The Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race and Culture (ISPRC) was founded in 2000 at Boston College (BC), under the direction of Dr. Janet E. Helms, to promote the assets and address the societal conflicts associated with race or culture in theory and research, mental health practice, education, business, and society at-large. The Institute offers pragmatic information about teaching, conducting research, and applying interventions intended to promote the benefits of racial and ethnic cultural diversity and resolve related social problems. The Institute is unique in its emphasis on addressing psychological issues related to race and ethnic culture from an interdisciplinary perspective.

16th Annual Diversity Challenge:
Race, Culture, and Educating Our Youths:
Developing Whole People, Not Widgets

On October 28-29, ISPRC hosted its 16th annual Diversity Challenge. The Challenge was a two-day interactive conference that brought together scholars, educators, mental health practitioners, and other parties interested in promoting social justice across racial and ethnic cultural groups. The theme of Diversity Challenge 2016 was “Race, Culture, and Educating Our Youths: Developing Whole People, Not Widgets.”

Over 120 presentations focused on the Challenge theme and nearly 300 people participated in the sessions, which included workshops, individual presentations, posters, symposia, structured discussions, and panels. Invited speakers included JuanCarlos Arauz, Riché Daniels Barnes, Amy Cook, Phillipe Copeland, Belle Liang, Alveena Shah, Gabe Weinreb, and teachers and administrators affiliated with The Buckley School in Manhattan.

This year’s 17th annual Diversity Challenge, “Race, Culture, and Criminal Justice throughout the Lifespan,” will explore a variety of perspectives and issues related to concerns of race, ethnic culture, and criminal justice defined in various ways. The conference will take place at Boston College on October 13-14, 2017.
A Message from the Director

Young people in society generally as well as on high school and college campuses witness, experience, and participate in overt and indirect racial and inter-ethnic violence. The violence during the past year has varied along a continuum, ranging from microaggressions (acts of incivility) to systemic killings of unarmed citizens. Development of the skills necessary for discussing or facilitating dialogues about racial and racialized ethnic-cultural issues among themselves or with the communities that they serve is rarely a focus of the training of educators, administrators, mental health workers, or police officers. Therefore, many of the collaborations of the Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race and Culture (ISPRC) in this 17th year focused on teaching skills through various formats—based on the principle that development of empathy for and understanding of “the other” begins with conversation. The year ended with a contentious Presidential election that left many immigrants and people of Color fearing for their safety. We invite you to read about our efforts to assist communities in addressing these difficult issues in this newsletter.

Unfortunately, one of our long-time collaborators, the Jeremiah E. Burke High School, lost one of its beloved students through a senseless act of violence. In response, the Burke High School Grief and Bereavement Resilience Model was developed to help students and staff cope with their loss. Our general update on the ongoing ISPRC-Burke collaboration is described along with specific information about the model.

Although it was a rather somber year, a highlight was Diversity Challenge where we managed to address a serious topic and provide nurturing entertainment at the reception. With over 300 attendees, this conference on Social Justice was a major success. If you missed it, perhaps our synopsis of events and festivities throughout the newsletter will encourage you to join us October 13-14, 2017, when our theme will be, “Race, Culture, and Criminal Justice throughout the Lifespan.” Finally, many of the ISPRC team members are moving on to new professional roles at the end of this year. We congratulate and bid temporary farewell to them in this issue. Also, we are pleased to share and congratulate former team members for their accomplishments since leaving ISPRC, some of which they share in this issue.

~ Janet E. Helms

2016-2017 ISPRC Staff

Director
Janet E. Helms, Ph.D.

