

Community Engagement Training and Research in Counseling Psychology: A Two-Part Pilot Study

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Abstract

For decades, leaders in the field of Counseling Psychology (CPSY) have called for scholars and practitioners to engage more with our communities as a manifestation of our values. However, questions remain about the extent to which our field has risen to meet these calls. This two-part pilot project is an attempt to answer those unanswered questions by evaluating the current state of CPSY's involvement in community engagement practices and scholarship. Part 1 is a 30-year content analysis of community engagement scholarship in three flagship CPSY journals; in Part 2, early career counseling psychologists and counseling psychologists-in-training were surveyed to ascertain the extent to which they were (or are being) trained in engagement-related practices. Results revealed counseling psychology may not have effectively integrated community engagement practices into our training or our scholarship, pointing to possible areas of growth for the field.

Keywords: community engagement, engaged scholarship, participatory research, training, advocacy

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Community engagement—an intentional bridge between professionals and communities—is a necessary mechanism for promoting social justice and equity. Despite its demonstrated utility in rectifying harms historically and currently perpetuated through research processes and health care systems, many faculty, clinicians, and graduate students in fields as diverse as biology, English, mathematics, and psychology, have been shown to be unprepared for community engagement (e.g., Applegate, 2002) and to avoid conducting engaged scholarship (e.g., Bell & Lewis, 2022).

Counseling psychologists are trained to operate with social justice, multiculturalism, and equity as core, field-specific values. As a result, it would make sense for individuals trained in counseling psychology (CSPY) to lead the way in community engagement practices and scholarship, as it is a natural embodiment of our stated values. Indeed, leaders in the field have called repeatedly for counseling psychologists to train in and conduct community engagement practices especially as the field embraces liberatory aims (e.g., D’Andrea, 2005; Singh, 2020). Despite this, questions remain about the extent to which CPSY has risen to meet these calls.

Defining Community Engagement

Although there are multiple definitions of community engagement, it is generally understood to be a process of “working collaboratively with and through groups of people...to address issues affecting the well-being of those people” (CDC, 1997, p. 9). As such, community engagement can involve any activity, including “teaching, research, or outreach that connects disciplinary expertise, theories, or ideas to public concerns” (O’Meara & Jaeger, 2006, p. 128), in service of transforming policies or practices to improve the health of communities and community members (Lang Center, 2022). Community engagement can, therefore, be thought of as activities that involve *collaborative, mutually beneficial partnerships* between professionals and external communities (Texas Tech University, 2021).

Community engagement, especially between academics and community partners, is not new and has been implemented for decades under various names (UofL Community Engagement, 2022). In fact, the establishment of land-grant institutions through the 1862 Morrill Act was explicitly intended to create higher education institutions that would engage with and be beneficial to the public (Peters et al., 2005). One main mechanism for this public benefit was engaged research, including Participatory Action Research (PAR; Friere, 1972; Lewin & Lewin, 1948), Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR; Israel et al., 2010), and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR; McIntyre, 2000). All of these approaches acknowledge and rely on the expertise of community members as research collaborators with the goal of producing culturally and contextually situated knowledge and solutions (Saltmarsh et al., 2011).

Despite the well-established approaches to engaged scholarship, community engagement has not always been prioritized by academia. Indeed, several scholars in the United States (U.S.) and beyond have cited multiple institutional barriers to community engagement by faculty (e.g., Jump, 2015; Maynard, 2015; Watermeyer, 2015). In recent years, however, engagement has been promoted with increased frequency as various disciplines recognize its importance in furthering social justice and equity (O’Hara et al., 2021) and ensuring knowledge is of “service to the nation and the world” (Boyer, 1996, p. 20), rather than confined to professionals.

Relevance of Engagement for Counseling Psychology

The values undergirding community engagement have notable convergence with the values that have historically shaped the field of CPSY. In particular, social justice has been a “critical and defining feature” (Fouad et al., 2006, p. 2) of CPSY since its inception, which prepares scientist-practitioners to not just heal the ills created by systemic and systematic oppression, but also to advocate for systemic change to prevent those ills from occurring

in the first place (Hage et al., 2007). More recently, social justice was added to the pivotal Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC; Sue et al., 1992), reflecting its centrality in providing culturally relevant services to diverse groups (Ratts et al., 2016). In terms of research, CPSY's commitment to social justice is evident in the *content* of CPSY publications but may be less evident in CPSY's research and pedagogical *practices* as most studies published in CPSY journals still use quantitative empirical methods that may not adequately capture participants' voices (Fish & Syed, 2020).

To truly abide by social justice values, counseling psychologists cannot pick-and-choose aspects of social justice to incorporate into their practice and scholarship while leaving other components untouched. As attested by O'Hara et al. (2021), inequitable practices create further inequities. While traditional practices and research methods have utility, counseling psychologists must avoid relying solely on such methods at the risk of compromising their values. Indeed, truly manifesting a commitment to social justice and multiculturalism necessitates "a reevaluation of multicultural competence that includes advocacy and other forms of community intervention" (Vera & Speight, 2003, p. 253). Without community intervention, counseling psychologists cannot hope to fully embody their commitments to multiculturalism and social justice.

What Stands in the Way?

