PART VI

OUR FUTURE
Chapter Seventeen Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Understand characteristics of dehumanizing and harmful societal structures
- Understand which means are most effective to reduce harm when engaged in social and political change processes
- Understand how to engage in sustainable forms of activism
In the photo above, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is pictured leading 600 demonstrators on a civil-rights march through angry white crowds in the Gage Park section of Chicago’s southwest side. After King was struck by a rock, he was escorted by his bodyguard Frank Mingo. Frank later said: “No need to tell you anything different, I was sure scared. I got hit five or six times that day. But I didn’t mind. That was what I was there for, to protect Dr. King. My wife and I have three boys growing up. I felt that anything I could do to improve society would help them too.”

Part of the community organizing aspect of Community Psychology is understanding the long game, as the quote above nicely demonstrates. Many community psychologists work to reduce the symptoms of oppression through programming and community-based participatory research. Critical and liberation community psychologists, particularly ones engaged in activism, work to use psychology to confront oppressive actors and organizations. Frank Mingo worked diligently for the Poor Peoples Movement and the Back Home Movement, which was a part of a repatriation of the south by African Americans, laying claim to land that was legally theirs. Both Mingo and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. set examples of ways community psychologists can learn about courage and persistent involvement toward social change. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s writings and speeches, in particular, demonstrate ways in which community psychologists can use their skills to be effective and, at the same time, remain ethical and positive in their activism.

Community Psychology programs often focus on changing inequalities for people who are suffering, but the means have to be considered with extreme care. The message of this chapter is that rather than community psychologists being thought as the sole agents to “empower” others, we need to work together with community groups in collaborative efforts to foster their own empowerment. In other words, we can bring people together and work as allies with those who experience injustice (Olson, Viola, Fromm-Reed, 2011).

Part of being an effective ally is turning our attention toward those responsible for structural
violence. Structural violence is a way to understand that violence and harm are caused not only by individual actors but by unjust laws, dehumanizing structures, and other features of the environment—all of which, of course, were created by human beings. To summarize, we feel that attention should be placed on the actors, policies, rules, and structures that harm community members. As the well-known psychologist Amos Wilson said, “If you want to understand any problem in America, you need to focus on who profits from that problem, not who suffers from the problem” (1998). Wilson is referring to those who have power to engage in any form of injustice whether it is due to greed, indifference, or racism.

The key question is: how do community psychologists attempt to tip the scale and change oppressive organizational, corporate, or governmental policies? It is often difficult to fight a powerful opposition, and the obstacles can seem insurmountable, as they were during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. When the goals seem impossible, and a sense of hopelessness and helplessness has set in, values and passion can provide the drive to continue working for social justice. We will show in this chapter examples of how this might be accomplished, as well as how you can remain inspired and motivated through it all.

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY AND OPPRESSION

Amos Wilson (1998) felt that the elite effectively secure and enhance their power, hiding their real actions and motivations, all the while appearing not to do so. This can often leave those who have been oppressed to believe that they themselves were responsible for their struggles. Part of the work
of community psychologists is to pay attention to those who have experienced oppression as a result of this structural violence. This work within communities is to help its members unravel these kinds of manipulations. To understand **oppression** and those who are oppressed, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* offers important insights. For Freire (2007), the **oppressors'** psychology is one of hierarchy, suppression, and **dehumanization**, and those oppressors will never liberate the **oppressed**. Freire felt that our ordinary way of thinking, “an eye for an eye,” would just lead to the oppressed replacing the oppressor, only to keep dehumanizing structures the same. Community psychologists work with community members to help them identify aspects of structural violence in order to change those structures. Follow this link for some helpful definitions related to **oppression and power**.

Examples of oppressive systems are the **Guantánamo Bay detention camp**, located in the Guantánamo Bay US Naval Base in Cuba, and secret Central Intelligence Agency black sites throughout the world. At Guantánamo, prisoners’ conditions of detention fell under human rights definitions of torture (find more about the abuses at Guantánamo from the perspective of a detainee). The torture program at the Central Intelligence Agency black sites designed by psychologists led to permanent psychological harm of the Muslim detainees. There were some psychologists who sought to expose these human rights violations. This is how it came about: due to media reports of extreme interrogations by the US government, the American Psychological Association (APA) convened a task force in 2005 to examine psychological ethics in national security, and this task force endorsed the continued presence of psychologists to use their psychological tools against detainees.

Following the task force report, members of the **Coalition for an Ethical Psychology** mobilized to hold APA accountable to its own ethical standards. The hallmark of the Coalition was the unmasking of policies regarding unethical psychologist involvement in torture. The following case study describes this coalition and some of their work.

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**Case Study 17.1**

**Coalition for an Ethical Psychology and the Hoffman Report**

A community psychologist, a psychoanalyst, a historian of psychology and other clinical psychologists are leaders of the Coalition for an Ethical Psychology. The members of this coalition created a collaborative, non-hierarchical place for their activist work. They shared information and developed key allies with other organizations who could aid them in their efforts to expose the collusion, pertaining to the torture program, between the APA and the national security sector. By working with these allies, stakeholders in and outside of the field of psychology, their efforts eventually led to James Risen’s *New York Times* articles that detailed this collusion. The articles revealed APA’s collusion in allowing psychologists to be engaged in interrogation procedures that involved torture, and this led to the APA commissioning an independent review by David Hoffman, eventually culminating in what has been called the **Hoffman Report**. The Hoffman Report
presented communications and actions taken by APA officials and members of the Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, and Department of Justice that pointed to coordinated efforts and knowledge of APA Ethics Code subversions. The Hoffman Report and the aftermath led to increased accountability within the organization. Video discussions by Coalition members and their allies can be found below.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://press.rebus.community/introductiontocommunitypsychology/?p=770

The creation of the Coalition for an Ethical Psychology is an illustration of what psychologists can do to combat oppressive forms of injustice, and in this case, the violation of human rights.
One job of community psychologists is to engage in dialogue with the oppressed and find what Freire called their *generative themes*, the core issues that face a group (Freire, 2007). Freire believed that community members are the best ones to identify the nature of the problems they face and participate in the solutions. When they align themselves with those facing oppressive conditions, they can, together, start directing their attention to unjust actors who control structures. For example, when the UN created the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), those in the disability community objected because they had been left out of this process. People with disabilities were successful in demanding that they were the best ones to shape the foundational principles of the Convention, and they indeed became instrumental members. The famous phrase that came out of the disability community was “nothing about us without us.” Follow this link to hear young participants’ perspectives within the process.

Within Community Psychology, Julian Rappaport (1981) coined the term *empowerment*, which is very compatible with the value of helping the oppressed gain access to resources and increase self-determination. Rappaport often cautioned community psychologists against suggesting they were in charge of “empowering” community members. Rather, the empowering process is one in which all parties work together to bring about a greater sense of *collective efficacy* and work to equalize power throughout society.
Rappaport made an important distinction between empowerment and other approaches called needs-based and rights-based strategies. **Needs-based strategies** put those with the lived experiences on the dependent side of the hierarchy. Trying to deal with their needs, and focusing on pathologies or limitations becomes the focus. When focusing on the **rights-based strategies**, it is too easy to adopt a position of fighting “for” but not “with” community members. The **Third Way of Empowerment** (Rappaport, 1987), as described in this chapter, is very much aligned with working with community members. However, sometimes it is difficult to work directly with the community that is oppressed. As in the example of the Coalition in Case Study 17.1, it was impossible to work with the detainees because they were in secluded and restricted detention settings. Nevertheless, the Coalition communicates with multiple groups in an effort to help “educate” rather than “train” others.

“Training is defined as teaching a group what to think rather than how to think. This makes the people dependent rather than assisting in developing skills which could be used for independent activity. It rewards behavior that operates against their group’s interest, promoting individual rather than group achievement, and instilling negative self-concepts and low self-esteem”

– Bobby E. Wright (Anonymous, 1982)

Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was similarly all about a new form of non-hierarchical education. Like the “empowerment process”, it was about collaboration and dialogue—where the teacher is also the student, and the student also the teacher. When working with communities, empowerment involves everyone working toward common, mutually-decided upon goals.

Community psychologists who engage in activism can also learn much from Rappaport’s notion of **paradox**, which is something that combines what seem to be contradictory qualities (Rappaport, 1981). In doing community work, we often encounter paradoxes, where two apparently contradictory truths do not necessarily contradict each other. For example, one paradox is that the Coalition for an Ethical Psychology was engaged in an empowerment process, but there was no direct contact with the prisoners, the people they were attempting to empower. Although this might seem to be a paradox, it is possible to do empowerment work and not be in direct contact with those who are oppressed. In engaging, investigating, and highlighting the side not receiving enough attention, empowerment can occur.
Praxis means putting an idea or theory into practice. This is often a repetitive process where a theory, lesson, or skill is turned into an actualized action. Community psychologists learn from community members, co-design research projects, and try to put that learning into real action and activism. They then see how things work, and then return to the drawing board. Ethics, morals, and values are all essential parts of the praxis process. But here there is sometimes a division between those who use any means to get to their goals met and others who feel the means have to be ethical. Several community activists, such as Saul Alinsky and Malcolm X (particularly in his early life) felt that any means could be used as long as the ultimate goal is just. Sometimes using any means results in cutting corners or even harming others.

To use an analogy, the ring of power in Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings is often attempted to be used for good, but it can only be used for evil. The characters with the best of ends in mind can become corrupted, due to the influence of the ring. So, what we are suggesting is that the means of reaching one’s goals in social justice is of importance. Poet and activist Audre Lorde famously declared, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (2007). If the problem is oppression and violence, using oppression and violence to achieve one’s goals might not be effective or just. Malcolm X realized this toward the end of his life when he sojourned to Mecca and saw people of all races, nationalities, and backgrounds praying together in unity. This radically altered his views on working to dismantle the oppressive power structures in this country, and he began preaching more about love and collaboration. To demonstrate the difference in approach to the means of activism, Case Study 17.2 compares different means of two influential social activists.
Alinsky and Gandhi were both tricksters in defying powerful individuals, but they were also different in the means with which they carried out their work. Alinsky in Chicago believed in confidently insulting those in power and even using tactics of deception. In other words, all means could be used to get to the objective. As an example, in Alinsky’s book Rules for Radicals, he recommended: “find their [the opposition’s] rules and use those rules against them–because they find these rules precious and they cannot live up to them.”

A different approach was used by Gandhi in British Colonial India, where he engaged in nonviolence and humility, attempting to make the means ethical, and always striving to work with love for all human beings. In India in the 1930s, a British “rule” or “law” was a salt tax, making it illegal for the people of India to make or sell salt or even to collect it from the sea. Gandhi engaged in civil disobedience by initiating a march to the sea to collect the salt. This act inspired all of India and made the British look foolish, as they were unable to stop the march. In this way, Gandhi successfully took on the British without using their oppressive and violent tactics. His means were just and not corrupted in radical opposition to British rule. But, as is often the case when engaging in defiance of oppressive systems, Gandhi was punished by incarceration for his salt march.

It is in choosing the means of activism that a tempting crossroads presents itself to community psychologists, and we would argue for the adoption and use of ethical means to reach the goals.
The Means of Working in Partnership With

The means by which we partner with community members also matters. Community members are sometimes labeled with oppressive terms: the disenfranchised, vulnerable, the marginalized, the poor, those of “high risk”. The words we use do matter, and even the term “community organizer” suggests a person who is in charge of the collaborative spirit. Therefore words that suggest hierarchy, where one might have more power than others in the change process, are outside the spirit of Community Psychology.

