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title page

Promoting Justice through Community-Based Research: International Case Studies

Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar, Fabricio Balcazar, University of Illinois Chicago, USA

Daniela E. Miranda, University of Seville, Spain

Tesania Velazquez, Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru

Caterina Arcidiacono, Federico II University, Naples, Italy

Manuel Garcia-Ramirez, University of Seville, Spain

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar, University of Illinois Chicago, 1919 West Taylor, University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL 60612. Email: ysuarez@uic.edu

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Promoting Justice through Community-Based Research: International Case Studies

Abstract

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches to promoting justice focus on working from the ground up and giving a voice to marginalized communities regarding their concerns, potential solutions, and how to address social justice issues that matter to them. The pursuit of justice is often related to efforts to attain personal as well as collective well-being. In this paper, we illustrate three exemplars of community psychologists' efforts to promote justice. Within each case study, we discuss the social and community context and examine how the researchers built partnerships and solidarity, developed ways of doing, and approached challenges and solutions. First, we present an example to promote economic justice through an entrepreneurship initiative developed in collaboration with young Black youth with disabilities in the United States. The second case illustrates an effort to promote reproductive justice in collaboration with Roma women and girls in Spain. The third exemplar depicts the use of life stories as a method to raise the voices of displaced, marginalized indigenous women in Peru. Based on these three case studies, we present a synthesis model of social justice. We also discuss implications for future studies emphasizing the importance of engaging community participants in research meaningful ways, developing sustainable partnerships, and decolonizing research.

Keywords: community-based participatory research, social justice, economic justice, reproductive justice

Community researchers and practitioners have been deeply committed to embracing participatory research to promote social justice. Social justice is one of the core values of community psychology (Kloos et al., 2020), and much of its scholarly work has been framed in terms of justice. Social justice is understood as a complex and multifaceted term that refers to rights, equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and decision-making power among individuals that enable them to thrive within a society (Evans et al., 2017; Fondacaro & Weinberg, 2002; Prilleltensky, 2011; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2019).

Social justice is based on the *principle of fair equality*—whereby all human beings have rights and responsibilities—and the *principle of difference*—which suggests that goods should be redistributed in such a way as to ensure that all human beings have sufficient resources to enjoy a freely chosen life with dignity and respect (Prilleltensky, 2011). The dominant concept of social justice includes a *procedural dimension*—opportunities to freely decide on a life project, and a *distributive dimension*—access to the necessary resources to achieve it (Nelson, 2013).

Many of the movements that have gained momentum around the globe in recent years, supported by community scholars and practitioners, have underscored social justice values. These movements have brought people together from diverse disciplines, diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, and all walks of life, while calling for racial justice (e.g., Black Lives Matter), environmental justice (e.g., the Climate Justice Alliance), indigenous justice (e.g., the First Peoples Worldwide), justice for survivors of sexual abuse (e.g., the #MeToo Movement), and immigrant justice (e.g., Families Belong Together), among others. The widespread interest in developing initiatives aimed at increasing global social justice is not accidental. The growing inequalities affecting humanity and the urgent search for answers to the global problems affecting our communities require a search for new frameworks (Wolff et al., 2016). This need is

reflected in theories and models of health equity (Corning, 2011), critical theory (De Vita, 2014), critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000), structural racism (Wolff et al., 2016), feminist theory (Riger, 2017), civil rights (Jenkins & Morris, 1984), disability rights (Charlton, 2000), LGBTQ rights (Samuels, 2019), and reproductive justice (Ross, 2011).

Despite community psychology contributions to social justice work, much research is needed to continue to advance social justice. Evans et al. (2017) argued that our efforts are usually concentrated on providing assistance, building capacity, and delivering ameliorative interventions within marginalized or disenfranchised communities. The authors asserted that most community psychology work needs to take a more critical view and stronger stand for advancing social justice, for instance, by questioning and achieving the redistribution of resources and the equitable participation of citizens in their societies' decision-making processes (Evans et al., 2017; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Psychologists have made contributions to denouncing and fostering awareness of the inequalities in society, yet much work is needed to ensure that all individuals have access to psychosocial goods (Sanchez Vidal, 2017).

These claims call for redefining the concept of social justice and addressing the failure to achieve it considering the current challenges which we are living and society's inability to prevent as well as to rectify inequalities and ensure a fair redistribution of natural, technological, and social resources (Buser at al., 2020). The movements of today arose among collectives that are frustrated by not having access to the conditions that enable them to pursue a dignified life (e.g., http://nopapersnofear.org/) without coercion (e.g., https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice) and needed supports to ensure fair treatment and advance their cause (e.g., #MeToo, BlackLivesMatter). These movements also arose because many political leaders have abandoned the public good for the purpose of their work. Political leaders—often lost in the tangle of

interests unrelated to the well-being of their constituents—are putting at risk the survival of human beings and the planet as a whole (https://ejfoundation.org/).

Evidence indicates that global inequities (see Crow & Lodha, 2016; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2020) require a conception of social justice that advances in at least four directions: (a) recognizing inequalities as a result of the systematic and intersectional violation of human rights worldwide, (b) recognizing the global character of the inequities that affect local communities, (c) including the proactive role of all stakeholders in pursuing justice, and (d) empowering local communities through building global alliances and giving them a voice to advocate for global transformative changes.