For decades, CPSY leaders have called for the field to partake in engaged practices and scholarship (e.g., Roysircar, 2006; Singh, 2020) to combat the "intellectual incarceration and monocultural ethnocentrism" (D'Andrea, 2005, p. 524) of traditional, individualistic scholarship practices. Community engagement frameworks align with CPSY's core value system, offering pathways to improved equity, multiculturalism, liberation, and social justice in research, training, and pedagogy (Bell & Lewis, 2022). However, despite the clear rationale for counseling psychologists to conduct community engaged practices, it is unclear to what extent CPSY training and research actually encourage community engagement.

Institutional and systemic barriers could be one explanation for why community engagement may not be widely adopted by counseling psychologists. Despite CPSY as a field promoting social justice, equity, and multiculturalism as core values, these are not the values upheld by academic and healthcare systems as a whole (Keeler et al., 2022). As in other disciplines, the impact of work in CPSY is still largely measured via historically prioritized outputs. In clinical spaces, impact is measured in number of clients seen; in academia, outputs like peer-reviewed publications and presentations, winning awards, and obtaining grants are the gold standard (UofL Community Engagement, 2022). Unfortunately, these impact measures are individualistic, and may fail to align with the outcomes most valued by community partners.

Accordingly, counseling psychologists who wish to establish themselves as engaged scholars and practitioners must navigate a values conflict between the individualistic outcome measures expected by their organizations and institutions and the communitarian values promoted by CPSY. Although universities increasingly acknowledge the value and relevance of engaged scholarship (Beaulieu et al., 2018), and many healthcare settings have explored alternative treatment models to bring services to clients (O'Donnell et al., 2019; Schrage, 2021), these institutions and organizations still often lack policies and infrastructure to support and recognize individuals who conduct engaged practices and research (Bell & Lewis, 2022; UofL Community Engagement, 2022).

On the training side of engagement, similar issues arise. In the face of growing societal attention to issues such as racial justice, climate change, and health inequities, CPSY graduate students are increasingly interested in engaged practices as a means to manifest their scientist-practitioner identities (Keeler et al., 2022). However, these students are often met with inadequate university resources and support to assist them in conducting community-engaged work (Keeler et al., 2022), as the individualistic, highly specialized disciplines in academia lack the interdisciplinary, community-based value infrastructures needed to support these endeavors (Sandmann et al., 2008). Indeed, faculty and students reported being *discouraged* from partaking in community engagement due to the time demands required to build partnerships and sustainability (e.g., Maynard, 2015; O'Meara & Jaeger,

2006). Additionally, there is a lack of research on the degree to which institutional programs and agencies are emphasizing community engagement training.

Current Study

Despite CPSY's alignment with the core values that guide community engagement and repeated calls for counseling psychologists to train in and conduct community engagement practices, questions remain about the extent to which CPSY as a field has effectively responded to these calls. As such, this two-part pilot study aims to bring attention to the norms and practices in CPSY training and research. Part 1 of the project is a 30-year content analysis of community engagement scholarship in the top three CPSY journals; in Part 2, early career counseling psychologists and counseling psychologists-in-training were surveyed to ascertain the extent to which they were (or are being) trained in engagement-related practices.

Author Positionalities

The positionalities of the authors undoubtedly affected our initial motivations for undertaking the current study, the methods we employed, and the lenses through which we viewed the results. The first author (A) identifies as a white, American, cisgender, heterosexual, economically stable woman and mother who is a U.S. citizen and faculty member at a land-grant institution with a strong engagement focus. Her research both prior to and since joining the faculty at her current institution largely utilizes engagement methodologies based on mutually beneficial partnerships with community members. Many of these partnerships extend well beyond research to include consultation and advocacy. However, she was not introduced to such community engagement practices in her doctoral program and recalls needing to learn them on her own or with the assistance of academic and practitioner colleagues and mentors post-degree. The second author (B) identifies as a white, cisgender, heterosexual graduate student and U.S. citizen. Her research interests broadly include psychotherapy and supervision processes, psychology training and education, and systems-level interventions. As a doctoral advisee of (A), she has had exposure to engagement practices throughout her training and believes academia's involvement in community engagement is necessary to attend to society's most urgent issues.

Part 1: Content Analysis of Targeted Counseling Journals

Part 1 of the project explores the extent to which engaged scholarship is written about or published in the field of counseling psychology. To do so, we conducted a summative content analysis of the three flagship counseling psychology journals (i.e., *The Counseling Psychologist*, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*). Summative content analysis is a qualitative content analysis approach that is often used to analyze the types of articles or the content of articles published in journals or textbooks because of its employment of both manifest and latent content analysis methods (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Manifest content analysis quantifies the representation of certain words in a text or collection of texts (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999), while latent content analysis explores the usage of those words (Holsti, 1969). By combining these two approaches, summative content analysis both identifies word usage and interprets the context of that word usage (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Methods

Judges

The judges included one faculty member (the first author) and one undergraduate student who was trained by the first author over a series of weeks in content analytic methods. After consulting with engaged scholarship experts at her university's Office of Engagement, the first author selected 10 keywords organized in five searches to capture engaged scholarship topics. The keywords included: (a) Public scholar* OR public engage*; (b) engage* scholar* OR scholar* of engagement; (c) translation* science OR translation* research; (d) research-practice

partner*; and (e) Participatory Action Research OR Community-based Participatory Action Research OR Youth Participatory Action Research.

