

## **Chapter Summaries**

### **Chapter 1: The Fundamentals of Community Psychology**

Community psychology concerns the relationships of individuals with communities and societies. By integrating research with action, it seeks to understand and enhance quality of life for individuals, communities, and societies. Unlike other fields in psychology, community psychology emphasizes collaboration with community members as partners in research or action. Compared to other psychological fields, community psychology involves a shift in perspective. The focus of community psychology is not on the individual alone but on how the individual exists within a web of *contexts*—encapsulating environments and social connections. Community psychologists analyze social problems using ecological levels of analysis and encourage the application of second-order change to promote lasting change. Analyzing problems using ecological levels of analysis is critical for problem definitions and creating effective responses. For social and community issues, problems are not “solved” but changed. Every action creates new challenges, but these can be an improvement over time.

Values are important in the field. They help clarify issues and choices in research and action, facilitate questioning of dominant views of social issues, and promote understanding how cultures and communities are distinctive. Community psychology is based on eight core values: empirical grounding, a multi-level strengths-based perspective, sense of community, respect for human diversity, collective wellness, empowerment and citizen participation, collaboration, and social justice. These eight core values are interrelated and at times competing. Open, collective conversation about the role of each core value in community research and action is critical to social improvement.

### **Chapter 2: The Development and Practice of Community Psychology**

Psychology has been influenced strongly by individualism with comparatively little attention to social context. Community psychology emerged in the U.S. in the mid-20th century, and its shift in perspective required finding new ways of “doing psychology.” Five important forces contributed to the development of community psychology: (a) a preventive perspective; (b) reforms in mental health care; (c) action research and group dynamics; (d) social change movements, such as civil rights and feminism; and (e) optimism about solving social problems. New conceptual frameworks were developed for the field: prevention, an ecological perspective, sense of community, focus on social justice, valuing human diversity, self-determination, empowerment, and multiple interventions to promote coping. Political eras and political contexts have challenged the field and provided opportunities for continuing development. Community psychology around the world has developed to address concerns in different local and national contexts. While community psychology may emphasize different approaches to creating change, it is unified in addressing injustice.

Training in community psychology includes many options for both masters and doctoral level training. These include programs in community psychology, clinical-community psychology, counseling-community psychology, social-community psychology, and interdisciplinary approaches to community research and action. Community psychologists practice in a wide array

of settings and professional roles. They may work in nonprofit organizations, government agencies, companies, education, or start their own businesses. Their professional roles include consultants, program developers, policy specialists, community organizers, community developers, and evaluation specialists, among others. Ethical decision making is needed to balance values, social roles, and these new ways of “doing psychology” with the demands of the situation. Consideration of roles for community psychologists and community psychology practice skills can help inform career decisions and can be used by citizens interested in working for social change.

### **Chapter 3: The Aims of Community Research**

Reflexivity is critical in community psychology, as it examines how a researcher’s own values influence their research. Overarching concerns for community psychology research can be summarized in terms of the following four commitments: interrogating the values and assumptions we bring to our work, promoting community participation and collaboration in research decisions, attending to the cultural and social contexts of research, and conducting research with an ecological perspective.

Three philosophies of science underlie community psychology research: postpositivist, constructivist, and critical. Whereas positivist views emphasize objectivity, experimentation, and hypothesis-testing to discover cause and effect, postpositivist views assume that no researcher is truly neutral but seek to minimize bias with measurement and experimentation. Constructivist views emphasize a connection between researcher and participant, the particular setting where research occurs, and understanding participants’ experiences and their meaning to participants. Critical views emphasize how social forces and belief systems influence both researchers and participants and researchers’ responsibility for integrating research with social action. Each philosophy of science has advantages and limitations. The goal is to encourage explicit decisions by researchers about values and philosophy of science.

