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# Teaching and Learning During A Pandemic: How one Graduate Community Psychology Class Quickly Incorporated Healing Justice Into Our Practices

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## Highlights

- Community psychology courses and changes to make during stay at home orders.
- Community psychology training, taking into account trauma during a pandemic.
- Healing justice as an class intervention to support developing scholar-activists.

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**Abstract** In this first-person account, we describe the changes we made to align our graduate student-level community psychology class with a healing justice model. We undertook this intervention because the class started in March, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home directive in our region. We describe the facets of a healing justice model, which promotes radical healing and collective action in a trauma-informed environment. We then discuss the changes we made to the class to better align with healing justice, including how enrolled students (i.e., co-authors) experienced the process of the course (e.g., reworking the syllabus, starting class with check-ins and an exercise to engage our parasympathetic nervous systems), as well as the content of the course (e.g., service projects to support people who are undocumented, unhoused, or minoritized in other ways; photovoice). We end with implications for teaching community psychology, including the importance of universal design, and for scholar-activist PhD programs.

**Keywords** Community psychology training · Healing justice · Teaching · Trauma

## Introduction

About two weeks before Spring 2020 quarter, and as the graduate student wildcat strike<sup>1</sup> was in full swing, we learned that teaching would be remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I, a tenured social-community psychologist, was to teach a graduate-level community psychology class, and, like many other campuses, ours was in a tail-spin. I attended distance learning training sessions, pulled together through our teaching center, to learn how to teach my class remotely. The emphasis was on technical aspects, but not on pedagogical shifts that might be needed.

As a community psychologist, I made several assumptions. First, the pandemic would create trauma for my students, who were likely already traumatized due to the heavy and militarized police presence on our campus during the strike and the disciplinary sanctions students were being subject to for withholding grades and/or non-violent protest. Given my students' demographics (mostly students of Color<sup>2</sup> and many first-generation college students), I hypothesized that some had grown up in over-

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<sup>1</sup> A wildcat strike is one called by workers, but without authorization from the union, if workers have a union. Until 1935, all US strikes were wildcat strikes. Laws changed in 1935, when collective bargaining was recognized. Wildcat strikes still happen throughout the US, such as the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike and the 2018 West Virginia Teachers' Strike.

<sup>2</sup> We capitalize "Color" to reflect the term's use as a political tool to recognize bridges among people from diverse ethnic backgrounds striving to liberate themselves from institutionalized racialized violence (Lugones, 2003; Rosales & Langhout, 2020).

policed neighborhoods and some had been subject to harsh disciplinary practices in their K-12 schools. Second, I assumed I would be dealing with trauma during the pandemic. Third, given racist and classist health care policies, the pandemic could be expected to disproportionately affect communities of Color and working poor communities, which would likely bring additional stress and trauma to my students.

Put another way, I assumed a trauma response due to the pandemic because of the abrupt change to our schedules, loss of control, loss of in-person connection, and threat to our collective mortality. For example, based on the mortality rate of 2% for the 1918 flu pandemic, I thought it possible that people in our campus community, and in our department, would die, and that family members and perhaps one of us in the class could die. In fact, I thought it plausible that we could be using class time to hold remembrances or memorials. Also, I feared for my mortality given my asthma, a marker of my upbringing due to environmental classism. I reasoned this trauma response would disproportionately affect the most marginalized among us due to unjust power imbalances and access to resources, like health care and safe housing. Trauma responses would impact the class collective's ability to process, retain, and learn information; early writing on the pandemic indicates that these were appropriate assumptions. Specifically, psychologists point to the psychological toll that comes with loss of everyday roles, social despair due to the exacerbation of division based on privilege, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, fear, anger, and uncertainty, and community-level degradation of mental health due to the disintegration of social networks and institutions (Duane et al., 2020; Masiero et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2020).

Based on these assumptions, I knew I would need to fundamentally retool the class and my pedagogy, and I would have the one week spring "break" to figure it out. In this paper, a first-person account, all of the graduate students in the course and I reflect on the virtual space we co-created. The course was intended to serve as an advanced Social Psychology seminar, an optional class for doctoral students' scholarly training. The Social Psychology PhD program focuses on training researchers with a social justice approach to the psychological study of social issues. Graduates choose many careers, including being professors, researchers for private or public organizations, program evaluators, legislative aides or directors, and more. All students enrolled in this course were in their first, second, or third years in the program, meaning some were in the same cohort and others were not, and some had the same advisor. This first-person account grew out of the final paper assigned to the class. Each student or small group of students drafted a section they

volunteered to work on, took comments from the other authors/class members, then journal reviewers, and made modifications as appropriate. First, we outline the conceptual framework the instructor used to guide the collaborative course redesign. Then, students discuss their experiences with different aspects of the class, from the structure of the course to the work we conducted. We end with a discussion of what we learned and its implications for community psychology as well as for classroom universal design.

## Healing Justice

Healing justice is a trauma-informed framework that was created in and by Black and Indigenous communities, often by Black women and LGBTQ+ people (Raffo, nd). The origins begin with Cara Page and the Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective. The majority of writing is in activist/blog/vlog spaces as opposed to academic journals behind paywalls. Southern Black radicals developed a healing justice framework through their collective learnings after Hurricane Katrina, but in response to ongoing social conditions, violence, and trauma that predate that disaster (Page, nd; Page 2013). The goal of healing justice is to collectively transform trauma and to address the structural violence of oppressive systems such as colonization, racism, and capitalism by working toward care and social justice (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010, 2016; Raffo, nd). Trauma can be complex (Ginwright, 2016; Raffo, nd) and collective (Daw, 2013; Page, 2013). Complex trauma is a common outcome from long-term and generational exposure to the myriad forms that racism, classism, and other types of structural violence take, such as over-policing, genocide, and housing and food insecurity (Imad, 2019; Page, 2013). Although collective trauma can occur through racism, sexism, and other -isms that disproportionately directly target minoritized groups, it can also occur through events such as hurricanes, terror attacks, and pandemics (Daw, 2013), which may indiscriminately target all groups but have a disproportionate outcome for minoritized groups (Page, 2013; Watson et al., 2020). A healing justice approach is powerful because it is designed by and for communities of Color and working class communities to enable the simultaneous holding of trauma, hope, care, and action, which supports the complex personhood of these groups by enabling them to narrate themselves as full human beings, with hurts, desires, and hopes (Daw, 2013; French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010; Page, 2013). Taking critical action, or action that addresses trauma, also serves as a protective factor from suffering, which builds hope and well-being while also building a sense of control, agency, and self-

determination (Abadian, nd; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; Ginwright, 2016; Page, 2013; Prilleltensky, 2003; Raffo, nd).

To work toward healing justice, there are many possible processes. The model should be contextually and culturally relevant (Page, 2013). We conceptualize healing justice as the combination of radical healing (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2016) and collective action in a trauma-informed space (Imad, 2019; Page, 2013; see Figure 1). A model for radical healing based in our region that has been used in connection to schools is Ginwright's CARMA model (2016). CARMA addresses collective healing and building hope, or one component of healing justice. Ginwright argues that the environment must promote CARMA, or culture, agency, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Ginwright, 2016). We take each concept in turn.

