Exploring Participatory Action Research as a Vehicle for Social Justice Training

Susan E. Mao
Abstract

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The field of counseling psychology has demonstrated a longstanding history to multiculturalism and social justice, which is reflected in the field’s professional standards of competence. Goodman et al. (2004) derived a set of social justice principles from feminist and multicultural counseling theories, which have served to guide counseling psychologists in social justice work. These six tenets include: *ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness raising, building on strengths, and leaving clients with the tools* to work toward social change. Graduate training has been identified as one essential component in the development of training social-justice oriented and competent counseling psychologists. Training programs have made attempts to address the training needs of the field of counseling psychology and its commitment to the development of social justice competencies in a variety of ways; however, there is lack of understanding regarding the efficacy of these approaches as well as an identified need for increased experiential training. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an approach to research that has demonstrated potential as a tool for social justice training with its emphasis on collective participation, collaboration, empowerment, and positive social change. As such, the purpose of this study was to explore counseling psychology trainees’ experiences with PAR and the impact of these experiences on the development of social justice competencies. Data was collected through 12 semi-structured interviews with current and recently graduated doctoral- and masters-level trainees in the field of counseling psychology. Participant narratives were transcribed and then analyzed using Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR). Results illustrated participants’ understanding of social justice and PAR, descriptions of
PAR projects, personal reasons for engaging in PAR as well as expectations and challenging experiences related to PAR. Participants also discussed the impact of PAR on clinical training and professional practice, specifically related to the development of social justice competencies and the development of their own self-awareness and multicultural identity development. Personal meaning and value of PAR experiences for participants as well community members engaged in PAR are also presented. Implications of the findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed.
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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Laura Smith, to whom I am eternally grateful for a decade of guidance and wisdom. Laura, your unwavering encouragement and support gave me the confidence to persevere throughout this journey. I have grown personally and professionally as a result of your mentorship and I am inspired by your brilliance, compassion and humility.

And to my dissertation committee members: Dr. George Gushue, Dr. Greg Payton, Dr. Diana Punales-Morejon, Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, and Dr. Laura Smith, I am so thankful for the support and expertise you provided throughout this dissertation process as well as your caring and thoughtful approach to this project. Your participation and contributions made one of the most daunting components of my graduate school career, my dissertation defense, an enjoyable and inspirational experience that I will never forget.

This research would not have been possible without the commitment, dedication, and countless hours of hard work by my analysis team, Jennifer Chang and Karima Clayton. Thank you for your incredible efforts and for caring so much about the integrity of this project. I am greatly indebted to you both. To my TC cohort, Jennifer Chang, Min Cheng, Rosa Cho, Karima Clayton, Elizabeth Hernandez, and Avy Skolnik, I express my love appreciation for the many years of support, learning, challenges, celebrations, laughs, and tears. I am honored to have been a member of this group and thank you for your friendship.

To my family, thank you for your endless unconditional love and encouragement. To my parents, Nancy and Teddy Mao, and sister, Elizabeth Andrews, this project represents the fulfillment of a dream of mine, one that would not have been possible without your support. To my partner, Matt, I cannot imagine navigating the dissertation process, especially with two toddlers, without you. Thank you. Mom, I especially share the joy and relief of the completion of this long journey with you. You were truly my companion at every stage and provided feedback as my lifelong editor as well as encouragement, emotional support, and home cooked meals when I needed it the most. I will never be able to fully express my gratitude. Finally, to the 12 people who participated in this study, it was an honor and privilege to hear your stories. Thank you for your openness and enthusiasm for this project and your inspiring dedication to social justice work.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my children, Mackenzie and Grayson. You will forever be my greatest achievement. I hope I make you proud.
Chapter I: Introduction

We do not want to assume that the role of psychology is to help individuals and families adapt to the status quo when this present order contributes so massively to human misery, psychological and otherwise. Our psychology should not exist in a vacuum of disconnected theory where classrooms, research, and clinical encounters are considered apart from conflicts and suffering in society, where personal history is severed from the historical context and social institutions one has inherited. (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, pp. 13-14)

For decades, scholars in the field of counseling psychology have appealed to the profession to reevaluate longstanding paradigms of counseling and psychotherapy practices. Katz (1985) highlighted the ways in which psychological theory, research, and practice were built upon a foundation of White cultural norms and values, and suggested that historically the profession retained these values at its core. In so doing, mental health professionals risked becoming perpetuators of cultural oppression (Sue & Sue, 2008). Consequently, scholars have identified the need for helping professionals to take an active stance in developing culturally appropriate and socially just research, practice, and training approaches, and to become more responsive to the needs of multicultural populations. Contesting the notion that mental health practice can be entirely without political implications, Katz (1985) referred to counseling as a “sociopolitical act” (p. 615). From this perspective, failing to challenge the status quo of oppressive norms within the field contributes to the maintenance of paradigms that have been found to be ineffective and even harmful when working with culturally diverse and historically marginalized populations.
Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) voiced the need for appropriate treatment approaches for working with a culturally diverse population and addressed the inadequacy of traditional approaches through a “call to the profession” (p. 477). This prompted the development of a multicultural framework for counseling, which included cultural awareness and critical examination of sociopolitical forces, as well as a set of guidelines for multicultural counseling competence (Sue et al., 1992). The dimensions of these guidelines included the knowledge, awareness, and skills necessary to engage in culturally sensitive and appropriate interventions (Sue et al., 1992).

Scholars have also highlighted the need to include a commitment to social justice work along with multiculturalism and have posited that, in fact, multiculturalism and social justice are inseparable (Goodman et al., 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003). According to Vera and Speight (2003), “a social justice perspective emphasizes societal concerns, including issues of equity, self-determination, interdependence and social responsibility” (p. 254). Counseling psychologists have identified multicultural competence and social justice-oriented practice as imperative to ethical and just approaches to research, training and practice (Burnes & Singh, 2010; Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006; Goodman et al., 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003). Sue and Sue (2008) highlighted the importance of this commitment by referring to it as “superordinate” (p. 29) to other aspects of treatment. In order to guide counseling psychologists in social justice work, Goodman et al. (2004) derived a set of social justice principles from feminist and multicultural counseling theories that include: ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness raising, building on strengths, and leaving clients with the tools to work toward social change. Ongoing self-examination refers to the importance of clinicians developing awareness of how sociocultural forces shape their identities and values and influence
their understanding of other people (Constantine, 2007). The notion of sharing power aims to reduce the inherent hierarchy in the counseling relationship (Constantine, 2007) and prioritizes collaboration and empowerment of marginalized communities and individuals (Goodman et al., 2004). Giving voice is a principle that highlights the importance for helping professionals to listen to and advocate for individuals and groups who have historically been oppressed and silenced. Facilitating consciousness refers to helping individuals recognize and understand the historical, social, and political roots of their experiences and to develop increased awareness of privilege and oppression affecting their lives. In order to facilitate this type of understanding it is essential that helping professionals develop their own awareness of their sociopolitical context, or critical consciousness. Emphasizing strengths has long been a part of the counseling tradition and refers to acknowledging and focusing on a person’s strengths rather than on personal deficits or pathology. Lastly, leaving people with the tools for change is a focus on fostering the ongoing development of resources and supports in one’s cultural context to aid in growth and empowerment beyond clinical intervention (Goodman et al., 2004). These principles have been cited by numerous scholars as foundational to social justice practice (e.g. Burnes & Manese, 2008; Motulsky, Gere, Saleem & Tranthem, 2014; Singh et al., 2010; Smith & Romero, 2010).

It is important to note that the concept of giving voice is not without controversy and has been critiqued as retaining a power-over position of those who have historical been oppressed. Throughout this document the term giving voice will be used in order to reflect Goodman et al.’s (2004) original terminology; however, the intention here is to not undermine the power and/or voices held by marginalized groups. Rather, the aim is to recognize that these groups have a long history of being ignored or not being heard and that it is important to have these voices come forward.
Professional standards have echoed this commitment to multiculturalism and social justice within the field of psychology. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2002) first introduced a set of guidelines to multicultural counseling competence within the realms of education, training, research, and practice in 2002 and recently revised these guidelines to reflect the growth in multicultural research and theory (APA, 2017). The most recent iteration of these guidelines emphasizes the importance of broadening psychologists’ understanding of identity:

[The Multicultural Guidelines present] an opportunity to participate directly, as professional psychologists, in engaging a fuller understanding of diversity and its considerations within practice, research, consultation, and education (including supervision) to directly address how development unfolds across time and intersectional experiences and identities; and to recognize the highly diverse nature of individuals and communities in their defining characteristics, despite also sharing many similarities by virtue of being human. (APA, 2017, p. 6)

APA also formulated competency benchmarks for professional psychology (APA, 2012; Fouad et al., 2009). These benchmarks included multicultural training expectations and social justice competencies. The American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics has also included guidelines for culturally sensitive practice (ACA, 2005) and, more recently, the promotion of social justice (ACA, 2014).

Graduate training is one area that has been identified as significantly influencing the thinking and behavior of future clinicians, researchers, and academics in the field of counseling psychology (Arredondo & Rosen, 2007). Training programs have addressed the field of counseling psychology’s growing commitment to social justice and the corresponding professional standards in a variety of ways. These have included the introduction of single
courses dedicated to multiculturalism and/or social justice issues (Constantine, Ladany, Inman, & Ponterotto, 1996; Quintana & Bernal, 1995; Sammons & Speight, 2008), the implementation of more experiential and integrated approaches to social justice (Burnes & Singh, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Sevig & Etzkorn, 2001; Steele, 2008), and even the development of entire training programs dedicated to the mission of social justice (Boston College, 2015; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007; Teachers College, 2015; University of Oregon, 2015). Studies have demonstrated that multicultural counseling courses increase students’ multicultural competence in terms of their knowledge, awareness, and skills related to working with culturally diverse clients; however, these courses have not been shown to significantly improve students’ social justice competencies. Scholars have suggested the need for increased focus on experiential aspects of training and more integrated frameworks for training (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Burnes & Singh, 2010; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Lewis, 2010; Toporek, 2001). Examples of such approaches based on social justice theories have been outlined (Burnes & Singh, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Sevig & Etzkorn, 2001; Steele, 2008). Graduate programs that have fully integrated social justice training into their curricula have also been highlighted, which include, the University of Oregon; Teachers College, Columbia University; and Boston College. Although these efforts are promising, these programs remain the exception. They also have entirely different training curricula from one another and have not yet been studied in order to assess what training elements are effective. In general, scholars have noted, “there is very little literature on pedagogical approaches to incorporating social justice awareness or competencies” (Motulsky et al., 2014, p. 1060). Additionally, most of the existing literature within counseling psychology has been focused on social justice philosophies, competencies, and theoretical frameworks, rather than on the application of effective social justice training methods
(Motulsky et al., 2014). Therefore, there is an apparent need to explore the efficacy of specific applied methods of social justice training.

Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach to research that has demonstrated potential as a tool for social justice training. With its roots in Kurt Lewin’s (1951) action research, Paulo Freire’s (2005) critical pedagogy, and feminist principles (Brown, 2010; Maguire, 1987), it is a collaborative paradigm for research with marginalized communities in which researchers conduct studies with rather than on community members (Herr & Anderson, 2005). All participants in PAR projects are co-researchers whose collective participation is central to every aspect of the PAR process. Community members and outside researchers work together to determine research questions and methods, and results of the research are co-owned by community members (Brydon-Miller, 2001).

PAR addresses all of Goodman et al.’s (2004) social justice principles. It has been found to not only represent a socially just method of research but also to have significant impact on both community and university co-researchers involved in the PAR process. First, it has the ability to promote the emotional well-being of members of marginalized communities (Smith & Romero, 2010). Smith and Romero (2010) pointed out, “PAR is a knowledge-generating project, but it can also be a psychological health-enhancing project” (p. 23). PAR has also been found to increase the social justice competence of university researchers (Fine & Torre, 2006; Smith & Romero, 2010). Evidence in support of this has been demonstrated through the thoughtful reflections of university co-researchers. They have included descriptions of developing increased awareness of power, privilege, and oppression in their own lives as well as in the lives of their community co-researchers (Chataway, 2001; Fine & Torre, 2006; Smith & Romero, 2010). Such narratives help illustrate PAR’s potential as a vehicle for social justice training.
The aim of this study was to explore counseling psychology trainees’ experiences with PAR and their impact on the development of social justice competence in counseling. It explored PAR within trainees’ overall training experiences and addressed whether PAR has had an impact on the development of trainees’ skills and professional development. More specifically, it explored whether PAR affected trainees’ usage of social justice competencies, as outlined by Goodman et al., (2004): ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness, emphasizing strengths, and leaving people with the tools for change.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The following chapter reviews the literature on social justice training in the field of counseling psychology and positions participatory action research (PAR) as a potential vehicle for social justice training. First, a brief outline of the development of counseling psychology’s commitment to multiculturalism and social justice is outlined and provides context for the importance of training techniques that promote the development of competencies in these areas. Next, attempts at addressing social justice issues in the field of counseling psychology training, including didactic courses as well as integrated training approaches and graduate program curricula, are described. Subsequently, the central features of PAR as well as its early influences and philosophical roots are described and examples of PAR projects are highlighted. Finally, PAR is introduced as an approach to social justice practice and training.

Multiculturalism and Social Justice in Psychology

As a specialty, counseling psychology is premised upon a holistic, strengths-based philosophy about human nature (Brown & Lent, 2000). The field emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant interventions for diverse populations and therefore has long demonstrated a commitment to multiculturalism and social justice (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Accordingly, counselors and counseling psychologists have been concerned with the relationships between mental health and the social and cultural context in which we live for decades. As the population of the United States becomes exponentially more diverse every year, and our society continues to become increasingly multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual (Carter, 1995; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), the American Psychological Association (APA) has acknowledged that multicultural competence in areas of practice,
research, consultation, education and training is more important than ever (APA, 2017; Fouad, Arredondo, D’Andrea, & Ivey, 2002).

The need for a multicultural approach. The initial development of feminist and multicultural counseling psychology arose from dissatisfaction with the inefficacy of applying traditional theories of psychology to the lived experiences of women and people of color (Goodman, et al., 2004). Like other contemporary American professions, counseling psychology was developed within the context of a White European middle-class values system—values which can correspondingly be detected within many of the assumptions, practices, and paradigms of the field (Helms & Cook, 1999; Sue et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 2008; Wren, 1962). Sue et al. (1998) referred to the basis of such paradigms as ethnocentric monoculturalism, which was defined as consisting of five components: a belief in the superiority of one’s cultural heritage; a belief in the inferiority of other groups’ cultural heritages; the power of the dominant group to impose standards and beliefs on the less powerful groups; the manifestation of the dominant group’s values and beliefs in the programs, policies, practices, structures, and institutions of the society; and the phenomena of people’s worldviews operating without conscious awareness (Sue et al., 1998). The universal application of psychological treatment approaches designed for White European Americans has been found to be inappropriate and even harmful when working with culturally diverse clients (Abreu, Chung, & Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Carter, 1995).

As a result, Sue et al. (1992) made “a call to the profession” (p. 477), which highlighted the shifting demographic composition of the population in the U.S. and emphasized the need for mental health providers to be able to competently treat a growing culturally diverse population. Sue et al. (1992) addressed the monocultural nature of counselor training and the ineffectiveness
of traditional counseling approaches in working with culturally diverse populations, the lack of multicultural understanding in conceptualization and research, and ethical issues related to the treatment of clients from diverse cultural backgrounds (Sue et al., 1992). Such acknowledgments drew increased attention to the inadequacy of existing theoretical models for guiding appropriate mental health interventions for culturally diverse populations. It also set the stage for the development of a multicultural framework in the field of counseling psychology (Helms & Cook, 1999). Sue and Torino (2005) defined multicultural counseling as:

> [...] both a helping role and process that uses modalities and defines goals consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of clients, recognizes client identities to include individual, group, and universal dimensions, advocates the use of universal and culture-specific strategies and roles in the healing process, and balances the importance of individualism and collectivism in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of client and client systems. (p. 6)

This framework required counselors to become culturally aware and to critically examine their own conditioning within the sociopolitical context of society in order to avoid unknowingly engaging in culturally oppressive and unethical practices when working with a culturally diverse population.

**Multicultural counseling competencies.** As part of this multicultural framework, Sue et al. (1992) proposed a set of guidelines for the multiculturally competent helping professional (Sue & Sue, 2008): (a) awareness, (b) knowledge, and (c) skills. The *awareness* dimension of multicultural competence refers to helping professionals’ awareness of their own assumptions, values, and biases regarding race, ethnicity, and other cultural factors that may hinder effective counseling as well as awareness of the sociopolitical relevance of cultural group membership in
terms of privilege, discrimination, and oppression. The knowledge component of multicultural competence involves understanding the worldview of culturally diverse clients and sociopolitical influences on the subjective and collective experiences of marginalized populations. Skills, in terms of multicultural competence, calls for the development of appropriate intervention strategies and techniques to work with marginalized groups (Constantine et al., 2007). It is imperative for the counseling profession to have standards reflecting the culturally diverse reality of our society and for counselors to be trained to competently work with culturally diverse and historically marginalized groups. These competencies can be used as guidelines for doing so.

**Oppression, social justice, and the role of counseling psychologists.** Privilege, marginalization, and other harmful cultural forces have been identified as having a critical impact on psychological development (Jordan, 2010); however, mental health practitioners have historically focused primarily on increasing individuals’ ability to adapt to and cope with their environments rather than on changing the social context (Vera & Speight, 2007). Additionally, they often lack training and knowledge related to socially just approaches at institutional and systemic levels (Motulsky et al., 2014). Therefore, conventional approaches to psychotherapy and clinical training have erroneously “paid attention only to the individual—not to the damaging social environment” (Albee, 1998, p. 193) and at best largely ignored major sources of emotional disturbance. Scholars in the field of counseling psychology have begun to address these issues by integrating multicultural and social justice perspectives within their work.

*“Oppression as pathogen.”* Oppression has been described as “a state of domination where the oppressed suffer the consequences of deprivation, exclusion, discrimination, exploitation, control of culture, and sometimes even violence” (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002, p.12). Smith, Chambers, and Bratini (2009) conceptualized oppression as a cause of emotional
and physical trauma, a notion they referred to as “oppression as pathogen” (p. 160). Pathological social environments and stresses associated with societal conditions such as poverty, sexism, heterosexism, and racism have been found to contribute significantly to the development of mental disorders (Albee, 1996), as do normalized power structures, gender relations, and ongoing cultural trauma (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). As such, members of marginalized groups are at increased risk for psychological stressors (Israel, 2006), which have negative psychological effects, whether they are registered consciously or unconsciously (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). For example, adolescents who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual have demonstrated increased risk for relationship stress (Green, 2007), substance abuse and suicidality (Hershberger & D’Augelli, 2000); women have been shown to experience higher rates of depression (Wells, Brack, & McMichen, 2003); and people of color experience depressive symptoms (Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002) and psychological trauma (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Kelly, 2008) as a result of racial discrimination.

Additionally, members of marginalized groups often internalize dominant-culture standards and oppression, which perpetuate shame and isolation (Jordan, 2010). In the absence of language or space to address experiences of oppression or marginalization, these experiences may evolve into painful symptoms, which may then be misattributed to other factors by health care professionals (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). In fact, when professionals locate the cause of pathology as entirely or primarily within individuals, the result may be increased feelings of client self-blame and isolation. Thereby, counselors may not only minimize important environmental mental health factors but also inadvertently cause additional psychological distress (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010).


**A focus on social justice.** As scholars in the field of counseling psychology have continued to build upon the foundation provided by the multicultural literature, they have explicitly identified a dedication to social justice as an essential component of multiculturalism. A commitment to social justice expands ethical responsibilities to include working for the liberation of oppressed people (APA, 2017; Speight & Vera, 2004). This requires counseling psychologists to look beyond the conceptualization of pathology on an individual level to the impact of systemic forms of power, privilege, and oppression on the lives of people living at the margins of society (Goodman et al., 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003). Societal and systemic interventions must accompany individualistic approaches to mental health care in order to address the vulnerabilities to mental health problems resulting from various forms of oppression (APA, 2017; Israel, 2006).

Goodman et al. (2004) offered a definition of the social justice work of counseling psychologists as the “scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination” (p. 795) and proposed that social justice work occurs on three different levels, which extend beyond intervention at the individual level. These levels were derived from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model and include:

(a) the *micro-level*, including individuals and families;

(b) the *meso-level*, including communities and organizations; and

(c) the *macro-level*, including social structures, ideologies, and policies. (p. 795)

This model will be discussed in greater detail later on.

In order to show how the systems of feminism and multiculturalism guide counseling psychologists’ work toward social justice, Goodman et al. (2004) identified six recurring
foundational principles of feminist and multicultural theories of counseling, which extend beyond individual psychotherapy to work “with and for communities” (p. 797). These principles include: ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness, building on strengths, and leaving people with tools for change (Goodman et al., 2004).

**Ongoing self-examination.** Critical self-assessment is one of the principles of culturally competent counseling (Sue & Sue, 2008). Existing sociohistorical and sociopolitical forces influence the development of all individuals, including helping professionals. As such, it is necessary for clinicians and researchers to gain awareness of how these forces shape their identities and values and how these influence their understanding of their clients (Constantine et al., 2007). This principle of self-examination extends to the need for counselors to be vigilant of the power dynamics in their relationships with clients and community members (Goodman et al., 2004).

**Sharing power.** The facilitation of power sharing between clinician or researcher and those with whom they work is one of the central intentions of feminist and multicultural counseling theories. Inherent power differentials exist when working with individuals and communities of marginalized groups. Multicultural theorists have called on helping professionals to openly acknowledge these disparities and to use their resources to advocate for their clients and to work to reduce this hierarchy in the counseling relationship (Constantine et al., 2007). Relational-cultural theory, which shares much of its foundation with feminist theory, refers to the notion of power sharing in these types of relationships as *mutuality* (Jordan, 2010). This concept acknowledges that sharing power leads to growth-fostering interactions, which benefit the growth and development of all parties. In social justice-oriented community work, sharing power and encouraging the active participation of community members as co-researchers or co-learners
fosters community building, ownership, and efficacy. The idea of power sharing prioritizes collaboration and the empowerment of communities over that of the individual (Goodman et al., 2004).

*Giving voice.* Giving voice is central to feminist and multicultural theories and emphasizes the importance of de-silencing and advocating for individuals and groups who have historically been oppressed and whose voices and narratives have been silenced. The principle of giving voice highlights the importance for clinicians and researchers to understand problems or questions in cultural context and from the point of view of the clients or communities with whom they are working (Smith, 2007). Giving voice also means to focus on amplifying the voices of community members that speak to their needs, visions, and strengths, so that others can learn about them. Social justice-oriented psychologists can facilitate this process by bringing into focus some of the ways that social conditions shape individual and community experiences (Goodman et al, 2004).

