Greetings! It’s been a good spring for the Community Psych program. The CP Club won the 2015 award for Outstanding Graduate Student Organization from the UNH Graduate Student Council. Audrianna Rodriguez, a 1st-year CP student, was elected President of the Graduate Student Council. Charlotte Lai, a 2014 graduate, was accepted into the doctoral program at William James College (formerly the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology). And the recipient of this year’s Jennifer McNeil Endowed Scholarship has been named: Jessalyn Crossman, a Dayton Civics Scholar from the University of Dayton. Congratulations, Jessalyn! She will be entering the CP program in the fall. Finally, on May 17th we unleashed upon the world our most recent batch of Community Psychology graduates, ranging all the way from A (Alasaos) to Z (Zakrzewski). Let the world-changing begin! (Or, more accurately, continue.) See above for a photo of some of the graduates, along with Dr. Melissa Whitson and myself. (Ignore the Bud Light sign.) In late June a number of us (faculty and students) will be attending the Biennial Conference of the Society for Community Research and Action in Lowell, Massachusetts. Of course, we expect the snow will have melted in Massachusetts by then. The gathering will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the field of community psychology at a 1965 conference of psychologists in Swampscott, Massachusetts. We’ll try to remember to bring home birthday cake and party hats for everyone.

Have an invigorating summer! -- Mike Morris

Edited by: Victoria Raimondi
Where did you grow up and go to college?
I grew up in Flagstaff, Arizona and went to Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah for undergraduate school. At Westminster I double majored in Social Sciences and Spanish and Latin American Studies. During my time at Westminster I studied abroad for one year in Barcelona, Spain.

How did you become interested in the UNH community psychology program?
After I graduated from Westminster I spent three years continuing my work as a seasonal river guide and took several jobs abroad. During this time I knew that I wanted to go to graduate school and spent a lot of time scouring the Internet for a field of study that could potentially combine my love of the outdoors, desire to work in nature-based programs, and fascination with communities as sources of change. I discovered community psychology on idealist.org and it immediately appealed to me. UNH’s Community Psychology program stuck out as the program best suited to my needs, as it offers a program development track.

What are your future professional goals? What sort of job would you like to have 5 years from now?
My professional goals are still taking shape, but I know that I want to be involved in nature-based or wilderness programs that act as agents for individual and community change. I hope to be able to tailor programs to address issues of inequality through intergroup contact and increased access to nature. As far as what sort of job I want to have five years from now... I don’t know exactly. When I graduated from Westminster College four years ago a family friend told me not to make plans, because making plans limits you to what you’re aware of as your options. So I suppose in five years I would like to be doing a job that is entirely beyond my awareness today. Hopefully one that I love, that incorporates the outdoors... and that lets me ski/paddle two days a week.

What’s the toughest thing about being in grad school?
Besides time management, which is a constant struggle, I would have to say that adjusting to life in Connecticut has been the most difficult thing for me. In the past I chose to live in places because they were beautiful, offered supremely skiable mountains, or because I could learn a different language. The decision to come to New Haven wasn’t about the place but rather to pursue a graduate degree in a program, a program I believe to be excellent. Choosing UNH was a great decision for me, but I have had to tailor my outdoor activities and seek out new ones that are available here.

Thus far, what aspect of the CP program have you found to be the most beneficial/interesting?
I’m finding this question difficult to answer because every facet of the program is clearly designed to provide us with the foundation we need to become working professionals. Classes on social science research methods, organizational functioning, and social justice all intertwine to make the UNH CP program a strong one. For me, the most beneficial aspects of the program have been the courses Survey of Community Psychology and Social Stratification in Community Organizations. I absolutely loved those classes. The former taught me about the ultimate goals and methods of the field of Community Psychology. The latter helped me begin to define how I could potentially use nature-based programs to address larger societal issues of inequality.

Continued on page 3
What do you like to do in your spare time? Hobbies/interests? Any particularly fascinating experiences, jobs, or accomplishments prior to coming to UNH?

I love rivers and mountains! I have been extremely fortunate to spend a lot of my time playing and working in those two venues. I grew up doing white water rafting with my family and began working as a licensed river guide when I turned 18. In between undergrad and grad school I rowed river trips in the summer and taught skiing in Germany and then English in Spain over the course of a few years. The job of teaching skiing in Germany was for the US Military at a rest-and-recreation base in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Living in the German Alps was incredible, and being able to work with military service people and their families abroad opened my eyes to the variety of communities with unique strengths and weaknesses that can exist. The following year, when I taught English as a Second Language in Spain, I lived in a small town in the Pyrenees and worked with elementary-aged children in public schools. I believe there were two other people in town who spoke English as their first language (and one of them was my significant other). Needless to say, my Spanish improved a lot that year. My favorite thing about navigating a foreign work environment was learning new and surprising things from my coworkers and students. While traveling I’m constantly enamored with the aspects of other cultures that I could have never imagined existed.