A social justice framework also calls for embracing a community-based participatory research approach (CBPR). A CBPR approach is underscored as a strength-based and emancipatory process whereby the research and action components are driven by community concerns and carried out by scholars in partnership with the community (Minkler & Wallerstein 2003). This approach involves promoting critical dialogue directed at increasing participants' awareness and understanding of their own capacity to transform their social reality (Freire, 1970), and developing meaningful participation of communities in the co-creation of knowledge (Suarez-Balcazar, 2020). However, just as our vision of social justice needs to be revised, our CBPR strategies to promote it also require advancing ways of doing things in collaboration with the community. Such ways of doing involve conducting participant-centered research, which gives voice to community residents in meaningful ways, promoting the redistribution of resources, and facilitating access to power to make decisions about one's life. Working in collaboration with community partners to co-create knowledge and address issues that matter to

them, in their own terms, enables the development and sustainability of partnerships and solidarities.

Typically, partnership and coalition building are defined as representing different collectives within communities, but are community members really participating in our initiatives in meaningful ways? Is the voice of community residents influential in facilitating change and promoting procedural and distributive justice? McGarry (2014) have drawn attention to the need to distinguish "presence, voice, and influence" in community-based research. Undoubtedly, all interested parties should be present in initiatives to address the inequities they experience and be provided with the opportunity to directly influence decisions that affect them rather than through representative structures designed by academics, policymakers, or self-appointed leaders (Wolff et al., 2016). These structures can reinforce the vulnerable nature of racialized minorities and foster paternalistic attitudes in society.

The aim of CBPR approaches should be to involve populations that have experienced marginalization in meaningful ways in the research process and in ways that they can gain procedural and distributive justice. However, this is not a simple task. Often, the groups that experience marginalization and social inequalities are farthest removed from occupying influential roles in social and political participation and researchers may have hard time recruiting them as partners. This is a challenge that requires increasing critical awareness among investigators and those in position of power to create spaces to give a voice to the most silent communities.

To address this issue, meaningful participation of those most impacted by oppression and experiencing injustices is needed. This paper aims to provide some exemplars on how partnerships have brought the voices of marginalized populations to make decisions and begin

the process of achieving procedural and or distributive justice. The three cases illustrated in this paper attempt to take a more critical view by implementing initiatives focused on influencing decisions that impact people's lives and illustrating participatory approaches to promoting justice in three countries—the United States, Spain, and Peru. For each case, we discuss the social and community context and factors that lead to inequalities; partnerships and solidarities addressing the issue; ways of doing things, strategies and innovations; and challenges and solutions. As a result of these three cases, we introduce an integrative social justice framework and close with a discussion of the implications for community psychology.

First Case Study: Promoting Economic Justice Among Youth with Disabilities in the United States

Social and Community Context

One of the main challenges people with disabilities experience is unemployment. They often face discrimination, prejudice, lack of vocational opportunities to prepare for employment and gain skills, and a lack of willingness from potential employers to make needed accommodations (see Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2020). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2021), the employment rate of persons with disabilities in 2020 was only 17.9%, down from 19.3% in 2019, while the rate for persons without disabilities was 61.8%, down from 66.3% in the prior year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These disparities generate profound inequalities and directly impact the quality of life of people with disabilities of all ages. We focus this case study on the second author's efforts to promote self-employment among high school students with disabilities as an additional career option after graduation.

Transition preparation programs provide opportunities and supports that help youth with disabilities acquire the competencies and knowledge needed to make a successful transition to

adulthood. Unfortunately, these programs are difficult to access for youth of color with disabilities (Balcazar et al., 2018). Self-employment and entrepreneurship are rarely included in these transition programs, even less often among low-income communities of color. Unfortunately, positive transition outcomes for youth of color with disabilities who live in poverty in urban communities are minimal (Langi et al., 2017). In Chicago, for instance, many youths of color with disabilities who complete high school do not have high levels of success in enrolling in postsecondary educational settings or securing jobs that pay above minimum wage, include benefits like health insurance, or jobs that allow career advancement (Awsumb et al., 2020). For these reasons, we are seeking strategies to promote economic justice among this population.

Building Partnerships and Solidarity

One way of addressing the problem of low employment participation rates among young adults of color with disabilities is to provide opportunities and resources for them to become self-employed and to start managing their own businesses at a younger age, before they reach adulthood (Kitching, 2014). To address this issue, a participatory research process was developed between the research team and multiple local and state partners, including teachers from a local charter school for former dropouts, service providers from an agency that offers assistance to people with disabilities, and individuals with disabilities who had started their own businesses and were receiving supports from a local business incubator. These partners participated in ongoing meetings, and in multiple interviews (involving 20 entrepreneurs with disabilities, 6 service providers, and 5 school administrators) with the purpose of better understanding the supports and barriers to starting and operating a small business through a business incubator that was started by a local foundation. Another partner is the Division of

Rehabilitation Services (DRS), a federal program that helps individuals with disabilities return to work and provides resources to individuals with disabilities interested in starting their own businesses. A federal grant sponsored this project, and the main purpose of this phase was to give voice to the partners to develop the model that was going to be implemented with high school students with disabilities. The university team, recipients of the federal grant, led the effort, yet they are not making decisions on whose project gets the resources to start a business. The model has been embraced by partners such as several schools in the area that would like to replicate the model and DRS, which will enable to sustainability of the solidary to support youth with disabilities.