With respect to culture, people's identities must be supported. Based on the foundations of the CARMA framework, racial and ethnic identities are given priority. Due to the university's invalidating response to the wildcat strike and retaliation against graduate students, I, the instructor, thought about the intersections of ethnicity, social class, and being a scholar. Research demonstrates that faculty of Color and faculty who were first-generation college students have a tenuous relationship with academe (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012), as do graduate students (Carolissen & Duckett, 2018; McNamara & Naepi, 2018; Schlosser et al., 2011). Furthermore, I assumed a context of cultural mistrust (Schlosser et al., 2011) given the institution's response to the strike, meaning that many graduate students would be mindful that they were in a racist and classist context, and might be leery of me as a part of the institution. I therefore assumed that graduate students may be questioning their place in the university and if they should persist in this PhD program, so I wanted to support their social identities as first-generation scholar-

activists of Color who had a perspective that was essential for and urgently needed in the academy. I thought I could work toward this goal through several culturally grounded considerations that are important to and for many Latinx graduate students, such as emphasizing student collaboration, supporting the integration of the social and academic, ensuring material was relevant to the current situation, supporting relationship building, developing trust, creating a space to celebrate achievement and grieve loss, letting them get to know me as a person, and ensuring students knew I genuinely wanted to hear their voices (Negroni-Rodríguez et al., 2006). Moreover, I wanted to create a space that would center their wisdoms and voices, as this lifts up ancestral wisdom and cultural knowledge (French et al., 2020). I hoped to co-create a space that would enable the rebuilding of a collective identity that had been devalued and demeaned, which is essential in radical healing (French et al., 2020).

Agency includes the individual and collective ability to act (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2016; Imad, 2019). Possibilities arise through agency. In a moment when we were told to stay home, I wanted to ensure the class facilitated student agency. A challenge to agency is social isolation, which occurs from complex trauma and can generate further isolation. Agency shifts us from isolation to engagement, and from passive to active participation. Active roles are healing because they restore control and influence that might have been foreclosed through the trauma generated by injustice. Agency also allows us to make changes toward a desirable condition like transforming education to be just (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2016; Imad, 2019).

Relationships enable us to connect to and care for one another, and see our places within an historical context of those who have worked toward justice before us (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010, 2016; Imad, 2019; Raffo, nd). Given that we would be holding class over the internet, I knew I would have to develop additional mechanisms for connection, showing care, and relationship building. Our relationships would be especially important during a pandemic because trauma can be remedied by development of healthy connections with others, often manifest via care (Ginwright, 2010). In the U.S., dominant norms of coping with trauma are highly individualistic and isolating (Henning & Brand, 2019). Yet, building relationships for radical healing counters individualized coping norms. Relationships not only allow for care and social support, but build a collective consciousness, which works toward collective hope and well-being. In this way, learning from each other and co-construction of knowledge gives rise to a shared radical imagination of liberation and healing (Ginwright, 2010, 2016; Page, 2013). Thus, connecting struggles, trauma, hopes, care, joy, and



**Figure 1** Healing justice model.

dreams combats isolation. Relationships also provide the fertile ground for other elements of radical healing to grow.

Meaning is facilitated when people engage in ways that they deem purposeful (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2016; Imad, 2019), and deepened when problems are viewed as systemic. In this way, focusing on meaning through a radical healing agenda builds critical consciousness and redefines the students' role and purpose in justice. Thus, meaning pushes back against trauma by combating internalized oppression, releasing pain, and challenging the status quo through the development of an alternative vision (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010). Purpose and critical understanding of systems of oppression can promote hope because it repositions people as actors that have important roles in collective healing (Ginwright, 2010, 2016). Developing meaning also was challenging given we were under a stay-at-home directive. I therefore wanted to provide opportunities for students to engage in ways that they would find meaningful.

Finally, achievement includes building knowledge and skills (Ginwright, 2016). In this context, I wanted to redevelop my class to set students up for academic and professional success during a pandemic. In this context, success would be more likely to be reached through fewer readings, more time to reflect, and a climate that would support students' cultural identities (Negroni-Rodríguez et al., 2006). As mentioned under culture, these facets include collaboration, integrating the social and academic, discussing relevant material, focusing on relationship building, developing trust, celebrating achievement and grieving loss, being vulnerable and open, and listening to students (Negroni-Rodríguez et al., 2006). Success in this form, therefore, is about working toward goals that generate positive counter-narratives for personal and collective advancement. A sense of accomplishment moves people to a state of thriving rather than being stuck in a state of surviving (French et al., 2020). Achievement through a larger radical healing agenda has an important role in building and bolstering hope.

In addition to radical healing, the healing justice model also includes taking collective action within a trauma-informed space. Community psychologists are familiar with collective action, which is used similarly in a healing justice model. In healing justice and collective action, people work together to transform oppressive systems and structures to be more liberatory in order to increase wellness and well-being (Abadian, nd; French et al., 2020; Page, 2013; Prilleltensky, 2003; Reeb, 2006). Essential to healing justice, and sometimes practiced in community psychology, is the development of a trauma-informed space (Daw, 2013; Mihelicova et al., 2018; Page, nd). A trauma-informed space names trauma and makes room for

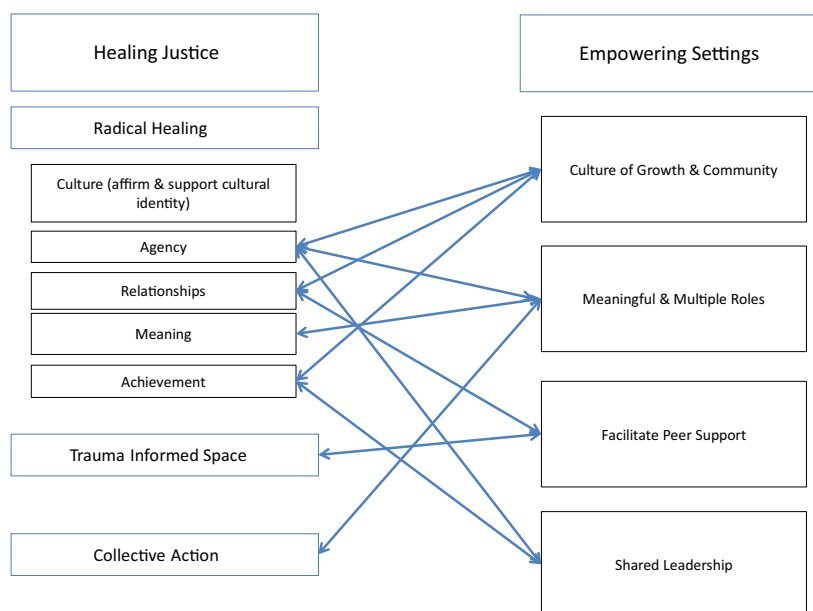
the feelings and embodied experiences that go along with it so that one can move through the trauma, all while connecting with others (Daw, 2013). The space enables movement through grieving, toward agency and mastery to build a more liberatory future (Abadian, nd; French et al., 2020).