This chapter describes participatory, collaborative community research processes. Developing a community research panel is one way to involve citizens in these decisions. Psychopolitical validity concerns whether the research process empowered citizens to become involved in liberating social change to benefit their communities. Understanding the cultural and social contexts of a community is important. Three research issues involving culture include: (a) how cultural and ethnic identity are assessed; (b) challenging assumptions of population homogeneity, that everyone is similar within a cultural group; and (c) methodological equivalence of research methods and measures across cultures. Much community research concerns multiple ecological levels of analysis. This chapter illustrates how thinking in levels-of-analysis terms helps to understand community contexts for well-being and social support networks.

### **Chapter 4: Methods of Community Psychology Research**

Community research methods can be divided into qualitative and quantitative approaches. Each approach has strengths and limitations. Qualitative methods often provide knowledge of what a phenomenon means to those who experience it. Quantitative methods often provide knowledge useful in making statistical comparisons and testing the effectiveness of social innovations.

Chapter 4 describes ten common features of qualitative methods. These methods usually involve intensive study of a small sample. The goal is to understand contextual meaning for the research participants through a participant–researcher relationship. The researcher uses open-ended questions and listens carefully to participants’ language to generate thick description of participants’ experiences. Data are usually words. Data analysis often involves interpretation of themes or categories in participant responses, often refined through checking of interpretations with participants. Four qualitative methods are discussed: participant observation, qualitative interviewing, focus groups, and case studies. Qualitative methods often tap shared narratives and personal stories of individuals. Qualitative methods address reliability, validity, and generalizability differently than quantitative methods. Validity for qualitative methods often concerns convergence, verisimilitude, and reflexivity.

Quantitative research emphasizes measurement, comparisons, cause-effect relationships, generalization across multiple contexts, and often experimentation. Data are numbers. Standardized measurements with established reliability and validity are preferred. Statistical analysis is the dominant method of analysis. Quantitative description includes a variety of methods involving measurement but not experimental manipulation of variables, such as community surveys, epidemiology, and use of geographical information systems. In epidemiology, important concepts include incidence, prevalence, risk factors, and protective factors. In community research, quantitative methods include randomized field experiments, nonequivalent comparison group designs, and interrupted time-series designs.

Qualitative and quantitative methods can be integrated in a single study or in multiple related studies, often called mixed-methods research, to offer the advantages of both approaches.

## **Chapter 5: Understanding Individuals Within Environments**

As individuals, we are embedded in many environmental contexts. This chapter presents conceptual tools for where to “look” to investigate how contextual factors can have an impact on individuals and how people can shape environments. As a linking science and practice, community psychologists seek to understand both environments and their connections to well-being.

The chapter discusses six approaches to understanding people in context and to find ways to create or alter contexts to enhance individuals’ quality of life. Kelly and associates proposed that we use four ecological principles for understanding contexts in community psychology: interdependence, cycling of resources, adaptation and succession. Moos developed the idea of measuring the social climate of environments through the perceptions of their members. Social climate scales have been related in research to many measures of setting qualities and individual functioning. Seidman developed the concept of a social regularities, predictable pattern of social behavior and power in a setting to understand allocation of resources. Barker and associates proposed the concept of behavior settings, comprising a physical place, time, and program or standing pattern of behavior, to understand social behaviors in everyday context. O’Donnell and associates use the concept of activity settings that takes subjective experience and cultural understanding of setting participants into account. Environmental psychology concerns the

relationships between the physical environment and individual or social behavior.

Neighborhood factors influence family and individual quality of life. Neighborhood risk and protective processes are defined by proximal forces directly affecting individuals and families and by larger distal forces whose effects may be indirect. These include distal socioeconomic factors, risky physical environments, neighborhood disorder, and protective processes such as neighborhood strengths and resources. Community psychologists are especially concerned with how settings can be altered to improve individuals' quality of life.

## **Chapter 6: What Defines Community?**

To understand the interactions between communities and individuals, community psychologists use an ecological–transactional model of community. This model illustrates the reciprocity between contexts and individuals, and it highlights the construction of settings and development of individuals over time. Communities have traditionally been defined as relational—defined by shared goals, interests, or activities—or locality-based where geographic boundaries define the community. Community psychologists consider multiple ecological levels of communities, as well as how and by whom communities are defined.