Ways of Doing

Based on the information collected through the interviews with entrepreneurs with disabilities, the partners finalized the model and the corresponding training curriculum addressing the basics of developing a business plan and issues of prejudice and discrimination experienced by people with disabilities. Given that entrepreneurship opportunities are not readily available to youth, less so to youth with disabilities of color, we used a capacity-building framework and a CBPR approach to develop the entrepreneurship model. Although entrepreneurship is not an innovative idea, what is innovative here is that the model, developed with input from key stakeholders, focused on promoting self-employment among youth of color with disabilities and that youth with disabilities have to create their own ideas. Often, these youth are used to school and home environments where everything is structured, predetermined, and decided by others (parents, teachers, special education personnel), rather than by themselves. These students come from charter schools located in 15 of the poorest neighborhoods in

Chicago, and approximately 18% of the students receive special education services each year, while 13.5% are classified as homeless because they do not have a permanent residence.

The partners' entrepreneurship model enables the youth to come up with their own creative business ideas, develop a support map to identify people who could help or mentor them, develop a business plan, and conduct a business pitch. Students have the opportunity to make their pitch to a panel of judges—which includes small business owners with disabilities from the community. Students whose ideas are selected by the panel are allocated up to 500 dollars to purchase supplies or equipment to start their small businesses. In a traditional colonialist power structure, those who hold the resources make the decisions about the distribution of the resources. In this case example, the university team does not make this decision. A panel of judges, which includes entrepreneurs of color with disabilities, make such decision based on the proposal and pitch presented by the youth.

As they develop their own creative ideas, the students receive technical assistance and consultation from the researchers and teachers involved in the project, but they do not make decisions for the students. Some of the business ideas being developed by students included a music production company (DJ) for parties and events; a T-shirt production company with personalized designs, made to order; and a make-up service with natural products. Youth will continue to receive support from the diverse partners (DRS, the researchers, the schools), to implement and sustain their business ideas.

Challenges and Solutions

One of the biggest challenges that we faced at the beginning of the project was unrooting prejudice among people in positions of power who believe that youth of color with disabilities cannot develop their own entrepreneurship ideas. Youth with disabilities are typically operating

under structured educational systems, in which they have few opportunities to make their own choices. Our entrepreneurship model empowered them to explore ideas, develop a business proposal, prepare to defend the proposal, and implement their entrepreneurship proposals. The team had several discussions with school personnel, service providers, and the youth themselves to address these issues. Contrary to the common myth that youth with disabilities cannot be entrepreneurs, and consistent with a CBPR approach, we designed a participatory process to enable youth of color with disabilities to choose their life project when it comes to starting their own business, and explore challenges and solutions to implementing their ideas.

COVID-19 brought in another set of challenges. The pandemic generated inevitable challenges to the implementation of the project. There were problems with scheduling the trainings, keeping attendance, and accessing computer technology (e.g., some of the students were using their phones to attend the trainings, which did not allow them to access some of the content). Online education has resulted in poor student engagement with the training modules and limited social interactions among students, slowing the learning process. To address some of the challenges presented by the pandemic, we are providing more resources than initially anticipated, including additional virtual supports, and enhancing dialogue among participants and research team members while they develop their business plans.

Another challenge often mentioned by stakeholders is the project sustainability over time. Our partnership with DRS has become very valuable for addressing this challenge. DRS is interested in the model's success and has opened a training hub to help replicate the program with adults with disabilities who can then prepare their business plans to compete for self-employment funding, which the agency can provide. In the long-term, DRS could continue to support implementing the entrepreneurship model in high schools across the state, including

access to the start-up funds as part of their transition preparation program for students with disabilities. Bringing in this partner has been critical to increasing awareness among people in position of power (DRS personnel) about supporting youth with disabilities to make their own decisions and become key players in their entrepreneurship journey, outside of a paternalistic approach.

Overall, our entrepreneurship model exemplifies how a university-community partnership can improve opportunities for youth of color with disabilities to become small business owners and address some of the employment challenges they face (Balcazar et al. (2014). The training model is being implemented during the 2021-22 academic year in two high schools and two organizations, including a larger and wider variety of students with disabilities. Following a participatory approach, youth can become agents of change and make their own decisions once provided with the opportunities and supports needed to pursue their life projects. Although the students have not achieved economic justice yet, they are engaging in the process of making decisions and developing their ideas, which may result in addressing economic justice in the long run. Our model exemplifies practical ways in which community psychologists can collaborate with multiple stakeholders to promote small-scale systemic change to pursue economic justice. Entrepreneurship can be a viable career option for many people with disabilities and is being promoted as an effective employment strategy for adults with disabilities from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. In this case, CBPR approaches are being utilized to build the youth's capacity to create a business plan, youth are provided with resources and opportunities, opportunities to make decisions, and the right to be who they want to be.

Second Case Study: Promoting Reproductive Justice Among Roma Women in Spain

Social and Community Context

The reproductive rights of Roma women and girls (RWG) living in at-risk contexts are in jeopardy as the pandemic leaves its imprints on the most marginalized communities. The Roma (also known as Gypsies) are Europe's largest ethnic group that often experience discrimination, negative stereotypes, and are likely to live in poor living conditions (Crowley et al., 2013). During the COVID-19 lockdown, RWG were under strain to perform roles in their households and the community—including childcare, elderly care, care for husbands or fathers, soliciting support from social services, and daily chores—as families had to find ways to survive without external support. Roma families traditionally live close to their extended relatives, and girls are expected to play multiple roles as caregivers, including motherhood and marriage, at a very young age, in some cases as young as 13 or 14 (United Nations Fund for Population Activities, 2018). When the pandemic hit and schools across the world moved to online education, the ability to participate in online schooling depended on students having the space, time, access to computers and Wi-Fi, and the support from families. However, Roma girls living in at-risk environments have limited access to computers or reliable Wi-Fi, live in overcrowded housing, are tasked with household responsibilities, and their families often face financial crisis (Korunovska & Jovanovic, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, many Roma communities in Spain engaged in informal work (e.g., as street vendors or housekeepers), and the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted their only sources of income. In addition, due to the informal status of their work and discrimination towards them, many Roma families were excluded from receiving government-sponsored unemployment support. The marginalized contexts of Roma families forced them to live in fear of the worsening economic conditions and not necessarily fear of the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Building Partnerships and Solidarity for Community-Based Advocacy