In any praxis-based campaign, there is also a need to address the oppressor’s dehumanizing and colonizing nature. But, as we saw with Gandhi and with Martin Luther King’s work, this can be done in an ethical way that does not replicate the oppressors’ way of being. For an example of how to practically consider and address colonization using Community Psychology tools, learn more from Demystifying Decolonization: A Practical Example from the Classroom.

Ultimately, an important task of the community psychologist engaged in activism is to try to ethically persuade others using the tools of research and community-based action. Some individuals will never change and with others, it will take considerable time. Sometimes in a democracy, what is needed is to convince a majority of people, and encourage them to continue to engage in voting and social action. Community psychologists can also help keep groups of people cohesive, effective, and willing to engage in a long-term struggle despite criticism, insults, threats, and even risks to one's career.

The Means of Assessing and Working on Oneself through Self-Purification

The activist’s journey is not only outwards toward bringing about change, but is also inward. It involves a thorough examination of one's own imbalances, flaws, virtues, and motivations. This is often referred to as part of the “self-purification” process. When considering one's motivations, one might ask if they are for accomplishing one's own goals and priorities or if they are for the advocacy of others. An important civil rights activist who became the first female African American Episcopal priest was Pauli Murray who expressed a modest realism that comes from a life of self-purification. She stated, referring to the many activist campaigns she engaged in:
“In not a single one of these little campaigns was I victorious. In other words, in each case, I personally failed, but I have lived to see the thesis upon which I was operating vindicated. And what I very often say is that I’ve lived to see my lost causes found.”

This self-purification process is often a necessary element in social and political change, which as described earlier, is by doing it “with” not just “for” others. Gandhi, for example, believed purification processes were the most powerful antidote to external violence in the world, and helped a person sacrifice one’s well-being for the larger cause. Gandhi’s purification was a daily process which was clear to anyone who looked at how he both dressed and ate. The purification process could even be seen in how he responded to being attacked. Gandhi was incarcerated by the British after the salt march, and many other times was abused by powerful officials. But due to these abuses, social change occurred when the public was shocked and angered by the way he was treated by government officials. The act of sacrifice shifts public perceptions of the horrendous situations facing those being oppressed. The sacrifice and pain endured by such individuals as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela of South Africa existed in a broad, public view, which can galvanize public support for social change.

The Means of Exposing and Changing the Oppressive Power Structures

It might appear that activism has only a loosely structured set of rules. In fact, there are no definitive rules to the liberation process, as much depends on context and on the many paradoxes one encounters when trying to change societal systems. Many community activists, such as Alinsky, focused on finding the immoral weaknesses or vulnerabilities of those in power, and inciting the police or public officials to over-react. The activist takes action, like in Gandhi’s salt march, in order to get the powerful system of oppression to react to the defiance.

Therefore there are patterns that help us, but activism is less a set of procedures that can be learned and memorized and more a process of experimentation. This perspective frees one to take risks, but our goal is to use ethical means so that when we are wrong, we will not bring about harm to others. It also gives us additional motivation, and that is of learning, invention, and searching for truth. Altering the path of an abusive power structure is intimidating, and Gandhi saw this as experimentation toward truth. Gandhi and King’s commitment to nonviolence showed the real possibilities, even death, to those that challenge the status quo. These activists embraced a self-purification process, but as Gandhi said, “non-violence laughs at the might of the tyrant” (Gandhi, 2001, p. 57). Nevertheless, both Gandhi and King used self-purification to avoid hating the enemy. Gandhi described this through a story about
a burglar breaking into one’s house and the need to treat the thief as family, a concept referred to as critical kinship (Olson, Viola, & Fromm-Reed, 2011). We need to be critical, but at the same time see the opposition as kin.

One might ask whether students can participate in this process of taking on the power structure. The next case study shows it is possible, and it began with student reactions to the lynching of 128 African Americans living in the south. These killings had been unsolved for decades, and when the Justice Department withheld information about these civil rights injustices, it operated as an oppressive power structure. The hiding of this information can lead to cross-generational trauma, as the victims’ immediate loved ones and descendants have to live with the agony of unanswered questions, such as “What happened? Who did it? And why?” The students in Case Study 17.3 sought to answer these questions by confronting the source of the structural violence.

Case Study 17.3
Students Taking Action For Justice

A teacher of Government and Politics at Highstown High School in New Jersey told the students about this historical civil rights injustice, the unsolved lynching of 128 African Americans. They merely asked, “Should we try to do something?” (Jackman, 2019). In a true community organizing fashion, the class made it their mission to bring some semblance of peace of mind to the loved ones of the victims. The class drafted a bill that would force the compilation and immediate release of all the withheld case files to the public. The students understood the importance of focusing on the historical injustices and rectifying them. With the implementation of their activism, the students demonstrated a successful model of praxis. The students conducted research in order to fully understand the issue, took the time to meet with the families of the victims, and made sure to set the agenda through a strategic media campaign. Their efforts were noticed by two US lawmakers, who advocated for the bill and encouraged citizens to pressure the President to sign the proposed bill into law. The students also engaged the President through social media, and the high school allowed the cancellation of classes to undertake the social media effort. The President did sign the bill to release the withheld cases.

The students demonstrated the power of effective community organizing, community engagement, and speaking truth to power in order to take on an oppressive power structure.
A social justice campaign is rarely a single event or a single march. Organizations begin and fizzle but activists continue to fight for justice. Having a framework for the intricacies of social change is needed for the long-term process to be successful. As discussed earlier, this process is referred to as praxis, which is the cycles of participatory action and research: community input, research, action, and reflection (Olson et al., 2011). Part of praxis is seeing what works and what does not work. When barriers and obstacles are insurmountable, certain tactics need to be let go of in order to search for new creative ways. Community psychologists plan for readjustments, adaptations, setbacks, small wins, and unexpected barriers. They also need to remind themselves of the higher goals they are trying to achieve. A long-term commitment is often the best ally a change agent has, along with allies from the community, in bringing about real change against those who control the status quo (Jason, 2013).

The analysis moves in spirals toward the best possible fit: the combination, the generation, the cyclical action—this is what a temporal campaign involves, until there is progress—a small win, and then another, and another, until transformational change gets going. To implement these processes, finding or creating alternative social settings helps protect individuals and the community from daunting oppression and barriers to change.

We are all part of many settings, some of which are more or less consistent with our social justice
identities. To the extent one finds oneself in settings that support oppressor norms, it is possible to work from the inside to change them. When impossible to change, it is often possible to leave a setting, and seek or create new settings that better support one’s values. The creation of alternative settings has been described by Seymour Sarason, whose book The Creation of Settings and The Future Societies has much information on these alternative settings (Sarason, 2000). The creation of such settings is exactly what is needed for the sustainability of campaigns for social justice. The creation of alternative settings takes time and commitment, but they can provide an essential home base for sustainable activist work.

**Sustainability of the Campaign Process**

In a praxis-based campaign, it is important to consider what needs to be done first. One of the earliest stages involves generating, with others, hypotheses or ideas for change. A logic model can be developed that provides an outline, and a theoretical structure of how assets and activities are likely to help obtain short, intermediate, and long-term goals. The plan can be simple sketches that represent how one is going to break through the barriers ahead to meet the eventual long-term objectives. This is like a planning notebook and one can connect it with experiences, arguments, and evidence. If the logic model is created as a visual with concepts and arrows, it is possible to see the whole plan in a single glance. The whole group can then discuss and revise, using it as a conversation piece to connect it with all of the group’s experiences and where the group is trying to go together.

Ultimately, community psychologists measure whether or not their actions and efforts were successful in the short and long term. But what should the outcomes be? Certainly, it is useful to know if the program was successful. What actions helped? When it worked, what was the active combination of ingredients that had the effect? How do we study and help amplify where good grassroots connections are happening? Another goal is to understand how we can make a campaign more sustainable. How can capacity be built when campaigns fizzle out? Can we hold onto the small wins and keep going? To answers these questions, and to avoid burnout and keep the campaign sustainable, it is important to pace oneself, and ensure that self-care and mutual education are present at every part of the process (Olson et al., 2011).

Let’s provide another example of a problem that was encountered at a university. One of the highest members of the university’s administration had been actively involved in the APA’s collusion that made it permissible for psychologists to be involved in interrogation settings that included torture. As described earlier in the example with the coalition, this collusion came to the public light following the July 2015 publication of the Hoffman Report. The administrative official was mentioned dozens of times in this Report, and when the school student newspaper emailed Jack O’Brien asking for his reaction, the following case study shows what next occurred.
Case Study 17.4
The Vincentians Against Torture Coalition

Jack O'Brien was interviewed with the reporter for the school newspaper, and he gave his thoughts regarding the university official who was alleged to have been instrumental in the facilitation of changing APA policy and procedures that allowed for human rights violations perpetrated by psychologists in interrogation settings. After being quoted in the school paper, O'Brien started a petition to remove the official from the university and organized the Vincentians Against Torture Coalition. He collaborated with several local human rights organizations such as the World Can’t Wait and Voices for Creative Non-Violence. He also networked with student groups, such as Students for Justice in Palestine and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan, that were invested in the issue. His petition amassed over 700 signatures, and this ongoing struggle was prominently featured in many articles in the student newspaper. O'Brien next organized a press conference on campus, which was featured on local television news channels and written about in newspaper articles in the Chicago metropolitan area.

However, even though there was a high level of media visibility and protests involving faculty, staff and students, ultimately, the President of the university announced that the school would not be taking any actions against the university official. In the short run, the campaign had not dislodged this official, but a few years later, both the university President and the official that had been the focus of these protests left the university. Although the protests and the media attention might not have been a direct cause of both officials departing, they contributed to concerns that many university employees had regarding their performance.

Following graduating from college, O'Brien continued to invest himself in the torture/human rights issue affecting psychology, such as organizing a symposium addressing the issue at a national psychology convention. As in Case Study 17.1, both activists had to stick with the torture issue for a long time in order to see meaningful change occur in the profession of psychology.
The work of Community Psychology does not support hierarchical social and political change. Rather it is non-hierarchical, working from the bottom up with **grassroots** sources in the community. The voices of the people are the main data that is used. Praxis possesses an improvisational quality, and it is experimentation at its best—as there are many advantages to this approach when working with the community to advocate and engage in social change.

Community psychologists work with community members to mutually educate each other in order to reach more complete understandings of the issues they are facing, and the nuanced impact of these issues. As activists, community psychologists are facilitators, a part of the process, and are intentional and respectful. When community psychologists analyze systems, they use skill and an ecological lens (as pointed out in the first chapter, Jason, Glantsman, O’Brien, & Ramian, 2019), combined with respect for the people they work with. As Coalition for an Ethical Psychology member Roy Eidelson advises, aim to call “…attention to daily injustices, whether that’s working hard for less than a living wage or facing discrimination in housing, education, or law enforcement,” as a first step in challenging and changing dehumanizing structures (2018, p. 203).

Community psychologists, whether they are practitioners or scholarly activists, try to untangle the blocking points and hurdles to social change. Often, the job is to find the paradoxes and tension points, and to help show the world the abuses, just as was done by the leading activists of the past. By using honesty, truth, and the strategies outlined in this chapter, you and your community partners can begin to advocate for long-term change, and bring about a more equitable distribution of resources for a better world.
Critical Thought Questions

1. What social or political changes do you want to be achieved in the world? Can you think of a praxis, a process, and put it in a logic model, that could best help you as you engage in activism?

2. Can you think of an “alternative setting,” in your own life? A group of people, your tribe, who share a set of values with you, or want to see the same injustice righted? Can you think of ways that you could collaboratively work with them to bring about change?

