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# PREFACE

Welcome to the fourth edition of *Community Psychology: Linking Individuals and Communities*! In this book, we hope to get students excited about the work of community psychology, including research and social action, and show how the principles of this field are applicable to everyone, including nonpsychologists. We also take a more values-focused approach than in previous editions, one that makes more explicit the importance of social justice, anti-racism initiatives, and creating second-order change at multiple ecological levels.

In this new edition, we remain committed to integrating pedagogy into the text to promote student reflection, insight, application, and action. To accomplish this, we have significantly expanded the book's pedagogical features by including additional examples and exercises that highlight how community psychology is relevant to addressing modern societal issues, along with extensive discussion questions that can help students internalize key concepts and apply them to their own lives. We continue the previous editions' primary focus on advanced undergraduate students. However, through enrichment sections, updates of current research, and online discussion formats, we have developed this book to be a resource for graduate courses as well. Furthermore, with advances noted in this book, it can serve a third function as a record of advances in the field for community psychology professionals.

We recognize that many students using this book in your course will not become community psychologists. We wrote this edition to make ideas from community psychology accessible and helpful for those who will have careers in human services and for all of us who participate in civic life. Community psychology frameworks can assist critical review of social problem definitions and proposed solutions that students will encounter as citizens, community leaders, and professionals. We have colleagues who have used material from the book in social work, counseling, education, urban studies, and public health courses. Finally, we seek to make conceptual contributions to community psychology, posing issues for scholars and activists in our field to consider and adding to the ongoing conversation that allows our field to evolve and grow.

We welcome two new authors to this fourth edition: Andrew D. Case and Victoria C. Scott. They were instrumental in our discussions reflecting on developments of the field since the third edition. We wrote all our chapters after a wide-ranging reading of new developments in the field. This edition benefits from the multiple perspectives and varied experiences of the author team, who used a collaborative writing process to promote continuity between the

chapters. We challenged each other's viewpoints and developed a consensus for the revisions. Each chapter has a primary author whose perspective led our revision. Bret Kloos is primary author for Chapters 2 and 14 and took responsibility for coordination of this edition; Jean Hill is primary author for Chapters 1, 6, 10, 11, and 13; and Elizabeth Thomas is primary author for Chapters 3, 4, and 8. Andrew Case collaborated with Elizabeth on Chapter 7 and Bret on Chapters 5 and 9; Victoria Scott and Abe Wandersman collaborated on Chapter 12.

We also want you to know that we donate 10% of our royalties to the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), an international body of community psychologists and scholars in related fields devoted to enhancing well-being and promoting social justice. To learn more about SCRA or to become a member, see their website at http://www.scra27.org/.

## Highlights and Changes to the Fourth Edition

Throughout the book, we have included greater consideration of ethics and reflexivity in community psychology practice and research. We incorporated more examples that demonstrate how social justice is an overarching value of the field. For example, we extended discussion of critical perspectives and second-order change across multiple levels of analysis. We added calls to action for the field to incorporate decolonial perspectives as community psychology evolves as a field. We also expanded discussions of minority-related and acculturative stressors, expanded discussion of counterspaces, and introduced the notion of "brave spaces" for engaging tensions and experiencing discomfort as we learn together.

In terms of pedagogy, there are also several new features that are intended to make the content more accessible and engage students in broader discussions of what it means to "change perspective" in psychology and how one could "do psychology" differently. We have continued the Community Psychology in Action features from the third edition and added Changing Perspectives features, both of which include discussion questions to encourage reflection and constructive critique. Each chapter begins with an opening exercise and discussion questions to set the stage for the main themes of the chapter. We include a marginal glossary to introduce key terms with definitions immediately available for students. We have moved chapter summaries to the book's companion website, where student and instructor resources can be accessed at the following link: http://pubs.apa.org/books/supp/kloos4/. Where we had to cut material, we have also moved it to the companion website to be part of the instructor's manual so that it is still available to instructors who would like to continue to feature it in their teaching. Below, we highlight the goals of each chapter as well as key revisions.

### Chapter 1. The Fundamentals of Community Psychology: Promoting Social Change

The main goal of this chapter is to help students negotiate the conceptual shift in how problems are defined and addressed to a community psychology perspective. We developed a new exercise to link values to community research and social change—testing DNA evidence of sexual assault cases that had been warehoused. The chapter has been revised to give greater clarity to why community psychology requires a shift in perspective. We have integrated values of community psychology throughout the chapter, particularly social justice as an overarching value for the field. We provide more examples of the concept of second-order change at multiple ecological levels. Research on youth participatory approaches in community research and intervention is used to illustrate these concepts. The discussion of community psychology values has also been modified and extended to include the concepts of collective wellness and a multilevel, strengths-based perspective.