The aim of this case study is to illustrate a collaboration between researchers from the Center for Community Action and Research at the University of Seville (CESPYD) and RWG from two neighborhoods in Seville, Spain designed to ensure that local officials heard the voices of RWG in the distribution of resources to ameliorate the economic impact of COVID-19 (see Garcia-Ramirez et al., 2020). The RWG involved were all mothers from the most marginalized areas of their respective neighborhoods.

Community-driven advocacy can ensure that RWG transform their experiences of oppression into political acts (Lindberg et al., 2020). Through a community-driven advocacy approach, RWG have created a space to identify the issues of power that are at play in maintaining unjust conditions and gain the capacity to demand change. This approach has allowed RWG to assume new roles that are not exclusive to being a mother, wife, or daughter. From this approach, the fostering of the university-community solidarity provided a space that fostered RWG's capacity to voice the issues that mattered to them and connected them to key stakeholders and city officials that could provide access to resources needed to meet their needs. The solidarity is likely to sustain over several years, given their desire to continue working together.

Ways of Doing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, RWG and researchers (henceforth, the partners) have adapted a three-phase advocacy strategy proposed by Miranda et al. (2020). This strategy includes: (a) building critical knowledge at the local level, (b) building alliances and resources to develop the capacity to advocate, and (c) implementing coordinated multi-level advocacy efforts.

Building Critical Knowledge

To identify what RWG were going through during the pandemic and how to support them, the partners and RWG decided to collect information from other Roma women regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. The partners created questions of interest for an open-ended interview with Roma women from their communities. Via snowball and word-of-mouth recruitment, a total of 22 Roma women were interviewed using WhatsApp audio messages. At the time, WhatsApp was the best way to communicate with the RWG via prepaid SIM cards. The 22 interviewees were members of the RWG's immediate and extended families, as well as close friends. The partners received and transcribed the recorded messages. They also developed a thematic analysis that was then triangulated during Zoom calls with the RWG (Lawson, 2015). This member checking technique has been reported as a strategy for enhancing the rigor of qualitative data accuracy (Tracy, 2010). During the Zoom calls, the partners reflected on the patterns found in the narratives. Overarching themes included lack of essential resources to take measures for COVID-19 safety (e.g., lack of money to purchase masks, lack of running water to wash hands), digital gaps that affected schooling for children, anti-gypsyism in the social media and the news, and exclusion from COVID-19 economic support measures from the government. These themes built on critical knowledge that legitimized RWG's experiences and their desire to challenge the dominant narratives and define by themselves the impact COVID-19 was having on their lives. Given the lack, and for some women, limited access to the internet and Wi FI, the university partners facilitated access, and enhanced the capacity of RWG to navigate the internet to allow RWG to participate fully. From a CBPR approach, RWG collaborated on data collection, data analysis, and were fully engaged in advocacy efforts described below.

Building Solidarities and Resources to Develop Capacity to Advocate

During the pandemic, a lack of financial resources to continue the collaboration between the university and Roma women forced the team to mobilize and raise funds to build solidarity beyond their neighborhoods. We raised funds on the GoFundMe website to provide economic support for the RWG's access to reliable Wi-Fi and optimize online platforms for community organizing efforts. For example, we used the Change website, an online petition platform utilized to share messages and gain worldwide support for various causes. Our RWG partners found themselves in a role they had not played before—fundraising and writing petitions. Through Change we wrote a petition that urged the city council to schedule a meeting with the partners to advocate for the partnership's funding and to monitor how the city council planned to involve RWG in the post-pandemic reconstruction plans. With over 1,200 signatures, the petition gained local and international support. This support led to contact with an influential Roma community organizer who connected RWG to other important decision-makers. For example, RWG networked with city council representatives as well as national and local organizations.

The team realized that the online environment was difficult to navigate for a few reasons, including lack of familiarity, limited access, and lack of a clear group identity. The group decided to continue the fundraising efforts to gain start-up funding for formalizing the RWG's own grassroots organization. The organizational naming process was a significant turning point, as the RWG came to a consensus on how they wanted to be represented and what image they wanted to project. The RWG decided their name would be YILÓ (meaning *heart* in the Romani language), with the tagline "women, mothers, daughters, neighbors that give voice to their neighborhoods." The naming process created a sense of solidarity and accomplishment among the RWG. YILÓ would provide a space for the RWG to advocate for their communities with the voluntary technical support of CESPYD researchers. YILÓ ensured that the RWG had a

supportive network as well as reciprocity and recognition between each other and their communities. Through this process, RWG engaged, with the support of the university partners and local organizations, in roles that they had never assumed before and sought new identities outside of their traditional role of mothers and caregivers.