3. Think about some of the tools and skills that were mentioned as necessary to successfully bring about social and political change, or second-order change, through activism. Did you identify with any of these tools, have you used any of them in your own life, and how could you use them as an agent of social change?

4. The authors argued that the ends never justify the means. Do you agree with this statement? Reflect on why or why not.

5. Do you see yourself, your identity and reality, as being more or less in the oppressed or the oppressor group? Or some combination of both? How can we think about Freire’s categories as less about the oppressor and oppressed, and more about intersecting identities that still recognize asymmetries of power?

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REFERENCES


Chapter Eighteen Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Know the reasons that “validated” and “effective” interventions are often never used
- Identify effective ways to put research finding to use in order to improve health
- Understand advantages of participatory methods that provide more equitable engagement in the creation and use of scientific knowledge
What if our research on bringing about change was not used by society to deliver better services to others? In other words, if all the programs and interventions that have been reviewed in this book were never used by others, this would be tragic. Well, two major publications from about 20 years ago highlighted this problem of getting the public to use programs that have been validated by research.

The first influential report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) showed that US healthcare was of low quality (IOM, 2001). So you might ask, why haven’t programs that have been shown to work and are effective been widely implemented throughout our healthcare system? We need to find answers to this question as we all have a stake in getting the most effective and safe healthcare interventions. When this IOM report was released, everyone was shocked to learn how the US healthcare system fell short of national goals for quality programs being used by the public.

There are long delays between scientific discovery and use of research findings in communities. These healthcare quality concerns were followed by a second report that showed it took an average of 17 years of science before an effective health practice program reached patients (Balas & Boren, 2000). Even more depressing, at the end of the 17 years, adoption of these practices only occurred among 15% of providers. Imagine, the healthcare you should be getting at age 20 may not reach you until you are 37 years old! And of course, that’s only if you are the lucky one out of six patients (the 15%) whose healthcare is guided by research. Based on these findings, researchers began to focus on the gap between research evidence and healthcare practices.

Ten years after the original IOM report appeared, Health Affairs, an influential journal, published new research on the “quality chasm.” And now, after 20 years, researchers are still finding that their discoveries are not used (Brownson, Proctor, & Colditz, 2018). These high impact findings led to the development of a new field called implementation science. Read more about implementation science here.

Implementation science began because health practices, programs, and policies were not achieving their expected benefits based on their research evidence. When research shows that a treatment works, or a program addresses a problem, we want to realize those benefits in the broader world. In other words, we need to find ways to get effective practices used (or implemented) outside of research studies. Dissemination is the process by which this valuable information is made available for our use. But before we come up with solutions to this dissemination problem, let’s first review the different types of evidence, by which programs are evaluated.
Scientists often differentiate types of evidence. Efficacy trials (Type I evidence) are often a first step in program development. These trials establish the cause and effect of a program on its intended outcomes. Efficacy trials determine whether a program changes a health outcome under scientifically controlled conditions. Individuals connected to a university often implement these studies. The next step in developing research evidence is typically known as effectiveness trials. This Type II evidence evaluates cause and effect in community settings, and in these studies the people, such as a teacher in a school, implementing the studies are often right from the community setting. So, what has been learned by well-trained researchers from the university is now implemented from people in the field to see if positive effects are once again found. Evidence-based practices are identified through a series of efficacy and effectiveness studies published in peer-reviewed literature. The third type of evidence (Type III evidence) evaluates the implementation context, such as an organization’s readiness to implement a new practice. One community might be ready and interested to implement a program on birth control, for example, whereas another community might not want to even try to do something in this area due to a number of issues, including the controversies that surround this topic or even lack of leadership to take on such a topic. The readiness of the community is a factor that community psychologists point to as key in whether or not an intervention is successfully implemented (Scaccia et al., 2015). An important skill is being able to work with communities differently so that we take into consideration their readiness to implement an intervention.
Community psychologists often link imbalances in resource allocation to social problems. But even in the creation and distribution of the research knowledge, there might be inequitable practices. For example, some say that we should only rely on knowledge created during randomized clinical trials, as this is the best way to know whether an intervention is effective. Many members of the community, however, do not have access to the resources or skills to implement these types of expensive interventions. And more to the point, there might be many other ways to understand whether an intervention is effective.

There is an important role that community members might play in the creation of knowledge. The creation of collaborative teams involving researchers and community members might be one way that allows information to be actually perceived as valuable, and then widely disseminated. We will come back to this important issue, but first let’s see how the field of Community Psychology has come up with some strategies to overcome these dissemination problems mentioned at the start of this chapter.

**SOLUTIONS TO A COMPLEX PROBLEM**

Many people still believe that research knowledge moves efficiently from the research setting (e.g., University) to the community. But this is not always the case. Community psychologists Wandersman and Florin (2003) have examined the gap between research and practice, and they identified a number of the issues that need to be addressed if we are going to effectively deal with the ongoing challenge of putting research to use. It is unfortunate, but just showing that an intervention can improve health does not mean others in society will use those exciting ideas. In other words, just because there is
evidence that a particular intervention can solve a health problem, there is no guarantee that it will be adopted by community members and groups. For example, many people might never even get a chance to learn about such an innovation, or the intervention could be poorly implemented so its effectiveness is compromised. Clearly, getting effective programs to be used by others is a complex process, and there are often multiple barriers that need to be addressed. Case Study 18.1 shows a real example of community psychologists addressing these types of implementation issues.

Case Study 18.1
The Veterans Health Administration

The Veterans Health Administration is the largest, integrated US healthcare system. For over 15 years, the Veterans Administration trained thousands of providers to deliver evidence-based addiction and mental healthcare. The Veterans Administration mandates evidence-based care and offers financial incentives for meeting quality measures. Yet, like most US healthcare services, only 3-28% of the Veterans Administration patient population receives the highest quality care. Understanding this limited reach of evidence-based practices is critical to the Veterans Administration policymakers, providers, Veterans, and their families.

To address this problem, Lindsey Zimmerman and her research team of community psychologists used a partnership approach to equitably involve the Veterans Administration stakeholders in implementation research. The program, *Modeling to Learn*, was designed according to Community Psychology values, methods, principles, and theories. They sought to develop a systems understanding of the Veterans Administration addiction and mental health services. This occurred by empowering frontline providers to improve the limited reach of evidence-based care with their existing staff and local resources (Zimmerman et al., 2016). They prioritized participatory learning, so frontline staff could better meet the needs of their local veteran communities and sustain improvements over time. They also developed and implemented effective methods to address complex problems with care coordination, medication management, psychotherapy, and the overall mix that services teams offer to reduce impairment, relapse, overdose, and suicide.

Preliminary research findings indicate that this innovative program called *Modeling to Learn* significantly increased the number of patients who received evidence-based care in the Veterans Administration. One important way to increase the chances that research findings like in the case study above will be used, is to be involved in Community Psychology participatory methods, as we will illustrate in the next section. These approaches emphasize more equitable engagement by citizens and scientists in the creation and use of scientific knowledge. When this occurs, it is more likely that effective interventions and improvements will be available.
Community Psychology began when psychologists saw a better way to address some of the most pressing needs and challenges within their communities (see Chapter 1; Jason, Glantsman, O’Brien, & Ramian, 2019). As indicated throughout this book, participatory research methods are a core strategy used by community psychologists (Jason et al., 2004), and they can be effectively used to address implementation problems.
More and more researchers have learned from the field of Community Psychology to bring in community representation in early stages of research. Figure 1 of the National Institute for Drug Abuse Prevention Research Cycle above depicts the need for community input to inform all steps of research development (Robertson, et al., 2012). The NIDA research cycle allows for opportunities to include community input and address contextual factors (dashed lines) earlier in research as opposed to the tendency to use input later (solid lines). Researchers should pursue knowledge of how community factors will impact program implementation and success. The **community-centered approach** to implementation is community-driven. With a community-centered approach, community psychologists can ensure that their efforts in health, education, practice, policy, and/or research are actually used, as is indicated in Case Study 18.2.

**Case Study 18.2**

*The Infectious Disease Elimination Act Exchange*
The Test and Treat Rapid Access Model is designed to start someone who is diagnosed with HIV on Antiretroviral medications immediately. Angela Mooss and her team from Behavioral Science Research Institute partnered with the Infectious Disease Elimination Act Needle Exchange in Miami-Dade County, Florida, to implement this model for their clients in collaboration with community partners (e.g., HIV treatment providers). The needle exchange clientele were active injection drug users who received support to reduce the harm associated with drug use. Although Test and Treat was effectively practiced in Miami with multiple community-based organizations, the Infectious Disease Elimination Act Needle Exchange staff had concerns about their ability to use Test and Treat to link their clientele to HIV care.

Although the Test and Treat model was a best practice, effective use required addressing barriers to implementation so that it could benefit the needle exchange’s clientele. So, what did the Infectious Disease Elimination Act Needle Exchange staff do to put Test and Treat into practice? They used community-centered values and participatory methods to develop their implementation plan. A consumer, Jane Doe, helped with planning from the first meeting and identified key barriers that could have gone unnoticed and impacted the program’s success. Jane pointed out that given the timeframe, individuals who are active injection drug users would experience a “come down” during the Test and Treat process. Even with a care navigator, this would make them more likely to leave mid-way rather than complete enrollment. This would minimize the program’s effectiveness linking vulnerable individuals to life-saving treatment. Read more about the Infectious Disease Elimination Act Needle Exchange program here.

By engaging consumer voices and valuing the expertise of their community, the needle exchange staff prevented a failed implementation and they continue fine-tuning the process with ongoing feedback. As a result, the Infectious Disease Elimination Act Needle Exchange staff have found ways to make services more accessible. This includes Medication Assisted Treatment for individuals willing to begin treatment for opioid use, and the provision of Telehealth services so consumers can enroll directly in Test and Treat from the Infectious Disease Elimination Act Needle Exchange hub. Jane Doe’s voice and expertise were highly valued, and this again shows how community psychologists can partner with community members from the very beginning of their work to have programs more effectively implemented.

Program Adaptation

Successful implementation means that programs often need to be adapted to meet the special needs of the local community, whether they are care managers, foster parents, nurses, teachers, therapists, or physicians. One key question is how much a program needs to be adapted to fit with the local context (adaptation) versus how much it needs to be implemented as intended by developers (fidelity). Fidelity often declines when a program or practice developed under tightly controlled research conditions is then translated to a new community setting. There is some evidence that the closer the
community members can implement the programs in ways similar to those of the researchers, the more positive are the health benefits.

However, fidelity and adaptation need not be at odds. For example, Anyon and colleagues (2019) argue that when adaptations follow some key guiding principles, successful fidelity and adaptation can be achieved (Spoth et al., 2013). If there is a core effective method in an innovation, and it is culturally tailored to a particular community, there is no reason it might not be as effective or even more effective than the original intervention. The key issue is whether the intervention continues to have those basic components that are effective and whether it is implemented in a way to which the community members are receptive. Participatory methodologies bridge the research and practice gap through a mutual flow of knowledge among researchers and communities. This bidirectional knowledge sharing goes on throughout the implementation and evaluation phases of the project.

CAPACITY BUILDING

However, there is another problem that often arises: even when a new program is adopted and used in a setting, it is not sustained. This sometimes occurs because the community has not been provided the means and training to take over the intervention. Here we can rely on another Community Psychology principle which involves building capacities for local communities to sustain their efforts over time.