### Chapter 2. The Development and Practice of Community Psychology

This chapter addresses how you "do psychology" differently if you have a shift in perspective. We build on Chapter 1 by introducing theories and practices that have enabled the new field of community psychology to act upon its shift in perspective. We emphasize the importance of problem definition and responding to social forces in (a) understanding the development and practice of community psychology and (b) encouraging students to examine how community responses to challenges shape the field today. We have further developed discussion of community psychology practice, including ethics and emerging global dialogue about viewpoints and practices across regions. Our view of community psychology's development is written from a North American perspective. However, we note parallels and differences in the practice of community psychology in different countries and regions. We frame the chapter as an account of the ongoing development of community psychology.

### Chapter 3. The Aims of Community Research

Chapter 3 is the first of two chapters dedicated to research. It focuses on the goals and commitments of contextually grounded inquiry, with additional attention in this edition to researcher reflexivity and the ethics of participatory and collaborative strategies. Chapter 3's Community Psychology in Action feature provides an updated account of a longtime partnership between researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago and El Valor, a community-based organization serving mostly Latinos with developmental disabilities across the life span, as well as their families.

## Chapter 4. Methods of Community Psychology Research

This chapter builds on themes of community collaboration, participatory approaches, and research across levels of analysis, providing illustrations of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research in community psychology. This edition offers additional examples of inquiry conducted by academic and community researchers outside North America, opening with participatory action research from the Garo Hills region of Northern India. We include a more extended discussion of the value of multiple methods and new examples of mixed-methods research.

## Chapter 5. Understanding Individuals Within Environments

Chapter 5 continues our presentation of fundamental ecological concepts of the field. In this edition, we open with a new discussion of "blue zones" and consider how place and environments are related to health, well-being, and life expectancy. We retained the third edition's review of six approaches to understanding persons in context. In some cases, we tightened the presentation (e.g., Barker's ecological psychology) to allow for expanded discussions of activity spaces and counterspaces. We updated our discussion of creating new spaces when current alternatives are insufficient. We close with the historical example of the Fairweather Lodge and consider current efforts to expand use of this alternative model to mental health services.

## Chapter 6. What Defines a Community?

In this chapter, we invite readers to consider "community" as a transformation from "place" to "space." We have added discussions of alternative settings and counterspaces, the research on the tension between the values of human diversity and community, and the greatly enhanced body of research on sense of community online (including the sometimes harmful effects). We have also extended our discussion of sense of community in spiritual communities to explicitly include concepts of hope and transcendence.

## Chapter 7. Understanding Human Diversity in Context

We open Chapter 7 with an invitation to engage in diversity conversations with courage and humility. We introduce the notion of brave spaces as a holding place for engaging tensions and growing more accustomed to experiencing discomfort as we learn together. The chapter is also framed by an expanded discussion of intersectionality, as well as extensive discussion questions that encourage students to reflect on their own social identities. We illustrate socialization in cultural communities through research on activity settings, including interventions to prevent youth suicides in Alaska Native communities

and counterspaces for individuals to challenge deficit-oriented societal narratives concerning their identity. We strengthen the section on oppression and liberation with the call to action that decolonial perspectives offer to our field.

## Chapter 8. Empowerment and Citizen Participation

Chapter 8 (Chapter 11 in the third edition) is now focused on empowerment and citizen participation. We moved this chapter forward to build upon the invitations for engagement and calls to action offered in the diversity chapter and to focus on collective and community responses to challenges. We emphasize how an empowerment perspective changes how we think about problems and solutions and how we work with others. We include a Community Psychology in Action feature that provides an example of empowerment through long-term action by community psychologist Marci Culley and residents of Sugar Creek, Missouri, as they responded to environmental pollution in their community. The theme of citizen participation to address environmental injustice is elaborated in new examples, including the Flint, Michigan, water crisis and long-term activism around nuclear energy. In our discussion of empowering practices and settings, we attend closely to features of relational contexts across multiple levels. Examples include Family Violence Coordinating Councils, the Highlander Research and Education Center, and the Riot Youth LGBTQ+ Theater Group.