It is notable that healing justice, or practicing radical healing through CARMA and collective action in a trauma-informed space, has some similarities with community psychology's conceptualization of empowering settings (Maton, 2008; Maton & Brodsky, 2011). Similarities include the focus on process as a way to move toward social justice, which requires attention to how the setting is constructed. Empowering settings include four facets. The first is developing a culture of growth and community. The goal is to develop a sense of "we" so that individuals can seek support from the collective and grow as change makers. The second facet is that the setting provides people with meaningful and multiple roles so that they might see themselves as essential contributors. The third facet is that the empowering setting facilitates peer-based support. This support enables feedback to its members and promotes group cohesion. The final facet is shared leadership, so that each member has the opportunity to take on meaningful and multiple roles.

Yet, there are also notable differences between healing justice and empowering spaces. One difference is that healing justice explicitly attends to trauma and cultural identities, connecting the process of working through trauma with social justice work and rooting that work culturally, thereby fusing the healing of mind–body–spirit with identity affirmation whilst transforming systems so that they no longer harm minoritized groups but instead, enable them to thrive. See Figure 2 for a schematic of how radical healing and empowering settings compare and contrast.

### **Redesigning the Class with a Healing Justice Lens**

As the instructor, I developed an optional anonymous survey, which enabled me to get a sense of what students might bring with them, and what accommodations I might consider. At least some students had no printer, and at least some disclosed high levels of anxiety and worry for their families, which indicate trauma. Based on this, I emailed all students the pre-COVID-19 syllabus and communicated that we could make substantive changes to the class. I laid out a few ideas and asked them to come to class prepared to discuss what might be manageable. I did this to start building my relationship with them, and to increase their agency, two components of radical healing (Ginwright, 2016; Imad, 2019; Raffo, nd).



**Figure 2** Healing justice and empowering settings.

In the first class, we began with check-ins, to get a sense of what people were holding. People could share what was on their mind and how they were feeling, or pass. I typically go first to model vulnerability. For example, I might say, “I am worried about my 95 year old grandfather because he is very social and won’t stay home. I know I am not the boss of him, but I sure wish he would listen to me.” I then gave a lecture on how trauma affects learning, which served to normalize the idea that most of us were or would be dealing with trauma, and subsequently, our ability to focus and learn would be dampened. I explained that we could develop practices to calm our nervous system and enable better focus (Imad, 2019; Jones, 2014). I shared that I know about various techniques, which I learned in self-help groups to help me deal with my own history of complex trauma from growing up in a household with alcoholism and addiction; in this case, these learnings and experiences would be useful since we were in a period of high instability and uncertainty. I then sought consent to lead the class through a 5-minute meditation and visualization exercise. After this, we developed shared agreements for our virtual space, and then jointly decided what we would do for the rest of the quarter. Finally, to consider what was manageable for the quarter, I had laid out some possibilities and created space for other options. I conceived of each of these course redesign aspects with healing justice, especially radical healing, in mind, but with an emphasis on different facets of it (Table 1; also Figure 3, which aligns course components with healing justice and empowering settings).

The next sections go into more detail about what we did, from the graduate student perspectives. We start with the format of the class and then move into the substantive work, highlighting one or more of the healing justice facets in each section. Although many aspects of the class link to more than one healing justice facet (see Table 1 and Figure 3), we go in depth with one to two facets of healing justice in each section, to provide depth of experience.

### **Slowing Things Down: Valeria Alanso Blanco and Daniel Copulsky**

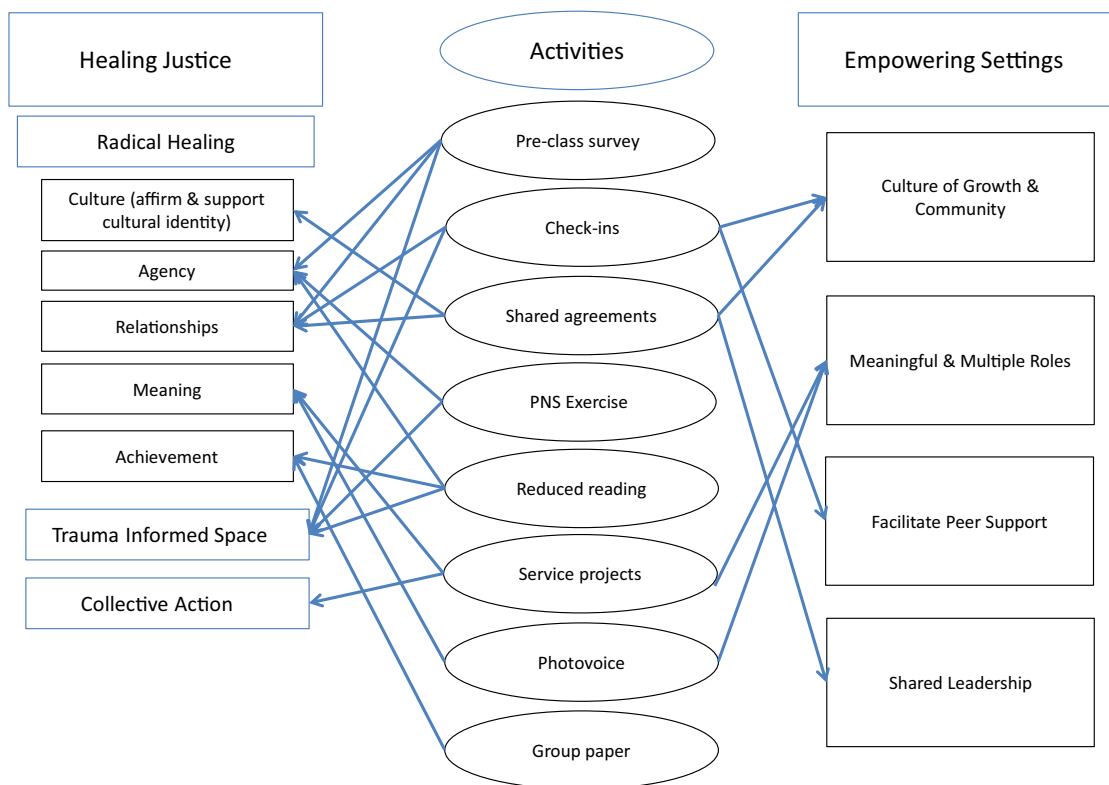
#### **Connection to Healing Justice Framework: Promoting Relationships**

Building relationships is an essential facet of healing justice that promotes radical healing by encouraging us to connect with and care for each other. Building relationships in our course challenges individualistic ways of dealing with trauma and moves toward collective well-being (Ginwright, 2010). Although connecting with people virtually could be difficult, it was essential to attend to our relationships during a crisis that requires us to physically isolate from one another. Therefore, we had to implement activities that allowed us to connect virtually and to promote collective well-being. The pre-class survey allowed us to share our current circumstances with the instructor, which began the process of cultivating a caring environment. We then worked together to build a

**Table 1** Overview of the course components in relation to healing justice

Course components	Original course practice	Connection to healing justice	Guiding principles for the changes
Pre-class survey	Not offered in original course	Practicing CARMA by building <b>relationships</b>	Assess student context to create a space that is welcoming for all; set community tone.
Check-ins	Occasional small group relational meetings regarding a course related prompt	Practicing CARMA by building <b>relationships</b>	Normalize collective trauma and humanize the space.
Syllabus revision	Revision of syllabus occurred when community guidelines were revised	Practicing CARMA by promoting <b>agency &amp; achievement</b> .	Gain control and decision-making power to tailor the class to our needs, and facilitate success.
Service project	Individual praxis assignments	Practicing CARMA through <b>agency</b> , as well as <b>collective action</b>	Action in the community reaffirms role as scholar-activist while contributing to efforts off-campus.
Photovoice	Not offered in original course	Practicing CARMA through <b>culture</b>	Collective meaning making of the COVID-19 conditions our communities are facing, & conducting research project that works toward career goals, which connects service, activism, & identities.
Parasympathetic nervous system exercise	Not offered in original course	Trauma-informed pedagogy	Normalize the impact that complex trauma has on our bodies and minds. Be intentional about healing.