*Facilitating consciousness.* Helping individuals and groups recognize and understand the historical, social, and political roots of their experiences is known as consciousness raising, another essential component of multicultural and feminist frameworks. For example, multicultural counselors acknowledge the influence of racism and White privilege on the experiences of people of color rather than focusing on personal failure as the reason for their struggles (Helms & Cook, 1999). Similarly, feminist theorists have encouraged women to become consciously aware of sexism and male privilege and the impact such forces have on their experiences as a way of locating the source of their distress in a social context. In work with marginalized communities, consciousness raising may be used in uniting a community around shared experiences of inequities thereby identifying a pattern of oppression or barriers created by
social institutions, structures, or norms. These types of connections represent a crucial step toward social change (Goodman et al., 2004). Addressing historical and sociopolitical realities in a therapeutic context provides a context for understanding clients’ issues. This process can also aid in liberating clients from the notion of individual pathology, increase their awareness of the connection between individual problems and the broader cultural and historical context, and empower them to engage in social action (Almeida, Dolan-Del Vecchio, & Parker, 2007). In order to facilitate this type of growth and contextualized understanding it is necessary for helping professionals to develop what is referred to as critical consciousness, the awareness of the current sociopolitical context. Otherwise, clinicians risk perpetuating systems of oppression and domination in their intervention practices (Almeida et al., 2007).

Emphasis on strengths. Counseling psychologists have a long tradition of using a strengths-based approach in their research and clinical work. Feminist theorists, in particular, have implemented reframing as a tool to encourage clients to view their behaviors as adaptive in an oppressive social environment and to acknowledge their strengths rather than to focus on personal deficits or failures (Brown, 1994). Similarly, multicultural theorists facilitate clients’ understanding of how oppression impacts emotional well-being and identify internal sources of strength and resilience (Sue & Sue, 2008). Emphasizing strengths in social-justice oriented community work means intentionally acknowledging and engaging a group’s strengths at every stage.

Leaving people with the tools for change. The last principle as outlined by Goodman et al. (2004) is focused on increasing the access of members of marginalized communities to tools of self-determination. At the individual level, this may manifest as helping professionals fostering the ongoing development of supports available in one’s cultural context, such as
extended family, other community members, or religious groups that will be beneficial beyond professional intervention. At the community level, researchers and clinicians working in community settings collaborate with community members to identify what tools are necessary for sustainability and to develop plans for how to support the continued growth and empowerment of the community’s members.

The Goodman et al. (2004) model reflects counseling psychologists’ movement toward a focus on the systemic roots of widespread societal problems to address structural and contextual causes of human suffering as well as to prevent the emergence and maintenance of these problems (Fouad, Gerstein & Toporek, 2006). Growing recognition of the negative consequences of oppression in the lives of members of marginalized groups based on multiple dimensions of identity such as race (Constantine et al., 2007), ethnicity (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000), gender (Capodilupo, Nadal, Corman, Lyons, & Weinberg, 2010; Vick, Seery, Blascovich, & Weisbuch, 2008), social class (Smith & Mao, 2012), sexual orientation (Nadal, Rivera, & Corpus, 2010), and ability (Keller & Galgay, 2010) has fueled helping professionals in the field of counseling psychology to identify interventions effective in addressing such issues and to broadly impact social change (Constantine et al., 2007).

**Professional standards.** The field of psychology responded to the need for culturally competent clinicians by offering ethical guidelines for practice and competency standards for accreditation. In 1991, the Association approved a document describing the need and rationale for multiculturalism in the field of psychology for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD). Subsequently, the Professional Standards Committee proposed a set of 31 multicultural counseling competencies, with the hope that it would become a standard in the training of helping professionals (Sue et al., 1992). In 2002, this proposal was followed by the
American Psychological Association (APA) endorsement of six guidelines to multicultural counseling competence relating to education, training, research, and practice:

- Psychologists are encouraged to recognize that, as cultural beings, they may hold attitudes and beliefs that can detrimentally influence their perceptions of and interactions with individuals who are ethnically and racially different from themselves.
- Psychologists are encouraged to recognize the importance of multicultural sensitivity/responsiveness, knowledge, and understanding about ethnically and racially different individuals.
- As educators, psychologists are encouraged to employ the constructs of multiculturalism and diversity in psychological education.
- Culturally sensitive psychological researchers are encouraged to recognize the importance of conducting culture–centered and ethical psychological research among persons from ethnic, linguistic, and racial minority backgrounds.
- Psychologists strive to apply culturally–appropriate skills in clinical and other applied psychological practices.
- Psychologists are encouraged to use organizational change processes to support culturally informed organizational (policy) development and practices. (APA, 2002)

Since that time, the American Counseling Association (ACA) has also endorsed multicultural competencies and revisions to the ACA Code of Ethics were made to include more extensive guidelines for culturally sensitive practice (ACA, 2005) and to explicitly include the value of promoting social justice (ACA, 2014). The Fourth National Counseling Psychology Conference in Houston emphasized the field’s agenda for social justice, and 88% of the
attendees voted to support counseling psychologists’ reclaiming of a social justice agenda. Subsequently, in May 2003, *The Counseling Psychologist* sponsored a forum dedicated to social justice issues (Goodman et al., 2004). In 2009, training directors in departments of counseling psychology put forth efforts to deal with value conflicts in training settings, resulting in the production of a counseling psychology model training values statement by the Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs. This document relates respect for diversity to APA’s ethical principles and code of conduct (APA, 2002) and the social justice commitment of counseling psychology (Bieschke & Mintz, 2012). It highlights the expectation that trainers and trainees examine their personal values and learn to work effectively with diverse individuals and emphasizes the importance of respect, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Recently, in 2017 APA’s Task Force on Re-envisioning the Multicultural Guidelines for the 21st Century created a new set of 10 guidelines:

- Psychologists seek to recognize and understand that identity and self-definition are fluid and complex and that the interaction between the two is dynamic. To this end, psychologists appreciate that intersectionality is shaped by the multiplicity of the individual’s social contexts.

- Psychologists aspire to recognize and understand that as cultural beings, they hold attitudes and beliefs that can influence their perceptions of and interactions with others as well as their clinical and empirical conceptualizations. As such, psychologists strive to move beyond conceptualizations rooted in categorical assumptions, biases, and/or formulations based on limited knowledge about individuals and communities.
• Psychologists strive to recognize and understand the role of language and communication through engagement that is sensitive to the lived experience of the individual, couple, family, group, community, and/or organizations with whom they interact. Psychologists also seek to understand how they bring their own language and communication to these interactions.

• Psychologists endeavor to be aware of the role of the social and physical environment in the lives of clients, students, research participants, and/or consultees.

• Psychologists aspire to recognize and understand historical and contemporary experiences with power, privilege, and oppression. As such, they seek to address institutional barriers and related inequities, disproportionalities, and disparities of law enforcement, administration of criminal justice, educational, mental health, and other systems as they seek to promote justice, human rights, and access to quality and equitable mental and behavioral health services.

• Psychologists seek to promote culturally adaptive interventions and advocacy within and across systems, including prevention, early intervention, and recovery.

• Psychologists endeavor to examine the profession’s assumptions and practices within an international context, whether domestically or internationally based, and consider how this globalization has an impact on the psychologist’s self-definition, purpose, role, and function.

• Psychologists seek awareness and understanding of how developmental stages and life transitions intersect with the larger biosociocultural context, how identity evolves as a function of such intersections, and how these different socialization and maturation experiences influence worldview and identity.
• Psychologists strive to conduct culturally appropriate and informed research, teaching, supervision, consultation, assessment, interpretation, diagnosis, dissemination, and evaluation of efficacy as they address the first four levels of the Layered Ecological Model of the Multicultural Guidelines.

• Psychologists actively strive to take a strength-based approach when working with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations that seeks to build resilience and decrease trauma within the sociocultural context. (APA, 2017, pp. 4-5)

There have also been recent shifts in training expectations in professional psychology toward a “culture of competence” (Schaffer, Roldolfa, Hatcher, & Fouad, 2013, p. 92). According to this perspective, learning outcomes are measured with an emphasis on competencies in knowledge and skill domains. The Council of Chairs of Training Council, comprised of the chairs of major professional psychology education and training councils in the U.S. and Canada, developed a proposal to the APA Board of Educational Affairs, which resulted in the identification of benchmarks for 15 core competency areas of education and training following a two-day meeting in 2006. As a result, the Assessment of Competency Benchmarks Work Group (the Workgroup) was then created with the central purpose of defining benchmarks based on the core competencies. Fouad et al. (2009) created a Benchmarks document based on the work of the Workgroup. This document outlines each of the 15 core competencies and the essential components of each competency and was revised by APA (2012) to include 16 core competencies. Each competency has “behavioral anchors” (p. S8), which are markers for competent performance at a given level of training, for each of these components at three levels of professional development, which included readiness for practicum, readiness for Internship, and readiness for entry to practice.
One of the core competencies as defined by the Benchmarks document is “individual and cultural diversity-awareness, sensitivity and skills in working professionally with diverse individuals, groups and communities who represent various cultural and personal background and characteristics defined broadly and consistently with APA policy” (p. S13). This core competency involves understanding the impact of the individual, cultural diversity, and context on self, others, the interaction of self and others, and relevant applications. Twelve essential components of this competency are outlined in the Benchmarks document. An example of one of these components listed as essential to demonstrate readiness for entry to practice is, “independently monitors and applies knowledge of diversity in others as cultural identities in interactions with others as cultural beings in assessment, treatment, and consultation” (Fouad et al., 2009, p. S14). Corresponding behavioral anchors include:

- Independently articulates, understands, and monitors, multiple cultural identities in interactions with others
- Regularly uses knowledge of the role of culture in interactions to monitor and improve effectiveness as a professional
- Critically evaluates feedback and initiates consultation or supervision when uncertain about diversity issues with others (Fouad et al., 2009. P. S14)

**Social Justice and Multicultural Counseling Competency in Counselor Training**

Multiple factors influence the perspectives of academics, researchers, and clinicians, including models, theories, research examples, and experiential clinical training and supervision. Arredondo and Rosen (2007) highlighted the significant impact that training and supervision have on the thinking and behavior of future clinicians, researchers, and academics. These scholars (Arredondo & Rosen, 2007) noted that, in order to apply the principles of multicultural
competence and social justice, students must first be adequately educated and trained about them:

Application of principles of multicultural competencies, social justice and professional leadership begins through education and training, and supervision grounded in these principles […] To not do so only perpetuates training that will be irrelevant for empowering marginalized and oppressed constituencies that are most in need of services, and renders future and practitioners unprepared to work in a world where social injustices prevail. (p. 443)

Scholars have highlighted the need for psychology trainees to understand the influence of oppressive systems on individual struggles (Goodman et al., 2004) and learn to actively engage with clients in a way that empowers them to challenge oppressive paradigms (Burnes & Singh, 2010).

The growing commitment to social justice and corresponding professional standards within the field of counseling psychology have been addressed in a variety of ways. Training programs vary greatly in how effectively they prepare mental health professionals to confront issues of oppression and injustice (Vera & Speight, 2007). Counseling programs engage different vehicles for social justice and multicultural training and the amount to which social justice perspectives are integrated in education and training in the field of counseling psychology has been described as a continuum (Toporek & McNally, 2006). This ranges from a single-course approach, which involves including didactic courses devoted to diversity, multiculturalism, or population-specific theory in training program curriculum (Watts, 2004) to full integration of social justice initiatives into training, research, and practice (Talleyrand, Chung, & Bemak, 2006). The next section will review existing research on the efficacy of multicultural counseling
courses followed by a description of experiential and integrated approaches to social justice training.

**Efficacy of multicultural counseling courses.** Many counseling programs have responded to the need for increased multicultural and social justice-oriented training by requiring that all students complete a course in multicultural counseling (Constantine, Ladany, Inman, & Ponterotto, 1996; Quintana & Bernal, 1995; Sammons & Speight, 2008) and researchers have begun to examine the efficacy of this training approach. Researchers have found that multicultural counseling courses improve the cultural competency of counselors in training (Carlson, Brack, Laygo, Cohen, & Kirkscey, 1998; D’Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Heppner & O’Brien, 1994; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). Sammons and Speight (2008) assessed 124 graduate students’ experiences of multicultural counseling courses using a Web-based qualitative survey, using the critical incidents technique (CIT). Four themes were identified in students’ responses: increased knowledge, increased self-awareness, attitudinal changes, and behavioral changes. Participants in this study acknowledged an increase in understanding of oppression, multicultural issues, cultural competency, and the profession of psychology. They reported increased awareness of their own biases and privileges, increased identity development, and increased professional cultural competence. Participants also noted attitudinal changes such as increased critical thinking and empathy, decreased cultural biases, and increased feelings of frustration. Lastly, participants noted ways in which they experienced behavioral changes. These came in the form of increased activism, improvement in relationships, increased professional competency, reduction in the use of biased language, and efforts put forth to seek out further multicultural training (Sammons & Speight, 2008).
Scholars have also found that three multicultural courses, based on developing cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills through the use of a combination of didactic and experiential activities, improved the cultural competency of counselors in training compared to control groups (D’Andrea et al., 1991). More specifically, these researchers concluded that, although didactics increased cultural competency, the development of multicultural counseling skills was the least impacted by didactic components of these courses. They recommended increased attention to incorporating a multicultural focus into experiential components of training. Similarly, Heppner and O’Brien (1994) conducted a study through which they found that trainees perceived experiential activities and culturally diverse speakers to be important in the development of multicultural awareness and knowledge. Students indicated that role-play activities, videos, class discussions, and listening to individuals’ stories from diverse backgrounds caused them to have powerful affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses. Student participants of this study provided feedback that included the desire for more class time for processing their emotional reactions to these experiences and less time spent engaged in cognitive or intellectual activities. Through a review of multicultural course syllabi, Pieterse, Evans, Risner-Butner, Collins, and Mason (2008) found that a focus on social justice as a goal or objective was not evident, and that little emphasis was put on skills training and counseling interventions in the course content of multicultural counseling courses (Pieterse et al., 2008). Historically, less than half of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited programs systematically incorporated multicultural content throughout the core curriculum, and even less included multicultural infusion during practica and internships and very few practical illustrations of counseling programs that integrate social justice exist (Dinsmore & England, 1996; Motulsky et al., 2014).
These studies support the use of current reading materials and lecture formats in multicultural counseling courses, as a way to improve multicultural knowledge competency. They also indicate that further integrating multicultural and social justice training into experiential aspects of graduate programs, moving beyond traditional cognitive and didactic teaching methods and courses, would likely be more effective (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Burnes & Singh, 2010; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Lewis, 2010; Toporek, 2001). These studies provide evidence that limited or single-course didactic approaches to multicultural competence are beneficial but insufficient in training counselors to be culturally competent (e.g. Dinsmore & England, 1996; Manese, 2001).

**Experiential and integrated training approaches.** Understanding the limitations of primarily didactic courses in social justice training, scholars have suggested approaches that focus on experiential training and proposed frameworks based on social justice theories. For example, Sevig and Etzkorn (2001) presented a format for a year-long multicultural counseling internship seminar in which the primary learning method is an experiential group that encourages self-reflection, dialogue, risk taking, and emotional openness as a means toward developing multicultural competence. Role-play activities, case consultation, readings, theory presentation, videos, experiential exercises, journaling, and discussion are examples of the incorporation of different learning modalities. Student and supervisor feedback over a seven-year period indicated that “a long-term and in-depth learning process is needed to address the complexity of the awareness, knowledge, and skills, passion, and action needed […] to become competent in multicultural counseling” (p. 69). They considered this format to have demonstrated effectiveness in providing multicultural training. Based on the feedback of students and supervisors, Sevig and Etzkorn (2001) formulated suggestions for incorporating multicultural
training into a practicum setting, which included: (a) finding a balance between cognitive and emotional learning, teaching theory as well as encouraging expression of confusion and emotional vulnerability; (b) establishing the norm of group members getting to know each other based on cultural group identities; (c) assessing multicultural competence levels pre- and post-training; (d) modeling appropriate tolerance of conflict rather than conflict resolution thereby allowing a genuine experience of the complexity of differences; (e) focusing on clinical applications in a systematic way in which diversity and multiculturalism are intentionally addressed; and (f) helping students to gain and maintain a diverse caseload so that clinical experiences reinforce the learning taking place during the group.

Other scholars have similarly proposed suggestions for practicum training in programs committed to the values of social justice. For example, Lewis (2010) proposed a series of aspirational recommendations for training programs committed to social justice values. One recommendation was for the program to clearly include its commitment to social justice in its mission statement to provide grounding for different elements of training, including practicum. A second recommendation was to provide students with a working definition of social justice early in training to help them build a solid understanding of social justice theory. A third recommendation was to clearly communicate the competencies that students are expected to develop at particular stages in their training and to subsequently integrate social justice theory and practice. Finally, the last recommendation, based on the notion that “true appreciation of social justice has to include a commitment to changing the social structures and conditions that are the root causes of social injustice” (Lewis, 2010, p. 150), called for practicum training with a primary focus on changing social conditions.
Similarly, Burnes and Singh (2010) outlined strategies to be used to integrate social justice work into applied practicum training for psychology trainees. First, they suggested building a foundation of relevant knowledge by introducing three areas of didactic learning, which included: (a) examination of literature, (b) self-examination, and (c) examination of systems. *Examination of the literature* involves thoroughly integrating social justice topics into course material throughout the practicum course rather than dedicating one class to the topic. Readings on social justice can derive from a variety of disciplines and will provide trainees with comprehensive exposure to material and a common language. Trainees should be encouraged to engage in dialogue with one another and to learn from each other as well as to define social justice for themselves. The second area of didactic training, *self-examination*, focused on helping students gain awareness of their attitudes and biases as well as their own ideas about what constitutes social justice. To do so, Burnes and Singh (2010) suggested using journals and class discussions to respond to content of the course or to self-assess areas of social justice competencies. The last area of didactic training was the *examination of systems*, which referred to learning activities throughout students’ practicum training that teach them to examine various systems of which they and their clients are a part. For example, this would involve learning to speak about marginalization and oppression. Burnes and Singh (2010) suggested that this be done both inside and outside of the classroom. They encouraged training to include note-taking on marginalization and oppression that they observe taking place at institutions and other locations outside of their campuses. By doing so they gain greater understanding of power and privilege. Students should also be encouraged to recognize their roles in marginalization. The practicum course should also be a space where instructors can mentor students and assist them in dealing with power hierarchies inherent to different practicum sites. Such power structures may
be detrimental to trainees’ clients and mentors can support students in advocating on behalf of clients.

Burnes and Singh (2010) highlighted four areas of consideration when integrating social justice work into practicum and working in different practicum sites. The first consideration was how practicum clinical hours are to be defined. Social justice advocacy would require reaching underserved or marginalized groups rather than solely engaging in traditional interventions such as individual and group counseling. Therefore, allowing for flexibility in what qualifies as practicum hours would ensure that students received credit for social justice advocacy in practice. The second social justice consideration was the suggestion for trainees to have opportunities to learn how to design, implement, and evaluate workshops, outreach, and prevention programs. Supervisors should oversee this training and offer guidance on how to simultaneously focus on prevention, empowerment, and resilience when working with marginalized groups. Burnes & Singh (2010) recommended that social justice interest groups be established within practicum sites to create spaces for ongoing dialogue about social justice issues. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of developing academic program-practicum site partnerships to enhance the chances for long-term inclusion of social justice work at institutions.

Steele (2008) developed a training framework focused on enhancing counseling trainees’ capacity in the area of social justice advocacy, which Steele defined as:

[…] professional practice, research, or scholarship intended to identify and intervene in social policies and practices that have a negative impact on the mental health of clients who are marginalized on the basis of their social status. Implicit in this definition is the requirement that counselors (a) know how various social policies and practices can result
in mental and emotional distress; (b) possess critical thinking, organizational, collaborative, and leadership skills; and (c) have a highly developed sense of interpersonal and self-awareness. (pp. 75-76)

Steele (2008) was inspired to develop the liberation model based on the educational philosophy of the Brazilian educator and activist, Paulo Freire, known as liberation pedagogy (Freire, 2009). Freire’s primary educational goal was to develop consciousness of the dehumanizing realities of oppression experienced by marginalized groups of people. According to Freire, those who are oppressed have been shaped by the ideals of the oppressor and have unknowingly internalized inferior images of themselves. In order to transform this oppressive system, the oppressed must develop critical consciousness by confronting this reality through dialogue and engage in transforming action. Freire stated, “To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (Freire, 2009, p. 47). This goal of developing critical consciousness is reflected in Steele’s (2008) liberation model. Students and teachers use collaborative pedagogical approaches and dialogue to equitably decide on educational content. They focus on content that expresses themes of students’ personal experiences, which helps students identify specific problems in their social contexts and increase students’ motivation to respond to these issues and take action to overcome the identified problems (Freire, 2009). In keeping with Freirean philosophy, the liberation model acknowledges that members of marginalized groups are limited by structural barriers and oppressive realities, such as poverty, racism, and sexism. This model is also infused with the philosophy of constructivism, “the idea that both knowledge and reality are constructed by individuals as they observe, name, interpret, and give meaning to the world around them”
(Steele, 2008, p. 49). Through constructivist education, interpersonal dialogue between teachers and students is used to facilitate learning in the form of developing questions and building knowledge.

Steele (2008) outlined four phases of implementing the liberation model for training counseling trainees: (a) examining the explicit and implicit cultural and political ideology of the United States today, (b) examining the explicit and implicit cultural and political ideology of counseling, (c) interdisciplinary study of relevant issues, and (d) applying the liberation model to the practice of counselor advocacy. The liberation model is aimed at the development of action plans by students in counseling psychology graduate programs to address hypothetical scenarios of working with clients in diverse contexts. These plans address issues identified by students as relevant to hypothetical stakeholders and describe how conditions that negatively impact clients could be altered. Students present on an identified problem to be studied, describe how it was developed, who would be involved in the study, and how they would engage in social justice advocacy using their own experiences while engaging in the project. Following completion of the project, students’ learning is evaluated based on participation in class discussions, journal entries, reports, and final presentations. Additionally, credit is given for students’ willingness to engage in open and honest dialogue and for demonstrating respect for alternative points of view. Traditional standards of completeness, clarity, conciseness, and organization are used to assess written reports and class presentations. One of the recommendations for future development of the model proposed by Steele (2008) is an applied practicum or service-learning project that would offer students the opportunity to practice skills of social justice advocacy in real-world contexts, rather than through discussion of application to hypothetical situations only within the context of the classroom.
Scholars have demonstrated that single-course didactic approaches to multicultural and social justice training have the potential to improve trainees’ multicultural knowledge, awareness, and skills. However, studies have also illustrated that this type of training falls short of developing the sort of social justice competencies put forth by Goodman et al., (2004): ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness, emphasizing strengths, and leaving people with the tools for change. The counseling psychology literature suggests that a more experiential or integrative approach to social justice training would be more effective in developing these competencies and curriculum-wide integration into the graduate training programs would likely be the most effective. The following section outlines some programs that have attempted to fully integrate social justice values into their mission, goals, and curricula.