## Chapter 9. Understanding Stress and Coping in Context

In Chapter 9 (formerly Chapter 8), we spend more time than in the previous edition developing and explaining risk and protective factors in an ecological model of stress, coping, and change. First, we wanted to make concepts of distal and proximal risk more accessible to students and to make the connections to intervention in other chapters. We have also expanded discussions of minority-related and acculturative stressors, traumatic growth, and the potential for positive growth. After the discussion of the model, we close with three community-based approaches for responding to challenges presented by stressors and consider the potential of these approaches for promoting positive change: social support, mutual help, and spiritual–religious resources.

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

Chapter 10 (formerly Chapter 9) presents students with an introduction to prevention and promotion as alternative ways to address problems. We emphasize the idea that they will all someday be involved in community or organizational prevention programming efforts. The goals of this chapter and Chapter 11 continue to be to generate excitement about the demonstrated potential of prevention and promotion programs and to provide students with

the knowledge and skills they need to join in these efforts. In Chapter 10, we have increased our emphasis on wellness promotion and added a new figure and metaphor to illustrate the relationships between risk and protective factors and interventions across multiple ecological levels.

## Chapter 11. Implementing Prevention and Promotion Programs

In Chapter 11 (formerly Chapter 10), we significantly increased our discussion of implementation science, including an extended discussion of the concepts of capacity and readiness. We begin with an example asking students to think about their high school experiences and what challenges they might identify for which a prevention program could be helpful. This provides the backdrop for more explicit discussion of how programs are introduced and adapted. We encourage students to think about which program components, organizational capacities, relationships, resources, and systems need to be in place to promote successful implementation.

## Chapter 12. Program Development, Evaluation, and Improvement

With an emphasis on evaluation, Chapter 12 (previously Chapter 13) links the concepts of program development, evaluation, and improvement. Like the previous edition, it opens with examples of how evaluation and program improvement are pervasive in everyday life. We expanded the description of Figure 12.1 to clarify the link between program development, evaluation, and improvement, and we updated examples throughout the chapter. Additionally, we introduce (a) formative evaluation, a type of evaluation that is increasingly used in community improvement initiatives, and (b) the inquiry–observation–reflection framework, a mixed-methods framework for data collection. We retained two widely used evaluation approaches: Empowerment Evaluation and Getting To Outcomes, revising the examples associated with both approaches to increase accessibility.

## Chapter 13. Improving Society Through Community Action

Chapter 13 (previously Chapter 12) is designed to engage students in a broad view of social change and to help them envision themselves participating in those efforts. We retain our examples from the PICO network as powerful stories of how individuals can become involved in community development initiatives in their communities. The section describing community development practices has been reorganized for greater conceptual clarity. We provide a new example of the relationship between prevention science and crime policy, and we updated and expanded the discussion of the impacts of state and federal policies on poverty.

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

In Chapter 14, we seek to promote students' optimism for their own engagement in community and social change. We consider emerging trends of (a) increasing social-justice–focused social action and (b) responding to challenges of globalization with community building and systematic efforts to decolonize our approaches to research and practice. We have expanded discussion of how students may use concepts and community psychology practice skills as citizens or social service professionals by adapting the points made by J. G. Kelly (1971) and Langhout (2015) about personal qualities that can help them achieve social change in collaboration with community partners. For students interested in obtaining training in community psychology or related fields, we expand our discussion of training, finding jobs, and careers. Consistent with other chapters, we discuss the expanding awareness of critical perspectives in the field. We close by encouraging students to think about how, where, and when they can use ideas from the text to address concerns in their communities.

## Alternative Orderings of Chapters

We recognize that we each have our favorite ways to organize the concepts and themes of the field. We encourage instructors to use chapters in an order that supports your pedagogy. In fact, members of the author team use different orderings in our classes, in part because the settings where we teach vary, as do the backgrounds and interests of our students. We have ordered chapters in this edition to build on the core concepts of the field and foster student recognition of interrelated strands among community psychology concepts. We think of Chapters 1–3 and 5–9 as providing conceptual frameworks that help psychology "shift its perspective." Chapters 4 and 10–13 provide tools for "doing community psychology"; we organized these chapters to begin with more person- or microsystem-focused approaches that then extend to broader community and social change in Chapter 13. Chapter 14 is intended to engage students in thinking about how they can use ideas from the course to work toward community and social change. Some possible chapter orderings follow.