The first author also determined the inclusion criteria, which included (1) the article was published between 1990 and December 2022, and (2) the article was about engaged scholarship or utilized engaged scholarship methods. Citations from the initial search were all saved in an EBSCOHost folder. The judges then screened those articles for adherence to the inclusion criteria. After the final articles were selected, the first author created a coding scheme to identify the type and focus of the articles. The judges individually coded each article based on the coding scheme and then met to review results, discussing discrepancies until consensus was reached. Interrater reliability estimates indicated a near perfect level of agreement ($\kappa = .83$, $p < .001$; Viera & Garrett, 2005) in the coding.

Procedure

Using their respective databases, we searched *The Counseling Psychologist (TCP)*, *Journal of Counseling Psychology (JCP)*, and *Counselling Psychology Quarterly (CPQ)* from January 1990 to December 2022. Five searches were performed for each journal based on the keywords.

This initial search resulted in a total of 19 hits: 9 from *TCP*, 9 from *JCP*, and 1 from *CPQ* (see Table 1). The judges did an initial review of the title and abstracts of those hits. Any articles that clearly met inclusion criteria based on this initial review were retained; when it was unclear through this initial review whether the article met inclusion criteria, the full text of the article was reviewed by both judges and discussed. These reviews resulted in the elimination of 11 articles that did not meet inclusion criteria. The full articles were then coded by the judges.

Table 1
Content analysis keyword search results by journal

Search terms	Journal of Counseling Psychology		The Counseling Psychologist		Counselling Psychology Quarterly		Total retained articles
	Initial search	Retained articles	Initial search	Retained articles	Initial search	Retained articles	
Public scholar* OR public engage*	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Engage* scholar* OR scholar* of engagement	2	0	3	0	0	0	0
Translation* science OR translation* research	4	1	2	0	0	0	1
Research*-practi* partner*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Participatory action research OR community-based participatory action research OR youth participatory action research	3	3	3	3	1	1	7
Total retained articles		4		3		1	8

Results

The purpose of this part of the study was to explore the representation of engaged scholarship topics and methods in counseling psychology journals. Once reviewed, only 8 articles (see Table 2) met the inclusion criteria, representing 0.18% of articles published in the three flagship counseling psychology journals from January 1990 to December 2022. Four of these articles were published in *JCP*, representing .21% of the total articles published in the journal, three were published in *TCP*, representing .20% of the journal's publications, and one was published in *CPQ*, representing .09% of the journal's publications. Of note, no articles that met inclusion criteria were published before 2005, and all but one of the articles were about PAR methods.

Table 2
Details of articles meeting inclusion criteria

Journal	Author (year)	Title	Type (Conceptual or Empirical)	Focus (Research, Practice, or Both)
CPQ	Smith et al. (2022)	<i>Counseling psychology and participatory justice: 'Sharing the university'</i>	Conceptual	Both
JCP	Kidd & Kral (2005)	<i>Practicing participatory action research</i>	Conceptual	Research
JCP	Tashiro et al. (2007)	<i>The causal effects of emotion on couples' cognition and behavior</i>	Empirical	Practice
JCP	Fine et al. (2021)	<i>Critical participatory action research: Methods and praxis for intersectional knowledge production</i>	Conceptual	Research
JCP	Levitt et al. (2021)	<i>The methodological integrity of critical qualitative research: Principles to support design and research review</i>	Conceptual	Research
TCP	Creswell et al. (2007)	<i>Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation</i>	Conceptual	Research
TCP	Smith et al. (2010)	<i>Best practices in the reporting of PAR: Embracing both the forest and the trees</i>	Conceptual	Research
TCP	Tucker et al. (2017)	<i>Socially just leadership approach to community-partnered research for reducing health disparities</i>	Conceptual	Research

Note. CPQ = Counselling Psychology Quarterly; JCP = Journal of Counseling Psychology; TCP = The Counseling Psychologist

Seven articles were conceptual, either describing participatory approaches to research and engagement or providing guidelines on how to effectively conduct and present participatory research. Two of these articles (Levitt et al., 2021; Creswell et al., 2007) were about qualitative research methodology more generally and included PAR as one of those methodologies; the remainder of the seven conceptual articles were explicitly focused on a particular type of participatory research. For example, both Kidd and Kral (2005) and Smith et al. (2010) described how to conduct and report on PAR, outlining strategies for both conducting PAR and presenting results of PAR studies. Smith et al. (2022) went on to situate PAR within a broader context of participatory justice, describing social justice projects that utilized the methodology and commenting on the necessity of training graduate students and others so they are prepared to use participatory methods. Fine et al. (2021) and Tucker et al. (2017) focused on participatory research approaches beyond PAR. Fine et al., (2021) focused particularly on Critical PAR (CPAR), describing the origins and main principles of the approach and providing an example of a CPAR project. Tucker et al. (2017) described Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and its fit with the aims of CPSY before providing recommendations for how counseling psychologists can take the lead in establishing community-university partnerships.

Only one empirical article met inclusion criteria (Tashiro et al, 2007). This was also the only article that was retrieved by search terms other than PAR, CBPR, or YPAR. In this article, Tashiro and colleagues utilized a translational research approach to examine how emotions caused maladaptive cognitions and behaviors in couples.