Implementing Coordinated Multi-Level Advocacy Efforts

The RWG developed a statement that highlighted their local knowledge about the impact COVID-19 was having on their community and disseminated it in diverse media with the support of the partners. This statement resulted in articles across nine different newspapers, a television, and a radio program. The statement was then disseminated across local grassroots networks and the broader university community. Shortly after, the city mayor requested a meeting with YILÓ. The city council promised to support RWG in these neighborhoods. A few months later, and with the support of a city council representative, YILÓ attended a citizen plenary session in November 2020 in which they called for a real political and economic commitment to their communities and urged that RWG be included in city council upcoming city-wide plans, which included COVID-19 economic stimulus packages. YILÓ networked and connected with other women-led groups, social movements, and other national Roma organizational networks. The university partners supported transferring knowledge from local RWG to European-level platforms—for example, at the launch of the European Public Health Alliance's Roma Health Network. Coordinated multi-level advocacy efforts ensured that solutions to the issues faced by the Roma people touched upon different systemic issues regarding RWG's participation.

The new ways of doing described here strengthened the solidarity between the researchers, the RWG, and the Roma organizations. Building the capacity of RWG to advocate for resources and involving RWG in the co-creation of new knowledge strengthened the

solidarity between partners who have been working together for some time. The partners have sought funding from the European Union to continue the partnership and solidarities.

Challenges and Solutions

The partners identified actors at different levels that were responding to the immediate needs of the RWG. However, uncoordinated actions and fragmented resources inadvertently silenced several of the RWG. After weeks of receiving no help from the local Office of Social Services, YILÓ advocated for another meeting with the city council. Following this meeting, the city council quickly responded by individually calling each of the RWG and providing their families with the support they needed, such as food stamps and economic support. It is possible to assume that the City Council responded in such a way to silence members, instead of investing resources in the whole community. However, this prompted Roma NGOs to take on the role of humanitarian aid, providing essential supplies to the broader Roma community. In this case, coordinated action ensured that opportunities and leadership roles were shared, resources were not duplicated, and a sense of solidarity was generated across individuals.

The university partners were in a position of power compared to RWG during the lockdown period. In a situation that stripped RWG communities of resources and influence, the partners played an important role in disrupting some power dynamics. The robust and genuine commitment the partners had towards the group of RWG and vice versa deepened the relationship and sense of responsibility to take action together. Working towards a common goal gave a new meaning to RWG home space, since their home was now a place to advocate for their communities. This was true for the partners as well. As a result of paying close attention to the group dynamics, as well as following a CBPR approach, the partners became more mindful of balancing the power dynamics (see Vaughn et al., 2018). A CBPR approach to research calls

for researchers to attend to power dynamics and balance power by building capacity, distributing resources, and encouraging the community to make decisions (Wallerstein et al., 2019). The RWG felt seen and heard during a time when negative images of them were being projected and in times when their voices did not count. Despite the limited gains made during this collaboration, RWG's struggle for justice continues, and the university team has been able to obtain funding from the European Union to continue their partnership to promote justice for RWG, which in this case has concentrated in enabling RWG to see themselves in roles other than mothers and caregivers. The experiences of RWG in Spain were linked to the realities of other RWG in Bulgaria and Romania. Sharing experiences contributes to building a cohesive "big-picture" narrative and gain power in numbers to challenge discriminatory structures.

Guided by a reproductive justice framework, RWG were supported to assume other roles atypically to those assigned to them by society, and were effective in engaging in advocacy and political roles. The reproductive justice framework supports the recognition of RWG as political actors who have the capacities to advocate for their rights and pursue goals vital to them. The process of recognition towards RWG from researchers, organizations, and policymakers gives power to challenge dominant structures. The CBPR strategies utilized here that facilitated justice and have helped sustain the solidarity between partners, included co-creating new knowledge with the RWG based on their experiences; empowering RWG to define themselves, and giving their voice to define their roles and partnership agenda; building their capacity for advocacy; and RWG meaningful engagement in research.

Third Case Study: Social Justice and Migratory Processes Among Indigenous Women in Post–Internal Armed Conflict in Peru

Social and Political Context

A few decades ago, Peru went through an "internal armed conflict" of tremendous relevance and psychosocial impact, which played out in a society with a long-standing history of violence and exclusion. In 2003, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) presented its final report, which aimed to identify the causes and consequences of the armed conflict that took place between 1980 and 2000. This report revealed the extent of the human rights violations by internal terrorist groups (mainly the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path, PCP-SL) and the Peruvian army. This violent era resulted in 69,000 people dead or missing, thousands of communities negatively affected, and more than half a million internally displaced people (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003). Data and testimonies showed a differentiated impact of violence based on economic, ethnic, and gender inequalities (see Reynaga-Abiko, 2008). Thus, the report noted that the primary victims lived in Peru's most economically and geographically excluded and poorest regions. In addition, violence changed the dynamics of gender relations in many communities (Reynaga-Abiko, 2008).

Prior to the internal armed conflict, women played a position of subordination as mothers and caregivers with little to no power to make decisions. This was the product of multiple systems of oppression. During this internal armed conflict, however, women took on new roles and took care of their families and their communities while facing forced displacement (Rivera-Holguín & Velázquez, 2020).

Building Partnerships and Solidarity

This case study illustrates a collaborative partnership between the community of Sacsamarca, located in the province of Huanca Sancos in the southern region of the state of Ayacucho, and the Academic Department of Social Responsibility of the Pontificia Catholic University of Peru (PUCP, [represented by the fourth author of this paper]. The community

population is 1,204 inhabitants (INEI, 2018), and almost the entire population is bilingual, with Quechua being their first language followed by Spanish. Access to essential services is still precarious; few households have water, electricity, or sewage services, and basic needs are not met. This is a community affected by the internal armed conflict and identified in the final report of the TRC as one of the first to confront the abuses committed by the PCP-SL (TRC, 2003). Due to the armed conflict, the population of Sacsamarca has decreased by 25% in the last thirty years, with mainly older adults remaining (Eskenazi et al., 2015).