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Kathleen Flaherty
Susan Ginivisian

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Kimberly Ashby
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Stephanie Paulk
Ammy Sena
Jonathan Sepulveda
Amanda Weber
Eva Wilson
Consultation Programs and Community Collaboration

Burke High School Grief and Bereavement Resilience Model
In response to the sudden death of a Burke School student, the Burke community and surrounding neighborhoods came together to recover from the tragedy. The Burke High School Grief and Bereavement Resilience Model was the result. The Model is unique because it offers a culturally responsive alternative to traditional crisis-intervention mental health models. In a video interview, Headmaster Lindsa McIntyre and Sophomore Academy Leader Cheryl Windell describe the model, which they premiered at an Endowed Chair Symposium at Boston College, “How An Urban School Coped with Community violence.” Dr. Helms conducted both the interview and the symposium. The video of the Resilience Model is available at bc.edu/isprc.

Diversity and Activism Training at Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt) Counseling and Wellness Center
ISPRC team members Kimberly Ashby and Amanda Weber collaborated to provide workshops and facilitations on topics related to power, oppression, racism, and racial identity for various groups of MassArt administrators, faculty, and students. Kimberly and Amanda developed these workshops by using Dr. Janet E. Helms’s racial identity theories as lenses through which to encourage participants to explore the ways in which structural, interpersonal, and individual-level forms of racial oppression may influence and inform student development, academic experiences, and community culture at MassArt.

Cultural Sensitivity and Civil Rights
The Middlesex Partnerships for Youth sponsored a conference to create more respectful school climates due to a number of incidents of inter-group racial/cultural harassment that was occurring in the Middlesex schools. Dr. Helms helped participants understand the differences between race and culture and how to introspect about them as a form of preparing to create safe climates.

Using White Racial Identity Theory to Avoid Re-Victimizing Survivors of Racial Trauma
As a Master Lecture for the 2016 California Psychological Association Convention, themed “Transformation and Innovation in Psychology,” Dr. Helms discussed the lack of explicit race-related skills training for mental health professionals. Through an interactive presentation, she urged attendees to acknowledge clients/patients’ racial trauma and ethnoviolence as real and overcome their own resistance to talk about race so that they can diagnose and treat racial trauma symptoms.

Aware Day Panel on Mental Health and Identity at Newton South High School
The AWARE organization at Newton South High School in Newton, MA, a student organization dedicated to educating about and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness at Newton South and in the larger community, invited ISPRC team member, Kimberly Ashby, and several of her peers in the Boston College counseling psychology doctoral program, Sriya Bhattacharyya, Jillian Scheer, and Jenny Fauci, to speak as a panel on the topics of mental health and identity for Newton South students. Each panelist introduced key terms, including privilege, oppression, and intersectionality, and provided personal narratives of both their individual and macro-level based mental health experiences from their lives, as well as the ways in which their experiences have prepared them and inspired them to engage in each of their various social justice oriented research, clinical, and activist work as psychologists-in-training.

Psychology and the Arts College/Career Mentorship Workshop at Hyde Square Task Force Youth Community Development Center
Hyde Square Task Force is a youth community development center in Boston’s Jamaica Plain neighborhood that aims to develop and empower youths and their families to enhance their own lives and build a strong and vibrant urban community. ISPRC team member, Kimberly Ashby, facilitated a college and career exploration mentorship workshop for the center’s adolescents and mentors. For the workshop, Kimberly used her various artistic skills to direct a community therapy arts project that will be displayed in the center when it is finished.

One School, One Question: Race and the Police Panel at Newton South High School
Newton South High School students and staff invited ISPRC team member, Kimberly Ashby, Boston College theology doctoral candidate, Craig A. Ford, Jr., and Officer Brian Henderson of the Newton, MA Police Department to address a variety of concerns including racial profiling by police, drug legislation, and the incarceration system. Kimberly primarily spoke about the psychological, emotional, and physical health effects of the chronic and vicarious trauma Black people experience as a result of unjust legal systems and disenfranchisement. Kimberly and Craig discussed how challenging and influential personal experiences related to growing up Black in predominately White environments contributed to their current social justice activism.
Current Research Project Initiatives