All our suggestions use Chapters 1 and 2 to introduce the field, although some instructors may choose to rely on Chapter 1 alone. After the introductory chapters, you might want to proceed directly to Chapters 5–8 (ecology, community, diversity, and empowerment and citizen participation). To highlight a social change perspective early, you could pair Chapters 8 (empowerment and citizen participation) and 13 (community social change) much sooner than they appear in the book. If your course has many clinically minded students (this includes graduate students in clinical or counseling psychology, but it is

also an implicit focus of many undergraduates), enlarging their perspective to think ecologically and preventively may be an important goal. To engage their interest, you might assign Chapter 9 (stress and coping in context) early to highlight the integration of clinical and community concepts to engage them in thinking about shifting perspectives. Alternatively, Chapters 9–11 (coping and prevention/promotion) can form an integrated unit on coping and prevention at some point in the course. Chapter 12 could be added to illustrate how local program evaluation can improve implementation and quality. However, we believe that full coverage of community psychology requires covering Chapters 5–8 and 13 at some point.

For a focus on community-engaged research, you may wish to assign Chapter 12 (program development, implementation, and evaluation) following the research focus of Chapters 3 and 4 to illustrate how the logic of scientific thinking can be adapted to practical community program monitoring and improvement. We have developed these chapters to explicitly link research and action and to challenge the received view that many students have of what constitutes rigorous research. Some instructors assign Chapters 3, 4, and 12 near the end of the course. The emphasis these chapters place on participatory research and cultural anchoring may have deeper meaning for many students after reading about ecology, community, diversity, and empowerment. Of course, these are only some of the possible orderings of chapters in this text. We encourage you to develop your own approach.

## Language and Identity

Respect for human diversity is a core value of community psychology. Language is a key mode of conveying this respect, particularly by referring to individuals and groups using their preferred self-identifying labels. We also recognize that the terms we use for identities are often contested. The terms preferred by individuals and groups can be an index of diversity in communities and familiar examples of how we negotiate inclusion and visibility. In this book, we refer to individuals' and groups' identities based on how they self-identify; where possible, we use language used by community members from the examples we cite. We also try to use inclusive language when referring to groups more broadly. However, language and identity are quickly changing, and once the book is published, it will be outdated. Our understandings of gender and how to adapt gendered language (e.g., pronouns) is quickly evolving. We also realize that different members of the same community may prefer different labels. For example, "Latina," "Latino," "Latinx," "Hispanic," and other terms may be appropriate when referring to some people from Spanish-speaking or Latin American cultural backgrounds in different regions or groups, but those terms may be inappropriate when referring
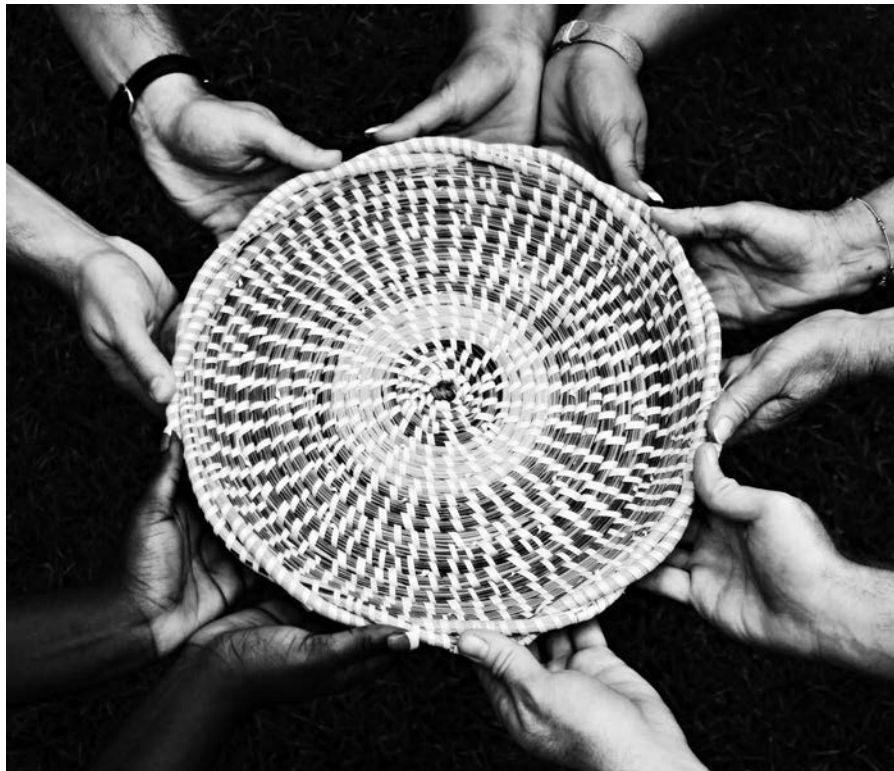
This community-woven basket represents community psychology's mission to promote well-being, resist oppression, and cultivate a sense of community diversity across ages, genders, ethnicities, and other social and cultural characteristics.