Bold indicates connection to the specific facet of the CARMA model.



**Figure 3** Activities mapping on to healing justice and empowering settings.

supportive community in our class by making time for weekly group check-ins and classroom exercises to activate our parasympathetic nervous systems. This section further discusses how the pre-class survey and weekly

check-ins intentionally slowed down our pace to focus on relationships. Then, we describe how another slowing down activity, a parasympathetic nervous system activity, was trauma-informed.

## Pre-Class Survey

### *What We Did*

The work to build a compassionate and collaborative community started before our first day of class. A week prior, the instructor sent an anonymous survey to us to get a sense of our current situations. The survey asked about our access to the internet, printers, and study space, along with other responsibilities we might be juggling (e.g., taking care of children or siblings). These questions considered our ability to engage in coursework during the pandemic in terms of practical considerations and in regard of our emotional capacities.

### *What It Meant to Us*

Although we were able to meet at the assigned class time and had access to study space and the internet, we appreciated this thoughtful gesture. It showed that the instructor was aware students' lives were likely to be impacted by the pandemic and that this could affect our ability to participate in class. Before the stay-at-home order, it was easier to leave our home lives outside of our courses, but this is much harder if your home, school, and workplace are in the same space. This was also a change from common expectations that graduate students must prioritize academics and that our only identity is being an academic. Life outside of coursework and research is possible, and for an instructor to acknowledge this and ask if we had other responsibilities (e.g., taking care of children/siblings) made us feel she cared about our well-being. The survey was also a helpful reminder that our peers may be dealing with different and perhaps more challenging environments. Others' contexts were important to be aware of during long video-conferencing calls and coordinating group projects remotely, which could test our patience. In this way, the survey set the tone for the course to cover specific course content and space in a way where we would attend explicitly to our relationships with each other.

## Check-Ins

### *What We Did*

We decided to start class by devoting the first twenty minutes of our weekly three-hour seminar to checking in about how we were doing, which allowed us to connect. There were no expectations of what we shared, and we had the opportunity to pass. At times, we shared what we were excited or happy about and celebrated each other's positive life events and professional successes. We often shared challenges we were facing with our work, health, and families, confiding in the class about our feelings of

fear, sadness, disappointment, guilt, and anger. Being able to share about our situations and the feelings we were experiencing helped with combating isolation since we knew we were not the only person experiencing various emotions.

### *What It Meant to Us*

Sometimes our check-ins felt sequential, with a comment about struggling to write one week followed by an update the next week about finishing a draft. Other times the mood would be a dramatic shift from the previous class, like our meeting after national uprisings against systemic violence against Black people through policing. We had co-created a space where we felt comfortable speaking about the emotions we were experiencing when these events unfolded during our check-in. For example, some spoke about the anger and frustration with instructors not acknowledging the situations and going on with their planned course content.

Throughout our check-ins, peers were often candid and vulnerable. Still, at first, everyone seemed reluctant to speak up during check-ins, often leaving long pauses between us. This may have been partly because of the online format, which makes the natural flow of a group conversation harder to gauge. We also experienced hesitation to share openly and reluctance to claim priority and take up space. It could be uncomfortable to share something positive or minor after someone else shared something difficult and emotional. Over the quarter, we began to share more openly and honestly since it felt essential for us to know each other and know how our lives outside class impacted our ability to be present in class or take on extra tasks.

Despite the challenges during our check-ins, we found the practice helpful. In a time of physical isolation, this was a chance to connect and remember that each of us lived full and complex lives outside our time together. It built a conversation where we could learn about our classmates and offer support. This allowed us to move away from an individual approach to coping with traumatic experiences, which are aspects of radical healing (French et al., 2020).

## **Parasympathetic Nervous System Activation: Valeria Alanso Blanco and Daniel Copulsky**

### Connection to Healing Justice Framework: A Trauma-Informed Activity

During our first session, the instructor created a short lecture to discuss trauma-informed pedagogy and the effects



of trauma on student learning. We learned that a rapidly changing situation like a pandemic could lead to feelings of fear, panic, and helplessness and impact our ability to focus. We also learned we could experience unpredictable emotions, strained relationships, and physical symptoms like headaches or nausea (Duane et al., 2020; Imad, 2019). Thus, we discussed how we could put into practice trauma-informed pedagogy for our class. Developing a trauma-informed space allowed us to create room to address the impact of our embodied experiences and feelings (Daw, 2013) and move through the trauma experienced by the pandemic. To address the trauma responses we all might be experiencing (e.g., feelings of hopelessness and uncertainty), the instructor suggested doing an exercise to activate our parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). These PNS activities helped us relax, focus, and transition into our group work or discussion.

#### What We Did

In our first class, the instructor asked each student to sign up to lead one exercise. The PNS exercises took a variety of forms, including meditation, breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and meridian body tapping. We drew on activities we had found helpful as individual recipients of therapy, seen as teaching assistants for undergraduate clinical psychology classes, or knew from private meditation practices. Yet, we are not in a clinical program, so our program does not formally train us in trauma-informed techniques. Caution is warranted in attending to the varied impacts that exercises like meditation can have based on individuals' past experiences of trauma (Treleaven, 2018), although we always had the option to opt out of participating in these exercises if we felt any discomfort. Moreover, there can be great wellness benefits to non-clinicians who get involved in similar activities, including leading such activities (Reeb, 2006), and community psychology has a long history of trusting the skills and capabilities of people who are not clinically trained (Kalafat & Boroto, 1977). Looking back, however, it may have been helpful to have more support in identifying exercises or training on how to deliver them.

#### What It Meant to Us

At the beginning of the quarter, we enjoyed these activities and found them helpful to clear our minds and focus on our classwork. Before engaging in the PNS exercises, we often felt distracted by concerns about the pandemic, instability in the world, and other work outside of class. These exercises helped us quiet some of these thoughts and bring our attention to the present. Additionally, we made time to take care of ourselves and listen to our

bodies. As graduate students, we are sometimes overworked and might not make time to take care of our mental health. For example, sometimes we unconsciously held a lot of tension in our body and had the opportunity to realize it and release it during our exercises. We even started using some of the meditation practices from our sessions beyond class. Toward the end of the quarter, it was harder for us to relax and keep our minds focused on the exercises. We found more structured activities easier than the less structured, quieter meditations since it got challenging to bring our attention to the current moment. Together, the pre-course survey, check-ins, and PNS exercises allowed us to focus on building a supportive community and create a trauma-informed space. At the same time, we also focused on what kind of work we would do together over the term.