Community psychologists have observed that individuals have emotional relationships with communities and the quality of those relationships can affect individual well-being. This is referred to as a sense of community and has four elements: membership, common symbols, emotional safety, and boundaries. A strong positive sense of community has been associated with many psychosocial benefits at the individual, organizational, and community levels.

Communities play a complex role in the lives of individuals. Individuals often belong to multiple communities form multifaceted identities based on engagement in these communities. The interaction of these various identities can sometimes conflict in important ways. The “myth of we” reveals how a singular focus on the similarities within a community can overlook important heterogeneity of experience, culture, and personal perspectives. Failing to recognize this diversity can spark conflict or oppress some community members. Counterspaces are communities created specifically to provide support for individuals experiencing oppression. While counterspaces play an important role, they are never the only community in an individual's life.

Chapter 6 also reviews several concepts related to understanding communities and how they are built. These include neighboring, social capital, social support, mediating structures, sense of community responsibility, and citizen participation. Concepts of community lie at the heart of community psychology with consideration of the field's values and ethics.

## **Chapter 7: Understanding Human Diversity in Context**

Community psychologists view diversity not simply as a discussion of individual differences; instead, we consider diversity of people in different contexts and between contexts. This chapter presents an opportunity to think more deeply about *how* we take diversity into consideration as we enter into collaborations, define problems, identify strengths, design interventions, and

conduct research. The chapter advocates for a stance of cultural humility as one of continuous learning, growth, self-awareness, and self-reflection in how we engage each other around diversity.

Chapter 7 briefly describes some dimensions of diversity within an intersectionality framework. Conceptualizing diversity in context requires discussing how persons are socialized into cultural communities. The chapter uses examples of activity settings to illustrate this process. Socialization processes strongly impact who we are and how we understand ourselves and others. Social identity development models help community psychologists understand the specific processes and stages of unexamined identity, exploration, identity formation, and learning that allow one to relate to one's own group and the wider world. Processes of acculturation and social identities are considered in context of people embedded in communities.

From a community psychology perspective, discussions of diversity are incomplete without considering oppression, liberation, and decoloniality that explicitly address power in social relationships and social inequities. Oppression creates an inequality of power between a dominant, privileged group and an oppressed, subordinated group, often based on factors such as race that an individual cannot change. The liberation perspective describes social systems of oppression and aims of liberation. In community psychology, a liberation perspective is increasingly accompanied by a focus on decoloniality that draws attention to what and whose knowledge counts as legitimate and powerful, and whose understandings and life experiences are constructed as "other." The chapter concludes with a discussion about how to attend to diversity in culturally anchored community psychology practices.

## **Chapter 8: Empowerment and Citizen Participation**

This chapter discusses issues relating to empowerment and citizen participation, intertwining processes through which individuals and groups access valued resources and take part in community life. Empowerment occurs when people lacking an equal share of resources gain greater access to and control over those resources. In community psychology, empowerment is a social process of gaining greater control over one's life through critical reflection, caring for others, and mutual respect, rather than simply a feeling or something that one does alone. It is a process that develops over time and varies across contexts. Individuals or groups may be empowered in one setting but not necessarily in another. Empowering settings promote citizen participation and empowerment through their members, specifically relationships among members of a setting. The concept of empowerment is relevant across all ecological levels: individual, microsystem, organization, locality, and macrosystem. Citizen participation occurs when individuals take part in decision-making in a community. It may be a means (a method of making decisions) or an end (a value about how to make decisions).

Understanding empowerment and citizen participation requires considering different forms of power in community settings. The chapter describes the concept of power in three forms: power over, power to, and power from. Power involves control of resources, influence in collective decision-making, opportunities for participation, and determining how problems are defined and addressed. It is best understood in relationships between persons or groups and as a dimension rather than an all-or-none dichotomy.

Chapter 8 concludes by examining how citizens become empowered leaders in their communities through action and commitment to these values. Personal qualities of empowered persons include critical awareness, participatory skills, sense of collective efficacy, participatory values and commitment, and relational connections. Empowering settings promote practices that encourage solidarity, member participation, diversity, and collaboration.