In alignment with the aforementioned study purposes, six of the eight articles were focused exclusively on research, describing participatory methods for the purpose of informing how research is conducted in the field. The empirical article by Tashiro et al., (2007) was focused on practice with the intention of informing couples therapy and the article by Smith et al., (2022) focused both on research and practice, describing the utility of participatory methods for both research and other clinical/collaborative activities. Of note, although all of the included articles identified through the PAR, CBPR, or YPAR search terms were about research, none of them actually used participatory research methods in an empirical study.

Part 2: Survey of Engagement Related Training Experiences

In Part 2 of the study, we surveyed currently enrolled psychologists-in-training and early career counseling psychologists to ascertain the extent to which they were (or are being) trained in engagement-related practices.

Methods

Participants

Participants included 36 individuals between the ages of 23 and 56 ($\bar{x} = 33.4$) who were either currently enrolled in an American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited Counseling Psychology doctoral program ($n = 18$) or had graduated from such a program within the last 10 years ($n = 18$). For the early career professionals (ECPs) in the sample, year of graduation ranged from 2012 to 2021 ($\bar{x} = 2018$); for currently enrolled students' year in program ranged from first to sixth, with the majority of the sample being in their third ($n = 7$) year. Most of the respondents ($n = 30$) attend/attended a Ph.D. program, with the remaining attending a Psy.D. program.

Regarding the demographic composition of the sample, 28 of the participants self-identified as cisgender female and eight cis-gender male. The majority of the sample identified as white ($n = 26$), with the remainder of the sample identifying as bi- or multi-racial ($n = 3$), Asian or Asian American ($n = 3$), Latinx ($n = 3$), Black or African American ($n = 1$), and MENA ($n = 1$). One of the respondents identified as an international student.

Measures

In addition to gathering demographic information, the online survey included 24 closed- and open- ended questions that centered on four topics (see below). The questions were designed for the purpose of this study by

the two authors, as well as members of their research team, all of whom are CPSY doctoral students. To create the items, the team began with the keywords utilized for the content analysis that were developed alongside engagement experts and then refined and added to those items based on our reflections about our actual or desired training in community engagement. Because the purpose of the pilot study was to ascertain respondents' perceived training and preparation, only self-report items were included in the survey.

At the start of the survey, respondents were provided with the following orientation: "For the purpose of the following questions, 'engagement practices' are defined as activities in which you are working directly with community members **in your role as a professional** (i.e., this definition does not include engaging with the community for personal or other non-professional reasons). This can include professionally related community outreach, consultation, advocacy, activism, or research. **Providing clinical services in community settings (i.e., through practicum or internship) is not included.**" This exclusion was made because, based on the nature of training, it is presumed that most students in APA-accredited programs would have such experience through practica and/or internships.

Training experiences

Respondents were asked to rate whether they received any of eight kinds of community engagement training through their doctoral program on a three-point scale including Yes, No, or Not sure. Instructions indicated respondents should only consider training they received through their program rather than through professional development opportunities that occurred outside of their program. The community engagement training included community consultation, community outreach, community advocacy, community activism, PAR, YPAR, CBPR, and translational sciences. For each of the training topics on which the respondent answered yes, they were then asked to indicate how they received the training by selecting one or more of eight response options (Required course, Elective course, Other required program activity, Other elective program activity, Independent project, Project with primary advisor, Project with other faculty member in program, Project with faculty member outside of the program).

Program emphasis on community engagement

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (*not emphasized at all*) to 6 (*highly emphasized*), the extent to which they perceived their doctoral program to emphasize community engagement. They were also asked to explain why they rated their program as they did.

Preparation to conduct community engagement work

Three questions gathered information on how respondents' felt preparation for conducting community engagement work based on training they received in their doctoral program. One question asked respondents to indicate, on a scale from 1 (*not at all well*) to 10 (*extremely well*), how well their doctoral program is preparing/did prepare them to conduct community engagement work. Two additional open-ended questions asked respondents to reflect on the ways their doctoral program does/did effectively prepare them for community engagement practice and what they wish they will/would have learned about community engagement practices during their doctoral program.

Alignment between actual and desired training

Respondents were asked to indicate how their actual doctoral preparation in community engagement practices aligned with their desired doctoral preparation in community engagement practices using a five-point scale (*I received much less/a bit less/the precise amount/a bit more/much more training than I wanted in community engagement practices*).

Procedures

After securing IRB approval, participation was solicited at three time points between August 2021 and April 2022 via listservs (e.g., Div17, Div17ECP, CCPTP) and social media (e.g., ECP Facebook group, CPSY Facebook group). Three solicitations occurred due to low response rates (see limitations section). The solicitation

included a short description of the study, which described the study purpose as attempting to examine the preparation students and early career professionals received in community engagement practices during their doctoral training, as well as a link to an online Qualtrics survey. No compensation was provided for participation. The first page of the survey included an informed consent form; respondents who consented to participate were directed to the online survey.