#### **Reworking the Syllabus: Daniel Copulsky and Valeria Alanso Blanco**

##### Connection to Healing Justice Framework: Promoting Agency and Achievement

The pandemic poses a particular challenge for agency by limiting personal mobility. Being forced to decrease face-to-face interactions drastically, practice physical isolation, and remain at home impacted our sense of agency. Thus, the opportunity to rework the syllabus and collectively decide our focus for the course helped restore some agency. We offered individual input on the work that felt meaningful and manageable during a pandemic and then, as a group, selected our focus. This way, we experienced agency individually and collectively. Engaging in collaborative work brings us into active engagement with others, providing a chance to make a material change in the world. It was imperative to promote agency as it is one facet of radical healing justice (Ginwright, 2016) and was effectively implemented in our course. Another facet of radical healing justice we implemented was achievement. In this case, achievement allows for academic and professional success by building knowledge and skills. We felt a sense of achievement by building a learning community that mastered photovoice (PV) as a method and collaborated toward writing a manuscript as the course's final paper. In this section, we further discuss the process of reworking the syllabus and promotion of agency and achievement.

#### What We Did

We talked through the syllabus at length during our first class, discussing what we were drawn to. This process

was informal, without a direct conversation about how we would make decisions collectively. We sensed the instructor compassionately guiding us toward a plan for the course that felt responsive to our current needs and met the requirements of a graduate seminar. Together we agreed to cut back substantially on readings for the class, focus our time on two group projects (which are discussed at length later), and swap out individual final papers with a final project of collaborating on an article. Even though we made significant revisions to the course structure during our first class, we continued to adjust readings, assignments, and use of our class time throughout the quarter. Throughout this process, we were given the agency to shift our class goals toward outcomes that would feel like meaningful achievements.

We maintained a sense of flexibility around our course plans throughout the term, particularly as national events continued to shift dramatically. Our final class session fell the week after George Floyd was publicly lynched and Black Lives Matter demonstrations erupted across the country. In light of these developments, the instructor offered to give us a presentation about colonization, oppression, policing, and incarceration. She acknowledged that some of us might find it helpful, but others might find it overwhelming and gave us the option of hearing the lecture at the end of class so some students could leave early. Although we had plenty else to work on, we all decided to take time for the presentation. We knew that this presentation was vital to our continued development as scholar-activists so we can continue to create knowledge that aims to challenge systems of oppression. We also talked about the challenge of carrying on with academic work when the events outside feel urgent and vital. We noted that when the quarter started with us suddenly working remotely during a pandemic, we could not have imagined ending the quarter in an even more tumultuous time. We appreciated this continuing flexibility of the class to attend to what mattered most and create space to address these topics instead of pretending they were not happening.

#### What It Meant to Us

Given the hierarchical model of higher education, we are used to our instructors telling us what we are going to do and what we are supposed to learn. When our instructor instead allowed us to decide what the course would look like, we felt an unexpected amount of agency. We appreciated cutting back on the reading, which felt burdensome during an overwhelming time, and shifting the remaining reading toward work that spoke more directly to the moment we were living through. Our decisions to change the syllabus were also informed by our desire to ground

our work in engagement with local communities we are close to and a part of. Because most of us came from minoritized communities and we noted the negative impact of the pandemic on these communities, we felt particularly compelled to find ways to engage with the community. We focused on achievable goals that would speak to pressing systemic issues we witnessed.

One significant change we made to the syllabus was to replace independent final papers with a collaborative project to write an article together. We were excited about co-writing a paper, mostly because our projects were meaningful. Additionally, we do not often prepare course papers for publication. Focusing on a co-authored manuscript would give students an opportunity to develop our knowledge on the process of publishing a paper and writing about PV. PV was a method few of us had been exposed to or written about. Thus, we also developed our knowledge about PV by practicing it. Additionally, most of our classmates were first-year students, and this was the first time we were writing with colleagues in the department.

This experience could contribute toward our professional success since a publication is positively viewed in academia. Yet, a publication where we discuss meaningful work and include our voices made this experience more enjoyable. The pandemic caused turbulence in our lives and required us to attend to outside events unexpectedly. Therefore, we could not always engage in research and writing as we did before the pandemic. Being able to co-write this article is an achievement. This achievement can be healing by creating a sense of accomplishment and shifting the focus from merely surviving to thriving, which is important for healing justice.

#### The Service Projects: Katherine Quinteros and Miguel Lopezzi

In this collective classroom space where we discussed what was affecting us as a community, such as issues related to ongoing oppression and trauma, the instructor offered several service projects based on her connections. The ones we chose were: (a) bringing attention to local mutual aid projects, (b) figuring out an efficient way to get relief funds to those who were ineligible for them, such as people who are undocumented, (c) working with a local agency to help change community narratives around undocumented immigrants, including DACA<sup>3</sup> recipients, (d) strengthening food distribution resources,

<sup>3</sup> DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, is an executive order signed by President Obama that allows temporary and limited protections for certain youth who live in the US.

(e) checking public restrooms to ensure those who are unhoused have access to water and soap during the pandemic, and (f) engaging in community organizing to change policies around who can access relief aid during the pandemic.

In this section, we discuss two of the projects and how they facilitated our meaningful work and collective action. The projects allowed the students to participate in meaningful work even in the midst of stay-at-home orders. Although the two example projects are different from one another, both are rooted in serving minoritized groups in Santa Cruz County through collective action and improving well-being. This was done through both projects' efforts of dismantling the barriers minoritized groups face in attaining the resources they need yet continue to lack. Furthermore, these projects provided meaningful ways to engage in collective action that helped bring hope, healing, and needed resources to our community, which combats the distress and trauma created by systemic oppression (e.g., oppressive laws, policies, and practices; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019).

#### Changing Narratives about Immigrants: Katherine Quniteros

##### *Connection to the Healing Justice Framework: Promoting Meaningful Work*

Meaning gives life to radical healing by creating a shared purpose that is built by those engaged in justice work (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2016; Imad, 2019). It provides a reason to engage with trauma, instilling the hope of creating an alternative to the status quo (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010). We had the opportunity to engage in meaningful work through our project on changing stereotypical narratives of immigrants. Often, dominant narratives about immigrants (either good or bad) do not tell the whole story of what this community faces. As a majority in the group were either Chicax or Latinx, and first-generation students, this project allowed us to use our cultural knowledge and experiences with trauma to bring to the forefront the voices of community members who are often silenced. Although we conducted this project during a time when it was difficult to find meaning and connection, because this project was rooted in a radical healing framework, we found a creative way to highlight minoritized voices while supporting an organization that actively works to help immigrant communities.

##### *What We Did*

This project involved four students, with three identifying as either Chicax or Latinx and one as White. We first

spoke with a member of our community action agency (CAA), a regional nonprofit, and heard what was needed at this moment. One suggestion was changing the dominant narratives (Rappaport, 1995) surrounding undocumented groups, such as DACA recipients. An example of one such narrative is the bifurcation of immigrants into “good or deserving” (e.g., DACA recipients who are innocent because they were children when they came to the U.S.), or “bad or undeserving” (e.g., most immigrants without authorization to be in the U.S.; Rendon et al., 2019). We developed this project with the aim of DACA recipients being able to tell complex stories about them and their families. We wanted to support alternative narratives that allowed space for complex personhood (Rappaport, 1995; Tuck, 2009). This had heightened importance given the expected US Supreme Court decision regarding DACA. We recruited DACA recipients to interview. Although we created a semi-structured interview, we prioritized their agency to tell whichever versions of their story they felt comfortable sharing, rather than imposing our views of which narratives needed to be told (Josselson, 2004; Tuck, 2009). After the interviews, we created graphics that reflected the themes of their stories, with a quote (see Figure 4). Once we had their approval, we gave the images to the CAA who then distributed the graphics via social media. Beyond shifting the narrative of “good” versus “bad” immigrants, we hoped that with these images, more undocumented migrants would feel valued and deserving of aid, as well as develop trust with the CAA.

