

Feminist Approaches in Community Psychology

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Background

Second-wave feminism and community psychology share common theories and ideologies as they both developed during the historical context of sweeping social movements of the early 1960s (Mulvey, 1988). According to Bond and Mulvey (2000), “Both are rooted in particular values, including respect for differences, distributive justice, and equality” (p. 600). Despite their commonalities, feminist approaches are not well integrated in the field of community psychology.

In 2012, Angelique and Mulvey were inspired by the paucity of academic literature on feminist community psychology (FCP) and published a special issue to target its “ongoing dynamic co-creation.” They cited that the previous publications on FCP in leading journals were outdated. For instance, the *Journal of Community Psychology’s* (JCP) first and only publication on feminist frameworks was released over twenty-five years ago (Mulvey, D’Ercole, & Blair, 1988). Additionally, it has been over ten years since the *American Journal of Community Psychology* (AJCP) released their two special issues on FCP (Bond, Hill, Mulvey, & Terenzio, 2000a, b).

To contribute to this collaborative project, the following systematic narrative review explores the ways in which the integration of feminist approaches has enhanced the field of community psychology since 2012.



Research Question

In what ways has the integration of feminist approaches enhanced the field of community psychology?

Methods

This literature review followed the systematic review method outlined by Batbaatar et al. (2015). A systematic and inclusive approach was taken to identify relevant texts on the integration of feminist approaches in community psychology.

For the search phase, searches were conducted using the ERIC and APA PsycInfo databases. The adopted key words were ‘community psychology’ AND ‘feminist’, ‘community psychology’ AND ‘feminism’, or ‘feminist community psychology’. By this method, ten research papers were identified with the following limitations: articles published in full in peer-reviewed academic journals, published between 2012 and 2023, linked full text, English language articles, and focus group methods.

For the screening phase, duplications in titles were removed. Additionally, abstracts were systematically reviewed for thematic relevance to feminist theory and feminist principles implemented in community psychology research.

All ten research papers that were identified as using focus group methods made it through the screening phase and were thematically analyzed. These studies were purposefully selected for the narrative review because focus groups are a data generation tool that I would like to use in future research projects with female participants.

Data analysis used an inductive approach to discover patterns in the studies. Key phrases answering the research question were marked, labeled with codes, and then grouped into categories. The themes and relationships between the categories are presented in the findings.

Findings

Integrating feminist approaches in community psychology can advance the goals of the field by developing social support systems to increase the well-being of individuals. The researchers in the reviewed papers sought to understand the experiences of participants from backgrounds that have been historically marginalized or underserved. Also, the prioritization of advocacy and empowerment efforts that were contextualized reflected a deep commitment to social justice.

Increased Representation

Centered on historically marginalized and/or underrepresented voices

- Warne et al. (2013)- photovoice for active student participation in developing healthy school environments
- Mootz et al. (2020)- first community-informed assessment on the mental health consequences of intimate partner violence (IPV) in Northeastern Uganda
- Roysicarr et. al. (2019)- research on the globally marginalized experience of Haitian women & children
- Cacari et al. (2021)- grounded research on the experiences of the pueblo mestizo

Challenge Dominant Narratives

- Goodkind et al. (2021)- alternative forms of resilience of Black girls
- Butler (2021)- community cultural wealth of low-income Black parents supporting their children

Social Justice Orientation

Empowerment initiatives for research site(s)

- Hunt et al. (2020) Muslimah Project- promote services that address the unique needs of Muslim women in the Waterloo Region, Ontario, Canada
- Goodkind (2020) Black Girls Advocacy and Leadership Alliance (BGALA)- coalition to address inequities affecting Black girls in the region
- Dressel et al. (2020) Nia Imani- the only long-term transitional living facility in Wisconsin
- McGregor & Davies (2019)- operationalized the theoretical approach of substantive equality (Fredman, 2011) to advocate for equal pay for women.

Promoted dissemination of research findings at the community level

- Warne et al. (2013); Mootz et al. (2020)



References

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