Results

Training experiences

Results indicated that, with the exception of community outreach and community advocacy, more respondents had not received training in each of the identified community engagement areas than respondents who had (see Table 3). This was especially true regarding training in participatory research methods (i.e., PAR, CBPR, and YPAR) and translational science. Of the respondents who provided data on their training experiences, 68.9% had not received training in any participatory methods; a rate that dropped to 51.7% when translational science training was integrated.

Table 3

Participant perceptions of education in community engagement and methods of training

Type of community engagement	Training received			If yes, method of training								
	No	Not Sure	Yes	Required course	Elective course	Project with advisor	Independent project	Project with other program faculty	Project with faculty outside program	Other required program activity	Other elective program activity	
Community Consultation	14	2	12	10	1	3	0	0	1	1	0	
Community Outreach	11	4	13	6	0	2	2	0	2	3	1	
Community Advocacy	11	2	12	7	1	0	2	0	1	3	2	
Community Activism	14	2	11	6	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	
PAR	18	1	9	5	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	
YPAR	26	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	
CBPR	19	4	5	1	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	
Translational Science	18	3	6	3	0	3	2	1	1	1	0	

Across the various methodologies, 28.6% reported receiving training in PAR, 21.4% in translational science, 17.9% in CBPR, and only 3.6% in YPAR. The mechanisms through which respondents received this training varied considerably (see Table 3). For example, across all methodologies the most common way students received training was through required coursework ($n = 9$), followed by either elective coursework ($n = 6$) or projects with their primary advisors ($n = 6$). People also commonly received training through independent projects ($n = 5$). Interestingly, although the majority of respondents indicated only one mechanism for training, 35.6% of the respondents indicated they had received training in more than one way (e.g., elective course and project with primary advisor).

The proportion of respondents who had received training in community-based activities (e.g., community consultation, outreach, advocacy, and activism) was greater, on average, than the proportion of respondents who had received training in engaged research methodologies. However, training rates remained relatively low in these categories as well, with none exceeding 50% of respondents (Outreach: 46.4%; Advocacy: 42.9%; Consultation: 42.9%; Activism: 39.3%). In keeping with these higher rates of received training, over half (57.1%) of respondents indicated they had received training in two or more of the community-based activities.

Similar to training in engaged research methodologies, the most common mechanism for learning about the community-based activities was required courses ($n = 29$) (see Table 3); this was especially the case for community consultation. However, unlike the training in engaged methodologies that was also received through a variety of other mechanisms, community-based activities were proportionately much less likely to be learned through methods beyond required courses (e.g., Independent projects, $n = 5$; Elective courses, $n = 3$).

Program emphasis on community engagement

The average respondent ratings of their program's emphasis on community engagement were 2.96 on a scale from one to six (range = 1-5) with a somewhat bimodal distribution (see Figure 1). Explanations for rankings were clear at the extremes of the scale. Respondents who rated their program a "1" noted their programs "had very little [training]—we didn't even have consultation coursework" or "did not provide any training on community engagement." At the other end of the spectrum, respondents who rated their program a "5" noted community engagement was "commonly brought up and discussed" and that "the program I am in always is purposeful about...talking about decolonization and getting involved in communities." In the middle of the scale range, however, explanations for rankings became less distinguished. One respondent who rated their program as a "2" stated "Community engagement is discussed but there are very few course activities or assignments that allow for community engagement experiences." Another respondent who rated their program a "4" noted "Community engagement is mentioned in nearly every class, but there is not a lot of information on practical application of community work."

Lack of practical guidance on how to do community engaged work was a theme that arose in explanations of multiple respondents who rated their programs in the two to four range. For example, respondents who rated their programs as "2," "3," and "4," respectively, stated "While they encourage community engagement, there are no formal ways that they teach us how to or give us real opportunities to do so;" "I felt that we often discussed outreach and advocacy...but we weren't necessarily trained in specific skills or practices related to community engagement;" and "My program stresses community engagement in our mission often and has many clinical/outreach opportunities to be involved in the community. However, the structured training is more theoretical." It seems, therefore, that respondents' ratings of their programs were largely focused on the emphasis of the program rather than on the training received.

Preparation to conduct community engagement work

In alignment with participant ratings of their program's emphases on community engagement, respondent ratings of how well their doctoral programs prepared them to conduct community engagement work were also in the mid-range, with an average rating of 4.57 on a scale from one to ten (range = 1-8). In describing the ways

their programs effectively prepared them for community engagement practices, many respondents noted the “strong focus on multicultural/diversity training” that “emphasized ethical guidelines/principals in giving back to the community.” In addition, several respondents noted that although they “have...knowledge about the local community” and “strong support from faculty” to do community engagement, they felt they needed to “do things by myself” because they “never had opportunities for [community engagement] in graduate school.” Accordingly, also in response to this prompt several respondents again noted a lack of “application work” or attention to community engagement practices.

Perhaps because of the sentiment felt by many of the respondents about their lack of preparation, several participants noted they wish they would learn or would have learned “literally anything” about community engagement practices from their doctoral programs. As one respondent noted, “I feel like there is so much I didn’t learn. I’m in a faculty position now and I feel like I’m learning more from my students and community organizations in the area than I ever did from my program.” Similarly, another respondent noted “I wish I would have learned what skills or concepts I would need to know, or what aspects of engagement I should be thinking about and considering.”