**Graduate programs dedicated to social justice.** Counselors and counselor educators have gone beyond making suggestions for integrating multicultural and social justice principles into practicum training (D’Andrea et al., 1991; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). They have developed entire training programs based on specific pedagogical and social justice theories and a commitment to social justice. These frameworks and models of training have been designed and implemented to encourage the preparation of multiculturally competent counselors who are trained to engage in social justice practice (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999).

**The University of Oregon.** The University of Oregon’s (UO) counseling psychology doctoral program exhibits a commitment to social justice. The foundation of this program is built upon two frameworks: Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model and Prilleltensky’s (1997) emancipatory communitarian approach. The following section outlines these two approaches and is followed by a detailed description of UO’s program.
The ecological model. The first model used to inform social justice-oriented training and supervision (e.g. Goodman et al., 2004, Neville & Mobley, 2001) is Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model, which was briefly mentioned earlier in the section describing different levels of social justice intervention. This model addresses the importance of context, historical information, sociopolitical factors, institutional culture, and additional forces that affect people’s well-being and allow mental professionals to view a client in a holistic framework (Arredondo & Rosen, 2007). According to the ecological model, each individual exists at the center of multiple interacting systems, which include, micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. The microsystem is comprised of people and communities that are in direct contact with an individual, such as family, educational settings, and faith-based communities. The individual influences each microsystem, and each microsystem impacts the individual’s development and well-being in reciprocal fashion. The nature and quality of relations between different microsystems are referred to as mesosystems. The ecological model posits that positive mesosystems, or interconnections between various microsystems, will enhance an individual’s development (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007). The exosystem consists of relations between settings that do not directly involve the individual, such as policies and practices associated with health care or housing. An individual’s development and well-being is influenced by these systems without direct participation of the individual. Micro- and mesosystems are both affected by, and influence, exosystems. Macrosystems are broader social structures that influence all other levels of the system. They include cultural values, race relations, gender-role socialization, and other important belief systems. Finally, a chronosystem, is what Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined as the development of interconnections among individuals and their environments over time. Bronfenbrenner (1979) put forth three assumptions of the ecological model:
• The individual and his or her environment are constantly changing as a result of continual interaction and mutual influence on one another.

• The individual is an active participant in his or her development.

• Changes in one ecological system may influence changes in systems that are more proximal and distal to the individual.

The emancipatory communitarian approach. Isaac Prilleltensky proposed another approach that emphasizes the impact of sociocultural forces on development (1997). It is a framework for examining ethical, social, and political implications of psychological theories and practices that have been used by counseling psychologists, primarily in the field of vocational counseling (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005). The framework contains three elements, including values, assumptions, and practices embedded in the field of psychology. Based on these three dimensions, Prilleltensky (1997) outlined an emancipatory communitarian (EC) approach to psychology practice, which examines moral implications of the field and offers a means of enacting social justice values through psychological practice (Blustein et al., 2005). The approach is emancipatory in that its ultimate goal is the liberation of individuals and communities from all forms of injustice and oppression and it is communitarian in that it focuses on the balance between the rights and responsibilities of people and promotes the common social good (Blustein et al., 2005; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007). The key features of the EC approach to psychology can be understood through a description of the dimensions of values, assumptions, and aspects of practice.

Prilleltensky (1997) outlined five values characteristic of the EC approach: (a) caring and compassion, or the expression of care, empathy, and concern for the well-being of others; (b) self-determination, or encouraging individuals to pursue and achieve their chosen goals; (c)
human diversity, or the promotion of respect and appreciation for diverse social identities; (d) collaboration and participation, or upholding an equitable, peaceful, and respectful process inclusive of meaningful input by citizens; and (e) distributive justice, or the fair and equitable allocation of resources, opportunities, and power in society (McWhirter & McWhirter).

Prilleltensky (1997) also identified five types of assumptions that reflect psychologists’ moral standpoint. Assumptions implicit in the EC approach include: (a) knowledge, which should be used to serve humanity; (b) the good life, which is defined by meaning and satisfaction with attention to individual well-being and collective interests; (c) the good society, which is characterized by focusing on the well-being of all people; (d) power in relationships, which is characterized by collaboration of helping professionals and respect for the wisdom and expertise of those they serve; and (e) professional ethics, which protect clients and attend to social concerns (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007; Prilleltensky, 1997).

Finally, the EC approach incorporates the aforementioned values and assumptions as they manifest as five aspects of practice: (a) problem identification, attending to external conditions that impact mental health rather than focusing exclusively on internal pathology; (b) role of the client, encouraging active participation; (c) role of the helper, engaging in a client-centered and client-directed orientation; (d) type of intervention, addressing systems and other factors that impact clients and not solely addressing internal symptoms; and (e) time of intervention, emphasizing prevention of issues and not focusing only on the remediation of existing problems (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007; Prilleltensky, 1997).

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model and Prilleltensky (1997) EC approach are consistent in that both frameworks pay clear attention to the impact of social conditions and structures and an individual’s development and, therefore, agree that enhancing individual well-
being requires intervention at systemic and structural levels. They also both support the notion that the well-being of the individual is largely influenced by the state of the communities and systems of the individual’s ecology. These philosophies together guide UO’s counseling psychology doctoral training curriculum (UO, 2015). McWhirter and McWhirter, faculty members at UO, wrote about the program’s philosophy and outlined details of the program in 2007. The following section will outline key characteristics of the program’s curriculum, which include coursework and assistantships, diversity and multicultural infusion, practica, student research, training environment, and evaluation of training.

Program curriculum. During the first year of the UO’s doctoral program in counseling psychology students are assigned readings in critical psychology, critical pedagogy, social change techniques, and qualitative studies of impoverished communities in the U.S. and begin critiquing the practice of psychology (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007). Early in the program students gain insight into the diversity of contexts in which prevention research and practice can occur and the roles of social identities and issues of diversity are defined and discussed in nearly all courses in the program’s curriculum. Additionally, all of the program’s first-year students are provided with graduate assistantships in human service agencies throughout the community, including early intervention programs, juvenile detention, and rehabilitation programs. Through these assistantships students are exposed early on, directly and indirectly, to diverse clientele through work as human service providers, as well as to interagency politics, university-community relations, and a range of realistic complications affecting practice. Students also engage in classroom discussions, supervision meetings, and informal discussions outside of the classroom related to their experiences and readings. The goal of the program is to provide
opportunities for the students to be critical of the practice of psychology and themselves and to support their development of critical consciousness (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007).

UO’s doctoral program views having a diverse group of students as imperative to providing training that builds multicultural competence and critical consciousness (UO, 2015). This is based on the perspective that it is the community of students that provide the experiences that drive learning. The program has been successful in recruiting an ethnically diverse student body, which members of the program believe is due to the value the program places on multicultural competence and its attention to issues such as White privilege and socioeconomic status. Direct practice work, research and the training environment of the program, are viewed as having a significant impact on students’ learning of multicultural competencies (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007).

Clinical training in the program is a key component to UO’s training curriculum. It begins with a series of pre-practicum intervention and theoretical foundation courses, including multicultural counseling. Once these classes are completed students take practica in a specific order: one year-long practicum focused on adult individual interventions; one year-long child and family practicum serving families in home, school, and clinical settings; and one year-long supervision practicum. This sequence was designed to expose students to clinical training across multiple contexts and work with diverse populations and interventions. The intention of this exposure is to help students fully integrate an ecological model (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007).

Students either work in the university counseling center or the local community college counseling center for their adult practica, predominantly serving students from lower income backgrounds. In these practice settings, in addition to focusing on individual therapy, there is
strong emphasis on prevention, community change, and consultation with other systems that are part of the campus community. Students also participate in a child and family practicum in which they primarily treat families living in poverty. Students are encouraged to engage in a strengths-based approach when working with these families rather than an approach focusing on deficits or pathology. This practicum is also highly structured and follows a three-step model of treatment.

The first step is an in-home intake interview. The second step is a multimethod assessment of presenting concerns, strengths, and areas of difficulty including observations of family and school interactions, as well as consultations with teachers and school counselors. This assessment information is integrated according to four elements (Stormshak & Dishion, 2002):

- parenting as central to the child’s success and well-being;
- attending to potentially harmful behaviors first;
- feedback tailored to maximize its effectiveness; and
- supporting the family’s motivation to change

The third step of the treatment model is providing feedback through a series of sessions. Student therapists provide feedback incorporating a parental self-assessment and collaboratively formulate various options for the family to pursue with the aim of optimizing the child’s success and the family’s well-being. Throughout this process emphasis is placed on highlighting the family’s strengths and incorporating the full ecology of the child. Notably, part of the role of the student clinician is to intervene with multiple microsystems and to strengthen the client’s mesosystem.

Students are also given opportunities to supervise undergraduate and other graduate students. First, they supervise undergraduate human service majors in practicum settings for one to two years and subsequently supervise first year graduate students in skills-training groups and
pre-practicum trainees in an inpatient setting. The goal of this training is to complement didactic training and to encourage the learning of diverse supervision methods. Students engage in critical self-reflection and examine their roles in order to assess ways in which their practice may be liberating or oppressive.

In addition to clinical training, students of the program are trained as researchers. Students are encouraged to engage in community-based research and are required to take courses in a variety of research methodologies. Throughout their coursework students develop competency in either program evaluation or qualitative research and carry out a research project in one of these areas. These projects are based on research ideas from local agencies and the university community, which facilitates student relationships with the community. Although student research has been found to be consistent with the EC approach, McWhirter and McWhirter (2007) acknowledge that participatory research models would be a beneficial addition to the program’s training.

Graduate training programs are microsystems for students and faculty. As such, members of the University of Oregon community strive to acknowledge inherent power differentials in a context of evaluative training. They also try to reduce student-faculty hierarchy by promoting a collaborative environment and using consensus decision-making and involving students in the process whenever possible. Additionally, members of the Counseling Psychology faculty at UO engage in research, service, and scholarship activities related to human diversity and value prevention and community-based interventions (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007).

In order to evaluate whether graduates of the program possess the expected knowledge and skills, information is collected from students and graduates of the program as well as from supervisors and instructors of the program. Practicum evaluations focusing on multiple levels of
ecology, dynamics of privilege, and diversity are completed by clinical supervisors two or three times per year. Students are also asked informal open-ended questions about how they feel they compare to students of other programs. Overall, students of this program receive positive feedback related to multicultural competence from their supervisors and report four areas that set them apart from students in other programs. These include conceptualization, assessment, and intervention using an ecological model, multicultural competence, understanding of power and privilege, and social activism.

**Teachers College, Columbia University.** Another program whose commitment to social justice guides its training philosophy is the counseling psychology program at Teachers College (TC), the graduate school of education at Columbia University. This commitment is emphasized throughout the components of the department’s master’s and doctoral level programs. It is stated on the program’s website (TC, 2015):

Although our curriculum features certain courses with words like “multicultural” in the titles, our multicultural-social justice instruction does not just reside in those courses. Rather, we conceptualize every course and program experience within the context of a social justice and racial-cultural framework. Not only is this orientation consonant with our belief that socially-just practice is ethical, effective practice, it also allows us to align our work with the broader movement toward social equity.

TC’s counseling curriculum exhibits the infusion of the multicultural and social justice foundation of the program (Carter, 2003). Courses offered within the program include:

*Counseling Women, Counseling Linguistically Diverse Populations: Latina/o Psychology, Psychological and Cultural Aspects of Ability and Rehabilitation, Multicultural Counseling and*
Carter (1995) highlighted RCCL as a unique element in the training. He described the theoretical foundation for RCCL and outlined its components in detail as they are implemented in the classroom (Carter, 1995, 2003, 2005). Carter (2003) developed a racially inclusive model of psychotherapy based on the premise that racial-cultural identity is central to personality structure (Carter, 2005) and human development and, therefore, has a powerful effect on psychotherapeutic interactions (Carter, 1995). According to Carter (2005), “it is not possible to be a competent counselor without being racially and culturally competent” (p. 37), thus this model adheres to the philosophy that cultural competence is superordinate to counseling competence (Sue & Sue, 2008) and is based on the concept of “the person as a counselor” (Carter, 2005, p. 20). The model emphasizes developing students’ awareness of themselves as racial-cultural individuals through the lens of cultural reference groups to which they belong, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class, and the impact that one’s social identities can have on counseling relationships and interventions. In other words, this model is based on the principle that the path to racial-cultural competence is achieved through personal exploration (Carter, 2005). This contrasts with much of early literature that focused primarily on training helping professionals to understand “ethnic minority clients” rather than on self-exploration of the role and meaning of one’s own racial-cultural worldview (Carter, 2003).

Carter (2003) developed RCCL as an integrative approach to racial-cultural competence training, which was based on a small-group interview-based course that had previously been designed and implemented as part of TC’s program (Johnson, 1987). RCCL emphasizes that the integration of the clinician’s affect, behavior, and cognition related to racial-cultural issues is
imperative to the development of cultural counseling competence (Carter, 2003; Sue, 2001). RCCL is typically taken in a student’s second year of training. The RCCL course is comprised of four components including lecture, small group, skill building, and feedback. The lecture portion of the class is didactic and focuses on factual knowledge of reference groups in terms of roles, stereotypes, between-group perceptions, and the social, political, and historical relationships between groups in U.S. society. Lectures and readings are also used to provide a conceptual framework for students to understand reference-group similarities and differences in a clinical context as well as to process their own experiences (Carter, 2003). Small group is the experiential component of the course and is focused on self-exploration. It is facilitated by a group leader, who is typically an advanced doctoral or master’s student who has successfully taken the course. Each group leader undergoes training prior to the course and receives weekly supervision. Additionally, the professor of the course rotates between small groups each week to serve as co-leader.

There are four written assignments used to facilitate self-exploration within the small group. The first of these assignments is what Carter (2003) referred to as an autobiographical sketch and is due on the first day of class. Students are asked to write about incidents that have contributed to their development and knowledge regarding gender, religion, social class, ethnicity, and race throughout their lifespan. Students are also required to prepare a genogram of their family and friendship networks as a precourse requirement. Later in the course this information is used to self-explore the cultural composition of students’ networks. The third writing assignment that students are asked to complete before the course begins is a structured interview questionnaire. This questionnaire is comprised of questions related to how students feel about their group memberships, how they are affirmed, how they have impacted
development, and what stereotypes they believe people have about these different reference
groups. Students are also asked about how their reference groups may influence them as a
helping professional.

The final writing assignment is completed over the course of the semester in the form of
weekly journal entries. This assignment calls for a brief outline of what occurred in small group
and the rest of the entry is dedicated to describing the student’s emotional, behavioral, and
intellectual responses to small-group and class events and discussions as they pertain to each
student’s reference group memberships. This creates the opportunity for feedback and dialogue
between the students in the course and the teaching staff and a place for students to share their
thoughts and feelings outside of the group. All of these assignments are utilized in an individual
small group interview format focused on examining each student’s development and meaning of
their reference-group memberships. There are three goals for each student during small group:

- to practice and hone his or her counseling skills,
- to help the interviewee gain a deeper understanding of his or her reference-group
  memberships, and
- to develop further insight into the impact of his or her own reference-group
  memberships as the interview proceeds. (Carter, 2003, p. 26)

The final component of the course is focused on skill building and provides students
opportunities to practice applying their racial-cultural knowledge and awareness by working with
other students in simulated counseling sessions. Students are paired up into dyads and take turns
as “client” and “counselor.” During these dyads students in the client role present personal
experiences involving one or more reference groups and students in the counselor role facilitate
the processing of these issues. Students then review each session with their partners, and
interventions are subsequently discussed in small groups as well. The goal of these activities is to ensure that counseling trainees gain a sense of their strengths and weaknesses and to become attuned to their affective, behavioral, and cognitive experiences in a racial-cultural counseling context.

The final part of the course is providing each student with feedback about their use of counseling skills and how they use and communicate their racial-cultural knowledge. Each student receives a midterm feedback report as well as a final feedback and evaluation report. In the final report members of the teaching staff describe to what extent the student has exhibited racial-cultural counseling competencies. An important requirement for passing the class is students’ willingness to engage in the process of learning.

**Boston College.** The mission statement of Boston College’s (BC) graduate program in counseling psychology expresses a commitment to social justice (BC, 2015). It highlights its goal of cultivating the highest level of social justice in its students. This commitment is apparent in the program’s curriculum.

One way that BC’s Counseling Psychology Department has integrated social justice values into its curriculum is a training component that provides students opportunities to address social justice issues in roles that extend beyond that of traditional counselor or psychologist, which focus on the individual (Goodman et al., 2004). The program instituted a requirement for first-year doctoral students, referred to as the “First Year Experience” (FYE, Goodman et al., 2004, p. 808). Students participating in the FYE work in urban community settings and focus on developing skills in prevention, advocacy, and collaboration (Goodman et al., 2004; BC, 2015). The FYE is meant to provide students with experiences that “teach students that working for social justice can involve collaborating directly with those marginalized communities whose
situations counseling psychologists are interested in improving or with those groups” (Goodman et al., 2004, p. 808). As part of the FYE all students participate in bimonthly supervisory seminars, where students share with each other and explore ways in which their own social and cultural dimensions of identity impact their experiences. Students draw connections between their project experiences to their greater social justice mission. The FYE concludes after one year; however, the program continues to integrate issues of social justice in courses related to both research and practice (Goodman et al, 2004).

Goodman and her colleagues developed one specific FYE project, which is called Reaching Out About Depression (ROAD) (Goodman et al., 2004, Goodman et al., 2009). The ROAD project was based on peer support, empowerment, and community organizing for women who are both low-income and struggling with symptoms of depression. The project is composed of two parts. The first part was a 12-session workshop series run by women who have identified as struggling with these issues themselves and who have also previously participated in the workshop series. A second part of the ROAD program is the advocacy component in which graduate students in mental health counseling (advocates) are paired with partners who are workshop facilitators. New advocates undergo intensive training and continue in specialized training and supervision throughout the year. Advocates and their partners work collaboratively to determine the focus of their work together within a flexible framework, addressing individual, interpersonal, familial, and systemic issues as well as alleviating any acute crises. Advocates generally work with their partners for nine months at which time partners may continue with a new advocate. Training and supervision of the participating advocates emphasize the importance of participants’ needs as central to the work, creating an authentic relationship, integrating
emotional and instrumental forms of support, and recognizing sources of oppression as significant contributors to distress (Goodman et al., 2009).

The field of counseling psychology has responded to the call for social justice training in a variety of ways in attempts to increase student practitioners’ multicultural and social justice orientation to counseling. This ranges from the addition of single course offerings in graduate programs to program-wide dedication to addressing issues of multiculturalism and social justice. Although promising efforts have been made, scholars have found that attempts to integrate multicultural- and social justice-oriented training into graduate program curricula, framing entire training programs around a commitment to social justice, remain a new and exceptional phenomenon (Toporek & McNally, 2006). In general, training approaches to prepare counselors in social justice-oriented practice remain insufficient (Motulsky et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2013; Vera & Speight, 2003). Experiential training, in particular, has been highlighted in the literature as an area needing multicultural training infusion in order to allow counselors an opportunity to gain adequate awareness, knowledge, and skills regarding working effectively with culturally diverse populations (Bradley & Fiorini, 1999; Carter, 1991; Ponterotto, Alexander, & Grieger, 1995; Sammons & Speight, 2008).

Social Justice Training in Psychology: Accomplishments, Missing Pieces, and PAR

Examples of vigorous efforts to incorporate social justice values into curricula were highlighted earlier through the descriptions of training programs at the University of Oregon, Teachers College, and Boston College. These programs are strong models for training and offer important information in that they have a number of social justice training elements in common. These include the use of literature and course material related to diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice related to psychology; opportunities for discussion regarding social identity and
diversity; experiential training in the classroom or in outside communities and institutions; and exposure to qualitative research methods. However, overall these programs vary widely in their approaches to multicultural and social justice training, making it difficult to identify and replicate specific and effective elements of training. Therefore, the question as to how to translate these themes and competencies into the effective training of students in these competencies remains (Motulsky et al., 2014). It may be useful to explore training methods beyond those that have been traditionally incorporated into counseling training programs that inherently address these important elements of social justice training. One such opportunity exists in an approach to research that has not yet been explicitly used as a vehicle for social justice training. This approach is known as participatory action research (PAR). PAR is a method of research in which researchers do not conduct studies on community members or youth; rather they conduct research with them, effectively putting into practice the six social justice tenets outlined by Goodman et al. (2004): ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness raising, building on strengths, and leaving clients with the tools for change.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

This section will present PAR as a potentially useful and innovative method for enhancing the competence of counseling trainees in multicultural- and social justice-oriented counseling. It will begin by defining PAR and outlining the ways in which PAR differs from conventional research. This presentation will be followed by a description of PAR’s unique emphases on critical reflection, participation, and power and empowerment. Early philosophical influences on PAR will be described, and examples of PAR’s implementation will be illustrated. PAR’s recent conceptualization as an approach to practice will be explored as well as its mutual impact on community member and university co-researchers. The section will conclude with an
introduction to the notion of PAR’s potential as a method for training clinicians to be multiculturally competent social justice agents.