## **Chapter 9: Understanding Stress and Coping in Context**

This chapter presents an ecological–contextual model for understanding stress and coping that emphasizes the role of social, cultural, and situational factors in personal outcomes. This model describes distal and proximal stressors that contribute to a stress reaction, the activation of resources for coping, which is followed by coping efforts. Effective coping can create virtuous spirals of improved coping and less stress. Coping outcomes refer to the psychological or health effects of coping. These include positive outcomes such as wellness, resilience, thriving, and empowerment, and undesirable outcomes such as distress, dysfunction, and clinical disorders.

Chapter 9 also discusses various resources for improving coping, including social support, mutual help groups, and spirituality. Social support includes two basic types: generalized (or perceived support) and specific (or enacted support). Important qualities of social support networks include multidimensionality, density, and reciprocity. Mutual help groups are also important resources that offer support. They have five qualities: focal concern, peer relationships, reciprocity of helping (involving the helper-therapy principle), experiential knowledge, and community narratives of coping. Spirituality can provide personal, social, and material resources.

## **Chapter 10: Key Concepts in the Science of Prevention and Promotion**

Prevention is an evolving focus of research and practice in community psychology and related disciplines. Dr. John Snow's work with the 1854 cholera epidemic in London is recognized as the beginning of the modern field of public health and illustrates much of the logic of prevention science. George Albee's work demonstrated that it was mathematically impossible to train enough mental health professionals in the United States to provide treatment to everyone who needed it. He concluded that psychology needed new ways of helping people rather than relying solely on treatment to address mental health. Psychologists began considering the application of prevention to mental health problems. Community psychologists have adopted prevention as a focus and apply it to many concerns ranging from health to education to social issues.

Prevention has become a term that denotes two complementary processes: (a) prevention of a disorder or problem and (b) promotion of wellness and social competence. While these can be viewed as competing approaches, community psychologists tend to view this as false dichotomy. Prevention programs tend to have promotion effects and promotion programs often have specific prevention goals.

Concepts for understanding and strengthening prevention and promotion efforts include risk, protection, and resilience. These dynamic processes are important topics for prevention and

promotion. The literature on prevention and promotion is constantly growing, particularly with understanding of principles of effective prevention and promotion. Meta-analyses are a good way of evaluating the effectiveness of prevention programs. These analyses show that prevention and promotion programs are effective in a number of areas. New research is documenting how prevention and promotion can be cost-effective. Finally, examples of programs that have shown effectiveness in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, childhood behavior disorders (parent-training programs), and school bullying are presented to illustrate the main points of the chapter.

## **Chapter 11: Implementing Prevention and Promotion Programs**

For prevention and promotion programs to be effective, they have to be implemented well. Successful implementation involves understanding best practices and tailoring them to the setting's unique circumstances. Current research identifies eight key aspects of effective implementation: fidelity, dosage, quality, participant responsiveness, program differentiation, monitoring of control/comparison conditions, program reach, and adaptation. The interactive systems framework for dissemination and implementation (ISF) is a comprehensive model of implementation that integrates the research-to-practice model and community-centered model of understanding gaps between research and practice. The ISF describes three systems: the prevention synthesis and translation system, the prevention support system, and the prevention delivery system.

Participatory action research is key to successful program implementation. Information gained from a continual process of assessing the interaction between the program and the setting is necessary to design appropriate program adaptations. Seven steps of participatory action research in program implementation are presented. Step 1, identification and definition of a problem or area of concern, emphasizes that the definition of the problem must be framed in such a way that prevention activities are considered an appropriate response. Step 2, assessment of the setting, must include an assessment of resources and community and organizational capacity. This includes an assessment of both innovation-specific capacity and general capacity. Step 3, review of available research and potential programs or policies, should be focused on evidence-based programs that have identified core components (that must be implemented with high fidelity, and adaptive components (that can be modified to fit the specific needs of your setting). The final four steps in the action research cycle are: assessment of fit between the innovation and the setting, training of personnel and development of supportive structures and processes, development of evaluation activities for implementation processes and outcomes, and implementation of the program and adaptation based upon information gained.