Alignment between actual and desired training

Finally, respondents were also asked to indicate how their actual doctoral preparation in community engagement practices aligned with their desired doctoral preparation in community engagement practices. Unsurprisingly based on the above-mentioned results, nearly all of the respondents indicated they received either a bit less or much less training than they hoped to receive on community engagement practices (see Figure 2).

Discussion

Results revealed that, since 1990, only eight articles were published on or used community-engagement methods in the three journals examined, representing .18% of the journals’ total published articles. For comparison, the authors ran the same keyword searches in the *Journal of Counseling and Development (JCD)*—the flagship journal of the American Counseling Association—and found that this journal alone published eight articles on community engagement since 1990. These results suggest there was an underrepresentation of scholarship or using community engaged practices in the counseling psychology journals investigated in the current study.

Results of the content analysis revealed no articles were published related to public scholarship or engagement, research-practice partnerships, or engaged scholarship, and only one was published on a topic connected to translational science. The remaining seven articles that met inclusion criteria were all identified using search terms linked with participatory research methods. However, all of these articles were conceptual in nature, with no published articles in any of the three flagship journals since 1990 actually using participatory research methods in an empirical study. These findings appear to be consistent with results of the survey, which demonstrated limited training in engaged practices, including participatory research methods.

Of the surveyed individuals who shared information on their training experiences, more than 68% reported receiving no training in any participatory research methods, a proportion that was reduced when translational science practices were included in engaged methodological training. Of those who were trained, the majority reported receiving training on PAR. The primary mode of training on these methodologies was through required or elective coursework, though only 17% of the sample indicated they were required to take a course that covered any engaged scholarship method.

A somewhat larger proportion of the sample reported receiving training in community-based activities (e.g., community consultation, outreach, advocacy, and activism). Nonetheless, less than half of the respondents reported receiving training in each these domains, suggesting a minority of counseling psychologists have been prepared to undertake such activities upon graduation. Similar to training in engaged methodologies, the majority

of survey respondents who reported receiving training in community-engaged practices indicated that training was provided through required courses.

These results, which raise questions about training in community engagement practices in CPSY, were amplified by participants' reflections on their training. Though our results revealed a diversity of experiences across participants, our findings nonetheless suggested that although community engagement was discussed in programs, those discussions rarely included instruction on how to conduct effective community engagement practices or scholarship. As a result, participants largely reported feeling underprepared for community engagement and desired more training in all community engagement areas.

Limitations

The results of this two-part pilot study should be considered in light of several limitations. Regarding the content analysis, we only examined articles that were published in three journals in the CPSY field. This choice was made intentionally given the aim of the content analysis was to explore the representation of engaged scholarship in the top three CPSY-specific journals. However, because counseling psychologists also regularly publish in other journals, expanding the investigation to include additional journals could more accurately capture the full range of community engaged scholarship produced by counseling psychologists. In addition, if a larger number of individuals were involved in the development of the keyword and coding search terms, the results may have been different. In particular, utilizing different search terms (e.g., including "stakeholder" or "community partner*") may have led to the identification of a larger pool of relevant articles. Similarly, different coding categories may have resulted in different aspects of the articles' structure or focus being emphasized in the data analysis process.

Regarding Part 2 of the study, because of the aim and structure of the survey items, the sample size could be considered sufficient. This is largely because no guidelines have been established for the ideal sample size for surveys containing open-ended questions (e.g., Hennick & Kaiser, 2022) and no analyses were planned beyond descriptive statistics. Nonetheless, the results are certainly limited by the number of survey respondents. Unfortunately, despite three rounds of participant solicitation involving more than ten different listservs and platforms over an eight-month range, interest in participating in the study remained low. This could be due to larger trends in decreasing email survey response rates, which have been declining since the 1980s (Sheehan, 2001) or because of the topic of the study. As the purpose of the study was described in all participant solicitations, it could have been that individuals who had not received any exposure to community engaged practices during their doctoral training chose not to respond. If that were the case, results of the current pilot study, as low as they were, may actually overestimate training in community engaged practices in CPSY training programs.

Implications

Despite the aforementioned limitations, and the fact the current study should undoubtedly be replicated with a larger sample size, results point to possible specific and necessary implications for training, research, and advocacy.

Implications for training

Overwhelmingly, results of the current study suggested CPSY programs emphasize the importance of community engagement and its alignment with CPSY aims and values. Simultaneously, however, the programs did not seem to prepare students to actually do community engagement work and scholarship. These findings are consistent with the results of the content analysis, which revealed published scholarship was primarily focused on discussing (i.e., conceptual) rather than doing (i.e., empirical) engaged scholarship. To overcome this issue, CPSY programs may want to prioritize training that builds upon the values of community engagement to outline tangible steps in engagement practices and scholarship and to give students hands-on community engagement learning opportunities.

Some CPSY programs already have such training in place. For example, a few participants noted they were required to conduct a social justice practicum or project that necessitated community engagement (Hage et al.,

2020); others noted they were able to gain experience in participatory research methods through research projects with advisors or other faculty. However, such learning opportunities did not seem to be the norm and, particularly with regard to engaged scholarship methods, were not commonly addressed in required courses or program activities. Programs may, therefore, consider integrating required coursework or activities into their curricula so all students can experience community-engagement work regardless of their own preliminary interest about or their advisor's involvement in community engagement.