**What is PAR?** Participatory action research (PAR) is a paradigm for conducting research with marginalized groups and communities, which emphasizes “collective investigation, education, and action” (p. 37, Maguire, 1987). It is a process of education and action to which all participants contribute their unique skills and knowledge and through which all participants potentially learn and are transformed. PAR is a dialogical and proactive process that considers the values of researchers and participant co-researchers to be central to the development of any PAR project (Kidd & Kral, 2005). Hall (1981, as cited in Brydon-Miller, 1997) summarized a set of criteria and characteristics of PAR into three guidelines:

- PAR focuses on communities and populations that have traditionally been exploited or oppressed.
- PAR works to address both the specific concerns of the community and the fundamental causes of the oppression with the goals of achieving positive social change.
- PAR is at once a process of research, education, and action to which all participants contribute their unique skills and knowledge and through which all participants learn and are transformed. (p. 80)

A central feature of PAR is a shift in the role of those who have traditionally been considered *subjects* of research to roles as *co-researchers* in collaboration with academic or professional researchers (Herr & Anderson, 2005). PAR projects are generally initiated by the identification of a need for action in a context where traditional methods of information gathering, knowledge creation, and action have inadequately addressed this need (Kidd & Kral,
Herr and Anderson (2005) offered a definition of action research as “inquiry that is done by or with insiders of an organization or community, but never to or on them” (p. 3). These definitions highlight the importance of collective participation among academic or professional co-researchers and community member co-researchers throughout the PAR process. PAR also incorporates an action or cycle of actions to address or change a community concern, which has been identified in collaboration with those who have a stake in the identified problem (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

PAR differs from conventional research in a number of ways. First, a major focus of PAR is to enable action, which is determined through a cyclical process of collecting and analyzing data. Action is then further researched, which leads to an ongoing cyclical process of data collection, reflection, and action. Second, PAR calls for the intentional sharing of power between the researchers and researched, turning the researched into co-researchers and partners in the entire process. PAR differs significantly from the traditional positivist paradigm of science according to which the world is viewed as having a single reality that can be measured objectively. PAR researchers believe that observers have their own set of values and have an influence on the phenomena being observed. Lastly, PAR researchers work within realistic environments, which contrasts with approaches that attempt to remove data and information from their contexts (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). Maguire (1987) similarly described PAR’s striking contrast to traditional methods of conducting research that have historically commoditized and dehumanized people:

By treating people as objects to be counted, surveyed, predicted, and controlled, traditional research mirrors oppressive social conditions, which cause ordinary people to relinquish their capacity to make real choices and to be cut out of meaningful decision
making. The collective processes of participatory research help rebuild people’s capacity to be creative actors on the world. (p. 37)

Methodologically, PAR cannot be defined precisely as it can use traditional forms of scientific inquiry such as surveys or interviews, as well as a variety of other methods such as political action, photography, or storytelling (e.g. Brydon-Miller, 2001). PAR draws on critical theory and constructivist paradigms and researchers may employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. PAR methodology is a strategy of action that shapes the choice of methods (Baum et al., 2006). Therefore, the difference between PAR and most forms of traditional research is that community-member co-researchers participate in determining research questions and methods. Alongside university or other outside researchers, community member co-researchers choose or adapt instruments, conduct the research, and analyze the results (Brydon-Miller, 2001). The results of the research are co-owned by community members, who may determine how any resulting information will be used to address issues that they have identified (Brydon-Miller, 2001). Kidd and Kral (2005) described PAR as “the creation of a context in which knowledge development and change might occur—much like building a factory in which tools may be made rather than necessarily using tools already at hand” (p. 187).

Throughout the process of PAR, participants work toward the goal of developing critical consciousness. In other words, as co-researchers, community members gain awareness and understanding of the existence of inequity, the processes that perpetuate it, and their ability to effect change (Fals-Borda, 1991). PAR researchers take action for change by critically examining the cultures that they study (Baum et al., 2006). This process is similar to what Freire (2009) described as conscientization, which requires that the researcher challenge the sociopolitical and role assumptions embedded in traditional research methodologies. Unlike
conventional research, PAR calls for an examination of researchers’ own values, rooted in dominant Western culture, and the intentional sharing of power by researchers with those with “no ‘training’” (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p. 188). Kidd and Kral (2005) also highlighted the necessity for academic PAR researchers to be equipped to understand and respond to the requests of members of different communities, to readily identify how PAR may or may not be beneficial in a certain context, and to develop a flexible and broadly applicable framework for action.

The concept of power is also foundational to PAR, a process that aims to empower all of those involved by shifting power relations and reducing inequalities and power differences in access to resources (Baum et al., 2006). Community-academic partnerships in PAR prioritize active participation in and ownership of research by community members with the goal of establishing them as more powerful agents.

**Early influences and philosophical roots of PAR.** This section will review the theoretical influences upon PAR, including Kurt Lewin’s approach to action research, Paulo Freire’s pedagogical theory, and feminist scholarship. This will be followed by a description of the Highlander Educational Center to illustrate the basic tenets of PAR through an early institutional example and then an example of a recent PAR project will be presented.

**Kurt Lewin’s (1951) action research.** Psychologist Kurt Lewin developed the action research model in the mid-1940’s to address problems that he perceived in social action and to implement democratic inquiry within the social sciences. He identified limitations of studying social problems according to traditional scientific methods and noted the significance of the lack of collaboration between practitioners and researchers, as well the gap between social action and social theory:
Without collaboration, practitioners engaged in uninformed action; researchers developed theory without application; and neither group produced consistently successful results. By using the methodology of action research, practitioners could research their own actions with the intent of making them more effective while at the same time working within and toward theories of social action. (Dickens & Watkins, 1999, p. 128)

Lewin believed that collaboration between practitioners and researchers could produce information, improve behavior, and produce social change in a way that traditional methods of inquiry did not. Action research is based on the idea that practitioners gain experience by interacting with their environment, which can be useful in informing practice. It is commonly community-based, involving parties who interact naturally in an environment and is conducted to make improvements in the overall community (Dickens & Watkins, 1999).

The process of action research, as conceived by Lewin, is a cycling between analyzing a situation and reconceptualizing that situation or problem and a series of research-informed action experiments (Dickens & Watkins, 1999). Lewin’s intention was to use some traditional scientific principles, but his approach differed from traditional scientific approaches in a number of significant ways. First, action research addresses human phenomena holistically and in naturally-occurring settings rather than reducing such phenomena to variables in a laboratory setting. It also does not attempt to control the experimental situation, which is unlike traditional methods of scientific research. Action research participants work collaboratively to engage in all stages of research and to reflect on their own actions. This contrasts with traditional methods that initiate research with substantial ideas of hypothetical relationships and aim to measure cause and effect. Also, in action research, results or discoveries are applied and are used to guide new inquiries or actions, rather than ending at the establishment of new information. Participants in action
research do not take on the role of subjects or objects to be studied. Instead, they are treated as co-researchers engaged in collaborative participation throughout every stage of research (Kidd & Kral, 2005).

According to Dickens and Watkins (1999), the two goals of action research are “to improve and to involve” (p. 131). The validity of new information resulting from research can be determined according to whether it leads to improvement or change by solving a problem as well as generating knowledge. Involvement is also imperative to action research. According to Lewin (1951), participants in an environment are grounded in the context and are, therefore, the most effective collaborators in the development of relevant and realistic hypotheses. Lewin also believed that involvement encouraged participants’ psychological ownership of the knowledge produced as well as providing opportunities for participants to develop skills necessary for continuous learning and problem-solving. This is in line with Lewin’s emphasis on collaboration as what distinguishes action research from other methods of social research.

Action research, as conceived by Lewin, is conducted through a spiral of steps, which allows flexibility and responsiveness depending on the environment. The first step in the cycle is to identify a problem within the community in which the action research is taking place. Next the team works to collect relevant data through interviews, conducting surveys, or any number of ways of collecting salient information. The collected data is then used to identify where change is needed. Once the data is analyzed it is shared with the larger organization. This in itself may be an intervention or action to create change in the system. The next step is to evaluate effects of any implemented changes or actions. This may lead to collecting more data or redefining the problem in the system, keeping with the cyclical nature of action research. Researchers will
continue to move through this cycle until they reach resolution of the initial problem (Dickens & Watkins, 1999).

Over fifty years after its conception by Kurt Lewin, the idea of action research remains an umbrella term for different types of activities aimed at fostering change on group, organizational, and societal levels. Action research is a methodology largely employed in a variety of practitioner-based environments such as classrooms, leadership, and community settings with the goal of improving practice (Craig, 2009). Action research focused on participation and empowerment of participants is what has become known as PAR (Dickens & Watkins, 1999). In other types of action research the amount of involvement is broadly defined and can vary greatly. According to McTaggart (1991), action research can be considered participatory when members of the context or community of interest design and conduct the research and actively reflect on the nature of the research. PAR is guided by the basis of social change, which inspired much of Lewin’s work. It is a process in which participants change both themselves as well as their environment (Dickens & Watkins, 1999).

**Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy.** PAR’s emphasis on empowerment, critical awareness and action toward social change was largely inspired by the work of Paulo Freire (2009). Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator, who was exiled in Chile following the Brazilian military coup of 1964. He engaged in what he referred to as *thematic research* with a group of Chilean literacy educators. His pedagogical philosophy had a strong influence on the development of PAR. Freire, a leading proponent of critical pedagogy, collaborated with community members to identify issues of importance to the community and developed projects with a dual purpose: (a) to help participants develop literacy skills and (b) to help participants engage in social critique and action (Herr & Anderson, 2005).
According to Freire (2009), only those who have been dehumanized by oppression are able to rehumanize or liberate themselves from oppressive forces. He also distinguished between allies who stand in solidarity or “true generosity” from those who perpetuate injustice through “false generosity.” Freire (2009) described a type of pedagogy developed “with, not for, the oppressed” (p. 48) in order to reflect together on oppression and its causes to strive for liberation. He identified those with true generosity as those who engage in the fight to destroy the unjust structures that sustain inequity and oppression. Freire (2009) also described praxis, the transformative power of reflection and action on the world, as central to the liberation of the oppressed:

Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity for liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it. And this fight, because of the purpose given it by the oppressed, will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressor’s violence, lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity. (Freire, 2009, p. 45)

Freire also highlighted the need for people to critically recognize the causes of oppression in order to transform it through creative action and emphasized that this struggle to transform a situation is already the beginning of the process of becoming more fully human (Freire, 2009). Freire used principles common to PAR to encourage marginalized communities to examine the structural roots of their oppression and worked in partnership with communities to develop action for change (Baum et al., 2006). His work provided a model of how the knowledge and
experience of local people can be transformed into critical consciousness of economic and social realities and inequalities (Brydon-Miller, 2001).

Under the guidance of Freire’s (2009) philosophy of education and research, PAR acknowledges power relations, conflicts of interest, and resulting tensions as inherent to the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2005). PAR draws upon Freire’s epistemology that reflection and action are united and that critical reflection is an action in itself. The transformative power that results from action and reflection taking place simultaneously in a mutually enhancing manner is central to PAR (Baum et al., 2006).

**Feminism.** PAR is also informed by feminist scholarship and has roots in feminist approaches to research. Feminist philosophy aims to overthrow patriarchy and end inequities through cultural transformation and social change (Brown, 2010). Patricia Maguire (1987) made an important contribution to PAR by adding a feminist perspective. She described feminism as “a worldwide movement for the redefinition and redistribution of power” (Maguire, 1987, p. 96) and defined feminism as:

(a) a belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation;

(b) a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression, in all its forms and;

(c) a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression. (p. 96)

Despite the oppression that women experience associated with multiple different identities, feminism honors women’s strengths rather than viewing women as helpless victims. Inherent to feminism is a commitment to identify and challenge forces that cause and maintain all forms of oppression (Brown, 2010). Feminism is also a commitment to political, social, structural, and
personal transformation. Feminism and PAR share an intention to work for social justice. Maguire (2006) identified five areas of PAR that are based on feminist principles, which include gender, multiple identity oppression, voice and silence, everyday experience, and power.

**Gender.** Feminist research and PAR both view systemic power relations in the social construction of knowledge as problematic. Feminist scholarship is distinguished from other traditions by its focus on gender and the promotion of emancipatory goals. Feminist scholars distinguished between the biologically based difference between male and females sexes, and the socially and culturally constructed differences in gender or masculine and feminine. This distinction challenged existing assumptions of a biologically determined hierarchy that placed women in a secondary status to men and identifies gender as culturally and historically embedded variable processes involving both feminine and masculine traits and capacities. According to this perspective, stratification based on gendered identities serve as a method for domination of masculinity over femininity, which contributes to a gender system that positions man as universal and woman as the other. This framework provides feminist research and activism the purpose of identifying and addressing power asymmetries based on gender relations. Action research grounded in feminism similarly addresses the construction and maintenance of gender inequalities and considers how complexities of women and men’s gendered identities impact the research process (Maguire, 2006).

**Multiple identity oppression.** Feminist scholarship and action research has evolved with the contributions of feminists of color and lesbian women toward inclusion of race-gender scholarship. These scholars have pushed for the acknowledgement of the diversity of women’s experiences of oppression in the context of complex historical and cultural locations based on the intersectionality of multiple identities. This type of scholarship considers how the experiences of
all people are shaped by the intersection of multiple identities and a resulting complex system of oppression and privilege. Feminist-informed action researchers acknowledge the influence of multiple social locations on an individual’s experience of their struggles, oppression, and strengths (Maguire, 2006).

Voice. Common to both feminist and action researchers is the metaphor of “voice,” which refers to the expression of the dominated or subordinated perspective and experience. The telling of and reflection on personal stories empower those who have historically been silenced and challenge power relations by identifying interactions of social and cultural locations and oppressions (Maguire, 2006). This type of dialogue also reflects the focus of action and feminist research on relational processes and the importance of human relationships to growth and change.

Everyday experience. Feminist and action researchers center the process of privileging the voices of the marginalized on the sharing of their everyday experiences and embrace these experiences as sources of legitimate knowledge. According to this perspective, these experiences reveal the dynamics of multiple sociocultural locations and provide a beginning place for inquiry. Feminist action research seeks to connect contextualized personal experiences with invisible structural and social institutions and to then build strategies and programs rather than basing them on theories or assumptions (Maguire, 2006).

Power. Feminist and action researchers seek to challenge power relations and structures by addressing the purposes of knowledge creation as well as the actual process of research itself. An effort to share power can be seen in PAR’s approach of co-researcher collaboration with community members. PAR also engages in feminist-informed efforts of disclosing biases,
examining multiple identities, and intentionally locating researchers themselves in the research process (Maguire, 2006).

**Summary: Influences on the practice of PAR.** PAR reflects its multiple philosophical underpinnings in a number of ways. PAR’s roots in action research are apparent in its emphasis on collaboration and social change as well as in its cyclical process and basis in community involvement. Freirean influences on PAR include understanding the importance of developing critical consciousness about the causes of oppression and power hierarchies through dialogue and working collaboratively for social change. PAR also exhibits characteristics of feminist practice through its commitment to change forces that cause and maintain oppression and its focus on listening to the voices of community members who have historically been marginalized and silenced.

**The Highlander Center: An early introduction to PAR.** One example of an institution that illustrates the ideals of PAR is the Highlander Research Center. It is an adult education center that has been a resource for grassroots groups and has been involved in major movements for social justice in the Southern Appalachian Mountains since 1932 (Lewis, 2006). Work at the Highlander Center has addressed community-based development, democratic participation, and issues of economic justice. The pedagogy employed at the center is based on principles that are similar to PAR and to Paulo Freire’s approach to literacy education in Brazil. These education methods evolved through Highlander’s work with marginalized and underserved communities. They found that learning through participatory educational practices led to greater understanding, reflection, and action, and ultimately was transformational. The philosophy of the Highlander Center is that the people themselves who are experiencing a problem and would be directly
implied by action taken need to fuel institutional change for it to be effective (Lewis, 2006, p. 263).

The Highlander Center was initially involved in the labor movement and became a school for members and organizers of labor unions in Tennessee. It also participated in the Civil Rights Movement by developing schools to teach African Americans how to read and write so that they could vote. This literacy training was an example of how a critical analysis of the learner’s experience led to the identification of a need and development of a relevant curriculum.

Participatory research was more formally introduced to the Highlander Center in the 1970’s when communities that they worked with identified issues of environmental pollution, related health problems, corporate land ownership, and limited access to information regarding taxation and occupational safety issues. Highlander staff created a resource center in order to provide research assistance to community groups to more effectively carry out their own research and enable them to participate in public policy decisions. Highlander also aided community-based development by facilitating learning about economics and how to identify community needs and resources through PAR. Using community members’ personal and familial historical accounts of employment they increased their understanding of broad economic changes that have impacted them. This knowledge helped them to preserve effective means of survival and to develop more democratic practices. Community members used a number of methods in their research. They developed surveys and conducted interviews with hundreds of people in the community, including powerful decision-makers. This served to gather data as well as stimulate discussions about important issues to the community. They then analyzed the results of the survey and used these results to clearly outline problems to be addressed. They also used visual mapping, drawing, and photographs to portray current issues in the community and ideas.
for the future. Resulting from this research community members developed theater, poems, books and songs based on oral histories of community changes and hopes for the future.

**The implementation of PAR: An example.** Participatory approaches to research have been explored in a variety of fields of study, including psychology, beginning in the 1960’s (Kidd & Kral, 2005). Counseling psychologists have responded to the call to bring social justice and action into their work through PAR and other empowering approaches (Vera & Speight, 2003). In terms of conducting research, such efforts aim to develop knowledge, reflection, and action alongside community members who participate as co-researchers in collaboration for social change (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). PAR aims to privilege the narratives of marginalized local community members that are commonly disregarded (Kidd & Kral, 2005) and to adhere to the tenets of engaging in social justice practice put forth by Goodman et al. (2004): ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness, building on strengths, and leaving people with tools for change rather than claiming exclusive ownership of methods of knowledge gathering (Smith & Romero, 2010). PAR has been applied in a variety of communities and institutions with successful results (Dold & Chapman, 2012). Just a few of these include working with youth in foster care (Ponciano, 2013); a Sudanese refugee community with concerns related to gender, family conflict, and domestic violence (Gustafsen & Iluebbey, 2013); and systems of care for children diagnosed with mental health disorders (Dold & Chapman, 2012).

One PAR project reported by social psychologists Fine and Torre (2006) was carried out inside a college-in-prison program for women in a maximum security prison. The context of the study occurred in the aftermath of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act by then President Bill Clinton, which took place in 1995. This act resulted in the closing of a 15-year-old
college program in a maximum security facility for women in New York State. In response, a group of prisoners, administrators, volunteers, and local university members organized to reestablish the college. This program offers participants a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology, as well as opportunities to take the General Educational Development (GED) test and pre-college courses. Students of this program initiated an evaluation of the impact of the college. Once the project received approval by the Superintendent and New York State Department of Correctional Services, 15 students of the program collaborated with two graduate student teachers to develop questions concerning the impact of college-in-prison, which were used to interview 75 prisoners. These questions included:

- What is the impact of college on your religious beliefs?
- How does college change the lives of women who have been abused by parents and/or men for most of their lives?
- What is the impact of college on mothers? On children? On lesbians?
- How does college affect young women from “bad” high schools?
- What do the officers think of the college program? (Fine & Torre, 2006)

The research team, composed of university researchers and prisoners of the facility, met every two to four weeks over the course of four years. Fine and Torre (2006) described the community they created as a collaboration of learners and researchers with shared commitments and markedly different biographies. They engaged in dialogue (Freire, 2009) through which they would critically examine the origins of their similarities and differences. Over the course of four years, this PAR team initiated multiple projects involving a variety of research methods, including archival research with college records, surveys of faculty and administrators, and focus groups with adolescent children of prisoners.
This PAR team developed goals, which included the restoration of funds for college prison funds by the New York State legislature and to produce useful materials for college campuses, other prisons, prison advocacy groups, and families of people in prisons. The team created a rigorous multi-method report and distributed it widely to political leaders. They also constructed an essay on feminist methodology; produced a thousand organizing brochures in English and Spanish, which called for ongoing advocacy, justice, and action; and created a website allowing access of the report to other activists, students, faculty, criminal justice administrators, prisoners, and prisoner family members. Fine and Torre (2006) reflected on the role of PAR in responding to the injustices associated with the mass incarceration of people of color:

PAR offers an electric current through which critique and possibility travel. PAR provides an interior legacy and power—within the prison and outside—of respect for insider knowledge, and recognition of prisoner authority, exposure of atrocity, a call for public responsibility. Participatory action research projects are born in dissent, strengthened by difference, organized through a bumpy democracy and motivated by a desire for contestation and justice. (pp. 264-265)

**PAR as practice.** PAR extends beyond traditional forms of research in its impact on both community co-researchers as well as its impact on university co-researchers who participate in PAR projects. Smith and Romero (2010) presented PAR as not only a socially just method of creating knowledge but as practice that promotes the emotional well-being of members of marginalized communities. By highlighting material, social, and psychological consequences of living in poverty, Smith and Romero (2010) affirmed “oppression as pathogen” (p. 12) and illustrated the necessity of mental health practitioners to understand one’s emotional well-being.
in the context of oppression. Without such considerations practitioners can unknowingly reproduce oppressive relationships between dominant and marginalized groups in their interactions with clients. Smith and Romero (2001) described how PAR represents a model for mutuality and collaboration that practitioners can use to ally with members of marginalized communities. It provides a guide for doing so in a psychologically beneficial manner through practice and action and the explicit sharing of power and voice. As part of a qualitative analysis of community co-researchers’ perceptions of their PAR experience, Smith and Romero (2010) wrote, “participants reported that being a member of the PAR team had made them feel more valuable, more important, and more knowledgeable” (p. 19). Similarly Smith, Davis, and Bhowmik (2010) highlighted the efficacy of using PAR as a school counseling intervention with urban youth. These authors discussed how participating in PAR projects with young people promotes emotional well-being by increasing sociocultural awareness, critical thinking, and sense of agency and by decreasing self-blame and feelings of hopelessness.

**PAR as training.** Outside the practice-related examples given above, PAR’s infrequent use in the field of counseling psychology has primarily been as a socially just research methodology; however, university PAR co-researchers have also reflected their own experiences of PAR and how they themselves have been impacted by their work with communities. For example, Fine and Torre (2006) wrote about their experiences conducting PAR in a women’s prison as two “outside researchers” who had the privilege of writing about these experiences without personal vulnerability, which was not the case for their incarcerated co-researchers:

We write because participatory action researchers have an obligation to reveal, when possible, the intimate details of PAR undertaken in difficult social institutions. We write this piece committed to participation and committing ironic betrayal. That is, the voices
of women in prison, or now out of prison, will not be found in this piece […] We write here, explicitly without our collaborators’ names, although with their review, permission and blessing, because we speak some truths they dare not say. (Fine & Torre, 2006, p. 255)

University co-researchers also reflected on discussions they had regarding significant differences they observed among them:

We had hard conversations about “choice”. Those of us from The Graduate Center were much more likely to speak about structural explanations of crime and mass incarceration, while the women in prison were stitching together a language of personal agency, social responsibility and individual choice(s) within structural inequities […] These conversations and differences had everything to do with privilege, surviving institutionalization, and waking up (or not) to the images of bodies/screams in your past. (Fine & Torre, 2006, p. 260)

In another example, Chataway (2001) discussed her experiences of a three-year PAR project in the Native community of Kahnawake. She highlighted some of her experiences during the initial months of her work, as an outside researcher, being confronted by mistrust and questioning by community members and feeling the need to constantly define her role and intentions. “As the object of their scrutiny, I experienced what they probably have often felt: as a person I was obscured and in my place was a category, to which the reaction was strong and negative” (Chataway, 2001, p. 248). In another example, Smith and Romero (2010) described their work with a group of women in a poor urban community. They were part of a community-based organization that primarily served women of color affected by HIV/AIDS, substance abuse,
and/or domestic violence. Smith and Romero (2010) highlighted how the experience of PAR with this group was transformative for university researchers:

[Our co-researchers] already had expertise in many areas about which they educated us, all informed by the perspectives of a community that, because of poverty and racism, does not often find a platform by which to speak its truths. As importantly, we have also continued to learn about ourselves, to deepen our awareness of our own agency, to better access our own voices, and to work in ways that are more confidently consistent with PAR principles. (p. 22)

PAR has been found to impact researchers and clinicians in ways that parallel growth and development in the feminist and multicultural competencies that underpin social justice practice (Smith et al., 2010; Smith & Romero, 2010). These reflections are examples of PAR university researchers giving voice to populations that otherwise could not tell their story and demonstrate self-examination and collaborative development of critical consciousness regarding the inherent power and privilege that university researchers exercise in being able to do so. They also demonstrate the importance of ongoing self-assessment and being aware of power dynamics while working with communities on PAR projects.