The years I spent abroad allowed me to truly embed myself within communities that were entirely different from any I had encountered previously. Working and playing outdoors speaks to my soul in a way that nothing else can. I realize that this all sounds very glamorous but mostly it was a lot of hard work. The time I spent overseas was the loneliest periods of my life. Part of my decision to go to grad school was the realization that if I row boats and ski my whole career I’m going to invest a lot of money in knee, shoulder and back surgeries. So I decided to return to school to develop my passions into something that I believe can improve the world’s communities (and allow me to maintain the functionality of my body).

Advice for undergraduates thinking about applying to the UNH MACP program?

Take a few years off from school first. Go travel. Get lost. Make mistakes. Find out what you don’t want to do. Get some professional experience under your belt. Discover what you really love. I think I have benefited as much as I have from the CP program because I came into it with a (somewhat) tangible idea of what I want to do with all the knowledge and skills gained. I’m sure many people are more fully developed humans when they graduate from college than I was. However, I needed some time to vagabond about and grow into my ideas, so naturally that’s the advice I would give others.

Before entering the program I did not have the opportunity to visit UNH so instead Mike gave me the contact info for a few second year students who answered questions and gave me encouraging advice. I hope that this is something we can begin facilitating in the Community Psychology Club for incoming students, as it was invaluable to me.
1st Year: Audrianna Rodriguez

Where did you grow up and go to college?

I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. For my undergraduate degree, I attended Cleveland State University and obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology.

How did you become interested in the UNH community psychology program?

I became interested in the field of community psychology during a McNair Conference hosted at Berkeley. A fellow McNair scholar informed me about the Society for Community Action and Research (SCRA). She suggested that I explore the website for career interests or possible graduate school opportunities. The SCRA had a list of universities on their website that specialized in the area of community psychology. I always had a passion for building communities and enhancing individuals’ wellbeing so that is what attracted me to the field. What attracted me to UNH was Dr. Whitson’s research and the ample grad assistant opportunities.

Thus far, what aspect of the CP program have you found to be the most beneficial/interesting?

The aspect of the program that has been most beneficial is the information that I received from my different classes. The knowledge that I have obtained will allow me to be a well-rounded professional in my field. For example, the concept of ecological levels proposed by Bronfenbrenner is a concept that I will apply in any community or clinical setting. Understanding and examining different levels of systems is important in diagnosis and developing treatment plans for clients.

What’s the toughest thing about being in grad school?

Being away from home is the toughest thing and learning to navigate the Connecticut area.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to do Yoga and cook.

Any advice for undergraduates thinking about applying to the UNH MACP program?

Before selecting a graduate program conduct an exhaustive search to gain an ideal of what you would like to pursue. When conducting your research, pay attention to your reactions to the program. If you are reading a program description and become bored or disengaged, more than likely the program is one that you should not pursue. If you are considering the MACP Program, try to challenge yourself and go beyond your comfort zone.
Alumna: Loretta Jay

Where did you grow up and go to college?
I grew up in Connecticut, and though I didn’t think so at the time, I must have liked it here sufficiently since I stayed and am raising my family here too. I had a tough time finding a good fit during my undergraduate years, attending four colleges (with as many majors) in four years. I finally graduated with a BES (what my mother calls a Bachelor’s of Everything) from the University of Bridgeport. Each school experience contributed to my outlook and perspective, and influenced my professional direction.

- My experience at SUNY Oswego (north of Syracuse on Lake Ontario) taught me that I was happiest when in close proximity to New York City and where snowplows with 6’ tall blades wouldn’t be needed in October or April.
- At UCONN I realized that large lecture halls weren’t for me: I needed a more personal environment where dialogue happens.
- For years I struggled to learn Spanish, and I was determined to do so as this seemed a necessity for work in urban communities. At the Universidad de las Americas in Puebla, Mexico the language finally clicked, and as an added bonus, I lived and better understood life in a developing country.
- During two stints at the University of Bridgeport I finally found my place, studying the social sciences and working with underserved populations.

How did you become interested in the UNH Community Psychology program?
I worked at the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), first as a social worker and later a supervisor. Most of my colleagues were pursuing a graduate degree in social work (MSW), but that didn’t feel right for me. I got excited analyzing and improving systems, developing new programs and impacting change on a broader scale.
I was very fortunate to receive guidance and mentoring from an exceptional administrator at DCF, Kathy Bahe (UNH CP alum, class of 1992). She led the Department’s Community Services unit – the group that works with DCF-funded community organizations that provide direct services to children and families. I worked with Kathy in this unit and she introduced me to Community Psychology!