Media Portrayals of Victims of Color after Fatal Force Encounters with Police

Does race influence how the media covers police use of fatal force in a state where there has been a public outcry against killings by police in contrast to a state with no public outcry? ISPRC conducted content analysis of news articles to compare the fatal use of force by police officers in the states of Missouri (MO) and Tennessee (TN) in 2015, states which showed similar levels of fatal police encounters but differing levels of public outcry. Ferguson, MO was the birthplace of the Black Lives Matter movement in response to the shooting of Michael Brown, whereas TN, a neighboring state has had limited attention in the national media. These data were collected through Google searches of names from The Guardian’s 2015 database of over 900 fatal encounters with police. Data were collected in the form of demographics of victims and police, terminology used to describe victims and police, as well as terminology used to describe both parties’ actions. Results showed there were differences between victims of Color and White victims on descriptions of police use of non-lethal steps and terms associated with criminality. There was also a difference in the number of news articles on fatal encounters with MO having more than TN which potentially suggests that public outcry has an impact on media reporting. The results are discussed as support for anti-racism training for media outlets, given that they are likely to influence public reactions to police violence. This study will be presented in a poster session at the American Psychological Association Convention in Washington D.C. in August, 2017.

Invisibility of Women of Color in Stop, Question, and Frisk Practices

Given the limited research on women of Color in the literature, the goal of this study was to better understand how law enforcement policies affect women of Color. Using a lens of intersectionality, Jonathan Sepulveda examined data from NYC’s Stop, Question, and Frisk program to understand how the intersection of race and gender may produce unique disparities. There is evidence of the significant disparities in the number of times men of Color are stopped and frisked relative to their White counterparts. The studies in this area have focused on this large disparity; for example, there is research on how the rates of stops influence community responses, community mental health, and increased likelihood that youths commit crimes. However, very little attention has been focused on how women of Color have been affected by Stop, Question, and Frisk practices in NYC. Results of this study showed that women of Color, especially Black Hispanic women, have been uniquely targeted in Stop, Question, and Frisk practices relative to both men of Color and White women. This study may contribute to the importance of critically examining how women of Color are affected by law enforcement policies and hopes to increase services and support for women of Color that are targeted by law enforcement policies.

Mental Health Advocates’ Assessment of Urban Youths’ Traumatic Life Events: A Relational Advocacy Model for Counselors in Training

Our Relational Advocacy Model matches first-year mental health counseling students with students in an urban, predominantly student of Color and/or immigrant status public high school. The mission of RAM is to address the psychosocial needs of students as a means of engaging them in school and teaching them to advocate for themselves. In collaboration with school clinicians, “invisible students” (i.e., neither high nor low achieving students) are paired with an advocate. As the first phase of their intervention, advocates conduct intake interviews using questions designed by the training team to help them build relationships with their students and learn about their life experiences. Advocates provide weekly recalled narrative transcripts of their interviews that we analyzed to understand what the traumatic life events are in the lives of urban students so that interventions can be better focused. ISPRC members Christina Douyon and Ammy Sena are working with Dr. Helms to publish the results of the Relational Advocacy Model (RAM) used in our work with the Burke High School. The study will illustrate the efficacy of a relational model of school advocacy by providing narratives of students’ lives and growth over the course of a school year.

ISPRC Alumni Advisory Board Update

The Alumni Advisory Board has been in communication to discuss projects to be implemented in collaboration with the ISPRC team. They are interested in using racial identity lenses to write and disseminate information that addresses the current sociopolitical climate in the US stimulated by the new administration’s views on race and culture.