Although PAR’s use as an approach to training has not been directly explored, some graduate programs have offered training activities that correspond to limited aspects of PAR. As described earlier, Goodman et al. (2004) outlined a program that was designed and implemented to integrate social justice into a curriculum within a graduate counseling psychology training program. As part of this program, graduate students worked in urban community sites in a variety of different collaborative and advocacy roles that extended beyond that of a traditional counselor or therapist, in a manner similar to PAR. For example, a genuine
and mutual relationship and recognition that all parties learn from each other to the extent possible were featured in the ROAD program at Boston College. Such reciprocity was highlighted as particularly important for work with marginalized populations who are continuously disempowered by societal structures. In reference to how experiences working collaboratively with community members have enriched trainees’ thinking about counseling psychology in general, Goodman et al. (2004) expressed:

> We have had the privilege of participating in interesting, complex, meaningful, and valuable work that embodies values about which we care deeply. We have developed skills and knowledge that allow us to address problems in clients’ live that psychotherapy can never fix. And, most important, we are doing work that we believe can make a difference in the social and political structures that shape people’s well-being.”  

(p. 827)

These anecdotal expressions offer support for the potential utilization of community-based PAR projects as training vehicles for the development of social justice competence among counseling trainees.

**PAR, Social Justice Training, and Counseling Psychology**

This section will briefly review important concepts that have been presented here in order to clarify the link between PAR and the social justice training of counselors. Counseling psychology’s commitment to social justice has grown and evolved from its original holistic, strengths-based focus. The field has responded to the “call to the profession” (Sue et al., 1992, p. 477) to challenge traditional monocultural approaches to practice, research, and training to better address the needs of a racially and culturally diverse population. As a result, a multicultural framework to guide appropriate approaches to mental health treatment for culturally diverse populations was developed and multicultural counseling competencies were constructed: (a)
knowledge, (b) awareness, and (c) skills specific to working with diverse clients (Sue et al., 1992). Additionally, guidelines to multicultural counseling competence relating to education, training, research and practice have been endorsed by national organizations, including APA (2002; 2017) and ACA (2005) as professional standards.

Scholars in counseling psychology have expanded the field’s commitment to this multicultural framework to include social justice as an essential component. These scholars acknowledged the impact of systemic forms of power, privilege, and oppression on disenfranchised individuals and groups of people and suggested that approaches to mental health care address various forms of oppression (Goodman et al., 2004; Israel, 2006; Vera & Speight, 2003). Goodman et al. (2004) developed a guide for counseling psychologists’ work with marginalized individuals and communities, comprised of six social justice principles: ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitation consciousness, building on strengths, and leaving people with tools for change (Goodman et al., 2004). These principles address structural and contextual causes of human suffering and attempt to challenge the creation and maintenance of these problems (Fouad, Gerstein, Toporek, 2006).

In order to develop the social justice competencies described by Goodman et al. (2004), counselors must receive adequate social justice training (Arredondo & Rosen, 2007). Scholarship in the area of counselor training suggests that great strides have been made in social justice training, particularly by graduate programs that fully integrate a social justice agenda in all areas of training. Graduate programs in counseling psychology that fully integrate social justice principles have been highlighted as the ideal context for social justice training. Some examples of programs that have successfully done so have been described, which include the University of Oregon; Teachers College, Columbia University; and Boston College. Such programs, however,
remain the exception and vary widely from one another in their approaches to training without standardized training components that could easily be replicated. Descriptions of these programs do not provide a replicable process or model that other programs could easily incorporate into existing training structures. Furthermore, the specific training components of these programs have rarely been studied in terms of their efficacy in training clinicians with adequate social justice competence. In general, there is a lack of discussion about what social justice work or training actually looks like (Goodman et al., 2004; Motulsky, 2014). This suggests the need to explore other potential vehicles for social justice training that could be incorporated into training programs.

PAR is a method of research that has exhibited potential as an effective tool of training social justice competencies. It is a partnering of researchers and disenfranchised community members. Its goals are the development of critical consciousness by all participants and taking action toward positive social change (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). PAR’s roots in Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy and feminism provide significant overlap between the process of PAR and Goodman et al.’s (2004) principles of social justice practice: ongoing self-examination, power sharing, giving voice, facilitating consciousness raising, building on strengths, and leaving clients with the tools for change (Ponciano, 2013; Smith & Romero, 2010). As such, PAR literature has anecdotally suggested that university researchers who have engaged in PAR have begun to develop these competencies. Although scholars have highlighted the mutually beneficial impact of engaging in PAR for community and university participants in these areas, PAR has yet to be explored as a potential method for training multiculturally competent and socially just practitioners.
Purpose of the Study

This project explored counseling psychology university researchers’ experiences with PAR and their impact on the development of social justice competencies. In order to initiate this exploration, the experiences of counseling trainees who have previously worked as PAR co-researchers were studied. These participants are viewed as important sources of information, given that counseling trainees are important stakeholders of counseling training programs (Sammons & Speight, 2008) and offer a unique voice to the multicultural and social justice discourse (Coleman, 2006). The inclusion of the trainee perspective is also important to reflect the field’s dedication to social justice as it relates to considering power differentials in training (Burnes & Manese, 2008), as trainees typically hold minimal power within their programs and the field of psychology more broadly (Singh et al., 2010). Counseling psychology students’ experiences, perceptions, and training related to social justice are imperative to consider to identify areas of growth for future training directions in the field of counseling psychology, yet they are lacking within existing literature (Singh et al., 2010). Singh et al. (2010) highlighted the absence of trainees’ voices in the counseling literature as problematic:

If counseling psychology as a discipline is to claim social justice as a central value, it is critical to explore and understand trainees’ perceptions of the degree of preparation they have in their programs to directly explore and confront issues of power, privilege, and oppression in training. (p. 767)

Not only is the inclusion of the trainee perspective congruent with the field’s social justice agenda, but learning about the training potential of PAR from trainees has the potential to benefit counseling psychology in several ways. It would offer firsthand accounts of engaging practically in social justice work or “walking the talk” (Singh et al., 2010, p. 766) as trainees,
rather than primarily focusing on social justice as a concept or set of values. Only recently have scholars begun to include trainees’ perceptions of their social justice training “to identify areas of growth for future training of counseling psychologists” (Singh et al., 2010).

As important as it is to understand social justice theories and the graduate curricula that are based on them, this understanding does not necessarily offer a practical way of incorporating its elements into existing training programs. The process of PAR, on the other hand, is a specific enactment of social justice principles that has the potential to be a replicable component of social justice-oriented research, practice, and training that could be incorporated into training programs that have not yet successfully integrated social justice values into their curricula. Lastly, exploring the training potential of PAR presents an opportunity to enhance the field of psychology by training clinicians whose competence satisfies professional standards (ACA, 2005; APA, 2002) and benchmarks pertaining to multicultural competence and culturally sensitive practice that the field has designated as necessary for psychologists to enter the field (Schaffer et al., 2013). Such an emphasis on knowledge of diversity and cultural identity underscores continuing (and growing) trends by which social justice competence is becoming codified within the training standards of the field. Scholars have highlighted the mutually beneficial impact of engaging in PAR for community and university researchers identifying PAR as a potential method for training multiculturally competent and socially-just practitioners.

Results of this exploratory study will set the stage for researchers to further examine linkages between PAR and social justice counseling competencies.

**Research Questions**

Research questions for this study were addressed through the use of qualitative inquiry and guided by Goodman et al.’s (2004) feminist and multicultural guidelines for social justice
practice. Research questions for the study pertain to the experiences of graduate-level counseling trainees or recent graduates who have worked as PAR co-researchers.

1. How do trainees describe the role of their PAR work within their overall training experience?

2. What impact has the PAR experience had on the development of trainees’ skills and professional development as counselors (if any)?

3. How do trainees believe that PAR has affected their competence in and usage of the following skills (if any)?
   a. ongoing self-examination
   b. sharing power
   c. giving voice
   d. facilitating consciousness
   e. emphasis on strengths
   f. leaving people with the tools for change
Chapter III: Method

This study’s aim was to explore the impact of PAR as a vehicle for social justice training by studying the reported experiences of counseling trainees who have engaged in PAR projects during their graduate studies. Given its exploratory nature as well as the limited literature in this area, a qualitative method of analysis was determined to be appropriate for this study. Consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill & Thompson, 1997; Hill et al., 2005) allowed for an in-depth examination of individuals’ experiences by incorporating qualitative and quantitative aspects of grounded theory, phenomenological, and comprehensive process analysis approaches. This approach includes five essential components:

1. open-ended questions and semistructured data collection techniques (typically in interviews), which allow for the collection of consistent data across individuals as well as more in-depth examination of individual experiences;
2. several judges throughout the data analysis process to foster multiple perspectives;
3. consensus to arrive at judgments about the meaning of the data;
4. at least one auditor to check the work of the primary team of judges and minimize the effects of groupthink in the primary team; and
5. domains, core ideas, and cross-analyses in the data analysis. (Hill et al., 2005, p. 196)

CQR has been used in the exploration of numerous topics within psychological research and has appeared in many of the leading academic journals across fields of psychology (e.g. Tuason, Taylore, Rollings, Harris, & Martin, 2007). This approach relies solely on interview data and prioritizes the narratives and meanings conveyed directly by the participants. Rather than imposing preconceived notions or theory onto the data, researchers work collaboratively in an
inductive process, drawing conclusions from the participants’ words. Salient themes derived from this investigative approach may be used to inform future testable hypotheses.

Participants

Twelve participants were recruited to participate in this study, which falls within the guidelines of eight to 15 participants recommended for CQR (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al. 2005). These participants were adult trainees who were either currently enrolled in masters- or doctoral-level counseling psychology graduate programs training to be clinicians or who were not more than five years post-graduation. All participants had engaged in the facilitation of at least one PAR project during their graduate training. The sample consisted of 11 participants who identified as female and one participant who identified as male. Five of the female participants identified racially as White, three identified as Asian or Asian American, two identified as Latina, and one female participant identified racially as Black. The male participant identified as Black. With regard to social class, eight participants identified as middle class, three identified as upper class, and one participant identified as working class. All participants indicated receiving graduate-level training in counseling. Eight participants were pursuing or had received doctoral-level degrees and four participants were pursuing or had received masters-level degrees. Five of the participants reported that they had completed their clinical training and seven participants indicated that they were currently enrolled in a training program at the time of their interview. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 40 (M=29.33), (SD=3.63).

Procedures

Recruitment. The strategy used for participant recruitment for the study was word-of-mouth and snowball sampling. Recruitment materials included an email containing a brief description of the study and the principal investigator’s contact information. Graduate students
and professional clinicians who were interested in participating in the study were advised to contact the principal investigator via telephone or email to schedule a meeting to receive more information about the study and to set up an interview time.

**Data collection.** Participants of the study engaged in interviews lasting approximately 50 minutes. The principal investigator of the study conducted each of the semi-structured interviews as well as all correspondence with study participants. Participants received and signed consent forms informing them of the voluntary nature of the research and advising them that they could withdraw from the study at any time. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed with participants’ informed consent. The informed consent form is contained in Appendix B. The transcriptions were then analyzed by a team comprised of the principal investigator and two additional researchers using CQR (Hill & Thompson, 1997), a methodology that uses rigorous examination of narratives in order to capture the essence of a phenomenon across individuals as well as in-depth individual experiences (Hill & Thompson, 1997; Hill et al., 2005).

**Instruments for data collection.** Participants completed a demographic questionnaire in preparation for the interview. Information about each participant was collected including age, gender, race, ethnicity, social class, and highest educational degree attained. The demographics questionnaire is contained in Appendix E.

In keeping with CQR guidelines, the interview was designed in a semi-structured format and aimed at assessing the impact of PAR engagement on social justice training from the perspective of counseling trainees. The questions were developed based on a thorough review of relevant literature and expert feedback from those knowledgeable in social justice training, PAR, and CQR methodology. The protocol is contained in Appendix F.
**Data Analysis.** Interview data was analyzed using CQR methods (Hill & Thompson, 1997; Hill et al., 2005) by a team comprised of two graduate students in counseling psychology and one professional counseling psychologist, trained in CQR procedures. Additionally, an auditor with extensive qualitative research experience provided additional feedback on the analysis. The CQR process is composed of two phases: a within-case analysis and a cross-case analysis.

**Domains.** During the within-case analysis phase, the analysis team worked with each transcript to create domains, which are categories used to group data. Domaining involved segmenting the transcript of each interview and grouping those segments into clusters under specific themes (Hill & Thompson, 1997). This process began with the creation of a “start list” of domains, based on the review of literature and interview questions. This list was then applied to the data and modified to best reflect information as it was presented in the data. Team members independently segmented the data according to domains and then worked together to argue to consensus in order to finalize the initial stage of the domaining process. Subsequently, the data was submitted to the auditor for review. Feedback from the auditor was reviewed and changes to the domained data were implemented based on this feedback and discussion amongst research team members.

**Core ideas.** The next step involved examining the material in the domains for each interview transcript and developing core ideas, or brief summaries that captured the essence of what participants conveyed within each domain. As encouraged by Hill and Thompson (1997), the analysis team made every effort to use the participants’ words during the development of core ideas so that interpretive analysis was minimized. The goal of this stage was to organize participants’ words into a concise format that can be compared across cases (Hill & Thompson,
Similar to the domaining stage, team members read each case and abstracted core ideas for each case independently. Next, the analysis team argued these ideas to consensus and agreed upon the most representative summary statement for each domain within each interview. Data was then submitted to the auditor for review and feedback, which team members used to inform changes to the organization and wording of core ideas.

**Cross analyses.** Following the development of core ideas within cases, researchers analyzed data across cases. The team generated and came to consensus on categories as a group and organized core ideas into these categories. Once core ideas were organized across cases according to categories, the auditor reviewed the data and provided feedback to the analysis team. Each category was then assigned a *frequency label*, according to the number of occurrences in each category. Results were labeled “general” when they applied to all or all but one cases (11-12), “typical” when applied to at least half of the cases (6-10), and “variant” when they applied to less than half of but more than two cases (2-5). Categories representing only one case are labeled “rare.” Rare categories are not considered representative of the sample and are, therefore, not included in the final results. Throughout cross-analysis, researchers continually revisited the raw data and examined and revised categories and organization of core ideas accordingly to ensure accuracy (Hill & Thompson, 1997).

**Research team.** The primary researcher was a Biracial female counseling psychology doctoral student who has had experience conducting research with CQR methodology. She oversaw the recruitment of participants, data collection, and data analysis. Prior to beginning the analysis, the primary researcher recruited and trained two additional members for the CQR analysis team. One member of the additional team members was a Black female counseling psychologist and the other member of the team and was an Asian American woman currently
enrolled in a doctoral program in counseling psychology. The primary investigator and one other research team member had previous experience as members of a PAR supervision group as members of a research team. The third team member had prior knowledge of PAR but no direct personal experience. All three members of the team had experience in community-based clinical and/or research experience. The auditor and supervisor for this study was a faculty member at a large university with extensive experience and expertise in CQR and PAR.

**Expectations and biases.** Open and honest consideration of biases and expectations on the part of the researchers is recommended in CQR as a way to minimize the impact of each person’s subjective interpretations of the raw interview data (Hill et al., 1997). As such, prior to the start of data analysis, the CQR analysis team members met to discuss their expectations and potential biases related to the research data. One team member anticipated that her strong personal dedication to and understanding of social justice could lead to her making assumptions about the motivations of participants that may not be true to their experiences. Another team member shared that she expected participants would have difficulty with the ambiguity and lack of clarity characteristic of the PAR process. She also thought that participants might report being surprised about the amount of self-reflection needed to be an effective PAR facilitator. Researchers also expressed a shared expectation that participants will likely report challenges to connecting with community co-researchers at some point during the PAR process, particularly with regards to navigating racial/cultural difference and facilitating difficult dialogues related to privilege and power. Discussions of bias continued throughout the process as research team members acknowledged their own and each other’s worldviews as potentially impacting each stage of analysis. For example, one research member identified that she disagreed with one participant’s report that there was no overlap with the process of PAR and clinical interventions.
during the analysis process. As a team, we examined our perspectives and returned to the raw data regularly in order to represent the narratives shared by participants and minimize the impact of our biases as much as possible.
Chapter IV: Results

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative analysis will be presented according to the nine domains that were discovered within the data. Categories and frequency labels applied to each category will also be reported. As suggested by Hill et al. (1997, 2005), categories applying to 11 or 12 cases were labeled general, those applying to six to ten cases were labeled typical, and those applying to two to five cases were labeled variant. When a singular pronoun is required to refer to a participant, the form he/she will be used to fully mask the identity of participants.

Domains and Categories

A systematic analysis of 12 semi-structured interviews was conducted in this study and nine general themes emerged. In keeping with CQR procedures, these themes will be referred to as domains in the following presentation of the analysis. Subsequently, a higher level cross-analysis of interview narratives yielded 40 categories. A list of the domains and their respective categories can be found in Table 1. Domains are indicated in the text as bolded paragraph headings, and categories will be italicized within in the text below.

Domain 1: Definitions of social justice. The first domain includes participants’ descriptions of a number of characteristics that they believed to define social justice. There was one typical category to emerge within this domain, which was participants’ belief that social justice means equality and equal access at multiple levels. For example, one participant described his/her view that social justice work can take place in a variety of contexts:

I think social justice means that everyone has equal access to resources and that everyone should have equal rights to these resources. I'm learning that social justice can also take place in smaller settings. So, for instance, in a therapy room, social justice would be to
figure out a way to make your interventions multiculturally competent, so you wouldn't be colonizing the client. And that social justice means using language that's appropriate, but also acknowledging the power differentials in everyday life and in the therapeutic room and trying to minimize it.

Another participant described the view that social justice begins with material equity, but then extends beyond it:

I really believe that social justice is about the equitable distribution and access to resources that allow people to live a life that is without threat of violence or fear for safety. That allow people to live with joy and without suffering, without having to experience oppression and marginalization to feel connected to community and to relationships with others.

The remaining two categories in this domain were variant, and corresponded to participants’ descriptions of additional qualities of social justice. Participants expressed the point of view that social justice entails advocating for marginalized communities. One participant linked social justice to advocacy and collaboration:

I think there are several components to social justice. So there's the social justice component that includes advocacy. Being an advocate for communities that have or hold marginalized identities. But then there's also collaborating with the communities.

Participants also expressed the belief that social justice is an active process. One participant stated:

Social justice means equality and that means taking a proactive stance to share the power, share the wealth and knowledge and awareness. To have the privilege to speak, to have your voice heard, to have your opinions matter, and to bring about meaningful change.
Similarly, another participant described social justice as an active process as opposed to a passive understanding:

Different groups are facing different contextual challenges and [social justice is] really proactively working to equalize things, which is not a passive process. It's a very active way of kind of showing that you're willing to step into [various] roles at individual levels and at system levels as well.

**Domain 2: Definitions of PAR.** The second domain includes participants’ definitions of PAR. One general category emerged within this domain. A general number of participants described PAR as a *collaboration with community co-researchers at every stage of the PAR process*. One participant acknowledged the importance of acknowledging community members as co-researchers:

PAR is a type of research that's not done *on* a community that's marginalized, but it's done *with* community participants. Members of whatever community the topic is about are full co-researchers often with academic researchers as participants. But the academicians are not the ones doing it. It's a collaborative effort to develop knowledge within communities.

Another participant similarly emphasized the importance of taking a collaborative approach throughout the PAR process:

[PAR] is not research on communities but with communities. So really partnering with people that would typically be subjects and they're redefined as co-researchers. And just forming the research question, designing the projects, working together, collecting the data, presenting the research, all of that, whatever the action is co-determined and
hopefully, goes back to benefit the community that's co-researching with you so that it doesn't just end up in a journal that other professionals read.

Another participant highlighted the importance of collaborating with community co-researchers at every stage of the PAR process:

Community members are involved at every level of the research: question developing, developing the methodology, considering what needs to be studied and why. And they also benefit from the outcomes of the research. And they’re integral research partners. It’s really just a way of better understanding the world based on the perspectives of people who are living in the experiences that we’re trying to better understand.

A typical number of participants described PAR as a method of giving voice to marginalized groups. One participant reported that “listening to the voices of the community and addressing problems from the inside out” as central to the PAR process. Similarly, another participant highlighted the importance of listening to the voices of community co-researchers to guide the PAR process:

PAR helps with really addressing what a community need is that can only be perceived by the people that have that standpoint. They have lived those experiences. That can actually really foster change versus someone coming in and saying: This is what's happening. And then leaving, and the people are like: Okay. But we knew that this was already happening. This is not news to us.

Additionally, a variant number of participants explained that PAR involves university co-researchers intentionally sharing power with community co-researchers. One participant explained the understanding of power sharing in PAR:
PAR would be a way of contributing to that bigger picture of social justice. It’s a relationship between researchers and community members where you share your power as researcher and you start to understand some issues or problems the community has from the inside out. So PAR really challenges those power differentials. So we co-create knowledge. And I always keep reminding myself in PAR, we are in this together.

A variant number of participants also identified that PAR may be used as a tool for social justice. One participant described PAR as “an approach to research that turns on its head the dominant paradigms of privilege and oppression. [PAR has] a lot of potential for liberation and healing and rebuilding, reconstructing society in a socially just vision, and reconstructing power structures.”