## **Chapter 12: Program Development, Evaluation, and Improvement**

People engage in some form of evaluation as they make judgments about our everyday experiences (e.g., reviewing a restaurant, critiquing a sports game, rating a product or service online). The DARE example in Chapter 12 illustrates the importance of linking program development, program evaluation, and program improvement. Evaluation data can be used to inform changes to the program aim and approach as well as identify areas of additional focus for achieving desired program outcomes. Program success depends upon having a good theory of why something works and implementing it with quality. Logic models link community needs or

conditions with activities, outcomes, and impacts. Accountability involves linking program evaluation to program development and improvement. The six-step logic model illustrates the link among different stages of a program.

There are three main types of evaluation, each with its own objective and value. A process evaluation is used to document and monitor program implementation. A formative evaluation is used to identify influences on the progress and effectiveness of implementation activities for the purpose of program improvement. A summative evaluation assesses the effects (outputs, outcomes, and impacts) of a program.

As a specific evaluation approach, empowerment evaluation aims to increase the probability of achieving program success by developing the capacity of community members to monitor and evaluate their own performance and mainstreaming evaluation as part of their planning and management activities. Getting To Outcomes (GTO) is a 10-step approach to results-based accountability. It provides a framework for evaluators to work with program staff to codesign the evaluation components of a program. The systematic nature of the GTO questions encourages program stakeholders to be thoughtful about the process of program selection, development, evaluation, and improvement; results-based accountability; and to ensure alignment across program stages.

### **Chapter 13: Improving Society Through Community Action**

This chapter addresses how citizens, acting collectively, acquire and use power to promote changes in their communities and in society. This is an important focus for community psychology because individual, community, and societal quality of life are intertwined. This chapter discusses social change within communities, including community organizing, community development, and community readiness. The direct action model for creating social change describes the cycle of community organizing: assessment, research, mobilization/action, and reflection.

Community development efforts include activities such as consciousness raising, direct actions, community coalitions, and consulting. Consultation to community development projects may present ethical dilemmas that require reflection and attention to community psychology values.

Public policy is not limited to legislation but includes all policies passed by public bodies. Community psychologists work on public policy issues through research, report writing, providing testimony, and consulting with legislative bodies. Chapter 13 includes two examples of public policy issues that community psychologists work in: crime and poverty. Crime policy is an example of how research could be used to develop effective public policy but often is not. Poverty has serious negative effects on the physical and mental health of both adults and children. The gap between the richest and poorest American families has been increasing, along with the number of children living in poverty. This chapter outlines several public policies related to poverty and homelessness and how they would affect one low-income family. Cultural and social barriers may often present substantial challenges to policy change despite strong evidence of the effectiveness of alternative policies.



## **Chapter 14: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities: Shifting Perspective to Promote Change**

This chapter identifies and describes emerging directions in community psychology: a broadening commitment to social justice and social action, challenges and opportunities in local-global connectedness, decoloniality and examining assumptions and practices of the field, and collaborative participatory research and action. Opportunities for promoting community and social change as citizens and as community psychologists are outlined. In particular, this chapter argues that the community psychology approaches presented in this book can help anyone interested in working for social change. Seizing the day and taking the long view are both important orientations for social interventions.

This chapter also discusses eight qualities that are beneficial to develop for the community psychologist, first identified by James Kelly and expanded upon by Regina Langhout. They are a clearly identified area of expertise, creating an eco-identity, valuing diversity and inclusion, coping effectively with varied resources, commitment to risk taking, metabolic balance of patience and zeal, giving away the spotlight, emotional accountability in community work. Langhout's call for community psychologists to recognize the importance of emotions in community-based work lead to the development of the eighth quality, which emphasizes affective ontology.

Finally, Chapter 14 describes the opportunities for working as a community psychologist, including some of the occupations that community psychologists are well suited for, as well as some considerations for students interested in pursuing community psychology in graduate school. All readers, regardless of whether or not they choose to become community psychologists, are encouraged to envision how they will use community psychology ideas to address challenges that affect their communities.