The partnership started from a request for support from the community to help elevate the voices of indigenous women's migration processes in the Sacsamarca community. Based on a collaborative agreement between the community and the university, the following working areas were established: (a) community strengthening, (b) cultural identity, (c) management of the environment, and (d) political incidences (DARS 2019). Various projects and initiatives have been developed to address these working areas. Under community strengthening and cultural identity, it was observed that many women who migrated out of the community returned to Sacsamarca, unlike the more common one-way migration process that took place in other regions of the country.

Following the principles of decolonial feminist community psychology approach (Boonzaeir & van Niekerk, 2019; Ciofalo, 2019), and CBPR (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003), the researchers approached the community to get to know the women in their context and created a safe space to hear the women's voices that may have been silenced by the multiple systems of oppression they had experienced—violence, displacement, and marginalization. The safe space created opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning once trust was established. The team worked with six adult women, between 30 and 60 years old, who resided in Sacsamarca and had

at one point migrated out of the community and returned. The researchers identified these women through one-on-one contacts with the community, and the women agreed to collaborate.

Ways of Doing and Being

To listen to the women and find out what matters to them (see conversations that matter, Suarez-Balcazar, 2020), the team engaged in conversations with the women to identify their migration processes using life stories and field ethnography methodologies (see Flick, 2014). Life stories is a technique based on social interaction between two people, in which a discourse is built in a joint dialogical reflection (Flick, 2014). This technique is based on the biographical method, allowing a condensing of the participant's historical and social structure and personal history. The technique enabled the team to connect individual experiences with the characteristics of historical and social processes (Arfuch, 2013). Additionally, the team took part in and recorded different community events, especially those in which women participated. What follows is a synthesis of the information gathered about how the voices of the indigenous women came alive.

One of the specific requests from the community's women to the partnership was to publish their stories and experiences during the armed conflict. This desire came from not feeling recognized within the official memory. Instead, the men who sought recognition for their stories were published, while the women's stories were not. Thus, the university partners gave voice to the women of the community. After years of conflict, justice for displaced community members means that the women stories become part of the official memory within the community. This collaboration with the university researchers is still ongoing, and the first outcome will be that these experiences and stories are published and officially delivered in a communal assembly.

For the women, this was a form of symbolic reparation, something to pass on to future generations, and a way to preserve their stories and voices.

The CBPR approach created conditions between the community psychology researchers and the participating indigenous women, whereby the power dynamics and limitations of the women to assume more active roles in the research process were limited due to literacy and reduced capacity. It was difficult to break from the tendency of the researchers to make all decisions—breaking the colonial and paternalistic approach to allow the indigenous women to decide for themselves. Listening to their stories and determination to have their stories heard and known to others at the local and national level helped the researchers, who continuously adopted a humble and participatory approach, to leave their colonial ways of doing behind. Through storytelling and listening, being in the role of learners, the university partners were able to change the power dynamics allowing indigenous women to take the lead and teach their stories to others. Respecting the women's space and history to preserve their stories and given them voice and agency has helped sustained the partnership and solidify the relationship between researchers and community members.

Andean Migration: The Internal Armed Conflict as a Turning Point

The migration of the women from Sacsamarca has been caused by poverty and violence. The women search for better opportunities for a fairer and more dignified life. Due to centralism, Lima and other main Peruvian cities concentrate education and health services. In most cases, early indigenous women who migrated took jobs as domestic workers, wage workers in farming, or traders, often under unsafe working conditions. In addition to ethnic and gender stigmatization, market neoliberalism increases the job precariousness of these migrant women.

One crucial factor, generally overlooked by past research, is the peasant network ("*red de paisanaje"* in Spanish), understood as a family and communal support network present in the city to which rural migrants move. Based on the information collected, we learned that the peasant network performs different functions such as providing housing, offering financial and social support, maintaining cultural practices, and generating commercial and development routes. In the case of women, these functions have re-created a sense of community and the notion of territory, as well as allowed the emergence of localized identities, supported by kinship and community relations, based on artistic and cultural traditions. These functions are linked to the sense of belonging among community members, which is supported by the place of migration and is part of the adaptation processes of the migrants (Sonn, 2002).

The internal armed conflict was a breaking point in the history of the Sacsamarca community. The impact was evident not only at the economic, political, and social levels but also in the migration processes that had been taking place. Violence and terror led to forced displacement (Venturoli, 2009), and arrival and relocation processes became more costly for migrants—mainly for the women (Ramirez, 2018). According to the participants' accounts, they experienced the loss of their homes, family members, and security, and lived under a constant threat to their lives from the violence. The displacement was final in many cases, but there was a return to the community in others. This return was possible because, as reported by one participant, "Sacsamarca is a community that allows one to return." Although women responded to the violence by migrating to other places, their aim was to return to their community. Sert (2010) points out that many displaced people do not return to their origins. However, in Peru, evidence indicates that more than 50% of displaced people returned to their places of origin after

the armed conflict ceased (Ramirez, 2018). These women are part of that percentage that returned after the threat to their lives ended.