**Domain 3: Descriptions of Participants’ PAR projects.** The third domain corresponded to descriptions of the PAR projects in which participants have engaged. Two typical categories and four variant categories were found in this domain. First, a typical number of participants described having worked with specific marginalized communities. These descriptions included “working with older adults,” “working in schools with youth,” “working with women internationally, who live in poverty,” and “PAR projects with older lesbians.”

A typical number of participants shared that the PAR process involved the exploration of group members' racial/cultural identities and experiences of oppression. One participant described having meaningful discussions of “sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and classism” related to the experiences of the PAR researchers and their broader community. Another participant described how the PAR group addressed racial and cultural differences between PAR group members:

We talked about some of those aspects: social class, education, and even intergroup kind of race dynamics. We would talk a lot about the color of our skin and how that impacted
who had a stronger voice in our group. I think all those identities come into play. Another one was age. So all those identities came into play. But we discussed them. And it was important in the participatory phase that they talked how their experience in life ended up leading them to work in the streets. I think discussing those identities was salient and important in PAR.

Another participant shared a PAR experience in which the PAR group confronted their own biases:

It was clear most of the group members were assuming all their interviewees would be heterosexual. And we needed to give a talk about sexual identity. We needed to give feedback about how to word the questions. Say partner, significant other, say boyfriend or girlfriend no matter the gender the person you’re talking to.

One participant also described how their group addressed the impact of racial and cultural differences on group dynamics:

We talked about some of those aspects, social class, education, and even intergroup kind of race dynamics. We would talk a lot about the color of our skin and how that impacted who had a stronger voice in our group. I think all those identities come into play.

Another participant spoke about personal narratives as central to their group’s PAR process:

PAR took form in them sharing their stories of how they ended up working on the streets. Some common things were sexism in terms of the workforce, oppression, being trafficked, and being sexually abused as younger girls.

This participant continued to describe how these conversations led to the focus of their PAR project:
They decided that founding a company that had their own values, that wasn't exploiting other women, but actually creating jobs for other women was what was important to them. That's the action piece.

A second typical category emerged as a number of participants reported that PAR groups can use a variety of traditional and non-traditional methods. Some participants described teams that used traditional research methods, such as interviews and surveys, while others reported utilizing creative and artistic expressions. One participant described the use of the photovoice method (Wang & Burris, 1997) to visually portray the narratives of PAR community co-researchers:

The methodology that we used was photovoice, and so our youth co-researchers went around their neighborhood and took pictures of the things that represented barriers to success for them. And then we gathered as a group and did focus groups using the photovoice methodology, which is a series of questions that you ask yourselves as a group and the people that you’re working with to really dive deep into the story behind the pictures.

A variant number of participants reported that their PAR group's initial focus was building trust and rapport through activities such as, “getting to know you games and other trust-building exercises.” A variant number of participants also shared that their PAR group formally presented project at a conference. One participant reflected on this type of presentation as particularly meaningful for their PAR group:

They created something. They got to go present it at an Ivy League University. They were really pumped about that. And just kind of flip things on its head with the way
education usually is, that students are supposed to just be passive receptacles of knowledge, but kind of step into their ownership of how much they did know.

A variant number of participants reported that the community co-researchers of our group were the ultimate decision-makers. One participant shared the experience of observing a shift in their PAR group as community co-researchers took ownership of the process:

Things started to develop in the group and they got a lot of ownership to the point that I was just sitting down looking and they were leading all the discussions and developing ideas and ultimately the project on their own.

A variant number of participants reported that they had held the role of a supervisor of PAR projects as well as a PAR co-researcher. Participants generally described working as members of a research team that was involved in multiple PAR projects. Participants described holding multiple roles, as PAR project facilitators and also providing “guidance” and “feedback” as supervisors to other pairs of PAR facilitators engaged in PAR work.

**Domain 4: Reasons for engaging in PAR.** The fourth domain corresponds to participants’ motivations for engaging in PAR and how they initially became involved in PAR projects. One typical category and four variant categories were found within this domain. Participants described learning about PAR through my research team as part of a university-based training program. One participant described the experience of learning about and becoming involved in PAR:

I had a general interest and then I joined this research team. Then being in that team and hearing about everyone's experiences, I'm like: This is definitely what I would like to do.

When I can do more projects like that, that's what I'd rather be doing. I'd rather be doing a
PAR project even if I'm doing one project every few years than doing these data analysis that are very impersonal.

A variant number of participants also reported being drawn to PAR because they viewed PAR as a way to engage in social justice work. One participant described motivation for engaging in PAR related to engaged is social justice-oriented work, particularly in terms of helping amplify voices of members of marginalized communities:

I think my motivation is to enable, like create this space where people can create their own narrative. I think that the media really shapes how we think about certain people and certain topics. I think it affects everyone. So my motivation is to give people the space to speak their mind and to feel that they have power and they can shape a narrative or the discourse.

Another participant explained feeling that PAR was in alignment with personally held values related to social justice, stating, “To me it just matched up with my social justice values that I have around power sharing and challenging the status quo in some way and really doing collaborative community based work.”

A variant number of participants also expressed motivation to engage in work that would have direct impact on communities. One participant explained the motivation to engage in research that was meaningful and sustainable:

I wanted something that could continue even without experts or researchers that the community had ownership over. I thought that that was what was actually meaningful and fulfilling for me to do something that could bring about a positive impact, not just for me completing research or whatnot, but for the people who made this project feasible, which are the co-researchers.
Another participant also shared their motivation to engage in PAR:

I think kids are sorely underestimated. I was really excited about doing something that helps them feel more empowered. It's research I like, too. I don't get motivated about just doing something to publish an article. I was really excited about the fact that that's an experience I'm sure those kids are never going to forget, that they worked hard on this project.

Additionally, a variant number of participants expressed a desire to work in a context where they had a personal connection to the community they worked with during PAR and wanted to engage in work that would benefit a specific community. One participant stated, “I think it was really important for me to see that whatever I was doing with my degree, like it actually benefitted the community that I came from.” Another participant described a personal connection to PAR work:

I want to learn and I want to know. But also, the social justice piece was important to me. That we're doing research that actually changes communities we're living in and not benefits just one person that is publishing a big article or someone like that. I think it was important to me to always take it back home and link my work in New York with my roots.

Similarly, another participant expressed that PAR offered a linkage to a community with which he/she felt personally connected:

The group was important to me because most of the women in my life who have been really important mentors have been older lesbians. Almost all of them, frankly. I feel like in many ways this community is a community who raised me. So for me, it felt really
important, even though I don't personally identify as an older lesbian, it felt really important to me to give back to this community that I feel like has given me so much.

Finally, a variant number of participants also viewed PAR as a way to enhance skills as a clinician. One participant described the connection between PAR and clinical interventions as follows:

I got into culturally adapting therapies for African American families. Then, what I liked about PAR was I saw it as another way of developing treatment modalities. Initially, I was thinking of adapting treatment modalities that currently existed using PAR. I'm not thinking that way anymore. People in the community know what their triggers are. We can ask them so we can then add that to how we're using our mental health services in the community. That's why I like PAR essentially.

**Domain 5: Expectations/challenging experiences related to PAR.** The fifth domain includes challenges that participants experienced related to PAR, both prior to and during their time engaging in PAR projects. Four variant categories were found within this domain and they included participants’ statements that it was difficult to navigate the ambiguous/unstructured nature of PAR. One participant described encountering such a challenge:

PAR is unstructured. Not entirely, but in some ways you kind of, as we say, you fly the plane while building it. You’re not exactly sure what the project is going to look like, what the outcomes are going to be. You can be planful and intentional with your team, but you have to let go a lot. And so, that could be stressful too…just being able to trust the team and trust the process.
A variant number of participants also described managing difficult relationships with university co-researchers. One participant described this relationship as the “biggest concern” with regard to his/her PAR experience:

We were just randomly assigned together. And from early on I had some warning signs that she didn't get what PAR was, she didn't really have much interest in forming a friendship with me, and it was actually really tough to work with her. I don't know how much she sort of understood larger issues. I think there was a lot of internalized racism on her part. I don't know that she understood sort of the social justice principles underneath PAR, which was massively disappointing to me. It really was. I often felt like we weren't on the same page in working together.

Another participant spoke about the challenges associated with navigating differences in facilitation styles between university co-researchers:

She's the opposite of me. She doesn't like to shoot from the hip. She likes having a very detailed plan, like what we're doing every minute. It used to frustrate her that I would refer to our schedule, agenda items, when we were moving from one thing to the next because she thought I was forgetting what the next thing was. At one point, she and I had a conversation about that. It was like: What's the deal? Why is there tension around this? Once we understood what our processes were in terms of how we think and do things, we could work together.

A variant number of participants also shared that managing group dynamics was difficult at times. One participant discussed feeling like a cultural outsider with her PAR co-researchers:

I was an outsider to the community, both in the fact that I was coming from a university, but also that I am a white woman. I grew up middle class. I was older than all of the
young people that I was working with. I was not Spanish speaking and they were multilingual. In so many ways, I was such an outsider. I felt that outsider status. I was building my relationships with them but it felt like it was important both to discuss those differences and also find a way to bridge them.

One participant described navigating group dynamics in PAR as challenging and necessary:

PAR in reality is messy and chaotic and complex. People don’t often agree. So we have to be really willing to come to the table and work through whatever’s happening so that it doesn’t go underground and then seep up in other ways that impact the group.

Additionally, a variant number of participants stated that they found supervision was helpful in managing challenges associated with engaging in PAR work. Participants referred to receiving “reassurance” and having concerns or challenges related to the PAR process “normalized” through supervision. One participant acknowledged feeling skeptical of the PAR project at times and shared how he/she sought support through supervision:

I believe in supervision. I definitely discussed my concerns about not really knowing what I was doing and it being really vague. The supervisors kept saying to me: You know what? This is part of it. It's going be OK. Of course, I trust them. They had a lot of experience. But at the same time, I was definitely skeptical. How is this going to be OK?

Another participant remarked on the value to supervision:

It was kind of tough almost all the way through. I ended up seeking one-on-one supervision sometimes for advice on how to cope with this not really clicking issue. We kind of came to a very functional place where she felt more comfortable doing a lot of the task-y things and I felt more comfortable doing more of the process-y things.
Domain 6: Impact of PAR on clinical training and professional practice. This sixth domain captures the ways in which the PAR process impacted participants’ training and work as clinicians. Three typical categories and seven variant categories emerged within the domain. A typical number of participants reported that PAR increased my awareness of the impact of power differentials within the therapeutic process. One participant described a significant shift in thinking about clinical work after engaging in PAR:

I think going into clinical work I didn't realize that there didn't have to be a power differential. I think I didn't know. PAR helped me break down some of those barriers in understanding how to look at clinical work in a different way. The expert in the room doesn't have to be the therapist or the clinician. It can be and is the client.

A typical number of participants also described experiences with PAR as having had a significant impact on how they work with clients. These participants reported that PAR taught me the importance of emphasizing individuals' strengths in my clinical work. One participant described the “disservice” that clinicians can do when they believe that they “have all the answers.” This participant went on to explain his/her view of the importance of valuing the strengths of every individual:

[It is] disempowering to them to be sitting across from somebody who thinks that they are not capable or that they don’t have their own inner strength and creativity that they can bring to their own healing process…So it just, I think as a therapist, it’s taught me to really see the strengths in my clients, and to treat my clients as though they are capable, even though there could be ways that they are struggling or need to develop skills or strategies, but to really honor what they are bringing to the healing process in a sincere way.
Another participant shared, “I think the most healing and transformative part is when we tap into kind of the resources the person outside of just talking about symptoms.” Similarly, a participant described learning about the inherent strengths people possess through PAR:

Getting to witness that really cements in the idea that everyone has within them already everything they need in which to operate in this world and to be creative and to be resilient and to heal. I feel like I get to witness that in PAR regularly. And then of course that impacts how I see my clients, too.

Additionally, a typical number of participants identified that experiences with PAR had a significant impact on professional development and resulted in a typical category. Participants described PAR as “integral” to their professional training. One participant described PAR’s impact on the way they approach their work with clients:

[PAR] was one of the most profound experiences I would say in my clinical work, even though it's not clinical, but in terms of my training as a professional. I think it was an extremely humbling experience when we don't have the answers or the authority to decide what people need and what people want, what's actually lasting.

Another participant shared that PAR helped them flex their “dream muscle” and expand their career goals as a clinician:

PAR has helped me become more in touch with ways I try to stay comfortable that are not for my own good. Being a compliant receptacle of information I think is an easy comfortable default. And I think I was imagining before PAR, a career of showing up to an agency and getting a paycheck. I think because of PAR, I've been really working on trying to flex my dream muscle and my fantasize muscle more about what my own career will look like. What kind of social change do I really want to happen in the world because
I was here on the planet? I don't know that I was thinking that big about my purpose as a counselor.

A variant number of participants also identified that PAR *taught me about the value of empowering my clients in my clinical work*. One participant described starting to ask important questions as a result of their PAR work:

How can I help? How can I fix things? But instead say: Am I willing to share power in the room with the people I work with? And with clients. Am I willing to not be the only source of knowledge and expertise in this room? But actually bring my expertise and be willing to open some space for the expertise this person has of their own life and what they bring in. I think PAR really did challenge a lot and really changed this naïve, good intention, kind of like early therapist wanting to change the world. That is not PAR. The essence of PAR is not me coming into a community and saying: Oh, this is how we're going to change everything. But it's actually saying: What am I not thinking about? What am I ignoring? Or who am I not listening to? It changes the ways you work as a clinician as well.

A variant number of participants also described that their *approach to clinical work is more collaborative as a result of experiences with PAR*. One participant described his/her approach as “building a relationship in which slowly they're taking the wheel more and more.” Another participant described the way that “the collaborative spirit of PAR” has impacted his/her view of clinical work:

The ideas behind PAR do translate to clinical work. For example, in the room, in clinical work, you can trust the expertise of your clients. I think that's very important as clinicians to remember. I think that's the essence of PAR. Where am I coming from that I am not
listening to the voices of my clients in the room? At the same time, PAR doesn't say that I have no involvement. But instead says I also have a say in this process.

A variant number of participants also reported that PAR showed me the value of facilitating the development of critical consciousness with my clients. One participant explained her view of the importance of fostering critical consciousness and externalizing experiences of oppression with clients:

We take personal responsibility for things that are not our responsibility. Or that we internalize things that are really not about us at all. So, I think the more that people can understand how things like racism and sexism and other forms of oppression operate, there’s a sense of being able to release responsibility for feelings of shame and self-doubt and all of these kind of really painful experiences where we think that there must be something wrong with us in order to have the feelings that we have or the experiences that we have.

A variant number of participants also identified that PAR showed me the importance of exploring my clients’ cultural identities in therapy. A participant described the importance of cultural factors in that “just as you assess for someone’s relationship pattern, you would assess for understanding of their cultural background, understanding of their identity, experiences of oppression, and understanding of their privilege. It’s just part of the whole.”

A variant number of participants highlighted that PAR taught me the value of transparency as a clinician in the therapeutic relationship. For example, one participant shared the benefits of being open as a way of building trust as a clinician:
Through the PAR process, I feel like I learned that it works best when you are open about who you are because it allows people in the group to also reveal who they are. On some level, I think clients feel that. They can tell when you're holding back.

A variant number of participants also reported that my group facilitation skills improved as a result of my experiences as a PAR co-researcher. One participant shared how they view PAR as an opportunity to engage and enhance group facilitation skills:

I think I learned a lot from the PAR group about becoming a better facilitator as well. It's a two-way influence there. One of the things I learned is that it takes a lot of skill to facilitate a group of folks to work together for four years or even less than that. But a community full of people who have different ideas, identities, experiences, perspectives. It's not an easy process. I think it does take a lot of facilitation skills. I think clinical skills actually add quite a lot to the experience of doing PAR and vice versa.

A variant number of participants specifically identified the PAR experience as integral to my clinical training. One participant stated that idea as follows:

So for me, I think because PAR happened so early in my clinical training, that it’s just been an integral part of my clinical training from the beginning to pay attention to these sociocultural factors as I consider what’s contributing to this person’s anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, etc.

Similarly, another participant reported that it was “essential” that PAR was:

part of my education, at that time where I was forming my identity as a professional was also a time that I was, through direct work, reminding myself of the importance of critical consciousness and thinking about intersectionality, social justice, how our identities impact our relationships with other people.
Domain 7: Impact of PAR on development of self-awareness and multicultural identity development. The seventh domain includes the ways PAR experiences impacted participants’ own self-awareness and multicultural identity development. A typical category emerged in this domain as participants reported that *my experiences with PAR increased my understanding of my own multicultural identity, power, and privilege*. One participant illustrated this category through discussion of how PAR increased his/her awareness of power and privilege:

I think more deeply about the space I take up as a white person. I think PAR has helped me find my way through some of that journey. I think there have been moments where I know as a white person I can take up all the space and that I'll be rewarded for it regularly. So, then there's a part of me [that wants to] not take up any space at all. Through the PAR process, I am realizing that that's not actually helpful either. I do have things to offer to the group. I shouldn't just sit back in silence and not offer them and not be part of this group or process. So it's about finding this balance instead of one extreme or the other. PAR helped me find my way through that a lot.

Similarly, another participant shared:

I think working in PAR groups has really helped me to think in more sophisticated and nuances ways about the ways in which my own power and privilege may or may not be showing up in different ways and different conversations with different people.

A participant described the invaluable learning and self-reflection that took place during the PAR project and referred to university and community co-researchers as “little mirrors of blind spots that we didn’t know we had.” Another participant also reflected on an increased awareness of age as a salient dimension of identity:
[My experience with PAR] made me more aware of the fact that age is a changing identity. Currently I'm at a very, I guess a powerful identity as a young adult. That identity is not a fixed one. We all age. And it was also something to be aware of, kind of the intersection of that identity with my role as like a white woman, that later in life I continue to have. It’s very powerful.

Additionally, a variant number of participants acknowledged, as a result of experiences with PAR, I am more attuned to power differentials in my everyday life. One participant shared:

I think being a part of this process has really helped me reflect in real time about what it means to step back and let others take up space. And what happens even when I try to do that, but as the white Westerner in the room, I may still be perceived as the person with all the power. So what do I do in that moment? Do I accept that invitation to take up all that space? Or do I find skillful ways to try to redirect back to the group?

Another participant described how PAR influenced their work in the role of educator:

I’m a professor now in a graduate counseling program. I teach Master's students who are learning how to become therapists and supervise them. It's really made me think a lot about the power I hold in the classroom and as a supervisor and a mentor. And to think about all the ways that power gets communicated. Not just big ways but subtle ways. It's really helped me be able to explicitly talk about those things.

**Domain 8: PAR’s personal meaning and value for participants.** This ninth domain includes participants’ descriptions of how their PAR experiences were personally meaningful and valuable. A typical number of participants identified that they developed meaningful relationships through experiences with PAR with university and community co-researchers. One participant described the experience of these connections:
I think it's a place where people just become much more whole and real and complex, but in a way where we kind of are excited because we get to learn more about ourselves and each other and form new connections that way.

Similarly, another participant described the impact of the strong relationships formed during PAR:

So not only was I always moved and surprised and humbled by my co-researchers. There was kind of that really wonderful ripple effect that I felt I was connected to, that was really meaningful to me. I felt myself changed by that.

Another participant shared:

I valued challenging my own biases. Learning from the richness and the amazing quality of human beings that I learn from, the relationships we establish. The moments we shared. There were tears and laughter, and very, very deep and serious moments. Really uplifting and powerful moments. I think out of all the work that I've done in my career, this PAR project was transforming to me as a person, as a professional. It's hard for me to say one thing, but the experience in general was life changing.

Additionally, a variant number of participants expressed finding great value in the opportunity to witness the growth and empowerment of community co-researchers. One participant described observing community co-researchers’ experiences throughout a PAR project:

They were valued. Their voices, their opinions, their questions, they meant something. They weren't perceived as people that were causing trouble, being bizarre, being disruptive. It gave their behaviors and their thinking and their crises kind of meaning and power to do something about that new meaning, not being stuck.
Domain 9: PAR’s potential value to community members. The tenth and final domain includes participants’ ideas about what they perceived as valuable to their community co-researchers related to their experiences during the PAR process. One typical category and two variant categories were found in this domain. A typical number of participants shared that community co-researchers seemed to value feeling heard during the PAR process. One participant spoke about the experiences of community co-researchers:

When I saw the young people who I was working with, it’s really just that they got to see themselves in a new light. That they have been told so much about who they were and what they were capable of that was often limiting and somewhat negative. Or just limiting, I would say. And that they became researchers. They became people who had a voice and had audiences who listened to their voices.

A variant number of participants expressed the belief that community co-researchers felt empowered through their PAR work. One participant described his/her impression of PAR’s impact on their PAR group:

It was empowerment. Challenging these ideas that women working on the streets were not valuable. And opening the possibilities for them to own their different identities, mothers and heads of households and change agents and entrepreneurs and business owners. All these things were so, so important.

Another participant shared:

One of our girls said, So often, people don't think kids have anything to say. But we know stuff, too. And there was a lot of: Thank you for believing in us and thinking we could do this. It seemed like they perceived a shift in the ceiling of what was possible for
them and I think felt really spurred on and motivated from getting to pick something. And getting to pick something I think was kind of a new experience for some of them. A variant number of participants also shared the observation that community co-researchers developed meaningful relationship during the PAR process, which seemed to be of great importance to their community co-researchers. For example, one participant stated:

So that, for me, as a clinician, I think that is the basis of healing when we feel truly understood and that we matter in our relationships. That it can be transformative. I think that is what the experience that PAR creates…you get to see that you matter. And that your experiences matter.

Another participant expressed his/her impression of what seemed most important to community co-researchers. This participant stated, “I think what was highlighted the most for them was this stronger sense of community within themselves.”
Chapter V: Discussion

Counseling psychologists have made great advances in answering the “call to the profession” (Sue et al., 1997, p. 477) for culturally sensitive and appropriate interventions (Sue et al., 1992) as well as a broader commitment to social justice (Goodman et al.; Vera & Speight, 2003). Scholars have facilitated this movement by organizing a set of social justice principles, which serve as a foundation to social justice practice (Burnes & Manese, 2008; Motulsky et al., 2014; Smith & Romero, 2010): ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness raising, building on strengths, and leaving people with the tools for change (Goodman et al., 2004).