In Chapter 7, Wolfe (2019) reviewed practice competencies that are used by community psychologists. Community capacity building is one of the key practice competencies to sustain the benefits of research and practice efforts. **Capacity building** describes activities that build tangible
resources, such as a prevention program, and enable the community to sustain it. Capacity building helps to maintain staff, facilities, and other resources to deliver effective programs over time, especially when research funding ends (Brownson et al., 2018). Capacity building activities include developing a communications strategy, establishing a fund-raising plan, improving data collection and measurement systems, training, and strategic planning. Community psychologists are trained for community leadership and mentoring, facilitating small and large group processes, consultation, and resource and organizational development (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012). All of these competencies support community and organizational capacity building. By using community-centered processes to build community capacities, community psychologists help community members gain access to important resources. Learn more about an example of community-centered processes by visiting the “Power Through Partnerships” Community Based Participatory Research toolkit for domestic violence researchers. These types of empowering processes lay the groundwork for achieving desired outcomes and sustainability, as is indicated in Case Study 18.3.

### Case Study 18.3

**Children’s Trust of South Carolina**

Children’s Trust of South Carolina (Children’s Trust) is a statewide nonprofit organization focused on the prevention of abuse and neglect. The vision of Children’s Trust is a South Carolina free from child abuse and neglect. The mission of Children’s Trust is to build strong families and empower communities to prevent child abuse by supporting and delivering programs, building coalitions, providing resources, and leading prevention training.

Children’s Trust is considered an intermediary organization, which means that it does not provide direct services, but partners with community-based organizations across the state, who do provide community services. As an intermediary, Children’s Trust performs five core functions: partnership engagement and communications, implementation support, research and evaluation, workforce development, and policy and finance. These functions form the foundation of the Children’s Trust Partnership Assessment, a tool by which Children’s Trust measures their success at building capacities of partner organizations to provide services within the community. The Partnership Assessment examines whether specific capacities have been built and if not, what supports are needed to achieve those specific capacities. In this way, Children’s Trust demonstrates its impact as a partner with community-based organizations to build their capacities for successful and sustained service implementation. Learn more about Children’s Trust [here](#).
In Chapter 1, the ecological model was described, and it involved multiple layers involving individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and the larger society. As is evident from the many case studies in this textbook, individuals can influence communities and communities can influence societies. In return, societies can influence communities and communities can influence individuals. This ecological model provides a useful framework to better understand the complex relationships among factors that contribute to social and community problems. Program developers and implementers need to be aware of this ecological model, as it provides a strong rationale to target our work toward multiple levels of influence. By considering ecological issues, we are better able to avoid and reduce biases (e.g., attribution effect, victim-blaming, racial prejudice) that can contribute to and perpetuate injustice. This can be particularly important for program implementers who support practitioners working in difficult and under-resourced settings. Case Study 18.4 applies the ecological model to the risk and protective factors involving child abuse and neglect.

**Case Study 18.4**

*The Empower Action Model®*

Children’s Trust, led by Melissa Strompolis, a Community Psychologist, and an interdisciplinary team of researchers, practitioners, and community members developed “The Empower Action Model™” as a blueprint for communities to prevent child abuse and neglect and build well-being and resilience.
The Empower Action Model™ uses an expanded version of the ecological model to ensure that levels of influence are identified and protective factors are promoted among children, families, organizations, communities, and public policies (Srivastav, Strompolis, Moseley, & Daniels, 2019a). For example, parents and caregivers can protect their children by focusing on child resilience. Organizations can emphasize policies and practices that promote employee health and well-being. Communities can build protective environments for children, including parks, schools, faith-based settings, social services, and health facilities. Policymakers can also prioritize programs and initiatives that support child health and well-being (Srivastav, Strompolis, Moseley, & Daniels, 2019b). Adapting the ecological model to the mission of Children’s Trust is helping communities all over South Carolina address the very challenging problem of abuse and neglect.

Figure 3 below is useful in addressing some of the specific implementation problems discussed in this chapter.
We conclude this chapter with another barrier that confronts so many people: critical knowledge about the effectiveness of programs remains in privileged settings, such as among academic and scientific audiences, behind paywalls and professional dues. Just as researchers who use participatory methods value community-held knowledge, participatory methods increase the utility and ownership of research findings in communities. Participatory methods aim to support community partners who need to have ongoing access to information and resources.

Community psychologists work to share information to reduce the access imbalance between scientists and communities. As one example, this textbook is an open-access book designed to provide
an accessible, free introduction to Community Psychology. Undergraduates can now freely join the Society for Community Research and Action as an Associate member, something that the editors of this textbook successfully advocated for with the leadership of this organization. The Community Psychologist and Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice are also online and open access. Throughout this book, consistent with community-centered values and capacity-building principles, you can learn about free and open blogs, podcasts, and webinars based on collaborations between community psychologists and communities, putting new research knowledge to greater use.

**SUMMING UP**

In this chapter, we have shown that the research conducted by psychologists does not often have an impact on the social and community problems that need our attention. One reason this information is not widely spread is that many programs, practices, and policies continue to be developed with minimal input from community members. More and more, we are recognizing the problems with this one-sided unidirectional transfer of knowledge.

But the field of Community Psychology does offer a solution to this problem, and by following its values, there is a higher likelihood that the research will be used by community members and those in a position of policy. This chapter has shown the advantages of using participatory research methods, which emphasize more equitable engagement in the creation and use of scientific knowledge. When using such methods, there is a higher chance that the research will actually translate into programs and be used by members of the community even when the researchers have finished their work. A key to this approach is building capacities for local communities to sustain and grow their efforts. Often problems that we face are complicated, and the field of Community Psychology offers an ecological approach to target multi-layered contributors to problems so that useful and effective approaches are widely implemented.
Critical Thought Questions

1. Where have you seen a new policy or practice implemented that was not effective?
2. What Community Psychology approaches would have helped in this situation?
3. What are the advantages of partnering with those closest to community problems to improve implementation?
4. In the case studies, what types of organizations are the community psychologists working in or partnering with to address implementation problems?
5. After reading this chapter, which implementation problems do you believe are hardest to address?

Take the Chapter 18 Quiz
View the Chapter 18 Lecture Slides

REFERENCES


Chapter Nineteen Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Understand educational degrees at undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral levels in Community Psychology
- Understand and prepare for career options in the field of Community Psychology
- Consider core research and practice competencies in assessing educational opportunities
- Assess future directions in the field of Community Psychology
- Engage in and contribute to the growth of the field
Now that you have learned about the basics in the field of Community Psychology, how do you want to build upon your understanding of Community Psychology? To what extent would you like to engage in a career that incorporates Community Psychology? What types of educational degrees are available in Community Psychology? What competencies are central in the field of Community Psychology? How do you engage in and contribute to growing the field? What opportunities are there for becoming a social activist? This chapter will address these questions about education, competencies, and engaging in the field in order to provide you with an overview of some next steps.
There are different types of educational programs available in Community Psychology. We will describe some of the core components of Community Psychology degree programs at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels, and you can find a list of Community Psychology programs across levels available on the Society for Community Research and Action’s website. Most programs in Community Psychology focus on master's and doctoral level training. In addition, there are several resources that may be helpful as you explore and consider educational options in Community Psychology (see Glantsman, McMahon, & Njoku, 2015; Jimenez, Sánchez, McMahon, & Viola, 2016; McMahon, Jimenez, Bond, Wolfe, & Ratcliffe, 2015; Serrano-García, Pérez-Jiméne, Rodrigues Medina, 2016).

**Undergraduate Programs**

If you are interested in attending a university that has a Community Psychology focus, check out its curricular options in advance because there are few institutions that have a significant focus on Community Psychology at the undergraduate level. For those that have coverage, there is typically a single course. Some universities, though, have developed concentrations or degrees in Community Psychology (Glantsman et al., 2015; McMahon, Jason, & Ferrari, 2010; McMahon et al., 2015). When there is a concentration or a degree in Community Psychology, students will likely gain
exposure to multiple content courses, as well as a community-based practicum/fieldwork/internship experience. These experiences may involve working with a non-profit organization that addresses important social issues such as mental health/illness, homelessness, domestic violence, or LGBTQ issues.

Students can receive course credit and group supervision for their hands-on experiences. Even if there is not a Community Psychology concentration at your university, look for Community Psychology relevant internships; students can visit their career center or advisors to find out more. Fieldwork experiences can be tailored to student interests, and students can put the knowledge and skills they have learned into practice. It is often the case that students who engage in these applied experiences with organizations get jobs following the completion of their undergraduate degrees. They are equipped with a range of knowledge and experience related to research, evaluation, systems theory, and intervention.

In addition to internships, another strategy is to reach out to faculty who are engaged in Community Psychology research and interventions. Seek volunteer positions to assist faculty members who are doing community work that you are interested in and passionate about. This will give you invaluable experiences and skills to further your education and training in the field. Develop connections within and outside of your university to be better prepared to take a job in a community-based organization or pursue graduate studies.

Even if you decide not to pursue Community Psychology for graduate school or work with a community-based organization, an undergraduate course, concentration, or degree in Community Psychology is helpful for a range of career options, including clinical psychology, counseling psychology, social work, law, public health, education, and many other career paths. Basic knowledge and skills in Community Psychology (see Table 1 below) are transferable and helpful in addressing social issues, such as poverty, immigration, violence, substance use, mental health, and criminal justice. In addition to courses in Community Psychology, consider taking relevant business courses to enhance your financial and organizational knowledge, and become technologically, methodologically, and statistically savvy (McMahon & Wolfe, 2016; McMahon et al., 2015; Viola & McMahon, 2010). These skills will be useful, whether you decide to enter graduate school or a career with non-profits, and especially helpful if you are interested in consulting, owning your own business, or the financial aspects of non-profits.
Master’s Programs

Master’s programs in community research and action may have different names, such as Community Psychology, community social psychology, clinical-community psychology, counseling, and interdisciplinary programs in community research and action. Serrano-García, Pérez-Jiméne, and Rodrigues Medina (2016) identified 75 graduate programs in Community Psychology around the world. Master’s programs include more intensive theory-practice integration than undergraduate programs and many include intensive practicum experiences. A major difference between master’s and doctoral programs is that master’s programs place less emphasis on research and advanced statistical approaches (Dziadkowiec & Jimenez, 2009) and more emphasis on practice than doctoral programs (McMahon et al., 2015).

In many countries, master’s programs are the most typical type of post-graduate program. Most students who enroll in master’s programs are preparing for practice careers in Community Psychology. The timeline to complete a master’s degree is about 2-3 years versus 4-6 years in a doctoral program. Master’s students, in general, are less likely than doctoral students to enroll full time, and many part-time students are employed full-time in local community organizations (McMahon et al., 2015). Thus, there are rich opportunities for students to apply the new knowledge and skills they gain in Community Psychology master’s programs to their organizational and community work.

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Table 1. Basic Skills in Community Psychology that are Transferable to a Variety of Careers and Jobs

- Collaboration and teamwork
- Ecological perspective in examining social problems
- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Research and analytic skills
- Oral and written communication
- Consultation
- Program evaluation
Doctoral Programs

Doctoral programs in Community Psychology tend to include advanced theory, practice, and comprehensive research competencies, and they prepare students for many career options. There are about 45 self-identified community research and action doctoral programs that are community, clinical-community, or interdisciplinary programs. Many of these doctoral programs are in the US and have a primary focus on research, but programs worldwide vary in the extent to which various competencies are emphasized. In the US, some programs train students in clinical-community psychology while others are focused solely on Community Psychology. The difference between clinical-community and Community Psychology is that students in clinical-community programs receive training in both clinical (e.g., courses in psychopathology, therapeutic approaches, and clinical areas) and Community Psychology, while students in Community Psychology do not receive clinical training but may receive an interdisciplinary education with Community Psychology as the central focus.