to other groups and individuals from those backgrounds. We sometimes use "Latinx" as a broad, gender-neutral term, but we recognize that using this term can diminish the experiences of Latina women. We have used the term "Black" to be more inclusive as not all persons of African descent identify as African American, but we use the term "African American" when authors or community members have used it.

We encourage you to examine the use of language with your classes and to criticize what we have written where more appropriate language is needed. We are aware of how quickly language and the politics of representation can change; we have painfully reread a few passages in the third edition that are now out of date. In Chapter 1, we include a note to students to think reflexively about how they use language when referring to their own social identities, those of classmates, or of anyone else, whether those identities concern ethnicity, gender, ability/disability status, or any other characteristic that is important to someone.

## Additional Resources

Finally, we want you to know that there are additional resources for the textbook online. For students, these include lecture enrichments, recommendations for further reading, and links to video clips. For instructors, we include materials for lecture enrichments. These include in-class exercises, PowerPoint slides for each chapter, background material on classic studies in community psychology, example assignments, and suggestions for student evaluation. Student and instructor resources can be accessed at the following link: http://pubs.apa.org/books/supp/kloos4/.

## Acknowledgments

This book would not have been conceived or written without the support of many individuals and of the multiple communities in which we live. Jean Ann Linney, Jim Dalton, Maurice Elias, and Abe Wandersman first conceived of writing a new community psychology textbook with an engaging pedagogy and have encouraged us after other commitments precluded them continuing with it. David Becker and Elise Frasier, our editors at APA Books, helped us to navigate the tremendous changes occurring in publication and production of textbooks and to prepare a text that is engaging and is delivered on multiple platforms. We express our appreciation to nine masked peer reviewers for their encouragement and critical comments to improve this edition. Our reviewers' support and critiques were genuinely thoughtful and valuable. We also appreciate the students at Rhodes College, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and the University of South Carolina who provided similar constructive criticism.

Our perspectives on community psychology have been strongly influenced by mentors, colleagues, and students. We very much appreciate the examples of our mentors who introduced us to community psychology or shaped the way we think about community psychology: Mark Aber, Nicole Allen, Carla Hunter, Leonard Jason, Thom Moore, and Julian Rappaport. We expect that they will recognize many of their influences in the book. We also thank many colleagues and students who have given us comments and suggestions in class, at conferences, on surveys, and by email. We also acknowledge the value of reading recent community psychology textbooks by other authors, especially those by Manuel Riemer, Stephanie Reich, and Scot Evans; John Moritsugu, Elizabeth Vera, Frank Y. Wong, and Karen Grover Duffy; Leonard A. Jason, Olya Glantsman, Jack F. O'Brien, and Kaitlyn, N. Ramian; Geoff Nelson and Isaac Prilleltensky; Murray Levine, Douglas Perkins, and David Perkins; and Jennifer Rudkin. All these make valuable contributions to the ongoing conversation of our field.

We also need to acknowledge the gifts of vision, confidence, and generosity that Jim Dalton and Maurice Elias gave to us by recruiting us to be stewards for the future development of this textbook as a resource for community psychology. They have consistently been encouraging and helpful. It is a somewhat sobering responsibility to follow their lead, but we will strive to produce a text and supplementary resources that thoughtfully present community psychology in ways that engage students and current social issues.

Bret thanks his community partners in social change efforts and his students for challenging his thinking. He is especially grateful to community partners for demonstrating the value of perseverance and creativity in promoting sustainable social change. Jean thanks Jim, Mo, and Abe for their work on earlier editions of this book and for their amazing generosity in sharing that work with us. She also thanks her students and colleagues who have enthusiastically supported her community work, even when they did not really share her excitement. Elizabeth thanks her community partners at the family center for all that they have taught her about collaboration and building inclusive communities. She thanks her students for the energy and insights they bring to community-based learning and action research efforts. Andrew thanks God for providing the opportunity to help write this edition with such a wonderful group of people. He thanks his mentors—both spiritual and academic—for their gifts of time, understanding, and support. Victoria thanks her doctoral program advisors for welcoming her through the door of community psychology over a decade ago and illuminating the value of linking community research and action in service of social improvement. Abe thanks his students and former students for their valuable contributions to theory, research, and action that make community psychology valuable to our communities. Finally, we deeply thank our families, whose love, patience, and support always nurture and enrich our lives.