##### *What it Meant to Me*

As a Latina and a first-generation college student, this project gave me a place to use my experiences as a daughter of war refugees and immigrants to bring attention to the needs of the undocumented community. I felt I was able to honor my parents' experiences, yet also learn about how a new generation of undocumented people are coming together to redefine their narratives and resist labels placed upon them. Through this project, I could see how trauma, resilience, and hope worked alongside each other to fuel a strong calling for change and a deep commitment to seeing that change happen.

#### Local Community Relief Efforts: Miguel Lopezzi

##### *Connection to a Healing Justice Framework: Supporting Collective Action*

Students find ways to maneuver, make change, and impact their community in meaningful ways, especially during trying times such like a pandemic (Imad, 2019). I wanted to engage and be involved in local community relief



**Figure 4** Social media image.

efforts that would not only leave a meaningful impact in my community but would be purposeful to me. This class gave me the opportunity to do just that—to support my community needs and be involved in issues relevant and significant to me and the other graduate students. I focused on strengthening community members' knowledge of virtual tools that support the communication of local aid efforts in a tangible way, as well as organizing and advocating for change in policies that leave out undocumented people from much-needed relief aid during this pandemic. It was of great importance to me that my efforts would give those hurting most in my community immediate relief and assistance. Working together and learning from each other through relational organizing may give rise to a critical consciousness that is needed to begin healing, increase wellness, and make liberation something that our community could envision (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010; Prilleltensky, 2001). Next, I describe how I experienced collective action, meaning, and healing.

#### *What I Did*

I began my partnership with the Sacred Heart<sup>4</sup> food pantry through a phone conversation with Sergio, a local volunteer leader. Sergio's role was supporting people interested in learning how to take leadership roles and preparing anyone interested in taking leadership positions that addressed social justice issues in our local community. I had never been involved in community organizing and was excited to learn and support my community at the same time. Two issues on Sacred Heart's agenda were teaching people how to use Zoom and engaging in local community efforts to advocate for ITIN (Individual Taxpayer Identification Number) filers (i.e., those without a social security number) who were left out of the first COVID-19 relief bill.

My first task was to assist people with downloading and using the Zoom application (app) when checking into

<sup>4</sup> All proper names have been changed.

the food pantry. Zoom is a web-based video-conferencing tool used for meeting virtually. During the pandemic, Sacred Heart food pantry used the Zoom app to check-in people at the food pantry, hold weekly meetings to talk about current projects involving the community (e.g., leadership training, organizing meetings), and as a medium to share community resources. Furthermore, it was used to create a space where people could use their voice to share their stories and express their suffering and hardship during this crisis.

Most people did not know how to use the Zoom app. For instance, while checking in to the food pantry, a person indicated they needed assistance with the app. After assisting Gloria in downloading the app, she informed me that she had not attended any of the Sacred Heart community support meetings because she did not know how to use the app and felt embarrassed to ask for help. After letting her know that I was there to support her with any technology issues, she shared various issues that her family was having with paying the rent due to her husband being laid-off from work because of COVID-19 cut-backs. Our conversation made me aware of the severity of the situation people experience in our community due to our government's policies and made me realize how important the work was that we were doing with Sergio at Sacred Heart. Furthermore, my work in assisting the people at the food pantry with the Zoom app brought to light the great technological gap in communities of Color. This technological gap interfered with people being able to access resources that were being shared and communicated via Zoom because of COVID-19. My experience in this project made me realize the need to support our community in accessing technological resources. I was compelled to contact my family to see if they needed assistance using the Zoom app. Later, I found it fulfilling when I saw Gloria in the Zoom meeting about rental assistance information. Once connected, community members in need of assistance could access resource information from the Sacred Heart food pantry and learn about resources only available through Zoom meetings.

After connecting people to Zoom, we held an organizing meeting to plan a meeting with state organizers, state legislators, and other decision-makers to pressure the governor to provide economic relief for undocumented workers with an ITIN. During this meeting, we discussed the economic contributions that undocumented workers make and the injustices involved with leaving them out of the relief program. A significant number of ITIN filers are essential workers who continue to work amid the pandemic, risking their health and putting their family's health at considerable risk. This is a conversation that bears heavily on my heart because I have family members who are in this situation. The actions set in motion that day led to state legislators'

commitments to work with regional organizations to advance legislation during upcoming budget hearings. For example, Bishops and Rabbis organized and wrote a letter to the governor demanding financial assistance for undocumented workers with an ITIN.

#### *What it Meant to Me*

I felt very emotional yet energized after the meeting. Listening to the pain in their voices and seeing the suffering in their faces weighed heavily in my heart. I could not fathom how this could be happening. The lack of compassion and empathy by those who decided who deserves help and who does not was quite frankly infuriating, and these are our leaders; these are the people we elected to run our country. I find solace in the fact that I am not powerless, and am energized in the fact that we can change this as a community. We can stand together to elect the people who align with our values, with our moral compass, and who have compassion.

This experience changed the way I thought about organizations and community organizing. After the meeting, Sergio provided a space in which the community could come together, share stories and knowledge, become aware of their wounds inflicted by structural racism, and gain the critical consciousness needed for liberation and radical healing (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010). We shared our thoughts and worked together on what our next step would be. This helped us develop a better understanding of issues that still need to be addressed and provided a sense of purpose and hope for all of us involved. For the first time, I felt I was part of something bigger than myself that could assist many people in my community, including my own family. I felt a great sense of accomplishment and was inspired to continue working with Sacred Heart food pantry. That day I communicated to Sergio and the course instructor that I was very excited to be part of this work. This experience facilitated a greater sense of connection, affirmation, and a better understanding of the power community organizing has in creating socially just change.

I felt that at the center of these organizations was a fight for liberation. Suffering from the denial of collective rights can make us feel powerless, and joining networks of support with personal, relational, and collective well-being at heart can better lead us toward liberation (Prilleltensky, 2003). As a community volunteer leader of Color who was affected by the ITIN status issue said during our debriefing meeting, "Our work matters, and our stories matter." I had not experienced the impact and the deep sense of emotion that people's stories can have. Also, amplifying their voices to tell their story is where the actual change begins. Because of the action and stories

told by community members, the organization was able to secure commitments from people in power to work together and find ways to deliver the much-needed assistance that our undocumented workers deserve. Through this process, I became involved in meaningful social justice work that can assist us in finding relief and ways to cope with systemic oppression (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). It provided us a space to learn how to join collective efforts to promote social justice in our community, giving us hope, and a space to begin healing.