Training within counseling psychology graduate programs is one essential component in the development of social justice-oriented counseling psychologists (Arredondo & Rosen, 2007). As such, training programs have made attempts to incorporate social justice in a variety of ways including single courses dedicated to multiculturalism and/or social justice (Sammons & Speight, 2008), integration of experiential approaches to social justice (Burnes & Singh, 2010), and the development of programs fully dedicated to the mission of social justice (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007). However, there remains a lack of literature related to examining the efficacy of such applied approaches to social justice training (Motulsky et al., 2014), which illustrates the need for studies such as the one presented here. PAR, with its foundations in action research (Lewin, 1951), feminism (Brown, 2010; Maguire, 1987) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005), addresses Goodman et al.’s aforementioned social justice principles. Additionally, beyond being a social justice approach to research, PAR has been identified as benefitting both community members and university researchers who engage in the process (Fine & Torre, 2006; Smith & Romero, 2010). Participants of this study have contributed to a better understanding of what
social justice practice and training looks and feels like through vivid accounts of their experiences with PAR and the impact these experiences have had on themselves both personally and professionally.

The following chapter will begin with an illustrative narrative of the typical participant’s experience as a counseling psychology trainee, who has engaged in PAR, guided by categories of general and typical frequencies outlined above (Hill et al., 1997). This will be followed by a presentation of relevant findings from this study, as outlined in the previous chapter, focusing on comparison with earlier findings as well as gaps in the literature. This discussion will initially be organized according to the three research questions that guided this study, which were:

1. How do trainees describe the role of their PAR work within their overall training experience?

2. What impact has the PAR experience had on the development of trainees’ skills and professional development as counselors (if any)?

3. How do trainees believe that PAR has affected their competence in and usage of the following skills (if any)?
   a. ongoing self-examination
   b. sharing power
   c. giving voice
   d. facilitating consciousness
   e. emphasis on strengths
   f. leaving people with the tools for change

Accordingly, the discussion starts with a presentation of PAR within the overall context of training (research question one), and then moves to include discussion on the impact of PAR on
the development of practice-related skills and overall professional development (research question two). Following this discussion, the impact of PAR on counseling trainees’ social justice competence in each of the six described domains (self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating critical consciousness, emphasis on strengths, and tools for change) will be reviewed in depth (research question three). Broader implications for the field of counseling psychology as well as limitations of the current project will then be described, followed by recommendations for future research.

**Prototypical Participant Portrait**

Within CQR results, a composite portrait of the prototypical participant can be derived from consideration of the general and typical categories generated by the analysis. In the current study, the typical participant has received graduate training in the field of counseling psychology and has engaged in at least one PAR project with a marginalized community. She defines social justice as equality and equal access at multiple levels. She learned about PAR through her graduate training research team and describes a central characteristic of PAR as collaboration with community co-researchers at every stage of the PAR process. Her PAR experience has included the use of a variety of traditional as well as non-traditional research methods and involved the exploration of group members’ racial/cultural identities and experiences of oppression. She describes the impact of PAR on her clinical training to include increasing her awareness of the impact of power differentials within the therapeutic process and teaching her the importance of emphasizing individuals’ strengths in her clinical work. She also points out that her experiences with PAR have had a significant impact on her professional identity. Additionally, she believes that her experiences with PAR increased her understanding of her own multicultural identity. Upon reflection of her experiences with PAR, she identified greatly
valuing meaningful relationships that she developed throughout the process and acknowledged that community co-researchers seemed to value feeling heard.

The Role of PAR in Training

The first research question addressed the role that PAR experiences had played in participants’ training experiences. Individuals who participated in this study identified initially being exposed to PAR through research teams that they joined as counseling psychology graduate students. They viewed PAR as a way to engage in research as well as a way to enhance their practice-related skills, while simultaneously engaging in social justice practice that would have direct impact on marginalized communities. Upon reflection, a number of participants identified PAR as an integral component to their overall clinical training. One participant described such an experience:

I will say that PAR has been really important to me as a counseling psychologist and as a clinician and educator. I've been trained in counseling psychology and I feel like counseling psychology as a field really wants to take this social justice stance. I think that we do that in many ways in our field and that we have been a leading voice in the larger field of psychology and counseling.

These findings highlight an important discrepancy between the perceived value of PAR by those who have first-hand experiences with the process within the context of training and PAR’s relatively limited incorporation into counseling psychology training programs as well as professional contexts more broadly. Additionally, the narratives of participants offer further support of the connection between PAR and social justice-oriented practice. One participant described a personal view of how social justice, PAR, and practice-related work are parts of the same vision:
I feel like the vision of social justice and the vision of PAR is building tolerance for discomfort. That is such an important part of the process for PAR and also for counseling and clinical work. For group work and individual work and any kind of community work that the more tolerant we can be of discomfort and to help hold conflict and stuff that comes up that doesn't feel good, then I think the more that works towards creating a beloved community.

Participants were able to gain experience in multiple roles (researcher, clinician, teacher, supervisor) by way of engaging in PAR projects, which identifies PAR as a promising opportunity to fulfill the identified need of integrated and experiential types of social justice-oriented training (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Burnes & Singh, 2010; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Lewis, 2010; Toporek, 2001).

**The Role of PAR in Professional Development**

The second research question addressed the impact of participants’ PAR experiences on overall professional development. Results of this study indicate that exposure to the PAR process during graduate training has the potential to impact the long-term development of trainees’ professional identity. In particular, participants identified PAR as influential with regard to making career decisions and choosing content and methods when engaging in research as trainees and professional psychologists. They also identified developing general applied skills as well as group facilitation skills as a result of their experiences with PAR. Participants elaborated on the development of skills correlated with social justice competencies, which will be discussed in further detail in the following section.
PAR’s Impact on the Development of a Social Justice Approach to Practice

The third research question addressed how participants viewed PAR experiences as influencing their levels of competence and integration of social justice principles in practice. Goodman et al. put forth six foundational principles, congruent with counseling psychologists’ movement toward identifying interventions that are effective in addressing the negative consequences of oppression for members of marginalized groups as well as producing social change (Constantine et al., 2007). Those principles are ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness, emphasizing strengths, and leaving people with the tools for change.

As elaborated below, results of this study highlight some of the ways in which PAR offers opportunities for trainees to gain experience in the application of these social justice principles as well as convey the impact that these experiences have on how participants engage more broadly in their work. In the following discussion, the principles of emphasizing strengths and facilitating critical consciousness will be reviewed together to more accurately represent the views of participants as these themes were frequently interwoven throughout the narratives of participants.

**Ongoing self-examination.** Ongoing critical self-assessment and understanding of how sociohistorical and sociopolitical forces influence the development of all people, including clinicians, has been identified as an essential component of competent counseling (Constantine et al., 2007; Sue & Sue, 2003). Participants’ narratives in the current study illustrated personal accounts of PAR experiences and how the PAR process facilitated their personal growth and self-awareness as many linked their experiences with PAR with an increased understanding of their own multicultural identity. Some study participants also included accounts of increasing
their attunement to power differentials in everyday life as a result of engaging in PAR. Participants of this study reflected on challenging discussions related to their own multicultural identity and issues of power and privilege, which facilitated a deeper and more critical understanding of their own experiences. They described this knowledge as providing them with increased insight regarding their own potential social impact on others, particularly clients in clinical contexts, where there often exists an inherent hierarchy of power.

Study participants suggested that this development of self-awareness has motivated the ongoing process of critical self-examination and commitment to challenge oppressive power differentials rather than replicate them in clinical contexts. PAR has been set apart from traditional models of research that do not inherently emphasize the importance of self-reflection. One study participant related personal growth and self-awareness developed through PAR experiences with her ability to communicate with clients and develop trust in the therapeutic relationship:

I think PAR experiences have really taught me how to bring up race, right? Or to bring up gender. Or to talk about personal gender pronouns. To notice the differences between me and the client and to wonder about them in a way that brings curiosity. My hope is to increase safety and trust in the room so that the person that I'm working with, sitting across from me, feels like they can talk about racism and I'm not going to get defensive about that. Right? Or they can talk about what I represent. My hope, too, is that I can own the mistakes that I make. Because I think being an ally means that we're not always perfect and sometimes we make mistakes. Being able to come back to the table and say: I just want to notice what just happened. I want to apologize. I wonder if we can start
again. Or I wonder what that experience was like for you. And to be able to continue the conversation and not get hung up in shame or guilt about it.

The findings of this study strongly support a connection between engaging in PAR and an increased understanding of participants’ own multicultural identity as well as their understanding of their own power and privilege. They also begin to address the lack of understanding of how social justice principles may be put into action (Moltulsy et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2010).

**Sharing power.** The intentional acknowledgement and challenging of power differentials is an essential component of a social justice approach to counseling as well as to the underlying philosophy of PAR. The narratives of participants reflected these values as they acknowledged an increased awareness of power differentials in both clinical settings and everyday life as a result of their experiences with PAR. Participants also learned to address issues of power in the therapeutic relationship by empowering clients and working collaboratively with clients in an attempt to reduce the hierarchy and share power. Participants speculated that community co-researchers felt empowered through engaging the collaborative process of PAR. One participant described the relevance of what she learned about the importance of acknowledging power differentials. This participant also highlighted the impact of PAR experience on work in an applied setting:

I currently work with families that are pretty vulnerable. They've had experience with a system that has the ability to separate their family. I am part of that system, although I don't directly work with the administration of child services. I represent it. And so, that is a big awareness that the power differentials exist. They matter. And it's much more helpful to acknowledge it directly. I do think that PAR made me more aware of the
importance of a really approaching things as collaboration and meaning it. Not pretending that it's collaborative and ignoring the fact that there were power differences.

**Giving voice.** Another related theme that frequently emerged from the responses of participants was the notion of empowering community co-researchers in a manner that valued their opinions and intentionally listened to what they identified or *voiced* was important. Participants subsequently utilized the empowerment-centered approach in clinical settings as well. One underlying principle to the PAR process is valuing the narratives of marginalized community members who have historically been silenced. Participants reflected on the value of feeling heard from the perspective of community co-researchers and observed this to be a transformative aspect of PAR. Study participants identified the importance of the input of the community co-researchers at every stage of the PAR process and how this motivated a more collaborative approach in contexts beyond PAR. One participant described her view of how this aspect of PAR translates into her therapy work:

More than I could say. More than I could put into words. I think PAR is a way of looking at your work. That's why we call it the spirit of PAR. The ideas behind PAR do translate to clinical work. For example, in the room, in clinical work, you can trust the expertise of your clients. The voices of clients in the room. I think that's very important as clinicians to remember. I think that's the essence of PAR.

**Emphasizing strengths and facilitating critical consciousness.** Participants viewed the facilitation of clients’ critical consciousness as important in clinical settings in that this type of understanding allowed for opportunities to externalize sources of psychological suffering as well as to challenge traditional paradigms that not only focus primarily on diagnosis and pathology (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007) but were also designed for White European Americans (Abreu,
Many participants also identified PAR experiences as imperative in teaching them the importance of emphasizing individuals’ strengths in clinical practice. The following statement, made by a study participant, illustrates how these two principles may be used to guide social justice-oriented interventions:

I think that I cannot say enough how the members of the PAR group showed all those strengths. They are incredibly resilient and strong in ways that for me, just every day we would finish the group saying the same thing: Oh, my gosh. They're skillful. They're talented. They're smart and sensitive and caring and loving. All of that was not highlighted in their day-to-day. They're usually being criticized and put down and oppressed over and over again to the point that they also believe that. In the group we kind of came back to the realization that they was nothing wrong with them, it was all these social systems oppressing who they really are and them just defending themselves and trying to survive and feed their families. It has helped me see all those strengths and positive coping strategies that may at this point be positive or not, but at some point they were really adaptive and really important for their survival. It was important to see that and to discuss with the PAR group all these strengths and then to notice them making some changes so that those strategies were current. They started to talk about change and they started to talk about their values and what they wanted in life. It was important to see and I still think about clients in that way for sure. I learned that from PAR.

Participants gained experience in facilitating a greater understanding of systemic oppression and identifying strengths in members of marginalized communities who have developed strategies for coping and survival.
**Leaving people with the tools for change.** Participants elaborated on the strengths-based discussion of how PAR impacted them as clinicians by ultimately highlighting the underlying current of encouraging empowerment through their practices and interventions. This parallels Goodman et al.’s (2004) principles, which emphasize the importance of facilitating the development of skills and agency in people’s lives—in other words, leaving people with tools for change. Participants viewed engaging in experiences and dialogues that emphasize individuals’ inherent strengths and resilience and critically examining sources of oppression and suffering as methods of empowering PAR community co-researchers and clients. Through a collaborative approach that views people as experts of their experiences and lives, individuals may develop a sense of agency in their lives, which may be viewed as a “tool” or strategy for managing life experiences beyond the boundaries of a PAR project or therapeutic relationship. Additionally, participants of this study described PAR as an opportunity for community co-researchers to develop research skills as well as gain experience in presenting research at professional conferences.

**Implications for Counseling Psychology**

Results of this exploratory study have important implications for the field of counseling psychology. These results reflect new discoveries as well as further support research related to social justice training. In the following section, implications for graduate training, clinical practice, and research will be outlined.

**Training.** Results of this study have several implications for counseling psychology graduate training programs. First, PAR has demonstrated its potential value as a tool for training that extends beyond gaining practical research experience and has been identified as an opportunity to gain supervised training that enhances practice-related skills and may offer the
additional benefit of exposure to supervisory roles as well (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007). Participants acknowledged gaining valuable experience through PAR, which included presenting at professional conferences, improving clinical skills, and learning a variety of research methodologies. This variety reflects the wide-ranging nature of PAR, which extends beyond the boundaries of many existing methods of research and blurs the separation between a variety of training areas, such as clinical practice and research (Smith & Romero, 2010; Fine & Torre, 2006; Brydon-Miller, 1997).

Another implication for training suggested by the results of this study relates to the identified need for integrated experiential components of social justice training into graduate program curricula (Lewis, 2010; Sammons & Speight, 2008; Sevig & Etzkorn, 2001). Results of this study suggest that PAR has the potential to put counseling psychology’s commitment to social justice into action in the context of training, which includes experiential exposure and opportunities to develop important practice-related skills. Participants of this study highlighted the importance of gaining first-hand experience with diverse marginalized populations and viewed PAR as a way to engage in the action of social justice work during their graduate training. These findings support PAR as an avenue for “walking the talk” (Singh et al., 2010, p. 766) of social justice. One component of this experience that was described further by participants was learning to manage difficult dynamics and discussions. Such difficult dialogues have been described as an imperative aspect of social justice training in counseling psychology as they “support movement away from broad categorizations to more complex, rich, and deep understandings of others” (Toporek & Worthington, 2014, p. 925).

Results of this study also suggest that the context of graduate training programs is optimal for future professional counseling psychologists to be exposed to PAR. These early
training experiences provide the basis for the development of counseling psychologists who are equipped to competently apply the multicultural and social justice principles (Arredondo & Rosen, 2007). These experiences can be influential to whether and to what extent trainees broadly adopt social justice values in graduate training as well as make future career decisions. This was reflected in the narratives of participants in their descriptions of PAR as integral to clinical training and having a significant influence on professional identity.

Additionally, results support the feasibility of incorporating PAR as a method of social justice training into a wide variety of existing graduate programs. The variability in the descriptions of PAR projects in which participants were involved speaks to the wide scope of projects and the ability to engage in PAR within a variety of contexts. Participants of this study described working with populations, which included naturally occurring retirement communities, schools, community-based organizations, and mental health clinics. Furthermore, scholars continue to make progress in establishing standards and best practices for reporting of PAR (Smith et al., 2010), allowing those unfamiliar with the process to envision ways to implement PAR within a training program. This includes programs that fully integrate social justice into their mission and curriculum as well programs that are moving in this direction. These findings also further support the broadening of what training programs consider as qualifying as clinical or practicum hours (Burnes & Singh, 2010), as they provide further evidence of the overlap of PAR as a research method and intervention with significant therapeutic value.

The implications of PAR for counseling psychology graduate training indicate that there are many potential benefits to the integration of PAR into training program curricula. Scholars have suggested that integrated in-depth and long-term approaches, including both didactic and experiential methods of developing multicultural and social justice awareness, knowledge, and
skills are the most effective in the development of social justice competencies. These suggestions are helpful, but at the same time, actual training formats for enacting them are also necessary. Therefore, the current findings offer information relevant to the consideration of whether and how to implement social justice curricula via PAR training into graduate program offerings. PAR offers opportunities to engage in social justice work that may expose trainees to a variety of research methods as it simultaneously offers benefit to community members. PAR work may also provide a chance for trainees to take on supervisory roles. As such, PAR work seems well suited as the basis for a research and/or clinical practicum course that also provided clinical and research supervision along with relevant learning materials and didactics. PAR as a training experience would be well-positioned within a curriculum that incorporated participatory methods into a variety of its courses as well as a broader culture dedicated to social justice. This type of environment would likely both support and benefit from PAR projects as a standard element within their curricula. Programs without such an emphasis may employ a PAR practicum as an initial way to expose trainees to the philosophy and practice of PAR as well as social justice concepts and applications more broadly.

**Practice.** Although PAR is obviously not clinical practice, the findings of this study support the implications of PAR experience for trainees’ mental health work in clinical settings. The narratives of participants in the study highlight a variety of ways in which PAR benefits both community members as well as university PAR researchers. This will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

First, although PAR is not therapy, it has been found to have positive effects for community members (Smith & Romero, 2010). Participants in this study reported perceived personal benefits of PAR for themselves and their co-researchers similar to those identified by
other scholars (Fine & Torre, 2006; Smith & Romero, 2010), such as feeling valued and empowered through PAR. Participants observed that community co-researchers reported feeling heard, and that community co-researchers also appreciated the development of meaningful and supportive relationships with one another through engagement with the PAR process. These findings support the suggestion of Smith and Romero (2010) that counseling psychologists move beyond the limits of traditional paradigms and embrace PAR as an intervention that has the potential to impact personal emotional wellbeing. Participants in this study described feeling as though PAR allowed them to have a direct impact on communities and to experience putting social work into practice as highly motivating to engage in PAR work.

Additionally, PAR offers clinical trainees opportunities to build competencies consistent with professional standards of competence relating to areas of practice, research, consultation, education, and supervision and to effectively addressing diverse intersectional experiences and identities (APA, 2017; Fouad et al., 2009). In addition to the development of social justice and multicultural competencies (Goodman et al., 2004) related to practice-oriented work described in the previous section, participants also referred to the development of several broader critical counseling skills through their experiences with PAR. These included group facilitation skills, understanding the value of transparency in therapeutic relationship, and focusing significantly on the process of building trust and rapport.

Finally, the narratives of participants in this study identified the significant role that PAR experience may also play in the formation of a social justice orientation to practice. Participants themselves identified PAR as integral to the development of their professional identities and influential with regard to future decisions related to their career trajectories. Participants described “the spirit of PAR” as guiding their work through their use of a collaborative, power-
sharing, strengths-based approach. Rather than trying to universally apply treatments, participants described engaging in interventions largely guided by the needs and goals of their clients. PAR is an approach to practice that addresses factors, such as sociocultural and political factors that affect the well being of clients (Koch & Juntunen, 2014). Participants also experienced the process of intentional power sharing with community members and empowering community members by engaging them as the experts of their own experiences and as decision-makers, which is in line with the basic underlying principles of PAR (Chou et al., 2014).

**Research.** PAR remains an infrequently utilized method of learning and research within training institutions (Kidd & Kral, 2005); however, results from this study support the value of a broader use of PAR as a method of research throughout the field of counseling psychology. Additionally, scholars have already identified and begun to challenge the misconception of PAR as a less rigorous form of research on the basis of its divergence from conventional research paradigms (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Smith et al., 2002). Rather, the strengths of PAR as a type of research with inherent strengths related to both the power-sharing process of the approach as well as the unique type of knowledge it generates have been demonstrated. Following is one participant’s description of how PAR is a reminder of the importance of the process of research in addition to the content being studied:

Participatory action research is really an approach, it's not a methodology. It's an approach to research that really turns on its head the dominant paradigms of privilege and oppression. In PAR the role of researcher becomes so expansive, that it's not just the academic researcher who's considered a knowledge builder in the process. Community members and other folks who are not involved in academia become a critical, if not central, part of the knowledge building process. I think research still lags behind. I don’t
think we have attended to much social justice wise. I feel like we will study social justice content. But we have not addressed the process of research. I feel like PAR has really taught me about deconstructing the process of research and how much hierarchy and power over goes on in that process traditionally. That even when we're studying social justice content, like microaggressions or something like that, that in the end, how much does that matter when we're still engaging in this very top down hierarchical process?

We're still reinforcing, perpetuating, holding up, those systems of domination. I think we still have a lot of work to do there, but PAR has taught me a lot about that.

As reflected in this participant’s words, PAR is a method of research that affirms and addresses the reality of power and privilege in the shaping of knowledge rather than perpetuating the hierarchies inherent in conventional forms of research. PAR therefore broadens the research preparation that students receive.

In PAR, there is a wide range of research approaches, which may be employed, including traditional surveys as well as forms of artistic expression and storytelling (Kidd & Kral, 2005). Participants of this study appreciated the flexibility of PAR, which allowed for the use of both traditional and non-traditional research methods based on the desires and goals of community co-researchers. Participants also described their experience with PAR as different from other forms of traditional research in that they felt their work had a direct impact on marginalized communities. Additionally, PAR has been referred to as “an approach to knowing” (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p. 187) that is linked to beginning a process of action and growth. As such, regardless of the chosen methods used throughout the PAR process, PAR is not defined by or reduced to any one method but as “a continuing conversation” (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p. 190). The knowledge created as a result of PAR emphasizes the importance of the expert perspectives held
by community co-researchers and upon actively implementing results in a way that will promote change.

**Implications: Summary**

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that PAR has important implications for the field of counseling psychology in the areas of training, practice, and research. This study’s contribution is significant in that it addresses an existing lack of guidance related to putting social justice values and theories into practice (Motulsky et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2010). In fact, the PAR process is dedicated to collaboratively exploring and engaging in *actions* toward social change. PAR has demonstrated value as a social justice-oriented approach to research as well as a process with therapeutic and growth potential for community co-researchers and university co-researchers as well as collective communities beyond the limits of any PAR project. Therefore, PAR offers opportunities for trainees to develop essential practice-related and research skills as well to begin the development of a professional identity predicated on social justice values. One participant reflected on the effects of PAR on university co-researchers:

I feel like PAR has really helped me take all these things that I've been studying and thinking about intellectually and actually put them into real embodied practice. I think reading about it, studying it, and then seeing it and witnessing it in action really brings this deeper knowing about. All those theories about intersectionality and oppression and privilege, you get to experience it, reflect on it, in real time. Then you get to apply it.

**Limitations**

This exploratory study focused on learning about the experiences of counseling psychology trainees who have engaged in PAR to better understand the impact that these
experiences may have on the development of certain areas of social justice competence. There are several limitations to this study, which should be considered in interpreting its findings.