# 1 The Fundamentals of Community Psychology: Promoting Social Change

Social justice is one of community psychology's core values that guides much of its work in improving communities and society, making sure that all voices are heard.

arindambanerjee/Shutterstock.com

## Looking Ahead ⅢⅢ➡

After reading this chapter you will be able to answer these questions:

1. What is the shift in perspective that makes community psychology different from other fields?

2. How does the concept of second-order change relate to that shift in perspective?

3. What are ecological levels of analysis and how do they relate to community psychology theories and practice?

4. Why is community psychology viewed as a values-based field and what are those values?

## Opening Exercise

## Testing Warehoused DNA Evidence

In a city police storage unit in Detroit, over 11,000 sexual assault kits sat ignored and untested, some for over 3 decades. Most, if not all, of the victims who had undergone the invasive physical examinations required to obtain that evidence had no idea that the DNA of their assailants had never been tested. Neither did many members of the Wayne County criminal justice system, including the assistant prosecutor who discovered the kits in 2009.

The prosecutor's office put together a multidisciplinary task force to assess the problem and asked community psychologist Rebecca Campbell to lead it. The task force was asked to determine how large the problem was and why the kits had never been tested. Additionally, the group was asked to develop a plan for testing the kits and notifying the victims of the results.

The obvious answer to why this immense backlog occurred might be that there was not enough money or resources to test all those kits, and that definitely was a factor. But as Dr. Campbell's research team conducted qualitative analyses of the police records, they discovered that a lack of resources was not the only factor, or even the most powerful

**Testing Warehoused DNA Evidence (continued)**

one. Instead, strong biases against sexual assault victims, particularly young victims and those the officers characterized as sex workers, resulted in many cases literally being warehoused.

The task force had more than 1,500 of the kits tested. The results showed that more than a quarter of the kits resulted in DNA matches in the FBI national database. Of those, 549 were to suspected serial rapists.

Today, police departments around the United States are using the protocols and training developed by the task force headed by Dr. Campbell to ensure that sexual assault kits are tested and that the victims are informed of the results in a supportive and appropriate manner. Even with those efforts, at least 100,000 sexual assault kits are still in warehouses, untested. That number may be much higher; many states do not know how many untested kits they have. For additional information about what your state is doing to end the backlog of sexual assault kit testing, you can visit http://www.endthebacklog.org/.

## What Do You Think?

1. Who would you say was responsible for the 11,000 untested kits found in Detroit?
2. What do you think is best way to solve this problem?
3. The field of community psychology explicitly values and centers social justice in its work. Why would untested sexual assault kits be viewed as a social justice issue?
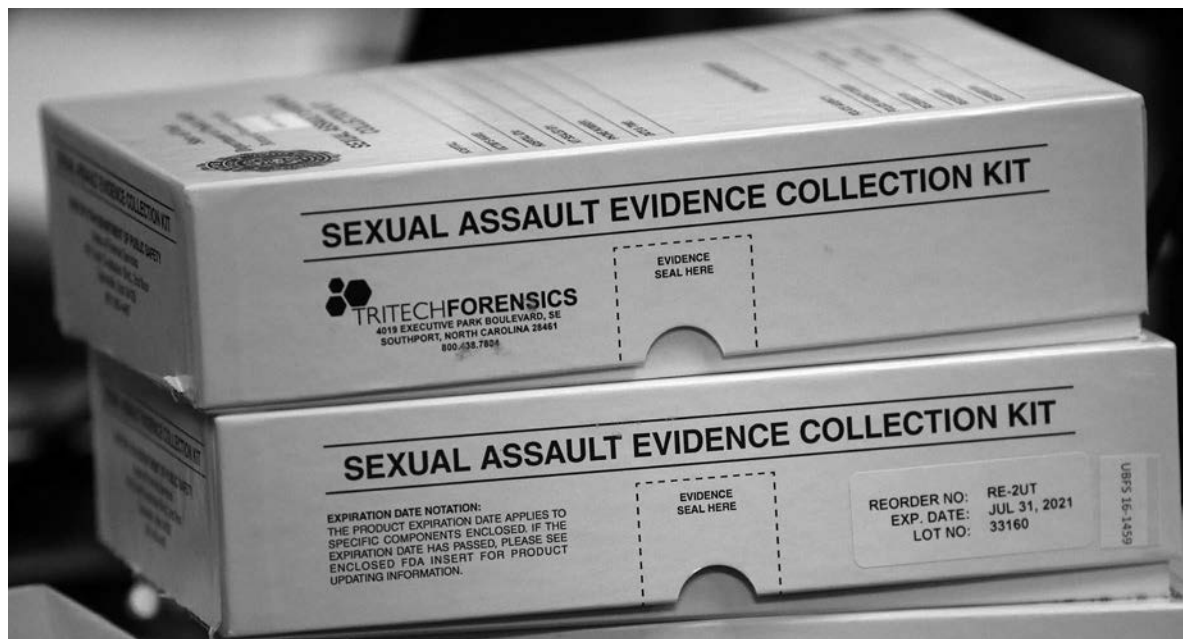