The ISPRC Alumni Advisory Board released a toolkit for managing symptoms of racial trauma, #racialtraumaisreal, which can be downloaded from our website: bc.edu/isprc.
**Undervalued, Disregarded, & Stereotyped: The Invisibility of Black Girls**

Black girls experience both literal and figurative invisibility in many of the spaces they inhabit. Literal invisibility refers to the lack of statistical information pertaining to their life experiences and challenges, whereas figurative invisibility refers to myths and stereotypes that society uses to define them and that they must overcome. Because of their invisibility, there is a lack of information about Black girls and resources designed to address the specific needs of this population. To bring visibility to Black girls and the issues they face, it is important to identify gaps in the existing literature as it pertains to them specifically so that appropriate interventions may be developed and implemented to help them overcome the challenges of invisibility. The purpose of the current study was to conduct a content analysis of literature focused specifically on Black girls to discover common themes and patterns.

The first study conducted a literature review of peer-reviewed psychology articles from the past 36 years, between 1980 and 2016, in which “Black girls” and/or “African American girls” were the specific focus. In the second study, team members conducted a conventional content analysis of the literature on Black girls. The goal of both studies was to examine the specific research that has been done on, about, and with Black girls and African American girls and to determine to what extent this research makes visible or conversely, continues to create the invisibility of Black and African American girls. To further understand how Black girls and African American girls are invisible in the literature, ISPRC team members, Kimberly Ashby, Amanda Weber, Eva Wilson, and Emily Joyner, have been involved in examining the methodology of each article and in conducting research for the two studies.

**The Community Advocacy Project**

The Community Advocacy Project (CAP) is a joint collaboration between ISPRC, the Domestic Violence Program, and the Counseling Skills course to explore how mental health counseling masters students have developed in their attitudes towards social justice, community advocacy, and empathy. Published findings indicate that practitioners engage in advocacy long after they have graduated.

**Race and Culture Challengers (RCC)**

The RCC was created by Christina Douyon with the help of two masters students, Kiara Manosalvas and Ammy Sena, in the spring of 2016. The goal of the RCC is to empower people to create and navigate conversations and spaces that critically address various aspects of race and culture. Through campus events and collaboration with organizations in the Boston area, the RCC hopes to engage others in social justice advocacy as well as help the ISPRC and its work become more accessible/visible. This year the RCC has put on three events entitled:

1. Surviving, Thriving, or Capsizing: Race & Higher Education;
2. Criminalization of minority-status populations: How Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinx individuals came to be seen as “criminal”; and

In addition to those previously mentioned, the RCC members for the 2016-2017 academic year are Jonathan Sepulveda (1st year doctoral student), Courtney Dunne, Olivia Welk, and Yvonne Gonzales (all 2nd year masters students).
A Look at Diversity Challenge 2016

Staff Recognition

Eva Wilson—Current co-team leader Eva Wilson received the Division 45 Student Poster Award at the 2016 American Psychological Association Convention for her poster, “Part-White, Still a Person of Color? The Utility of the PRIAS in Multiracial Individuals.”

News from Our Affiliates/Associates

Dericka Canada completed her doctoral internship at the University of Pennsylvania's Counseling and Psychological Services and is currently working at Salem State University's Counseling and Health Services as a clinical fellow.

Maryam Jernigan-Noesi, former ISPRC member, has recently had her private practice featured by the American Psychological Association's Practice Organization as an Early Career Professional spotlight. #winter2017

Hammad S. N’cho has recently completed graduate study in epidemiology and biostatistics and has been selected to become an Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Officer at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. As one of the CDC’s “disease detectives” he will be tasked with responding to disease outbreaks and other forms of domestic and international public health emergencies.

Natasha Torkelson has completed her post doctoral internship at Boston College and will be starting a full-time position as a Staff Psychologist at Suffolk University in Boston in August.

Shatina Williams is now a licensed psychologist in Maryland and Washington, DC and has started a private practice, Aya Psychotherapy, in Bethesda, MD.

Moving On...

Stephanie Paulk will begin her predoctoral internship in psychology at Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial VA Hospital in Bedford, MA within the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Rotation.