### **The PV Process: Daniel Rodriguez Ramirez & Sylvane Vaccarino-Ruiz**

#### **Connection to Healing Justice Framework: Promoting Culture**

PV is a participatory action research methodology often used to explore community issues from the standpoint of people from minoritized groups, through the collection and collective analysis of photographs related to a social issue (Wang & Burris, 1997). PV can also be used as a healing tool to encourage people to voice their community's issues and strengths, engage in discussion of issues, and suggest policy-making changes (Wang & Burris, 1997). PV therefore enacts a healing justice framework by allowing graduate students to cultivate a trauma-informed environment that promotes radical healing partly by supporting the culture of group members. Specifically, culture was supported through the PV process by using photographs to document our service projects and other interactions with our cultural communities, which we reflected on as a class. We highlight how PV heightened culture through the community psychology (CP) class, through enhancing our ties with our cultural communities and shifting a culture of competition to one of collaboration among graduate students (Ginwright, 2016).

#### **What We Did: Daniel Rodriguez Ramirez**

We decided on a prompt to root our photographs and narratives. Our prompt was inspired by Shawn Ginwright's work in healing justice (2016): "How does social toxicity (inequities), especially under neoliberalism, and social possibility, with glimmers of mutual aid, sit side by side during COVID-19?" We chose this prompt to answer Tuck's (2009) call to suspend damage-centered research that depicts historically minoritized communities as solely broken. We aimed to go beyond examining unchallenged examples of social toxicity in society, by exploring possibilities to address structural causes, and nurture cooperation with our communities.

#### **What it Meant to Me: Sylvane Vaccarino-Ruiz**

During the time we conducted PV, I was processing my violent arrest by University police and my pending criminal and student conduct charges for my involvement in the wildcat strike. Shortly after I was temporarily suspended from the campus for this arrest, we were put under physical distancing restrictions. As a result, my campus community felt distant. I describe this context to demonstrate why at times, my PV photos were guided more by my anger, sadness, and longing than a thoughtful response to the prompt. I took photos of violence, trauma, blatant white supremacy, my sorely missed home, and my zoom healing circles with my indigenous community. Frankly, I was unclear of how any of my photos connected to the prompt and instead was guided by my emotions. So instead of an eloquent analysis of my photos informed by our readings, I brought these feelings to each PV analysis session. For me, the PV discussion sessions ended up being a time to process feelings, commiserate with peers, collectively curse systems of oppression, radically imagine liberation, express anger at how the nation was handling the COVID-19 crisis, pray for our relatives in dangerous conditions, and eventually squeeze in some academic language to justify the class air-time I occupied.

I needed a space to connect with my peers (even via a computer screen) to construct meaning around this complex trauma, to feel like I had influence on the conditions impacting my community and me, and to feel like a valuable member of the academic community. A supportive group culture allowed me to grieve and take space to bring my whole self to the project. This is unlike many pedagogical practices rooted in white western academic cultural norms, which expect objective, real, and knowable dialogue. Furthermore, a constructivist styled project allowing co-construction of meaning as inspired by images gave me the epistemological space to own my subjectivity. I learned that the PV process is enriched by emotionality.

I am reminded of the heart-work needed in scholar-activism (Kelly, 2010), to conduct research that provokes growth (Wilson, 2008) and radical healing (Ginwright, 2016). Making space for my heart helps me be true to what I believe and know. I can now make space for relating to others in similar conditions in a deeper way, thus solidifying my role as a scholar-activist, rather than questioning my role.

#### **What it Meant to Me: Daniel Rodriguez Ramirez**

The COVID-induced physical distancing and UCSC's wildcat strike-related punitive measures were having a negative effect on graduate students, fostering feelings of

isolation and alienation. The PV process and the service projects allowed us to develop relationships and stay connected with our communities. Culture is tied to our identities, shaped by our worldviews and experiences related to the particular socio-historical contexts in which we live (Ginwright, 2016). As a class, five of us are students of Color, all of us have at least one minoritized identity, and we all, to varying degrees, have been involved in or supported the wildcat strike. We therefore wanted to explore avenues to amplify the needs and hopes of our communities, especially during the pandemic.

The PV process allowed graduate students to regain a sense of connection with our cultural communities by representing our concerns and hopes through our PV conversations. Furthermore, the PV process helped us create a bond with one another, though a collective aim to critically understand, challenge, and transcend systems of oppression through our research and service. By connecting our experiences of systemic trauma and the ones from our communities, we opened pathways of healing and understanding (Ginwright, 2016). In this way, the aims were similar to that of community psychology.

Through the PV process, we were also fostering a culture of collaboration to challenge the culture of competition pervasive in US academia. What better example of the university's culture of competition than the "publish or perish" aphorism prevalent in the mind of graduate students? Yet, one way students of Color challenge academia's culture of competition is by engaging in professional service within the institution and in our own communities. This allowed us to avoid intellectual isolation by collaborating with one another to improve the experiences of other people of Color in majority-white spaces as US academia (Baez, 2000). I have learned that one effective way to make this professional service "count" is by making it research. As participant researchers in the PV process, minoritized graduate students took advantage of the opportunity to use a graduate seminar to do something meaningful in our communities. This allowed us to act as colleagues in training to collaboratively work to publish a paper relevant to the pressing issues of our cultural communities, in the midst of a pandemic.

Personally, the class allowed me to express myself in my native language and bond with other immigrant people in town being served by mutual aid efforts, thereby increasing my sense of belonging to the United States as a non-citizen. Collaboration and connection were influential not only for my scholar-activist training and my sense of purpose as a future community psychologist, but also as an international person weathering a pandemic far from home.

## Discussion and Implications

In this section, we provide a summary of the results by linking the components of our class to the facets of healing justice. We then discuss implications for teaching community psychology classes, including universal design, and for community psychology training programs. We have written this section collaboratively, and we use the term "scholar-activist" rather than "community psychologist" because our program is a social psychology program that centers social justice, rather than being a community psychology program.

The healing justice framework supported this course as a form of scholar-activist training. By way of summary, we make explicit how we experienced the radical healing framework elements: culture, agency, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Ginwright, 2016), and collective action, all within a trauma-informed space. A main trauma-informed practice was the PNS exercises. These exercises provided a space to us as scholar-activists who have experienced police violence, rent burden, student conduct charges and repercussions, threats to visa and DACA statuses, a pandemic, and uprisings of Black Lives Matter and abolitionist work. Each class provided space to bear witness to the traumas unfolding daily.

With respect to radical healing, relationships were facilitated through the pre-course survey and check-ins because they instilled a sense of community. The pre-course survey supported a sense of community well-being since our needs were taken into consideration early on by the instructor. Furthermore, many of us looked forward to sharing our struggles and hopes in the weekly check-ins. This practice of relationship building in community repairs and restores the isolation and fractures of the stay-at-home directive and strike actions. Agency and achievement were promoted by reworking the syllabus. Traditionally, a course takes on a hierarchical form and the structure of the course is dictated by the instructor with little to no input from students. In this course, everyone shared the role of a course designer, which is not commonly practiced. This was even more impactful during this particularly challenging time. Making changes to the syllabus and choosing the projects, reading load, and the final paper shows trust and encourages a participatory educational experience. Moreover, the possibilities of meaningful achievement as scholar-activists in training are most notably authoring what we hope to be a publication, and contributing to meaningful work in the community.