The tradition of doctoral education has historically emphasized the discovery and production of new knowledge through field-specific, and often mentor-based, research opportunities (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). Although traditional doctoral programs may primarily prepare students to become researchers and academicians, doctoral programs are also providing training in the Community Psychology practice competencies (Sánchez, Jimenez, Viola, Kent, & Legler, 2017) such as evaluation, consulting, and grant-writing. This skill set enables students to go onto a variety of career paths, including community-based organizations, healthcare, education, public policy, government, foundations, and business [see Kelly and Viola’s (2019) Chapter 3 in this book for careers in Community Psychology].

International Programs

There are over 35 master’s programs throughout the world, including those in Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, El Salvador, Egypt, Greece, Italy, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, United Kingdom, and the US. Doctoral programs also span a variety of countries, including Australia, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, and the US (Serrano-García et al., 2016). Outside of the US, educational programs cater to niches based on the country’s culture, history, and career opportunities. For example, a master’s program in Community Psychology at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP) prepares students for
careers in the government, and graduates enter positions in which they develop and evaluate programs for Peruvian people within various governmental branches (T. Velázquez Castro, personal communication, June 12, 2013). The master’s program in Community Psychology at the American University in Cairo, Egypt focuses on preparing students to work as consultants or in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) where they primarily engage in capacity building activities and community development (M. Amer, personal communication, October 25, 2013). In Latin America, some programs have an emphasis on community social psychology; many graduates work with community organizations, healthcare, education, and to a lesser extent, clinical practice (N. Portillo, personal communication, October 25, 2013). Educational programs are nested within their cultural context, so if you are interested in working with a particular population, you may choose to seek training in that region of the world.

### Practical Application 19.1

**Who Should Write my Letters of Recommendation for Ph.D. Program Applications?**

We recommend that you ask at least one faculty member with who you have engaged in research. If you have two-three significant research experiences, all of your letters could be from research mentors. If you only have one notable research experience, then your other letters should be from a mentor or supervisor from an internship or volunteer experience, and from an advisor, instructor, or mentor with whom you have a strong relationship. The strongest letters will come from people who know you well, have worked with you for at least six months, and can speak to a range of your abilities, your fit with the program, your career goals, your research and academic skills, your motivation, work ethic, character, etc. Letters from instructors who simply taught courses that you took tend not to provide the edge that you need to get into competitive doctoral programs. Finally, when you ask individuals for a letter of recommendation, ask them, “Can you write a strong letter of recommendation for me?” If they hesitate and can’t give you a definitive “Yes,” then you don’t want them to write you a letter of recommendation.
Applying to Graduate Programs

If you believe that graduate study in Community Psychology is an excellent fit with your career goals, there are several strategies that may be helpful including 1) ensuring you have significant research experience, and if you don’t, volunteering to join a research team doing work you find interesting; 2) preparing to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), and considering a formal course, tutoring, or re-taking the test if your scores are weak; 3) building relationships with faculty and people working in the field, as you generally need three strong letters of recommendation (see Practical Application 19.1 above); 4) exploring and applying to a range of programs including both master’s and doctoral programs, and making sure the program is a good fit with your interests and career goals; 5) if you are invited for a visit, try and attend one – it will be beneficial for faculty to learn more about you, and you will get a good sense of which programs will be the best fit for you; 6) talking with current students to get a sense of the program from a student perspective; 7) assessing the balance of theory, research, and practice, as well as the core competencies that are taught in the program; and 8) learning about the various career paths of graduates of the program. People who are engaged in the field of Community Psychology tend to be passionate about the values of the field and the mission toward social justice and action, so getting advanced training is an excellent way to become better equipped to make a difference in the world and follow your passion.
As you consider what educational level you want to achieve and the programs that are a good fit with your interests and career goals, it is important to consider the competencies that you hope to achieve through your undergraduate and/or graduate education. Although there is overlap across programs, different programs emphasize certain competencies more than others. Some are focused more on theory and others are more focused on practice. Thus, you will want to examine exactly what certain programs are training students to do. Below we summarize an array of competencies that have been identified in the field, specifically related to practice and research.

**Practice Competencies**

The **Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA)**, the official organization of Community Psychology, has identified 18 core practice competencies (described in Chapter 7 by Wolfe, 2019) related to five themes that are commonly used in Community Psychology careers: 1) foundational principles (ecological perspectives; empowerment; sociocultural and cross-cultural competence; community inclusion and partnership; **ethical and reflective practice**), 2) community program development and management (program development, **implementation**, and management;
prevention and health promotion), 3) community organization and capacity building (community leadership and mentoring; small and large group processes; resource development; consultation and organizational development, 4) community social change (collaboration and coalition development; community development; community organizing and community advocacy; public policy analysis, development and advocacy; community education, information dissemination, and building public awareness) and 5) community research (participatory community research; program evaluation; Dalton & Wolfe, 2012). Most careers will tap into multiple competencies, while some will emphasize and require advanced skills in particular areas.

Research Competencies

SCRA has also identified research competencies that are important for community psychologists. Similar to the practice competencies, it is not expected that community psychologists gain mastery in all of these research competencies but will gain at least exposure to them and experience with some. There are five foundational competencies that underlie all areas of research, including a) research questions and leverage points, b) participatory community research, c) managing collaborations, d) developing community change models, and e) program evaluation (Haber et al., 2017). Further, there are specific research competencies in the areas of research design (e.g., survey design, sampling, mixed methods), data analysis (e.g., descriptive quantitative analyses, basic qualitative methods, missing data and data reduction techniques), and theories and perspectives (e.g., ecological theories, empowerment, policy change; Haber et al., 2017).

In their review of graduate program competencies, as well as the SCRA practice competencies listed above, Serrano-García and colleagues (2016) suggest that these competencies fall into four general categories: knowledge (e.g., application, articulation, integration), research (e.g., methodology, data analysis, writing proposals and reports), cognition, (e.g., identify, analyze, understand, and communicate injustice, values, social context) and practice/profession (e.g., develop, implement, and evaluate interventions, promote social change, demonstrate multicultural competence). Here are some questions to reflect on as you consider educational programs, review the curricula, consider your interests and desired skills, and focus on developing the competencies that will be most relevant for your desired career path. Which competencies are you most interested in learning about? Which competencies do you envision using in your desired career? Which graduate programs will help you develop your desired competencies?
Many individuals pursue the field of Community Psychology because of their interests in social change, and perhaps you are one of these individuals. There are a variety of ways in which you may become an activist to influence the assessment, interventions, or policies that relate to a particular population or social issue. While the field of psychology has traditionally focused on understanding individual behavior and problems as well as treating them at the individual level, Community Psychology is focused on the interaction between the individual and the environment and understanding individual problems from an ecological perspective (see Chapter 1 by Jason, Glantsman, O'Brien, & Ramian, 2019). Because of the values of our field (e.g., diversity, social justice), community psychologists are also interested in changing community and societal issues to ultimately better the lives of individuals. Some community psychologists have dedicated their lives to being scholars and activists in order to create social change. For example, Balcazar and Suarez-Balcazar (2016) have developed and tested community-based interventions that target individual behaviors (e.g., skills, awareness, knowledge) as well as factors in the environment (e.g., accessibility, resources, policies) that affect the lives of people with disabilities. They have also used the Concerns Report Method to help identify community members’ concerns, which are then used to take action on their concerns (see Case Study 19.1 for a description of the Concerns Report Method and how it has been used in various communities around the world).
While a graduate student at the University of Kansas, community psychologist Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar participated in the development of a community-based participatory methodology, informed by Community Psychology Ecological Systems Theory as well as Applied Behavior Analysis, to identify community concerns and take action. The methodology, called the Concerns Report Method, includes mixed methods, such as focus groups in which community concerns are identified by groups of individuals, development of a concerns survey, survey administration and data analysis, followed by town hall meetings to discuss results and plan actions to address identified issues of concern. Early applications of the Concerns Report Method included addressing the concerns of people with disabilities, such as handicap parking violations. Both Yolanda and Fabricio Balcazar have applied this participatory intervention methodology in collaboration with diverse community contexts. These include collaboration with residents of Golfito, Costa Rica, who were experiencing displacement by a large multinational corporation; immigrant Latino families living in a suburb of Chicago to identify and address health concerns; Colombian immigrants in the city of Chicago. Most recently Fabricio and a group of community partners applied the Concerns Report Method in Juanaclatan, Mexico. As a result of the implementation of the Concerns Report Method in Mexico, the community addressed several issues such as getting the Governor to allocate funds to treat the contamination of a local river, providing new services for families affected by domestic violence with funds from immigrants living in Chicago, establishing a new community center built by community volunteers on land donated by the local church, and developing new recreational programming for youth. For applications of the Concerns Report Method, check the following resources in the references (Balcazar, Garcia-Iriarte, & Suarez-Balcazar, 2009; Suarez-Balcazar, Martinez & Casas-Byots, 2005; Suarez-Balcazar & Balcazar, 2016).

Another approach to creating social change is by influencing social policy, and there are several ways that you may go about affecting it. Policy work is important because it is an avenue for psychologists to apply psychological principles to benefit public interest. Community psychologists are well positioned to conduct policy-relevant research and influence social policy to improve the quality of life for many people. Maton (2017) interviewed 79 psychologists (mostly developmental, social and/or community psychologists) about their careers as influencers of social policy. These interviews revealed that there are four key skills that participants used to change social policy, including a) building relationships with policymakers, staff members at intermediary organizations, media, practitioner groups, and/or researchers, b) research skills to conduct original research, evaluate research evidence, and to synthesize research literature, c) oral and written communication skills, and d) strategic analysis skills. Further, there were a variety of ways that these psychologists influenced social policy, such as serving as a member or chair of a policy advisory group, advocacy and lobbying, educating the public through the media, and sharing relevant psychological research and theory with key court cases. A key lesson that community psychologists share is the importance of being patient and persistent, as creating social change takes a long time and one may face many barriers and failures along the way. Jason (2013) advises community psychologists to take small steps to influence social change; small steps may
include creating and signing petitions, attending a protest, contacting local legislators, and writing a policy brief.

There is much work to be done by community psychologists in both research and practice that is relevant to social action and social change. Systems can support or even promote violence and oppression. Langhout (2016) mentions several examples of state-sanctioned violence in the US, as well as movements that emerged in response to this violence in Ferguson, Charleston, and other locations in the US. The violent act occurs in society on the ecological level, and the society responds by organizing and creating a movement in defense of those unjustly harmed.

Langhout (2016) argued that community psychologists need to use liberatory approaches and practices in order to transform society and truly free oppressed peoples. She calls on community psychologists to build on the work of feminist scientists, critical feminist social psychologists, and critical feminist social-community psychologists who focus on “the study of subjectivity, process, change, connectivity, desire, and difference” in order to build solidarity with the people most affected by state-sanctioned violence and disrupt the structures (e.g., whiteness, patriarchy, class privilege) that support the violence (p. 325).

**AREAS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Several textbooks including the current one by Jason, Glantsman, O’Brien, and Ramian (2019) have identified areas of future work for community psychologists, which are summarized below. These are topics that any student in Community Psychology can pursue in their career and/or educational path.

**Appreciation for Differences and the Search for Compassion**

Given increasing globalization and migration in various societies around the world, an appreciation for different types of diversity based on background, experiences, or cultures is important in helping individuals and communities with problem-solving, innovation, creativity and informed decision
making. In addition to an appreciation for diversity, compassionate attitudes are essential in order to effectively help others who are suffering. Our field could benefit from research investigating appreciation of diversity and compassion as outcomes rather than only as predictors. For example, researchers can examine the structural qualities that predict appreciation of differences and develop interventions that create compassionate communities (Moritsugu et al., 2014).