AP Photo/Rick Bowmer, File

These untested rape kits represent a social justice concern that community psychology is well-equipped to solve for the betterment of individuals, communities, and society as a whole.

# What Is 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.

Community psychologists work in a multitude of fields, including child development, mental health, criminal justice, education, community health, homelessness, substance abuse, and organizational psychology. What unites us is not the *area* in which we choose to work but rather the *perspective* we bring to that work. Community psychologists seek to understand people within the social contexts of their lives in order to promote a better quality of life for all people. Community psychologists believe that often the best way to alleviate human suffering and advance social justice is through a focus not on changing individuals but rather on changing the relationship between those people and the settings, organizations, and structures in which they live. This viewpoint may be best illustrated by the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., when he addressed the American Psychological Association in 1967. His address was titled "The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement."

> I am sure that we will recognize that there are some things in our society, some things in our world, to which we should never be adjusted. There are some things concerning which we must always be maladjusted if we are to be people of good will. We must never adjust ourselves to racial discrimination and racial segregation. We must never adjust ourselves to religious bigotry. We must never adjust ourselves to economic conditions that take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. We must never adjust ourselves to the madness of militarism, and the self-defeating effects of physical violence.

In that address, Rev. Dr. King called for the creation of a new organization, the International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment. The field of community psychology arose around the same time as his address, and as a field we embrace the concept of creative maladjustment, not only in relation to the social justice issues he listed but in response to any structural context that impedes optimal human health and well-being.

Keeping in mind the diversity of community psychologists' interests and personal views, we offer this definition of the field: **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.

Let us unpack this definition. Community psychology concerns the multiple relationships between individuals, communities, and societies. We define "community" broadly. An individual lives within many communities and at multiple levels: family, networks of friends, workplace, school, voluntary association, neighborhood, and wider locality—even cultures. All these exist within larger societies and, ultimately, within a global context. The individual must be understood in terms of these relationships, not in isolation.

Community psychology's focus is not on the individual or on the community alone but also on their linkages. The field also studies the influences of social structures on each other (e.g., how citizen organizations influence the wider community). But unlike sociology, community psychology places a greater emphasis on individuals and their complex interactions with the social structure.

Community psychology is also committed to engaging in research and developing valid psychological knowledge in the interest of improving community life. In the community psychology perspective, knowledge is constructed through research and action. The community psychologist's role has often been described as that of a *participant–conceptualizer* (Bennett et al., 1966, pp. 7–8), actively involved in community processes while also attempting to understand and explain them, as aptly summarized in these statements:

> If we are afraid of testing our ideas about society by intervening in it, and if we are always detached observers of society and rarely if ever participants in it, we can only give our students ideas about society, not our experiences in it. We can tell our students about how society ought to be, but not what it is like to try to change the way things are. (Sarason, 1974, p. 266)

Community psychology research is intertwined with efforts to change a community and social action. Findings from research are used to build theory and to guide action. For example, a program developed in a high school setting to prevent youth violence (i.e., action) can generate greater knowledge of the problem, adolescent development, the local school and community, and

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### Box 1.1    Changing Perspectives: Homelessness

