of Latin American culture, especially the importance of family ties and gender role expectations and norms. Facilitators passionately discussed these as important aspects of the context in which IPV occurs and must be understood. The facilitators described a host of stressors including language, not having social networks, and financial hardships, which were thought to contribute to IPV. Several facilitators addressed the cultural conflicts that their clients experienced and how this could be related to their IPV.

"I start off with the cultural conflict issue. When I raise it, their awareness of the possibility of what is happening to them in the home is connected to the cultural clashes they are experiencing".

"When we come here we find ourselves with no English [language], not knowing where to go, not knowing where to work... The cultural clash, the acculturation is enormous... [From] there comes anxiety, the stress".

"There are a lot of factors that contribute to this (domestic violence)... we know that stress due to limited economic advancement, no access to jobs, not having the basic needs met all create a tension... that [lead] to problems in communication [with their partners]... and things escalate and explode like a volcano".

The facilitators discussed how their clients felt angry at the criminal justice system and the larger government. Several facilitators believed that the anger stemmed from cultural clashes that the batterers were experiencing. Many felt that it was important to educate their clients about the difference in laws, customs, or beliefs in the U.S. culture and in the Mexican culture.

"And that's why it is so important to make them understand that there are two different cultures... You aren't in Mexico... It's true that here in Mexico, you can do one thing but, in the US, no... Because many of us, the Hispanics, we are accustomed to the famous "mordida" (bribing authority) for everything... The police makes a lot of restrictions in this".

"She can go out even to dance, go out with friends, with their partners, even with their ex-partners, and you have to understand this. And, for us Mexicans it's difficult... Why? Because in our culture, it is not permitted."

"The first thing that we start to talk about is what is appropriate and what is not appropriate of the culture difference. I had a client that told me that '[U.S.] is not my culture.' OK, I'm not saying that it is your culture. What I am saying is that you are living here and you have to change... the consequences are going to be different. The abuse on women is not accepted. You cannot rule (your home) with violence. Because many of them see women as property, which is what is instilled in the man... for many of them, to change this [belief] is very difficult".

The abusive men themselves corroborated the facilitator's comments about acculturation and the differences between the U.S. and Mexico. Several discussed that they did not approve of their partners' changes. Many believed that their partners were becoming too independent and felt that the U.S. culture influences Latinas not to rely on their male partners. Participants described that these types of changes created conflicts with their partners.

"Here they start telling them how they [women] can free themselves from us [men]"

"There [Mexico] one can say... 'do this for me'... not treating her badly, but one can order her [around]... and here [U.S.] she will say if you want something, you go get it... I think that that change here is what provokes these types of problems... I say it's a total change."

"You can't stop them because her friend will say 'if you want to go and enjoy yourself, you can go, he shouldn't be able to detain you'. Then that's where the problems start because she is following the flow from her friend..."

“But when two people get married it is different. [You] change and you form... a home... and the both of you know how it’s [supposed] to work.”

“It’s like they get together with you but they want to [still act] like they are single”

“They want to get the customs of here... of the Americans”

Many of the participants believed that the police or criminal justice system treated them in unfair manner. In many cases, the participants described that the unfair or discriminatory treatment exacerbated problems with their partners.

“And when they told them [the police] that I was Mexican, they set a trap [for me] just because I had an argument with my partner”.

“It is like they [police] are already against us, against Mexicans”.

“Do they want to change our culture? They are not going to change us. We are already from that culture. So we can try to adapt to... the American culture. But they can not change us completely... our roots are like this, we come from other countries. We can change a little bit but not completely...”

Some participants felt that they were treated unfairly by the courts because they felt that the sanctions only involved them and not their partners. In one of the focus groups, the batterers talked about how they perceived that men come out of this situation losing more than their partners because of the loss of work, limited or no access to their home, and court mandated batterer intervention programs.

“I think that things should be mutual. Not only me, because a family problem is a problem of the two [it is] not only one...”

“They send us here to the classes (BIP), but for them, no. Then we can change, but when are they going to change? They’re never going to change...”

“She gets everything and you are the one who has to leave”

“I lost [the job] definitively...It’s too much ten days [in jail]... it’s impossible and then without communicating to them [employers]”

Discussion

The findings indicate that IPV occurs in a culturally significant context for Latinos living in the U.S. Interestingly, the facilitators used examples related to acculturative stress or U.S.-Mexico differences as opportunities to discuss IPV and educate their clients. More specifically, the facilitators spoke about cultural clashes their clients experience as a point of entry to discuss their client’s IPV and/or to challenge assumptions and beliefs that underlie their abusive behavior. On the other hand, the abusive men themselves discussed acculturative stress and unfair treatment of the criminal justice system as explanations for their violence. They described how their partner’s acculturation (e.g., partner’s becoming independent, changing norms around familial obligations) contributed to their perpetration of IPV.