Looking back at your time at UNH, what aspects of the CP program did you find to be most valuable?
Mike Morris became my secret weapon that helped focus my attention. I found all of his classes to be incredibly beneficial and motivational. Meeting his expectations was a constant challenge, and I still check my own work by asking myself, “What would Mike say?” Since he graciously accepted my invitation to participate on B Stigma-Free’s Advisory Council, the pressure is on again.
In addition, the internships provided real-world application to support the classroom learning and their value cannot be overstated. Advisor guidance throughout the process built confidence and skills that helped me grow my career.

Continued on page 6
What do you like to do in your free time? Hobbies, interests, etc.?

I enjoy spending time with my family doing outdoorsy things. I love sailing and XC skiing. This June my 14-year-old daughter and I are going to try backpacking the Adirondack Trail with our dog. I haven’t done this since I was in high school, and it will be my daughter’s first time ever. We are currently outfitting ourselves to prepare for anything, just like in Mike’s classes.

What is B Stigma-Free, and what motivated you to start this organization?

B Stigma-Free is a national non-profit that works to reduce the social stigma often experienced due to people’s weight, mental illness, disease or disability, gender identity or sexual orientation, height, race, gender, etc. The ensuing polarization is like a disease; it creates a lot of hurt among our citizens, and if left untreated it damages the fabric of our communities. B Stigma-Free collaborates with organizations that share its commitment to empower all members of society by reducing stigma through awareness, education and advocacy.

When first envisioning B Stigma-Free, co-founder Cheryll Houston and I focused on the stigma associated with mental illness. We are both Board members of our local National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Fairfield chapter, and after the horrific school shootings in Newtown we organized community programming to help people talk about mental illness and its related stigma.

It was about a year and a few events later when we reflected and considered next steps. Our observation that stigma permeates our society on multiple levels, affecting numerous identities, wasn’t new. The motivating factor for B Stigma-Free was our realization that each of the groups that focus on different stigmatized identities is operating in a silo. They all have captive audiences, but their messaging about social change targets those who are like-minded. We have this same experience with our NAMI activities. We thought that by establishing partnerships and coalitions with these groups, the message would be more effective and much more inclusive: help people recognize the parallels between their different experiences, and work together to cross-pollinate the message between the various groups – reaching new and greater audiences!

Most of last year was spent conducting an extensive needs assessment, getting to know and understand stakeholders. We asked the leadership of national organizations representing frequently stigmatized identities (e.g., Mental Health America, Obesity Action Coalition, LGBT CenterLink, Howard University’s HIV Coalition, etc.) about their interest in a model like this, and then we built it, incorporating their suggestions based on their cumulative experiences.

What are the biggest challenges you face in doing this work?

- Monetization: inadequate funding limits our ability to build a team that can carry out our plans and vision. Fund-raising is always tough, and as a new organization we do not yet have a track record that many funders want to see before they invest.
- Messaging: our goals are sometimes too abstract and academic. Keeping our message simple is a challenge.
- Overcoming fear: no other group or organization is focusing on this type of collaboration building. Traditionally, groups and organizations partner with those that are similarly focused. Breaking into this new territory requires establishing trust and is often a slow process.

Visit B Stigma-Free at www.bstigmafree.org
Fun Facts

I would become a superhero who could control the wind! Seriously, wherever I go I feel like it’s messing with me. - Lena

I don’t have a favorite superhero. My favorite Disney characters are Mulan and Pocahontas. I like these women because they showed enormous strength and courage during difficult times. – Audrianna

Summertime Stress Relievers

The snow queen has finally decided we have been tormented enough and summer is here! While many of us have a heavy course load (Program Evaluation) we still need to find time to stop and smell the newly grown roses. Being a graduate student in the CP Program can be a very stressful lifestyle, but there is no need to let it ruin the summer we have been waiting and praying for. We are all lucky enough to be going to a school in a city that has a beach only a few miles from campus. Just because we have class until July 2nd doesn’t mean we can’t enjoy simple pleasures that go along with this wonderful season. Here are a few things that I enjoy doing in the summer as well as some ways that we can all relieve some of the stress that will be upon us:

1. Lying on the beach
2. Enjoying cold summertime drinks
3. Read a non-class-related book while sitting in the sun
4. Go for a walk or run
5. Have a backyard BBQ
6. Do yoga in the park
7. Open your windows while doing homework

Chocolate or Vanilla Ice Cream?

Chocolate, all the way – Lena
Chocolate – Audrianna
Definitely Vanilla- Loretta

If you could be any superhero who would it be and why?

Wonder Woman, mostly for her Lasso of Truth. While she used it to coerce confessions, I would use it to focus on getting through all of the divisive rhetoric, political correctness and roadblocks impeding the answer, and help stick to the facts. - Loretta