**Sustainability and Environmental Concerns**

Climate change and waste of natural resources have been pressing issues around the world. Many view climate change as a human rights and social justice issue, as it disproportionately impacts poor communities around the globe (Levy & Patz, 2015). For example, the environmental consequences of climate change influences access to safe food and water, which negatively affects health. Foodborne and waterborne diseases, respiratory disorders, and malnutrition are a few of the consequences (Levy & Patz, 2015). Given our field’s values towards helping oppressed communities, addressing climate change along with environmental classism and racism would prevent further health and economic problems in communities.

**Disparities in Opportunity for Health, Education, and Economic Success**

In the United States, the gap between the rich and poor is at an all-time high. Specifically, the median wealth of upper-income families was seven times greater than middle-income families and 75 times greater than lower-income families in 2016; for comparison purposes, the median wealth of upper-income families was 28 times the wealth of lower-income families in 1983 (Pew Research Center) (Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2017). There are also racial differences in wealth with Latinx and African-American families having disproportionately less wealth than White families (Kocchar & Cilluffo, 2017). These economic and racial inequalities influence access to quality schooling, health care, and job opportunities. As indicated in Chapter 1, Jason, Glantsman, O’Brien, and Ramian (2019) indicated that policy changes and increased political involvement are necessary to reduce these disparities. Further, they suggest that community psychologists examine ways to remove structural obstacles in order to reduce disparities.

**Aging and End of Life**

Issues of aging are generally understudied in psychology, and Moritsugu et al. (2014) encourage community psychologists to research and create interventions to help with enhancing the quality of life for our growing elderly population around the globe. Further, our society values life and vitality, and hence, discussions of death and dying are taboo. Community psychologists could do much to help individuals and their families and communities better deal with and face death and dying head on and support loved ones as they grieve. There are countless important global issues to address and
populations to work with to make a difference – the choice is yours and will depend on where your passion lies.

**NEXT STEPS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY CAREER**

![Image](attachment:image.png)  
*“2018 Midwest ECO Conference” by Luz Torres*

**Engaging in the Field**

Engaging in the field is an important next step and can give you energy, social connections, and resources that will facilitate pursuing your passion. There are many opportunities to connect with people who have similar values and are interested in applying these values to their work. Join SCRA and the SCRA listserve, and get involved in leadership opportunities. [SCRA27.org](http://SCRA27.org) provides helpful information for members, including opportunities to get involved in interest groups, committees, councils, and the Executive Committee. In addition, the website includes lists of undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral programs in Community Psychology, teaching materials, policy statements, webinars and blogs, and other helpful resources. Build your networks within and across your discipline and collaborate with others (McMahon et al., 2015; McMahon et al., 2016). Engage in **professional development** to stay current and grow your knowledge and skills through conferences, webinars, and workshops. **Continuing education opportunities** provide an avenue to grow stronger networks of community psychologists sharing their work and promoting community change across generations and settings (Jimenez et al., 2016). For example, the regional student-run Eco-Community Psychology Conferences (Flores et al., 2013) are a great place to network with other students, and these conferences have been occurring for the past 40 years. Another way to learn more about specific skills of interest is to explore and become familiar with the **Community Tool Box**. This online resource has a plethora of helpful guides to facilitate social action, including assessing community needs and resources, developing a model of change, developing strategic and action plans, developing an intervention, evaluating the initiative, and applying for grants.
Use the field to guide your work. Research is an important component of Community Psychology, so check out the literature on topics of interest, read the current research, and explore what others have done before you start something new. There are many empirically-based programs, so don’t re-invent the wheel without first learning what others have spent years creating and testing. Assess the extent to which existing theories, strategies, and programs have been applied to work in your area. Using resources such as university libraries (if you have access), Google Scholar, Research Gate, and other online tools can help you access literature that can guide your work. If you can’t access articles you need that are relevant to your work, try requesting them from the authors via email.

Follow your passion to make a difference. Appreciate “small wins” and engage in self-care. Working systemically to promote health and well-being among underserved populations is important work that can have far-reaching effects at the local, regional, state, national, and international levels. Be patient, and don’t try to do it all at once; figure out where your talents lie and where you can make a difference and work with others to have a larger impact.

Growing the Field

Our field is small but of utmost importance – can you think of anything better than to work toward solving the world’s problems through strategic, systemic, evidence-based practices in collaboration with organizations, communities, and government? You can help grow the field through a variety of strategies, such as 1) connecting with your local and national organizations to increase awareness of Community Psychology competencies and the fit with their work; 2) using technology and social media to increase visibility of good work in the field, such as through Twitter, blogs, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and videos that illustrate exemplary projects and public discourse on social issues; 3) looking for opportunities to introduce yourself as a community psychologist or someone who has training in Community Psychology. You should have an “elevator speech,” in which you provide brief bullet points about the field and what we do. Community psychologists add distinctive value through the ways in which we combine science, understanding of systems, and an ecological approach to contribute to an adaptive, collaborative team approach to sustainable change (Community Psychology Practice Council, 2010). You need to be able to describe to others what you bring to the table quickly and in user-friendly ways.

Disseminate your work through various outlets to yield greater visibility and impact for our field (Jimenez et al., 2016). Be politically and socially active in your community and share your work with communities across levels (e.g., locally, regionally, nationally). In addition to traditional academic outlets, submit articles and Op-Eds about your work to local newspapers, newsletters, websites, blogs, and other sources to let the public know about your Community Psychology-related work and impact (McMahon & Wolfe, 2016). Disseminating your work through social media helps keep the work current, relevant, and linked with those who find it most helpful (Jimenez et al., 2016). Communitypsychology.com is a website that SCRA created to interact with the public and share the
important work we are doing; consider submitting your research or practice work – there is an array of topics, including education, healthcare, children, environmental issues, prevention, criminal justice, public policy, substance use, violence, and housing. The field of Community Psychology offers a wealth of knowledge, skills, strategies, research methodologies, and interventions to create a more socially just society – now it is up to us to grow the field using a multi-pronged approach to action and dissemination.

Here are some questions to consider as you reflect on the next steps in your potential future career in Community Psychology. What are the issues that you care about most? How can you as an individual get involved in addressing these issues? What would you do differently based on the material you learned about in this book? How can you join with others, such as through local, regional, national, or international organizations, to make a difference? We have created an “Action Checklist” below to help you answer these questions.

### Practical Application 19.2
### Action Checklist

Below is a list of ways you can get more involved in Community Psychology.

- **Take political action**
  - Organize or participate in a rally
  - Contact your local, state, and/or national legislators on important issues
  - Start or sign a petition to share voices of concerned citizens

- **Volunteer in your community**
  - Offer skills you have to promote a cause that you care about.

- **Use social media effectively to raise awareness**
  - Transition from personal to professional usage
  - Write blogs and/or Op-Eds to share your perspective to a wide audience

- **Find a job that provides a forum for social action on issues you are passionate about**

- **Use and share the Community Toolbox** as a resource to guide social action
SUMMING UP

After learning about the field of Community Psychology, consider which path will facilitate your journey and what your next steps might be. There are undergraduate, master's, and doctoral level courses and programs around the world that can be beneficial depending on your experience and career goals. Consider social issues that matter to you and the Community Psychology competencies that will help you address these issues as you plan for your career. Gaining research skills and applied experiences through Community Psychology education will provide you with tools to effect social change. Join and become meaningfully involved in SCRA to connect with the field and a community of scholars and practitioners with similar values. Learn about others’ work, share resources and knowledge, and collaborate with colleagues to become the next generation of transformative community psychologists.

**Critical Thought Questions**

Consider the following questions to assess whether you may be best equipped for an undergraduate, master’s, doctoral, and/or international education.

1. What would you like to do when you finish your education? How might Community Psychology be part of your career plans?
2. What skills would you like to use in your work?
3. With what populations and in what settings would you enjoy working?
4. Have you been involved with research? If so, do you like it? Many people think they don’t like research, but once they try it, they find it to be very interesting.

5. How much do you see research or evaluation as part of your job description? How might you apply research or evaluation in a setting to assess and modify work being done?

6. How much do you see program development and management as part of your role?

Take the Chapter 19 Quiz
View the Chapter 19 Lecture Slides

REFERENCES


Langhout, R. D. (2016). This is not a history lesson; this is agitation: A call for methodology of diffraction in US-based Community Psychology. American Journal of Community Psychology, 58, 322-328.


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GLOSSARY

Academic settings

Refers to collegiate environments where teaching and research activities take place.

Action-oriented research

Research that generates knowledge through participatory university/community partnerships in the hope of bringing about social change.

Active Citizen Participation

Assures a higher level of involvement in partnerships involving both community psychologists and community members.

Activism

In Community Psychology terms, activism is any action taken in an effort to bring about second-order change to address an injustice in society.

Acute stressors

Observable stressful events that are time-limited.

Adaptation

Focuses on interactions between persons and their environments to better understand why behavior that is effective in one setting may not be useful in others.

Adaptive coping

Refers to the effectiveness of a given coping response within a given context and for a given challenge or problem that the individual experiences as stressful.

Advocacy

Advocacy involves active promotion of a cause or principle involving actions that lead to a selected goal.
Agenda setting

The process by which social problems and the solutions to these problems gain or lose the attention of policymakers or the public.

Aging

The developmental changes and transitions that comes with being a child, adolescent, or adult.

Alternative settings

A novel, new community of people that are allowed to live freely and pursue what matters on the individual and group levels.

Antecedent

Anything preceding a behavior that signals the likelihood of a consequence if the behavior is performed.

Applied Behavior Analysis

The application of principles of behavioral science to applied problems.

At-risk

Individuals who experience significant and chronic stressor events and are at-risk for developing associate physiological (e.g., cardiovascular complications) and psychological (e.g., anxiety, depression) symptoms.

Avoidance coping style

Involves avoidant actions and cognitive avoidance, these strategies attempt to manage emotions by trying to avoid thinking about the stressor.

B. F. Skinner

An American psychologist known for his influential work in behavioral psychology.

Behavior Modification

A technique used to change the frequency or duration of a behavior.

Behavior setting theory

Natural or developed ecological environments where behaviors evolve over time. A process by which different types of settings can be expected to influence the behaviors of people within a variety of different types of situations.
Behavioral analysis

A science of behavior focusing on the relationship between behavior and its consequences, resulting in a greater understanding of the principles of behavior that are observable and replicable.

Behavioral Community Psychology

The application of the principles of behavioral science to applied problems in community settings.

Beneficence

A research ethics principle that requires that researchers do no harm and maximize possible benefits, and they can do this by finding less risky methods to achieve research goals.

Biennial Conference

A conference held every two years by The Society for Community Research and Action.

Bottom-up approach

An approach to community change that originates with community members rather than experts.

Burnout

A feeling of overall exhaustion that results from too much pressure and not enough sources of satisfaction or support.

Capacity building

A process in which communities or organizations work to improve their collective skills and resources.

Capitalism

Also called a market economy, is an economic system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

Chronic stressors

Persistent demands on an individual; typically open-ended, using up our resources in coping but not promising resolution.

Civil servant

Someone employed by the government to work in the public sector to implement policies and laws.
Classical Conditioning

Refers to a procedure of learning in which a stimulus (e.g., food) is paired with a previously neutral stimulus (e.g., a bell) to shape behavior.