Required community-engagement training activities can take multiple forms. Required research methods courses could introduce students to the principles and steps of engaged scholarship methodologies (e.g., PAR, CBPR, YPAR); if accompanied by experiential, community-based, or service-learning, such courses would also enable students to receive hands-on experience in conducting or at least initiating a participatory project (Abraham & Torner, 2021). Requiring additional program activities that necessitate counseling psychologists-in-training to learn the core competencies of community engagement (i.e., how to partner with community organizations, listen effectively to community needs, and work collaboratively alongside community members towards mutually-beneficial aims) and gain experience conducting outreach, advocacy, or activism could increase the likelihood that these individuals acquire the requisite competencies and experience to perform community engagement work after graduation (Neville et al., 2021). Several CPSY programs already have such requirements. For other programs, one way to build opportunities for students to gain this experience is by establishing both long- and short-term partnerships with community partners who can help to educate the students. Programs can also integrate community-based teaching pedagogy (Blanchard & Furco, 2021) into new or existing courses.

Implications for research

As results of the study suggested, counseling psychologists and counseling psychologists-in-training do not seem to be consistently trained in engaged scholarship. It is, therefore, not surprising that the content analysis revealed research utilizing engaged methodologies is not being published in our flagship journals. However, this trend should not continue and changing it will require not only the aforementioned training for future counseling psychologists but also training and encouragement for current CPSY scholars.

For academics, such encouragement could come from institutions in the form of earmarked internal funding for engaged scholarship as well as “structures, incentives, training and support” (Brazzell, 2019, para. 11) to make community engagement and engaged scholarship core requirements of being an academic (Cavallero, 2016; Hebel, 2016; Saltmarsh & Wooding, 2016). In addition, institutions could integrate support for the creation of cross-disciplinary collaborations and partnerships (UofL Community Engagement, 2022) that can facilitate the creation of sustainable collaborations, so partnerships are not disrupted when faculty go on leave or students graduate.

In addition, APA as a whole and APA's Division 17 (Society for Counseling Psychology) in particular could do more to support engaged research. Publishing books and guides for how to participate in public engagement and integrate engaged research into graduate training (e.g., Nelson, 2004; Tropp, 2018) are critical. However, tangible support in the form of free and accessible online training on engaged scholarship for researchers, grants specific to research using participatory methods, and assistance finding engaged research mentors in the field could all help to support practitioners and researchers who would like to conduct engaged research. The flagship journals in our field could, as well, encourage counseling psychologists to conduct and publish engaged scholarship by creating special issues on community-partnered research or specifying the scholarship of engagement as a particular manuscript type that can be submitted. Future research could survey senior counseling psychologists to explore their engagement with communities to examine the effectiveness of institutional and field-specific support structures for such work and their freedom to conduct this work.

Implications for advocacy

Increasing CPSY training in community engagement practices and scholarship will likely necessitate one specific type of engaged practice—advocacy. For students to be trained and gain experience in community

engagement, trainers (i.e., faculty) need to be supported and incentivized to conduct such work themselves. However, for that to happen, barriers to engagement in academic systems may need to be addressed through focused advocacy efforts.

As multiple authors have noted (e.g., Keeler et al., 2022; Morin et al., 2016; Murray, 2002; Nelson, 2005), typical reward structures for tenure and promotion in colleges and universities create significant challenges for faculty to engage with communities. For example, especially at research-intensive universities where the majority of CPSY programs are situated, considerable weight is given to securing external funding and publishing as a sole author in empirically focused peer-reviewed journals. However, historically, external funding has not emphasized “translation and engagement with contemporary policy, practices, and problems” (Morin et al., 2016, p. 152); nor is engaged scholarship an individual endeavor best disseminated through publications by a single author in venues that are typically inaccessible to community members (Berlatsky, 2014). Faculty who are invested in community engagement may, therefore, need to advocate for themselves and recruit others to advocate on their behalf so tenure and promotion procedures better consider engagement outcomes (e.g., policy changes, media coverage, societal impact) alongside traditional scholarly outputs (Keeler et al., 2022).

To prepare for advocacy efforts, faculty and administrators could familiarize themselves with existing university models that allow for tenure or promotion on the basis of, or with attention to, engagement (e.g., Abel & Williams, 2019; Jordan, 2007). Resources are also available online through, for example, Campus Compact, which hosts a repository on how “community engagement and community engaged scholarship (CES) can be recognized and incentivized through faculty reward mechanisms, including tenure and promotion policies and practices” (Campus Compact, 2023). In addition, in advance of advocacy efforts, faculty and administrators may want to learn more about altmetrics (Julien & Bonnici, 2014; Konkiel et al., 2016), alternative metrics of scholarly impact, which have been increasingly considered for their utility in advancement decisions in academia.