First, much effort was put forth to stay true to the original words and intentions of participants. The analysis team frequently returned to original interview transcripts, engaged thoughtfully during the process of arguing to consensus, and direct quotations made by participants were utilized in the reporting of results to illustrate how broader themes were derived from the original data. The use of these rich descriptions was an additional validity procedure utilized throughout the analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Morrow, 2005).

However, there are limitations to the amount of information that can be gathered within the constraints of a medium-length, semi-structured interview. The interview protocol developed for this study intended to provide guidance based on the research questions and existing literature as well as value the unique narratives of each participant. Although this is not inherently problematic to the exploratory goals of this study, there are always opportunities for further and more in-depth exploration than time permits. For example, there was some variability among participants with regard to number of and duration of PAR projects that participants were engaged in, and it would be useful to further understand the impact, if any, that these differences have on trainees’ development of social justice competencies.

Additionally, the sample in the present study met the criteria outlined by Hill and her colleagues (1997; 2005) for CQR; nevertheless, CQR findings, like qualitative findings of many kinds, are not intended to be generalized indiscriminately beyond the parameters of the study’s inclusion criteria (Morrow, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005). Readers should therefore factor these parameters into the interpretation or application of these findings beyond the settings and program specialties represented here.
Lastly, efforts were taken to acknowledge and minimize bias among the research team. The research team engaged in researcher reflexivity by self-disclosing any assumptions, beliefs, and biases that they believed may impact their interpretations of the data. Researchers also worked with external auditors to systematically review documentation at every stage of the analysis process in order to ensure the credibility of this study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Yet, it is still important to acknowledge that the research team analyzing the qualitative data carried their own preconceived understanding of PAR within clinical training as they all had personal experience as counseling psychology trainees.

**Future Directions**

This exploratory study has provided informative data on the potential utility of PAR as a method of social justice training, and it also suggests useful directions for further research. First, the findings provide a general understanding of PAR’s potential regarding the development of social justice competencies for counseling psychology trainees. Future studies would enhance this understanding by using diverse methodologies and collecting data from multiple points of view (Ponterotto, 2002). For example, it would be helpful to better understand the perspectives of individuals in roles such as faculty members, administrators of institutions, and members of professional organizations. This would enhance understanding of both existing supports and barriers to the implementation of PAR into training programs. It would also be beneficial to further explore the experiences of PAR community co-researchers as well as members of communities impacted by PAR work, who were not directly involved in PAR projects to understand the broader impacts of PAR on communities. It may also be useful to assess the impact of PAR on the more long-term professional experiences of trainees who have engaged in PAR.
One premise of PAR is that every person brings their own distinct social, cultural, and historical experiences into the project through which unique group processes and dynamics will emerge. Additionally, PAR emphasizes the importance of focusing on the uniquely identified needs of a community. It should be noted that in addition to the important general and typical responses that were found throughout this study, there was a large number of the emergent categories that held the variant frequency label. The content of these variant categories also sets the stage for further exploration. For example, a study could bring an amplified focus to the relationship between engaging in PAR and becoming more attuned to power differentials in everyday life.

Results of this study also prompt the consideration of further questions related to the incorporation of PAR into counseling psychology graduate training programs. Some of the questions that arise include the following: What types of barriers currently exist to the inclusion of PAR in counseling psychology graduate training programs? What would the incorporation of PAR mean in terms of standardized training requirements, such as defining what whether PAR work fulfills research and/or clinical requirements? It is likely that such questions would need to be answered in order to integrate PAR into training curricula with the greatest success.

Concluding Comments

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of PAR within counseling psychology graduate training programs offers a number of potential benefits for the field of counseling psychology in enacting its commitment to social justice. PAR provides a foundation for the development of social justice competencies and facilitates personal and professional growth for those who engage in the PAR process. Scholars have identified that “counseling psychology has the potential to train future practitioners, researchers, and educators so that they
may contribute to social justice[…]and confront rather than perpetuate oppression” (Toporek & Worthington, 2014, p. 941). Participants’ acknowledgement of PAR as influential in the development of practice-related and research skills, social justice competence, and career trajectory illustrates the potential that increased integration of PAR into training programs could have on the counseling psychology community as well as the broader landscape of the field of psychology. In line with counseling psychology’s commitment to social justice, this study provides support for PAR as a promising method of training social justice competencies.
References


http://www.tc.columbia.edu/CCP/counseling/index.asp?Id=Doctor+of+Philosophy&Info=The+Ph%2ED%2E+Program+in+Counseling+Psychology


Appendix A.

Section I: PROTOCOL DESCRIPTION (Please answer each question in the space below it)

1. Please describe the purpose of your research. Provide relevant background information and scientific justification for your study. You may provide citations as necessary.

This project will explore university researchers’ experiences with PAR and their impact on the development of social justice counseling competence. In order to initiate this exploration, the experiences of counseling trainees who have previously worked as PAR co-researchers will be studied. These participants are viewed as important sources of information, given that counseling trainees are important stakeholders of counseling training programs (Sammons & Speight, 2008) and offer a unique voice to the multicultural and social justice discourse (Coleman, 2006). The inclusion of the trainee perspective is also important to reflect the field’s dedication to social justice as it relates to considering power differentials in training (Burnes & Manese, 2008), as trainees typically hold minimal power within their programs and the field of psychology more broadly (Singh et al., 2010). Counseling psychology students’ experiences, perceptions, and training related to social justice are imperative to consider to identify areas of growth for future training directions in the field of counseling psychology, yet they are lacking within existing literature (Singh et al., 2010).

Not only is the inclusion of the trainee perspective congruent with the field’s social justice agenda, but learning about the training potential of PAR from trainees has the potential to benefit counseling psychology in several ways. It would offer firsthand accounts of engaging practically in social justice work or “walking the talk” (Singh et al., 2010, p. 766) as trainees, rather than primarily focusing on social justice as a concept or set of values. Only recently have scholars begun to include trainees’ perceptions of their social justice training “to identify areas of growth for future training of counseling psychologists” (Singh et al., 2010).

The process of PAR is a specific enactment of social justice principles that has the potential to be a replicable component of social justice-oriented research, practice, and training that could be incorporated into training programs that have not yet successfully integrated social justice values into their curricula. Lastly, exploring the training potential of PAR presents an opportunity to enhance the field of psychology by training clinicians whose competence satisfies professional standards (ACA, 2005; APA, 2002) and benchmarks pertaining to multicultural competence and culturally sensitive practice that the field has designated as necessary for psychologists to enter the field (Schaffer et al., 2013). Such an emphasis on knowledge of diversity and cultural identity underscores continuing (and growing) trends by which social justice competence is becoming codified within the training standards of the field. Scholars have highlighted the mutually beneficial impact of engaging in PAR for community and university researchers highlighting PAR as a potential method for training multiculturally competent and socially-just practitioners. Results of this exploratory study will set the stage for researchers to further examine linkages between PAR and social justice counseling competencies.

2. Federal guidelines state that research cannot exclude any classes of subjects without scientific justification. Will your study purposely exclude any classes of subjects (e.g. by gender, class, race or age)? If so, please justify.

This study will not exclude any classes of subjects.

3. Please state your research question (in one or two sentences, if possible).

4. How do trainees describe the role of their PAR work within their overall training experience?
5. What impact has the PAR experience had on the development of trainees’ skills and professional development as counselors (if any)?
6. How do trainees believe that PAR has affected their competence in and usage of the following skills (if any)?
   a. ongoing self-examination
   b. sharing power
c. giving voice
d. facilitating consciousness
e. emphasis on strengths
f. leaving people with the tools for change

4. Please describe the specific data you plan to collect and explain how data and the subjects you choose will help to answer your research question/s.

Data will be collected through individual semi-structured interviews. The principal investigator of the proposed study, a counseling psychology doctoral student trained in interview techniques, will conduct interviews. Each interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed and then analyzed using a qualitative methodology known as Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill & Thompson, 1997, 2005). This method allows for the systematic thematic analysis of interview data through the identification of domains, core ideas, and categories within and between interviewees. The impact of interviewer differences is reduced through the use of interview protocols and adhering to interviewees’ own words throughout analysis (Hill, 2005). Consensus between interviewers occurs at each stage of the data analysis process following independent reviews of interview transcripts by each interviewer.

The interview protocol is appended to this proposal.

Section II: DESCRIPTION OF RECRUITMENT AND PROCEDURES

5. Please describe your recruitment methods. How and where will subjects be recruited (flyers, announcement/s, word-of-mouth, snowballing, etc.)? You will need to include your IRB Protocol number in all recruitment materials, including announcements, online and email text. Paper copies of submitted recruitment materials to be distributed will be stamped with your IRB Protocol number once your study has been approved.

Participants will be recruited through word-of-mouth and snowballing.

6. Are you recruiting subjects from institutions other than Teachers College? If so, documentation of permission or pending IRB approval from the institution/s is required with this submission.

No.

7. How many subjects are you planning to recruit?

15-20 participants will be recruited for this study.

8. Please list what activities your subject will be engaging in (e.g. surveys, focus groups, interviews, diagnostic procedures, etc.). [PLEASE NOTE: If you are collecting any private medical information from your subjects, please see our website www.tc.edu/irb under Forms and Guidelines for the HIPAA consent document.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of activity</th>
<th># of times the activity occurs</th>
<th>Duration of activity per instance</th>
<th>Total time period of active participation per subject (days, weeks, etc.)</th>
<th>Describe the Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>Audio-recorded semi-structured interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total hours of participation: Duration of participation:
9. Where will your data collection take place specifically (e.g., in classroom, outside of classroom, waiting room, office, other location)?

The interviews will take place in a private office at Teachers College or in another private agreed upon location.

10. Will subjects be remunerated for their participation? If, so please describe. [PLEASE NOTE: If using a lottery system, please remember to state odds of winning in consent form. Also, if you will be offering course credit for study participation, you must discuss this here and include the alternative assignment for those who decline to participate in the study].

Participants will not be remunerated for their participation.

11. Will deception be used? If so, please provide a rationale for its use. How will subjects be debriefed afterward? Submit debriefing script. Scripts should include a statement that gives your subjects the opportunity to withdraw their participation at that time. [PLEASE NOTE: studies involving deception are given Full Board Review unless the deception is minor and risks are minimal].

No.

12. Will you have a control group? Please describe your procedures and explain the purpose of using a control group.

No.

13. Will you be videotaping your subjects? If so, please describe in detail. [PLEASE NOTE: The IRB will only approve videotaping when there is adequate scientific and ethical justification].

No.

**Section III: CONFIDENTIALITY PROCEDURES**

14. How will you ensure the subjects’ confidentiality? Describe in detail your plans for ensuring confidentiality of data regarding subjects. [PLEASE NOTE: If you will be remunerating subjects after their participation, please make it clear if and how you will link their names/contact information confidentially to their compensation].

In order to ensure confidentiality, participants will be assigned a number, which will be associated with data collected. No identifying information will ever be associated with the collected data.

15. If you will be audio/videotaping, please state how you will ensure that subjects have consented to being recorded, and if some subjects do not consent to being recorded, explain how you will protect their confidentiality. (This must also be clearly stated in your consent form/s).

Participant consent regarding audio recording will be ensured by clearly stating the conditions of the proposed study in a consent form and through verbal discussion prior to participation in the study.

16. Will data be collected anonymously? Will you be able to link the data? If data will not be collected anonymously, how will subjects’ identity/information be protected? (e.g. codes, pseudonyms, masking of information, etc.).

In order to ensure confidentiality, participants will be assigned a number, which will be associated with data collected. No identifying information will ever be associated with the collected data.

17. Where will coding and data materials be stored (e.g. ‘in a locked file cabinet in the Principal Investigator’s home or office’)?
Coding and data material will be stored in a locked file cabinet upon completion.

18. Will you need bilingual interpreters or interviewers, and if so, what will you do to ensure confidentiality of the subjects? What are your procedures for recruiting interpreters/interviewers? Indicate the name of the interpreter/interviewer and for whom he/she works. Submit copies of all questionnaires or interview questions for each subject population. Interpreters will not be needed.

SECTION IV: DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH RISKS & BENEFITS

19. What are the potential risks, if any, (physical, psychological, social, legal, or other) to your subjects? What is the likelihood of these risks occurring, and/or their seriousness? How will you work to minimize them?

[PLEASE NOTE: The IRB regards no research involving human subjects as risk-free. You may describe minimal risks for your study (such as discomfort, boredom, fatigue, etc.), or state that the research will involve minimal risk, similar to an activity (named) like that which participants will perform as part of your study.]

The risks associated with this study are assumed to be relatively low and similar to those involved in a classroom discussion related to social justice issues, research and professional development.

20. What are your plans for ensuring necessary intervention in the event of a distressed subject and/or your referral sources if there is a need for psychological and/or physical treatment/assistance?

Participants will be informed prior to taking part in the study that if at any time during the interview they experience concerns related to the material they are invited to terminate their participation.

21. What are your qualifications/preparations that enable you to estimate and minimize risk to subjects?

The investigator is a counseling psychology doctoral student who has experience conducting interviews similar to those related to the proposed study, as well as eight years of supervised counseling experience.

22. What are the potential benefits of this study to the subjects? Most research conducted at TC provides NO DIRECT BENEFIT to participants and must be STATED as such in the INFORMED CONSENT FORM. Occasionally, study design will include a diagnosis, evaluation, screening, counseling or training, etc., that have a concrete benefit to participants, independent of the nature or results of a research study that may be listed below. Benefits such as “an opportunity to reflect,” “helping to advance knowledge,” etc., ARE NOT BENEFITS and MUST NOT be included in this section.

There are no assured direct benefits of participation in this study. However, potential benefits include increased self-awareness and insight related to personal and professional development through reflection on experiences with PAR and social justice training.

Section V: INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES (Please use the templates on the website in preparing your consent form/s, and note that Informed consent is a process, not a form).

23. What are your procedures for obtaining subject’s informed consent to participate in the research?

Participants will be provided with informed consent forms that clearly outline the procedures and risks of participation in the study. These forms are appended to this proposal. They will also be informed that participation is strictly voluntary and that they may end their participation at any time.

24. How will you describe your research to potential subjects? [Please note: if working with a population under eight (8) years of age, a script is necessary.]
Participants will be informed that this is a study exploring clinical trainees’ experiences with PAR and social justice training.

25. What will you do to ensure subjects’ understanding of the study and what it involves?

A statement of informed consent will explain the particulars of the study to participants in advance of their giving consent. This statement is included in a form appended to this proposal. Additionally, participants will be provided with principal investigator’s contact information in case they have further questions.

26. If you are recruiting students from a classroom during normal school hours, what will the alternative activities be for those who wish not to participate? (This should also appear in your consent form/s)

N/A

27. Use this section to provide a request for a full or partial waiver of informed consent, and justify this request. You may site criteria from the following link regarding Federal regulations and guidelines: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.116

N/A

Note for Researchers: Submit all consent forms/scripts, using the templates provided on the website. Drafts of consent forms will not be accepted. Each consent form must be a separate document and titled for its respective subject population (e.g. teachers, parents, etc.). All consent documents must be in English, even though you may translate them. All consent documents should be printed on Teachers College letterhead or include the name and address of the college, per the online Informed Consent and Participant’s Rights templates.

If your research project requires using documents that are translated into other languages, please submit both the translated English version AND the translated document with your application. You must sign and date the document. TC strongly urges investigators to use back translation (translation into the target language and back into English) as a method of ensuring the translation’s accuracy. Revised consents will also need to be translated.

NOTE: If you are conducting any part of your research within NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION [DOE] Schools: It is required that you receive approval from TEACHERS COLLEGE prior to submitting to the NYC Board of Education’s Division of Assessment and Accountability.
Appendix B.

525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000
www.tc.edu

INFORMED CONSENT

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study exploring experiences of participatory action research (PAR) and social justice training. As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Portions of de-identified transcription may be shared at professional meetings or conferences. The research will be conducted by Susan Mao, a graduate student in the Department of Counseling Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University. The research will be conducted in a private office at Teachers College, Columbia University or in another agreed upon private location.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks associated with this study are assumed to be relatively low and similar to those involved in a classroom discussion related to social justice issues, research and professional development. There are no assured direct benefits of participation in this study. However, potential benefits include increased self-awareness and insight related to your personal and professional development through reflection on your experiences with PAR and social justice training. You may end your participation at any time during the interview.

PAYMENTS: There will be no financial compensation provided for your participation in this study.

DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY: In order to ensure confidentiality, participants in this study will be assigned a number, which will be associated with data collected. No names or other identifying information will ever be associated with the collected data. Coding and data material will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 60 minutes.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED: The results of this study will be used to meet requirements of the researcher’s doctoral dissertation. The dissemination of the knowledge produced from this collaboration may also take the form of conference presentations, professional meetings, journal publication, or educational purposes.
Appendix C.

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000
www.tc.edu

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

Principal Investigator: Susan E. Mao, Ed.M.

Research Title: Exploring Participatory Action Research as a Vehicle for Social Justice Training

- I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future medical care, employment, student status or other entitlements.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (646) 884-3141.
- If at any time I have comments, or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board /IRB. The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, I can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY, 10027, Box 151.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.
- I ( ) consent to be audio-taped. I ( ) do NOT audio-taped. The written, audio-taped materials will be viewed only by the principal investigator and members of the research team.
- Written, audio-taped materials ( ) may be viewed in an educational setting outside the research ( ) may NOT be viewed in an educational setting outside the research.
- My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: ________________________________ Date:____/____/____
Name: ___________________________________________
Appendix D.

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000
www.tc.edu

Investigator's Verification of Explanation

I certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to __________________________ (participant’s name) in age-appropriate language. He/She has had the opportunity to discuss it with me in detail. I have answered all his/her questions and he/she provided the affirmative agreement (i.e. assent) to participate in this research.

Investigator’s Signature: _______________________________________
Date: ____________________
Appendix E.

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age: ________

2. Gender:
   _____ Male
   _____ Female
   _____ Please specify if not mentioned above: ____________________

3. Race or ethnicity (check all that apply):
   _____ Asian/Asian American
   _____ Black/African American (non-Latino)
   _____ Latino/a
   _____ Native American/Native Alaskan
   _____ White/Euro-American (non-Latino)
   _____ Please specify if not mentioned above:

4. Which of the following best describes your socioeconomic class membership?
   _____ Low-income/poor
   _____ Working class
   _____ Middle class
   _____ Upper class/wealthy
5. Please check the highest level of education that you have completed.
   _____ Some high school
   _____ High school diploma or GED
   _____ Some college or associate’s degree
   _____ Bachelor’s degree
   _____ Graduate degree
   _____ Certificate in Specialty – please specify: ____________________

6. Are you currently enrolled in a graduate program or have you complete your degree?
   _____ Currently enrolled
   _____ Degree completed

7. Please describe the type of program you are currently enrolled/completed.

8. Please check all types of research in which you have been involved:
   _____ Quantitative research
   _____ Qualitative research
   _____ Participatory action research
Appendix F.

Interview Protocol

1. Please describe social justice in your own words.

2. Please describe Participatory Action Research (PAR) in your own words.

3. Please describe any PAR projects that you have been involved in.
   • Prompt:
     How did you become involved in this project?

4. What was your motivation to become involved in PAR?

5. Tell me about your experience of PAR.
   • Prompts:
     Did you have any reservations or concerns about engaging in PAR with that community?
     (If yes) what were they? How did you address these concerns?

6. PAR is different from clinical training. But, as you reflect on your experiences with PAR, do you think it had any impact on your clinical/counseling training?
   • Prompt: (if yes) What were they?

7. Have your experiences with PAR impacted how you think about (ask for specific examples when applicable):
   • your own dimensions of identity? How so? How do you think this has influenced your clinical work?
   • power and power differentials in your work? How so? How do you think this has influenced your clinical work?
• your work with people/communities who have historically been silenced? How so? How do you think this has influenced your clinical work?
• the importance of critical consciousness/awareness of historical and sociocultural context? How so? How do you think this has influenced your clinical work?
• how much you focus on your clients’ strengths in your work? How so? How do you think this has influenced your clinical work?
• your treatment goals in your clinical work? How so?

8. How has your understanding of yourself been impacted by your PAR-related experiences?
   • Please give specific examples.

9. What was most valuable about these experiences to you?

10. What do you perceive was most valuable about these experiences to the community/communities with whom you worked?

11. What is important about your experience with PAR that I have not asked about?
Appendix G.

Table 1
*Summary of Domains and Categories from the Cross-Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain/category</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of social justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice means equality and equal access at multiple levels</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice entails advocating for marginalized communities</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice is an active process</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of PAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with community co-researchers at every stage of the PAR process</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A method of giving voice to marginalized groups</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice is an active process</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions of participants’ PAR projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked with specific marginalized communities</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR process involved the exploration of group members’ racial/cultural identities and experiences of oppression</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR group can use a variety of traditional and non-traditional methods</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR group’s initial focus was building trust and rapport</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR group formally presented project at a conference</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community co-researchers of our group were the ultimate decision-makers</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held the role of supervisor of PAR projects as well as a PAR co-researcher</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for engaging in PAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned about PAR through my research team</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR was a way to engage in social justice work</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to engage in work that would have direct impact on communities</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal connection to the community</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed PAR as a way to enhance skills as a clinician</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations/challenging experiences related to PAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty navigating the ambiguous/unstructured nature of PAR</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing difficult relationships with university co-researchers</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing group dynamics was difficult at times</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision was helpful in managing challenges associated with engaging in PAR work</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of PAR on clinical training and professional practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased my awareness of the impact of power differentials within the therapeutic process</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught me the importance of emphasizing individuals’ strengths in my clinical work</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences with PAR had a significant impact on professional identity</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught me about the value of empowering my clients in my clinical work</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to clinical work is more collaborative as a result of experiences with PAR</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed me the value of facilitating the development of critical consciousness with clients</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showed me the importance of exploring my clients’ cultural identities in therapy</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught me the value of transparency as a clinician in the therapeutic relationship</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My group facilitation skills improved as a result of my experiences as a PAR co-researcher</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR experience was integral to my clinical training</td>
<td>Variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of PAR on development of self-awareness and multicultural identity development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experiences with PAR increased my understanding of my own multicultural identity</td>
<td>Typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I am more attuned to power differentials in my everyday life

**PAR’s personal meaning and value for participants**
- Developed meaningful relationships through experiences with PAR
- The opportunity to witness the growth and empowerment of community co-researchers

**PAR’s potential value to community members**
- Community co-researchers seemed to value feeling heard during the PAR process
- Community co-researchers felt empowered through their PAR work
- Community co-researchers developed meaningful relationship during the PAR process