Clinical-Community Psychology

A type of doctoral program that provides students both clinical training, such as psychopathology, therapy, and assessment, as well as Community Psychology skills, such as consultation, evaluation, and community intervention.

Collaborative partnership

A reciprocal relationship between two or more people with a shared goal in mind.

Collective efficacy

The belief that the actions of the group can be successful in creating change.

Collective Wellness

Understanding and encouraging the state of good health for groups of people and communities.

Colonial matrix of power

Described in four interrelated domains: control of economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources); control of authority (institution, army); control of gender and sexuality (family, education) and control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education, and formation of subjectivity).

Colonialism

The extension of a nation’s sovereignty over territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler colonies or administrative dependencies in which indigenous populations are directly ruled or displaced. Colonizing nations generally dominate the resources, labor, and markets of the colonial territory, and may also impose socio-cultural, religious, and linguistic structures on the conquered population.

Community coalition

A set of organizations, institutions and community agents that cooperate to improve the living conditions of the community.

Community empowerment

Empowerment occurring at the community level, in which members uses resources, develop skills, exert influence, and effectively organize to address the issues that matter to the community.
Community intervention

Prevention or promotion programs that aim to promote behavioral change in defined community contexts to address social problems.

Community Mental Health movement

A national movement in the 1960s to more efficiently and cost-effectively treat mental illness in community settings rather than solely psychiatric hospitals.

Community organizing

Engaging in actions with in a collaborative way with other psychologists, professionals in other disciplines, community members, organizations, and local government.

Community psychologists

A person who seeks to improve community wellbeing through a cycle of collaborative planning, action and research in partnership with local community members.

Community Psychology

A field that goes beyond an individual focus and integrates social, cultural, economic, political, environmental, and international influences to promote positive change, health, and empowerment at individual and systemic levels (SCRA27.org).

Community Psychology competencies

The 18 competencies help define and clarify the unique combination of skills and values that differentiate community psychologists from other people working in community settings.

Community Psychology practice competence

Having the required skills to effectively engage in community psychology practice.

Community readiness

Degree to which the community is prepared for the behavioral and social changes that are intended by the intervention.

Community resilience

The collective ability of a defined group of people or geographic area to deal with change or adversity effectively.
Community Social Psychology

Some Community Psychology programs are embedded within a larger frame of social psychology, the study of how individuals are influenced by others.

Community systems approach

An approach that encompasses understanding the interrelated parts and dynamics of a community. Each part has its own organizing processes that influence, and in turn are influenced by, other parts. The total systems then are organized at a higher level that transcends the organizing process of any one part.

Community Toolbox

An online resource that provides detailed guides on how to work with organizations and communities to engage in social action, including information on assessing community needs and strengths, creating a model of change, designing plans, interventions, and applying for grants.

Community-based participatory research

Research that involves an exchange of resources and ideas between researchers and the community members as a way of understanding that is guided by community needs.

Community-centered approach

Refers to designing an intervention or program with an awareness of community factors and active participation and input from community members.

Concentration

A set of courses within a larger degree program that enables you to specialize in a discipline such as Community Psychology.

Conceptual research

Research that is used to educate policymakers and stakeholders on social issues and propose possible solutions.

Consulting

Using expertise and skills to provide advice, and support to other organizations looking to make decisions or change something within their organization.

Context

The surroundings, circumstances, environment, background, or settings which determine, specify, or clarify the meaning of an event or other occurrence.
Contextual factors

The individual, psychological, familial, community, and societal factors that influence people.

Continuing education opportunities

Advanced education programs, courses, webinars, workshops, or conferences that provide additional training in particular Community Psychology-related issues or skill sets.

Control

A design decision that dictates whether or not there is a control group (a group that is used for a baseline without intervention and to compare with the group of participants with the intervention).

Coping models

Refer to approaches that explain the processes of how an individual handles a stressor(s). An individual's coping model will be determined by cultural, social, and personality characteristics of people and will elicit a given set of coping strategies.

Coping process

Ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage external or internal demands/problems/challenges perceived by the individual as stressful. The process for coping is influenced by the context where the demand arises, the time the stressors last, and how long before one responds.

Coping styles

The personality dispositions or traits that transcend the influence of the situational context and time when choosing a coping strategies (Lazarus, 1993).

Critical awareness

Becoming knowledgeable of the injustices or the oppressions in an individual's life and in society around them.

Critical Psychology

This perspective seeks a psychological understanding within historical, social, cultural, and political contexts.

Cultural competence

Possessing the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively work with members of a culture.
Cultural humility

Ongoing process of learning about other cultures and being sensitive to cultural differences. Cultural humility includes acknowledging one's own lack of knowledge about aspects of culture and recognizing power dynamics that impact the relationship.

Culture

Dynamic concept of shared meanings and experiences that are passed down over time and generations. Culture includes shared beliefs, values, practices, definitions and other elements that are expressed through family socialization, formal schooling, shared language, social roles, and norms for feeling, thinking, and acting.

Cycling of resources

The systematic process of using and developing materials and resources that impact community growth and development.

Decolonial theory

As a revolutionary epistemology, decolonial theory and methods feature critical insights into knowledges from subaltern voices concerned with how the implementation of modern technologies shape colonial structures, inequalities, the daily lives of the colonized, and resistance strategies.

Deconstruct

Deconstruction is a concept central to postmodernism. It is a process of rigorously analyzing and making apparent the assumptions, judgments, and values that underlie social arrangements and intellectual ideas.

Deconstructing power and oppression

The reclaiming of power as liberation from oppression. Theoretical concepts such as empowerment and decolonization provide a baseline for community capacity building and self-determination.

Dehumanization

Involves redefining the targets of prejudice and violence by making them seem less human (that is, less civilized or less sentient) than other people.

Dehumanizing structures

Also known as power structures; structures created in society that benefit the oppressor class in the form of institutions, policies, influence, and other societal constructs.
Deinstitutionalization

The long-term process of reducing the number of psychiatric hospitals and replacing them with less isolatory and community-based alternatives for people with disabilities or mental illnesses.

Disabilities

Visible or hidden and temporary or permanent conditions that provide barriers or challenges, and impact individuals of every age and social group.

Disenfranchised

To deprive of a franchise, of a legal right, or of some privilege or immunity especially; to deprive of the right to vote.

Dissemination

The deliberate sharing of research findings to groups and communities that would benefit from said findings.

Dose

Refers to how much of the intervention they do deliver: for example, number of sessions, number of hours, time of application of the program, and so on.

Ecological

Understanding the relationships between people and their social environments (e.g., families, groups, communities, and societies).

Ecological Psychology

A subfield of psychology related to Community Psychology which focuses on the real-world relationships between people and their environments.

Effectiveness

Achievement of the results intended by the intervention (it is an indicator that the intervention works properly).

Elevator Speech

A short summary (about 2 minutes) that you share with anyone who asks about your work, interests, and/or the field of Community Psychology.
Emotional-focused coping style

When an individual responds with efforts to manage the emotional response to a stressful event by focusing directly on it in a constructive way.

Empirical analysis

The research whose results fall strictly on observable and verifiable evidence. It can be based on quantitative or qualitative methods.

Empowerment

The process of gaining power emerging at the individual, organizational, community, and societal levels, which are affected by peoples’ previous experiences, skills, actions, and context.

Empowerment Theory

Originally described by Julian Rappaport (1981), empowerment refers to the capacity for individual growth, self-determination and autonomy through the prescribed use and access of community resources.

Ethical and reflective practice

Engaging in thinking and reflecting upon community work to ensure it is efficient, productive, and ethical from a moral and science-based framework.

Ethnicity

One's social identity based on culture of origin, ancestry, or affiliation with a cultural group.

Ethnocentrism

The act of judging another culture based on preconceptions that are found in the values and standards of one's own culture.

Evaluation

The use of different research methods to understand person-environment interactions and also determine whether community interventions have been successful.

Evidence

The degree to which the outcome data supports a scientific assertion.

Evidence-based

An approach to intervention based on research that systematically demonstrates its effectiveness.
Experience

The level of competence whereby students or CP practitioners have engaged in supervised practice, in performing the tasks related to the competency (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012).

Expertise

The level of competence whereby community psychology practitioners have developed further experience and continuing education in a competency to the extent that they are able to teach and supervise others (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012).

Exploitation

Exploitation occurs when one social group is able to take for itself what is produced by another group.

Exposure

The level of competence whereby students or community psychology practitioners have become aware of the competency, understand its value, and know how it can be applied in community psychology practice (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012).

Extinguished

Decreasing undesirable behaviors by stopping the delivery of reinforcers that follow the behavior.

Federal agencies

Government organizations that are set up to oversee specific systems at the national level such as education, housing, and the criminal justice.

Fidelity

The degree to which a program is implemented as designed by the developers.

First-order change

Involves minor changes that lead to small, short term improvements by focusing exclusively on the individuals.

Gender

Socially-constructed perceptions of what it means to be male or female in our society and how those genders may be reflected and interpreted by society.

Gender expression

A person’s external expression of being male, female, or other.
Gender identity

A person’s inner psychological sense of being male, female, or another category.

Globalization

The process of the movement and integration of local and national economies, including workers and governments, into a worldwide market with the goal of creating a global market economy.

Government setting

A legislative, executive or judiciary department, agency or commission that establishes and enforces laws, and regulations and provides basic infrastructure, health, education, public safety, and commerce/trade to supports its citizenry.

Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

The Graduate Record Examination is a standardized test that is an entry prerequisite for the majority of graduate schools and universities in the United States.

Grassroots

Individuals at the ground level of a community group or an organization are brought into key roles in intervention design and planning.

Health care setting

Organizations that provides health care or related services (e.g., health focused research).

Help-seeking coping strategies

When an individual responds by using other people as a resource to assist in finding a solution, understand the problem, or express feelings of distress related to the problem.

Heroism

When a person who engages with underprivileged, disadvantaged populations and delivers critical solutions or consultations.

Homeostasis

An ideal “set point” that depends on the person and context. The homeostatic process is a tendency toward a relative equilibrium between independent processes.

Iatrogenic effects

Resulting in unintended consequences.
Imperialism

The political and economic control of one nation over another.

Implementation

Sequence of actions that goes from the planned on paper to actions in natural community contexts. Good implementation depends on the skills of the community psychologists involved and the degree of community readiness.

Implementation science

The study of the optimal methods for the adoption of successful interventions and programs by community settings.

Incidence

The number of new cases during a specified period of time.

Indicated prevention

Programming that targets people who have detectable signs of maladjustment that foreshadow more significant mental disorders or who have biological markers that are linked to disorder.

Indigenous

Native, or aboriginal, meaning belonging to a locality. Native implies birth or origin in a place or region and may suggest compatibility with it.

Individual empowerment

A process in which one believes in one’s capabilities and develops skills to take control over aspects of one’s life.

Individualistic perspective

A focus on the individual where the influence of larger environmental or societal factors is ignored.

Innovations

New knowledge or information such as programs or policies that could be useful to prevention efforts in the field.

Instrumental research

Research used to persuade policymakers to adopt a specific policy.
**Interdependence**

Because everything is connected, changing one aspect of an environment will have many ripple effects.

**Interdependencies**

The interrelated relationships between the factors in the ecological model and how they influence people adapting to their environments.

**Interdisciplinary collaboration**

Scientists from multiple disciplines work together to try to understand complex social and community problems.

**Interdisciplinary programs**

Programs that involve utilizing more than one academic approach to study and knowledge acquisition.

**Internalized racism**

More than just a consequence of racism, internalized racism is a systemic oppression in reaction to racism that has a life of its own. In other words, just as there is a system in place that reinforces the power and expands the privilege of white people, there is a system in place that actively discourages and undermines the power of people and communities of color and mires us in our own oppression.