Conclusion

That community engaged practices and research are worthwhile endeavors is, at this point, well-recognized both within and outside of CPSY. Despite this, and even with the alignment between engagement and CPSY values, results of the current pilot study suggested CPSY may not be emphasizing community engagement in our training or scholarship to the extent possible. To live out our social justice and liberatory values and aims, we need to do better. Taking the steps to ensure counseling psychologists are well-prepared in engagement methods and are supported in conducting engagement work is a necessary step in our field’s advancement.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests:

There are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Figure 1.
Participant perceptions of doctoral program emphasis on community engagement

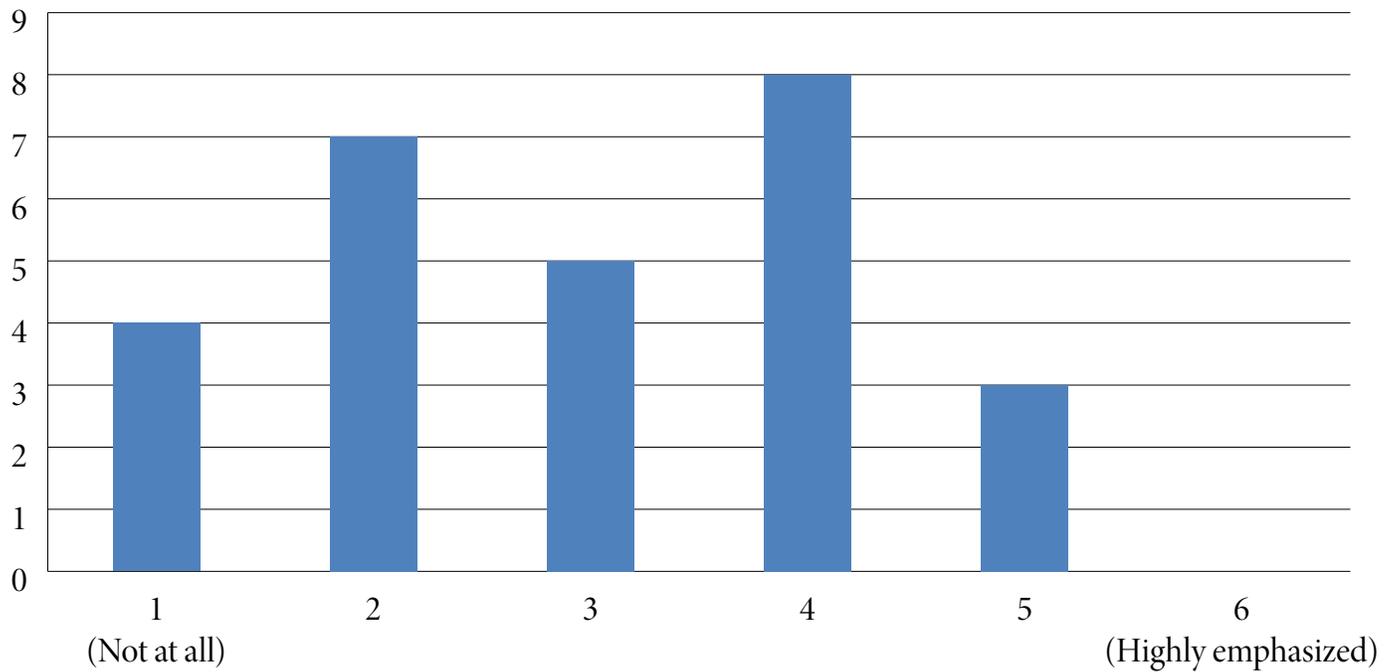
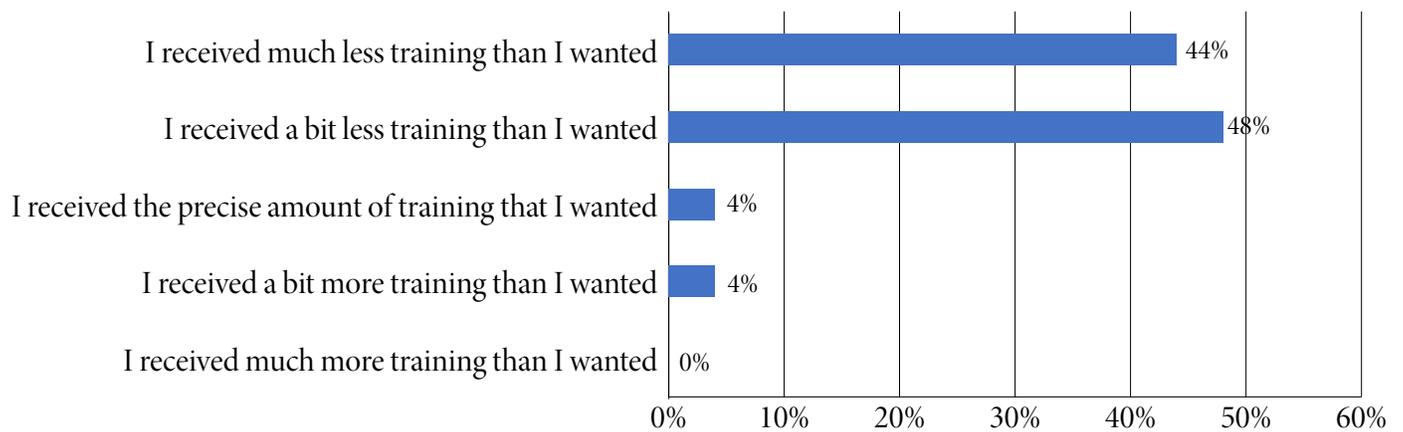


Figure 2.
Percent of respondents endorsing each option of alignment between actual and desired training in community engagement practices



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