Based on conversations with the women, we identified two factors that allowed migrants to return, setting up migration processes back and forth among the participants: Sacsamarca is a *courageous* and *sheltering* community. On the one hand, we found a heroic discourse, based on being one of the first communities to confront the PCP-SL in Ayacucho, which produces pride and fosters the participants' sense of belonging (Noa, 2018). On the other hand, the community offers warmth and security. Another element contributing to the women's return was their subjective experience of ethnic and gender stigmatization in the city. In some cases, participants were discriminated against and or experienced abuse, mainly in the workplace (Berg, 2015). These migration processes are characterized by being diverse and dynamic -- *round trip*. In other words, in some cases, the possibility of new migration processes remains open. In contrast to other communities that have experienced displacement, many of Sacsamarca's indigenous women wanted to return to their homes and land.

Challenges and Solutions

Women in Peru impacted by the armed conflict have experienced so much violence that they are often protective of their own space, experiences, and communities. The partnership included teachers at a private university in the capital, Lima, which has its own power connotation. Displaced communities often perceive Lima as a capital that has turned its back on the needs and realities facing indigenous communities in the Andean regions. Therefore, the university partners applied the principles of CBPR to develop trust, volunteer in the community, and respect the community through a constant and stable interaction over time (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Sonn, 2002). A relationship based on trust allowed the women to identify the

partnership's goals and expectations, enabling the six women who partnered with the university researchers to define their level of participation and roles, and to use their voice and stories as a source of liberation. It is essential to recognize internal tensions such as the emotional trauma these women had experienced and their mistrust of institutions of power. The university partners took the necessary time to develop trust and provide the women with a safe space to share their stories. Listening to the heartbreaking stories of the women, full of losses and abuse, was emotionally hard for the researchers. Therefore, it became necessary to engage constantly in self-reflection and open dialogue. In such circumstances, peer debriefing and constant deconstruction are highly recommended to move from individual Western psychology to Latin American community psychology.

In conclusion, by returning to the community, women had the opportunity to develop agency, tell their stories, and assume their roles within the community. The CBPR strategies and social justice themes emerging from this case, which in turn have sustained the partnership, include the need to raise the voice of oppressed community members, respecting oppressed individuals' space and history, promoting agency and decision making, access to opportunities to tell their stories, and gathering community narratives based on their life experiences. Like the other two cases, community participants are playing a critical role in shaping the research project, which has facilitated the fostering of strong solidarities between the women from the community and the researchers.

Discussion

The three international cases depicted here speak to ways of doing and being within community-based participatory approaches to promoting economic justice, reproductive justice, and justice for displaced women, giving a voice to oppressed communities. The first case,

highlights the complexity of factors interacting in a critical context and the importance of a multidimensional intervention. The authors and their partners developed ways of doing by creating an entrepreneurship model directed at improving the economic condition young of color with disabilities in the long run. Access to resources and opportunities for employment are vital to promoting distributive justice and are also aligned with community psychology efforts to promote systemic change. Youth of color with disabilities are provided with an opportunity to identify and create their life project and pursue their goals.

The second case study exemplifies a participatory approach to community psychology in action, which created the circumstances for effective advocacy. In this case, Roma women and girls participating in this project used their social network to gain information and collect data about the community's needs and resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their involvement in data collection and discussions within the community brought about social actions with the local power structures such as the local city council, enabling social change.

In the third case life storytelling became a powerful method to raise the voices of indigenous women. Storytelling was a powerful tool to rethink stories of oppression, giving evidence of the multiple effects of war, poverty, and racial and gender issues. The case of Peruvian women displaced from their community presents a decolonial feminist approach that emphasizes our responsibility as scholars and practitioners to create an interactive and safe space to give voice to those experiencing oppression. Moreover, this storytelling case emphasizes the importance of creating trust between researchers and an oppressed community, to raise their voices and have their place in history recognized (Arcidiacono, 2017; Arcidiacono et al., 2021; Di Napoli et al., 2019). This is a unique example of the principles and methodological research strategies developed by decolonial feminist community psychology. In all, building trust is an

essential process, as illustrated in the three cases, and not just a social value; it is the basic principle of all social interventions. In all three cases, the social justice-focused, CBPR approach enabled the researchers to develop and foster partnerships and solidarities grounded in trust, meaningful engagement in research, and respecting the voices and agency of participants (see Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Sonn, 2016; Suarez-Balcazar, 2020; Vaughn, et al., 2018; Wolff, et al., 2016).

Figure 1 illustrates a synthesis model that captures the multilayered complexities of social justice that incorporates the main themes identified in the three cases. The model includes the context of the racialized experiences of oppression illustrated in the three international cases such as lack of opportunities for youth of color with disabilities, RWG marginalization in times of COVID-19, and violence against displaced indigenous women in Peru. This is followed by the community-based participatory initiatives and strategies utilized here such as involving stakeholders in the co-creation of knowledge based on the experience of marginalized communities; providing access to resources and opportunities; empowering communities to define themselves; giving voice and agency to define roles and agenda; building individual capacity; gathering community narratives based on their life experiences; and meaningful engagement in research. This process resulted in specific outcomes illustrated in figure 1. The framework in Figure 1 captures the interconnectedness of the themes emerging in the case studies and the ongoing dynamic and interactive nature of the complexity of social justice.

These three cases open a debate concerning the values, the training, and the competencies of community researchers engaged in CBPR to promote social justice. We recognize that creating trust among the community participants and the institutional academic researchers is a significant dimension. It is a competence that requires active listening, developing meaningful

and mutually beneficial relationships, time investment, shared participatory leadership, and awareness of the power dynamics in the particular context. Developing trust is not implicit knowledge, and often, communities are subject to mistrusting relationships with universities and others in a position of power (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). Advancing social justice through community research and practice needs to focus on inviting the community to be involved in research in meaningful ways and becoming co-creators of knowledge with the researchers (see Sonn, 2016; Suarez-Balcazar, 2020).