Meaning and collective action were demonstrated in the service projects. Our engagement was a purposeful application of our studies and put into practice our activism. For example, working on the DACA narratives and the local community relief efforts were meaningful and

impactful. This work gave us a sense of purpose and optimism, and enabled collective action; these are key ingredients in engaging scholar-activists in healing justice work. Culture was affirmed through PV. Putting narratives to the photos we took of our community's experiences with inequalities and opportunities in the COVID-19 circumstance allowed us a space to reflect and give meaning. The conversations about the photos we took also incorporated our experiences as wildcats, which helped us build an awareness of our role and its connections to the world around us. We were able to reassert and affirm our identities as developing scholar-activists, all of whom hold at least one minoritized identity, in a social justice-oriented PhD program.

### Implications for Community Psychology Classes and Graduate Training

If community psychologists are serious about creating a field that is open and welcoming to those who are Black, Indigenous, and people of Color; working class and working poor; queer and transgender; those with disabilities; those living under capitalism, climate change and its denial, and white systemic violence (all of which affect everyone but differentially), then we need to think seriously about how we nurture the “spirit” of community psychologists in training (Kelly, 2010). Spirit includes passion, zeal, and emotional energy (Kelly, 2010), and to do this, we cannot ignore trauma and healing. Indeed, this issue is crucial because trauma will only grow as the United States continues on this path of late capitalism and climate change denialism (Watson et al., 2020). How do we, therefore, build not only a science, but a social movement (Kelly, 2010)?

Universal design principles are an important foundation for developing classes and training programs that are accessible and welcoming, but these principles rarely include trauma as an accessibility issue, and we might not have considered this issue if not for the COVID-19 pandemic. What we have learned about trauma and teaching, however, is broader than the pandemic. In addition to our social identities and contexts, which precede the pandemic, college itself is a context of trauma for many (e.g., sexual assault, food insecurity, housing instability). It therefore makes sense to have a practice at the beginning of each class that will assist students with focus, attention, and grounding that reminds them of their already existing well of deep knowledge. Having a focus on engaging our parasympathetic nervous system is important to support focus and can help students tap into their existing insights (Jones, 2014). Of course, this needs to be carried out in a way that does not co-opt traditional cultural practices, thus rendering them mostly

useless, nor should it take the place of social action that transforms unjust systems.

Beyond universal design, we must also consider what gets centered in CP training. In her paper on decentering community psychology, Dutta (2016) asks “who produces knowledge and from what space/location? What are the implications of these issues for how we conceptualize community?” (p. 331). We address these questions from our often de-centered perspectives, in the context of a graduate community psychology class. The course continuously de-centered the class away from the instructor and toward the graduate students—all of whom held at least one minoritized social position—aiming to create a non-hierarchical community of peers that acknowledge students as knowledge producers and decision-makers (Lewis et al., 2018; McNamara & Naepi, 2018). Importantly, we produced knowledge about *our* underserved communities. Refusing to bifurcate the “underserved community” from the scholar-activist, especially the scholar-activist who is from minoritized communities, pushes the decolonization of the community psychology field (Dutta, 2016).

We refused bifurcation by framing our knowledge as valuable and relevant to CP. Furthermore, we created a “communality” of people from different social positions, who came together to contest oppressive power dynamics (Lewis et al., 2018; Lugones, 2015). We understood our scholar-activist work as a project against white systematic violence in all communities, including the university (Dutta, 2018). In this way, we did not bifurcate the university from what we mean by community in CP, which is also a move toward decoloniality.

Healing justice in our course also worked toward decoloniality in several ways. The course enabled the centering of counter-narratives and activism through the PV and service projects. These projects enabled us to center our minoritized experiences and insert our identities and positionalities into the course. The centering of counter-narratives, activism, minoritized experiences, and attending to positionality are all facets of decoloniality in the classroom (Carolissen & Duckett, 2018). Through these processes, and the others highlighted in this paper, our work gave rise to our rehumanization (Bell, 2018; Lykes et al., 2018) and the forming of relationships (Mitchell et al., 2018). We made space in our course for radical healing and collective action through a trauma-informed lens, which in turn made space for affective atmospheres, an acknowledgment of our collective trauma (Bell, 2018), and relationships with each other. Dominant whiteman academia systematically stifles the lived experiences of scholars from historically oppressed communities (Lykes et al., 2018; Silva, 2018). In sum, a healing justice model of community psychology pedagogy can be another avenue for embodying a decolonial turn in the classroom.



By incorporating a healing justice framework as a means to guide course discussions toward social justice, we answered the call to shift classrooms from an information dissemination site to a place of critical inquiry, agency, and co-ownership (Carolissen & Duckett, 2018; Lichty & Palamaro-Munsell, 2017; Lykes et al., 2018; McNamara & Naepi, 2018). In questioning our pedagogy, and mutually deciding to create a classroom where normalizing emotions, question asking, critiquing the institution, and vulnerabilities were collectively allowed, we constructed an empowering space where students could practice agency through “ownership of their education and experiences” (Lichty & Palamaro-Munsell, 2017, p. 322, and see also French et al., 2020 and Lykes et al., 2018). Understanding that the university can be a location of trauma for many minoritized groups, fostering agency and empowerment is one effective strategy toward obstructing this ongoing trauma (Lichty & Palamaro-Munsell, 2017; Lykes et al., 2018).

Past work has documented the lack of resources (i.e., strategies and frameworks) to incorporate CP into undergraduate and graduate classrooms, noting dilemmas that arise such as the initiating and maintaining equitable participation while navigating power dynamics (Carolissen & Duckett, 2018; Lichty & Palamaro-Munsell, 2017; Lykes et al., 2018). Our experiences aid in providing strategies to navigate these difficult power dynamics and foster equitable relationships, such as negotiating a new syllabus. By also seeing a university classroom, even on a video-conferencing app, as an opportunity for CP practice (Lichty & Palamaro-Munsell, 2017), we acknowledged the opportunities to work toward healing within the university and the importance of future work that expands on our strategies for doing so.

Although these lessons and implications are important, it is also the case that if community psychologists are serious about transformation, including in our classrooms, then there are times when we must respond with urgency and spontaneity for the sake of wellness and healing (French et al., 2020). Although this may be uncomfortable for the instructor or the person who is designated as being “in charge,” and it can lead to some uncertainty and ambiguity, it is also important to practice humility, including cultural humility (Lewis et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2018), and trust/remember that there is wisdom within the collective (Silva, 2018). Creating a process that centers the voices of minoritized group members in determining the course of action may facilitate better alignment with healing justice and a better experience for all involved (French et al., 2020). In this way, a healing justice curriculum, like a decolonial curriculum, can be a reparative tool (Carolissen & Duckett, 2018).

Taken together, a healing justice model is valuable to community psychologists in training because historically, trauma-informed scholar-activism has not holistically and

explicitly worked toward healing justice, nor toward decolonization. It is time that we recognize that complex and collective trauma and healing practices can reinforce hope, well-being, and critical activism. Instilling a caring culture when engaging in this work can contribute to the project of the decolonization of CP training, while also serving as a protective factor against burnout for scholar-activists (in training). Furthermore, these practices can help reaffirm our commitments to the healing and well-being of communities in which we engage. A shift toward healing in our social justice practice and CP training is one move in addressing healing as a value for our work.

## Conflicts of Interests

There are no conflicts of interests to disclose.

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