**Intersectionality**

An intersectional approach takes into account the historical, environmental, socio-cultural, and political context and recognizes the unique experience of the individual based on the intersection and implications of all relevant grounds.

**Intra-organizational strategies**

Activities or actions that promote empowerment between departments or divisions within an organization.

**Justice**

A research ethics principle that indicates research should have similar benefits, risks and burdens to all populations.

**Leadership**

In community psychology practice, the ability to enhance the capacity of individuals and groups
Learning Theory

A method of learning that occurs when individuals respond to environmental factors or stimuli.

Liberation

Analyses that emphasizes social concern for the poor and the political emancipation for oppressed peoples.

Logic model

A hypothesized description of the process, step by step, of how a prevention or promotion intervention should work.

Medical model

In psychology, the medical model involves a therapist delivering one-on-one psychotherapy to patients. In medicine, it involves physicians providing treatments for one patient at a time.

Mentoring

The ability to assist community members to identify personal strengths and social and structural resources they can develop further and use to enhance empowerment, community engagement, and leadership.

Meta-analysis

A method for statistically summarizing the findings of multiple studies to quantify an average effect and identify possible predictors of variability of outcomes.

Midwest Ecological Community Psychology Conference

An annual Community Psychology conference organized and led by students in the Midwest. Other regional conferences include the Southeast, Northeast, and Eastern ECO conferences, as well as the Community Research and Action in the West Conference.

Mixed methods research

Thoughtful combining of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

Mutual education

Liberating education between psychologists and community members accomplished through a cycle of open dialogue, dissemination, dialogue, repeat.
Nationality

A person’s status of belonging to a specific nation by birth or citizenship.

Needs-based strategies

Addressing the needs of a population, such as adequate health care or racial, economic, social, and educational justice.

Non-profit organization

Local or national organizations that focus on a specific cause. They invest their income back into the organization to further their cause as opposed to distributing the earnings to shareholders, leaders, or members.

Non-traditional community psychologists

A person who pursues training in other academic fields or have lived experiences as a community advocate.

Operant Conditioning

A method of learning where an individual makes an association between a specific behavior and a consequence.

Oppressed

The group of individuals who do not benefit from the power structures in society and lack basic resources, rights, treatment, and opportunity in society.

Oppression

Oppression can be described as the collusion of dehumanization and exploitation.

Oppressors

The group of individuals who have the power, influence, and power structures in place that further their goals while taking away the rights, needs, and resources of others.

Organizational empowerment

A process in which an organization exerts its control and influence to facilitate the empowerment of its members. The process includes supporting organization members, building coalitions with other organizations, and making changes in the community around the organization.
Overload

The “wear and tear” on the body when stress response is triggered too often and/or remains hyperactive too long.

Paradox

A seemingly contradictory set of ideas that are intertwined, and must often be embraced when enacting social change.

Participants

A pool of people that are volunteering or being paid to participate in a study.

Participatory efficacy

The belief that you can effectively participate in community organizations.

Partisanship

The tendency of a member of a political party to strongly support their party’s policies and have a reluctance to compromise with members of other political parties.

Policy

Working with legislative, executive, or judicial branches of government to bring about change at the local, community, and societal levels.

Policy advocacy

Policy work that is guided by set of principles and that involves the active promotion of these principles (e.g., social justice).

Policy evaluation and revision

The last phase of the policy process in which a policy is evaluated to determine whether it successfully addressed a social issue, and whether it can be improved to more effectively address the social issue.

Policy formation and adoption

The second phase of the policy process in which a policy solution to address a social issue is adopted.

Policy implementation

The third phase of the policy process in which a specific policy is executed.
Policy stream

The potential solutions that can address a social issue and the costs of these solutions.

Policymaking process

A four step cyclical process that illustrates how a policy gains the attention of policymakers, is adopted, implemented, and revised.

Political stream

The level of public concern to actually devote time and resources to one of these topics and possible solutions.

Population

A group of individuals that share a characteristic which is the focus of scientific research.

Positive Reinforcement

When something rewarding happens after the onset of a behavior.

Post-test

A test designed to gauge participants’ scores post-intervention.

Power from

Is the ability to resist coercion and unwanted commands/demands.

Power over

The ability to compel or dominate others, control resources, and enforce commands.

Power to

The ability of people to pursue personal and/or collective goals and to develop their own capacities.

Practice settings

Environments that allow for the application of Community Psychology practice principles in an applied environment.

Practicum/Fieldwork/Internship Experience

A key component of undergraduate and graduate Community Psychology programs that involves supervised, hands-on learning through work in a community setting that is also helpful to that setting.
Pragmaticism

An approach that assesses the truth of meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.

Praxis

A repetitive process of turning a theory, lesson, or skill into an actualized action.

Pre-test

A test designed to gauge participants’ baseline scores.

Prevalence

The total number of cases in a population.

Prevention

The focus on actions that stop problems before they happen by boosting individual skills as well by engaging in environmental change.

Primary prevention

Interventions designed to prevent the onset or future incidence of a specific problem.

Privilege

Unearned advantages that individuals have based on membership in a dominant group.

Problem stream

The range of social issues that may affect a given population.

Problem-focused coping style

When the individuals respond with cognitive and behavioral efforts at managing or altering the problem causing distress.

Professional development

A way to stay current and grow your knowledge and skills, network, and establish and grow connections with colleagues in your field. This can be done through attendance of conferences, webinars, and workshops.

Promotion

Empowering individuals to increase control of their health through literacy and programming.
Protective factors

Variables that are related to a decreased risk for developing a disease or a social problem.

Psychological empowerment

A process by which one first increases critical awareness and understanding of the power dynamics that occur at multiple levels in their lives. To address these power dynamics, one then develops skills for gaining control over affected aspects of their lives.

Psychosocial

The relationship between thought and behavior, and social factors.

Public policy

The laws, regulations, course of action, and funding priorities issued by the government to address a social issue at the local, state, and national level.

Punishment

A consequence associated with a behavior or group of behaviors that decreases the rate or likelihood of the behavior in the future.

Qualitative

Methods involving collecting data that typically consists of words that provide comprehensive descriptions of participants’ experiences.

Quantitative

Methods involving collecting data in the form of numbers using standardized measures in an attempt to produce generalizable findings.

Race

Social construct based on observable physical criteria, such as skin color or other physical features. Racial differences include economic, historical, and other social factors that contribute to a system of disadvantage and privilege.

Random assignment

A design decision that involves the random assignment of participants into either an experiment group or a control group.

Reclaiming of power

The process of claiming and redefining identities; the process can includes naming the places
where one needs to take charge and act more powerfully, plan changes and take action that reconnect the person with their inherent power.

Reliable

The degree to which a study produces results that prove to be consistent, no matter who is conducting the research.

Religion

Shared systems of beliefs and values, symbols, feelings, actions, and experiences that often focus on relationships with the divine.

Replicable

The ability to replicate a study’s findings.

Research Design

A collection of decisions a researcher(s) makes tailored to what is being studied.

Resilience

A dynamic process characterized by positive outcomes despite adversity or stress.

Resource provision

Ensuring a community is provided with a resource it is lacking.

Respect for diversity

Acknowledgment, acceptance, and respect for the full range of human characteristics in their social, historical, and cultural contexts.

Respect for Persons

A research ethics principle that states children, prisoners, and pregnant individuals are considered vulnerable populations, and they require special protections when involved in research.

Rights-based strategies

Addressing the rights of a population, such as legal, political, and social justice.

Risk factors

Variables that are related to an increased risk for developing a disease or problem.
Second-order change

Involves initiating more structural, long term, and sustainable transformational changes.

Secondary prevention

Early intervention that decreases the prevalence.

Seeking-understanding coping style

When an individual responds by finding mining and understanding, not seeking to put a positive interpretation on the problem, but to learn.

Selective prevention

Programming that targets people who are at high risk for the development of a disorder but do not show any indication of disorder.

Self-efficacy

An internal belief in one's innate ability to achieve a desired goal.

Self-purification

An examination of one's own true motivations, flaws, virtues, and willingness to sacrifice when engaging in activism.

Sense of community

An individual's perception of similarity to others, giving to others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable group.

Sex

Biological descriptor involving chromosomes and internal/external reproductive organs.

Sexual orientation

A person’s emotional, romantic, erotic, and spiritual attractions toward another in relation to their own sex or gender.

Shaping of behavior

A complex set of procedures that results in a change in topography, or the sequence, of behaviors.

Shift-and-Persist

A strategy for adapting to stress that requires individuals to first shift their views of the problem and themselves within the context of the problem/stressors.
Small wins

Progress that occurs when breaking down a goal into manageable parts.

Social class

Social construct based on a person’s income or material wealth, educational status, and/or occupational status.

Social Climate theory

Understand how people adapt to their social contexts, how they survive traumatizing contexts, and how contexts adapt to persons within that context; addressing the power and fragility of social settings.

Social Justice

Involves the fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges that provide equal opportunities for education, health care, work, and housing.

Social network models

A method for identifying how relationships may influence attitudes and behaviors.

Societal empowerment

Empowerment occurring at the societal level; considers the equitable distribution of resources and access to power broadly across groups.

Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA)

SCRA is the official organization of Community Psychology in the United States, yet it also supports global connections and goals, with about 20% of its membership international.

Spirituality

Spirituality focuses on an individual’s relationship with the divine and a quest for meaning.

Stakeholders

Those who have something to gain or lose from a study.

Stimulus control

The process where rules (antecedents) become associated with consequences, and then make a behavior or group of behaviors more or less likely to happen in the future.
Strength-based approach

Focuses on building competencies and skills, rather than fixing deficits.

Stress

The process by which we perceive and respond to certain events that we appraise as threatening or challenging.

Structural violence

Systemic violence or oppression perpetrated by those who have power and influence in society toward those who are disadvantaged by society.

Succession

Refers to the fact that communities are in a constant process of change, and this process causes changing requirements for adaptation.

Support-seeking strategies

Strategies for coping with stress, which includes seeking advice or information, or direct assistance from others.

Sustainability

Focusing on the commitment to the long-term goal of a campaign by planning for adjustments, adaptations, collaboration, and unexpected barriers in the activism process.

Swampscott Conference

The 1965 inaugural conference in Swampscott, Massachusetts that led to the creation of the field of Community Psychology.

Systems of domination

A “social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property...and [owes] its survival to relatively self-activating social processes” (Jepperson, 1991, p. 145). In other words, institutions are enduring, historical facets of social life that shape our behavior. Examples of institutions include the family, marriage, media, medicine, law, education, the state, and work. These institutions can be said to structure thought and behavior, in that they prescribe rules for interaction and inclusion/exclusion and norms for behavior, parcel out resources between groups, and often times rely on formal regulations (including laws, policies, and contracts).

Systems perspective

A consideration of individual, group, community, and ecological contextual factors when examining a phenomena of interest.
Tertiary prevention

Implementing programming after the disorder has occurred.

Theory-practice integration

Education style used predominantly in graduate level training, incorporating both theory and concepts pertaining to a subject, as well as getting hands-on training in the field.

Third Way of Empowerment

Empowerment as an iterative process that will ultimately increases the number of opportunities for people to control their own lives.

Top-down approach

An approach to community change that originates with experts, community leaders, and other individuals in power.

Transformation

Fundamentally changing a community and its structures such that resources and power are more equitably distributed.

Universal prevention

Correlates of primary prevention; targets all the people in a given population.

Wellness

A term that refers to physical and psychological health, as well as attainment of personal goals and well-being.