Stay Informed

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Burke School Advocacy Program

For the past seven years, the ISPRC has provided advocacy services to the students at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School, a racially, ethnically, and economically diverse high school in Dorchester, MA. The goal of the relational advocacy program is to provide a voice for students and help them advocate for their needs while connecting them to appropriate resources. Mental Health Counseling graduate students from Boston College volunteer to participate in a Social Justice Lab section during their Principles and Techniques in Counseling course. Throughout the year, the graduate students work as advocates paired with one or two students at the Burke school. The advocates assess for emotional and social barriers to their students' school engagement while collaborating with their students to create goals and problem solving strategies. They also work with Burke faculty and staff to identify resources and collaborate with school and community agencies. The advocacy program provides the students with training and feedback on interviewing, rapport building, and the provision of culturally competent services. Assessments inform individualized goals and interventions that address individual and systemic barriers and aim to improve students' grades, self-esteem, motivation, and navigation of the educational system. Advocates help students gain access to necessary health and mental health, extracurricular and tutoring services. Finally, Boston College advocates are encouraged to help their students build awareness of how context affects their development, to co-navigate the school system, and to identify opportunities to make systems-level change that supports their students.

What Being an Advocate Means to Me

Roxane Cohanim: My experience as a Burke Advocate has been incredibly meaningful and rewarding. I have learned how to develop a collaborative and supportive relationship, how to be a thoughtful listener, how to recognize strengths and vulnerabilities, how to identify barriers to change, and how to find creative ways to problem-solve and achieve goals. Seeing my students each week, feeling their struggles and their joys, and being able to leave a lasting impression is an experience that will stay with me forever.

Alekzander Davila: Being a Burke Advocate for me, has added a whole new understanding of systems of power and has enabled me to sharpen my advocacy skills which hopefully, will be beneficial to future clients. Being able to help others identify/reach their goals is a major passion of mine and has only grown as a result of my Burke Lab experience. The most meaningful part of my experience was being able to build a relationship with two very special people, who I will miss very much.

An Advocate’s Experience

By: Tooba Fatima

Working as a student advocate at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School was insightful, challenging, and rewarding; an accurate reflection of what it is to work as a mental health counselor. I was able to take everything we were learning in the Master’s program and test it against the complexities of real individuals and systems. I was able to experience what it is like to build rapport, develop an alliance, experience resistance, and navigate emotions around termination. The role of an advocate was multifaceted. Using a systemic intersectional lens, we explored the influence of gender, sexuality, race, poverty, experiences of trauma, and systemic stressors with our students. Both for me and the student, this became an empowering tool to separate the individual from the challenges. Students that the system sometimes labeled as ‘lazy’ or ‘unmotivated’ became resilient individuals who were trying their best. I deeply admire the strength and persistence with which students continued to survive, thrive, and hold on to their dreams and ambitions despite difficult, at times downright chaotic circumstances.

An equally important part of the work was addressing practical challenges. Whether it was improving attendance and grades, accompanying them to the nurse’s office, connecting them with a coach or activity, or building a resume and looking for summer jobs. Although we were not therapists, the experience did teach me about what advocacy-based counseling looks like, and how important it is to address the intersection of intrapsychic, systemic, and everyday challenges in promoting mental health. My fellow advocates and the multiple spaces for supervision we had at Burke and BC were crucial supports. Listening to the experiences of other advocates gave each of us a better understanding of our own students, as well as the school system.

Along the way, there were as many breakthroughs as there were frustrations. Things as small (but not insignificant) as absences or resistance from students, to larger issues like the slow bureaucracy of social services, and the very structure and function of the education system. To me, the days that I felt frustrated, helpless, or even unhelpful were as important as the days when I felt my student and I had made progress or achieved a goal. They reminded me that the work is not always easy, especially when we choose to tackle systems. Yet simultaneously, I am more confident than ever that socio-cultural experiences cannot be separated from mental health. I am more conscious of my responsibility and potential as a counselor to be an active advocate for social change.
ISPRC Staff Presentations and Publications