Our research team has been working to understand how the men’s cultural position as Latinos in the United States, their values about family and gender, and their experience of racism and discrimination in employment and legal systems shapes the meaning they give to their abusive behavior in these focus groups. We do not view cultural context, cultural differences, or acculturation stress as excuses for partner violence but rather as explanatory concepts that need to be considered in designing appropriate and effective workplace intervention curricula to prevent IPV. Yet, community psychologists do not know very well how to theorize about cultural diversity in behavior or “subvert” oppression that masquerades as culture (see also Ortiz-Torres, Serrano-Garcia, & Torres-Burgos, 2000). Cross-cultural psychologists could help community psychologists address this important problem concerning the tension between value-based intervention and “hands-off” cultural relativism.

Efforts to address the problem of IPV in diverse communities will need to draw on the kind of situated knowledge generated by this study. We were able to gather this information through a partnership of people in the local community who work on the problem of IPV and

academic researchers. By developing collaborative relationships in which the design and conduct of the research was negotiated and shared between academic researchers and community members, the research knowledge produced is more contextually and culturally valid. Cross-cultural psychologists have unique experience in the development of international and culturally diverse research teams whereas community psychologists have demonstrated expertise in community-based participatory research. Combined together in a cultural community psychology, these sources of knowledge would increase the quality of research each field is able to conduct.

The findings from this research and additional information the team has collected from female employees, female survivors, and employers will inform our development of a culturally appropriate workplace intervention. Primary and secondary preventive interventions are needed because many employers seem not to effectively address intimate partner abuse affecting the workplace. Experimental evaluation of the intervention will continue the cycle of research informing action, in turn informing research that is a hallmark of community psychology. Knowledge about the synergistic practice of research and action can be useful to the field of cross-cultural psychology, which has a wealth of theory and empirical data regarding cultural aspects of psychological phenomenon, but not the same experience using data to inform intervention development and assessment in diverse communities.

Conclusion: Activities to foster the development of a community cultural psychology

Our description of this research and intervention project and the preceding historical and bibliographic analysis of the values and concepts represented in cross cultural and community psychology both indicate the potential benefits of developing an integrated cultural community psychology. Although collaboration can take many forms, and sometimes produces unintended consequences (Trickett & Espino, 2004), the present analysis has highlighted some likely benefits. In this light, we conclude the chapter by briefly describing some concrete actions that could foster thoughtful interdisciplinary collaboration.

1. Establish liaisons from the IACCP and SCRA to serve as reference persons and to coordinate communication and information sharing between our associations.
2. Develop and maintain a listing on IACCP and SCRA web pages of members in our respective associations who are interested in potential research collaborations on specific topics or problems.
3. Publish special issues of the *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology* and/or the *American Journal of Community Psychology* that highlights the key theories, research methods and value perspectives we have to offer each other, as illustrated in exemplary research and action projects.
4. Develop a graduate student exchange program to provide opportunities for students from different programs in cross-cultural and community psychology to obtain further training in the respective field, in a country or region different from their own.
5. Co-sponsor each other's Biennial conference meetings (which meet on alternative years -i.e., IACCP meets during even numbered years and SCRA meets during odd numbered years), by submitting a slate of panels, presentations, workshops and other proposals that highlight the best knowledge and research that our respective fields have to offer each other.

During the past several years, the SCRA has pursued the development of interdisciplinary research, training and practice, for example, by sponsoring a working conference on interdisciplinary issues, publishing a special issue of the *American Journal of Community Psychology* on community-based interdisciplinary research (Maton, Perkins, Altman, Gutierrez, Kelly, Rappaport, & Saegert, 2006) and establishing a standing committee on Interdisciplinary Linkages. This chapter emerges from these efforts within SCRA and argues

for the development of a cultural and community psychology. The two psychologies have much to learn from the similarities (and differences) in how we theorize and assess culture and diversity in psychological phenomenon, in how we conduct research, and in how we express our values in research and action projects with diverse communities and groups. The study of such “applied” and complex problems by psychologists requires interdisciplinary and multi-sector collaborations (Maton et al., 2006). Although such collaboration, like any cross-cultural research endeavor, will require the translation of languages and much patience and goodwill, it was clear to the first author as a U.S.-based community psychologist participating in his first IACCP Congress in Spetses, Greece, that the outcomes of this process can be very fruitful.

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