Acting on power imbalances, giving voice to people, supporting oppressed communities, and advocating for social change are critical aims of CBPR in the pursue of social justice (see Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). However, there is a need to move away from mainstream psychology to one that enables questioning issues of power and focuses on epistemology ethics that resist historical neoliberalism (Keast, 2020).

The lessons learned from these case studies highlight the following key points to consider in future research. First, the importance of the intersectionality of social action to understand complex social and community contexts that lead to oppression and marginalization. Second, CBPR is the appropriate approach to community research designed to promote justice and elevate the voices of those affected by oppression. Third, building trust is the social glue that enables the process of connecting with the community. This process takes time, and often, volunteering is an effective way to build such trust. Finally, promoting justice requires a reflective approach that emphasizes ongoing dialogue, deconstruction of a colonial approach, and a feminist ideology. As articulated by Sonn (2016), "decolonizing methodologies and the liberation paradigm privileges and seeks to elevate the experiences and knowledges of those who have been marginalized and oppressed" (p. 312).

This article depicts three experiences of communities in different countries facing oppression, inequality, and marginalization seeking social justice. We aimed to encourage reflection on effective ways of giving voice to community members about ways to address their needs. Future community research and action should document the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

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Figure 1

Figure 1. Contexts of racialized oppresions and social justice outcomes

Racialized Experiences of Oppressions

Lack of Opportunities for Youth of Color with Disabilities in the US

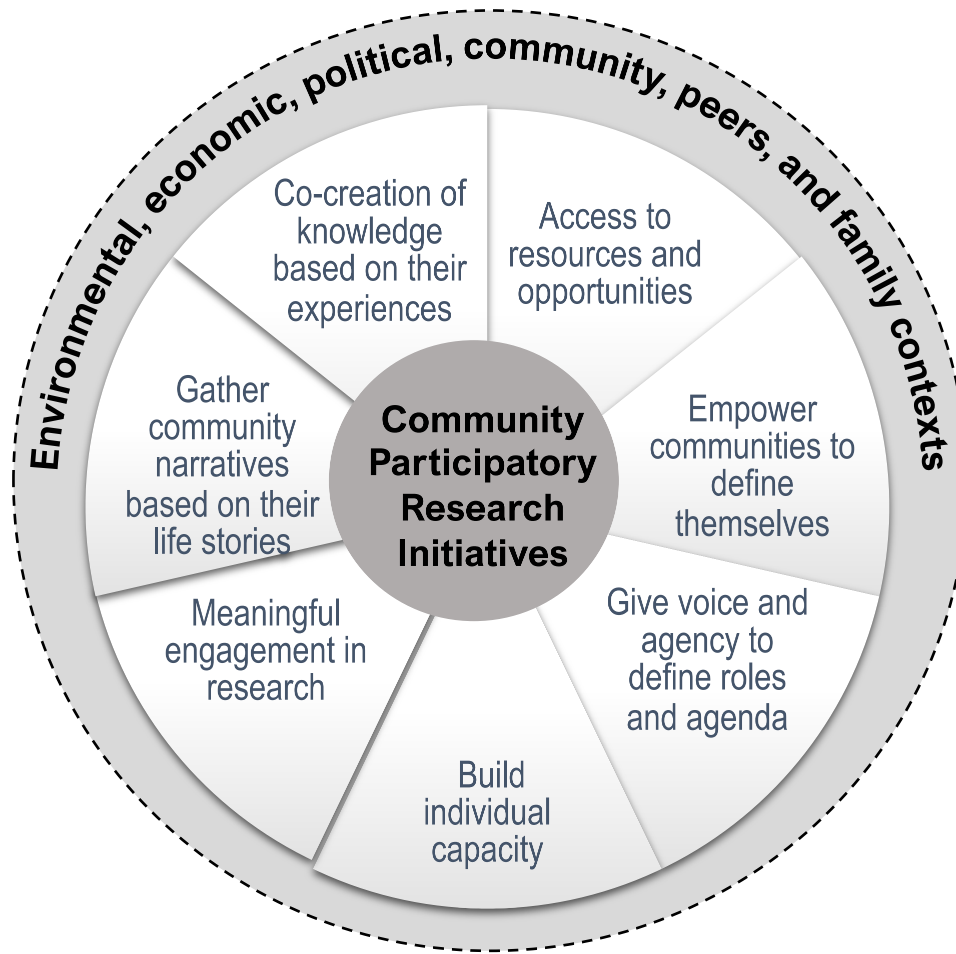
- High incidence of unemployment
- Lack of opportunities to decide
- Lack of resources to implement their plans

Roma Women and Girls' Marginalization in COVID-times in Spain

- Overcrowded substandard households
- Limited roles assigned by society (mother, wife)
- Lack of voice to advocate

Violence against Displaced Andean Women in Peru

- Persecution and violation of their rights
- Forced displacement and resettlement
- Voices are not recognized



Social Justice Outcomes

Economic Justice through entrepreneurship

- Self-Employment
- Capacity building

Reproductive Justice through advocacy

- Critical vision of their everyday experiences.
- Recognition as community references.
- Accountability gendered human rights

Resettlement Justice through citizenship

- Political influence in their new communities
- Proud of their cultural identity
- Implication in restoring justice in their homelands