Bessie Mae is 97 years old and homeless. She has her two boys, and that is about all. She and sons Larry, 60, and Charlie, 62, live in a 1973 Chevrolet Suburban they park each night on a busy Venice street. Bessie worked as a packer for the National Biscuit Co. until she was in her 60s. Charlie worked in construction and as a painter before becoming disabled by degenerative arthritis. Larry was a cook before compressed discs in his back and a damaged neck nerve put an end to it. He began working 26 years ago as a full-time caregiver for his mother through the California's In-Home Supportive Services program. That ended about 4 years ago, when the owner of a Palm Springs home where they lived had to sell the place. At the same time, the state dropped Larry and his mother from the support program, he said. The three have tried at various times since to get government-subsidized housing. But they failed, in part because they insist on living together (Pool, 2009). It was not until the publication of Pool's article in the *Los Angeles Times* that Bessie Mae and her sons were able to obtain housing from a nonprofit organization: the Integrated Recovery Network.

Bessie Mae and her sons are not alone. On one specific night in January 2019, an estimated 568,000 people were homeless in the United States (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). Nearly one fifth of those people were children. Only 63% of those who were homeless were staying in shelters or other types of transitional housing. The remaining 37% were living on the street, in their cars, or in other places where people are not meant to live.

**What Do You Think?**

1. Consider the news stories you have heard about the problem of homelessness or perhaps the homeless people you have encountered yourself. Why do you think these people are homeless?

2. Take a minute to list what you think are the top three contributing causes to homelessness.

how to design future prevention programs (i.e., research). Moreover, community psychology research and action are collaborative, based on partnerships with the persons or communities involved.

Community psychology is different from other fields of psychology in two ways. First, community psychology offers a different way of understanding human behavior and how to support individual, family, and community wellness. We focus on the community contexts of behavior. That shift in perspective (which is the first thing we discuss in this chapter) leads to the second difference: an expansion of the definition of appropriate topics for psychological study and intervention. Community psychologists are interested in effective ways to prevent problems rather than treat them after they arise. The field emphasizes promoting healthy functioning for all members of a community rather than intervening when problems develop for a few of those members. And we focus our research on factors at the neighborhood, community, and societal level that support or impede healthy development.

If you are like many people, you listed such things as substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence—problems affecting the lives of the people who become homeless. These are indeed contributing factors. But they are not the primary factors. All these variables are more common among persons who do not become homeless than among those who do (Shinn, 2009; Shinn et al., 2001). The most important factor contributing to the problem of homelessness in the United States has nothing to do with the character or personal circumstances of the individuals who become homeless. It is a lack of affordable housing in our communities. The best predictor of the extent of homelessness in a community is the ratio of available affordable housing units to the number of persons and families seeking them (Shinn, 2016; Shinn et al., 2001).

Structural factors are often more influential than individualistic factors when solving societal problems like homelessness. We must address these problems from multiple structural levels, while being respectful of individual differences and empowering those directly affected by these issues. Empirical grounding is also essential because studying and solving these problems, strengthening communities, and achieving social justice for all members of those communities is nearly impossible without a sound scientific basis. These are some of the fundamental values of community psychology, which we explore later in this chapter.

## Individualistic Versus Structural Perspectives

**individualistic perspective**
focuses on the life choices and behaviors of individuals when addressing societal problems.

**structural perspective**
also referred to as an ecological perspective, it examines how systemic factors at various levels impact the lives of individuals, families, and other groups within a community.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, many people tend to focus only on individuals' behaviors or life choices instead of considering structural factors when thinking about the roots of societal problems like homelessness. Listing factors such as substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence as the main causes of homelessness represents an **individualistic perspective**, focused on how homeless persons and families are different from those with housing. While this viewpoint is an important one, as individual factors do matter, we are going to ask you to consciously make a perceptual shift and to analyze problems in living through a **structural perspective** as well. Using this perspective requires you to think about how organizations, neighborhoods, communities, and societies are structured as systems and how those systems affect the lives of individuals and families. In community psychology, this is generally presented as taking an *ecological perspective*, and that is how it will be discussed in this book.

This shift in perspective can be made clear by viewing homelessness as a game of musical chairs (McChesney, 1990). In any community, there is a finite number of affordable housing units—just as there is a finite number of chairs in a game of musical chairs. And in both situations, there are more people than there are available chairs (or housing units). While individual variables do influence who becomes chairless (or homeless), these are not the defining factors in the game. These factors determine who gets the available seats and who is left standing *but not how many chairs are available*. The game is structured from the beginning to ensure that someone is left without a chair.

A study of solely individual-level variables in homelessness misses this larger reality. A social program for homelessness that focuses only on such factors as treating individual mental disorders or promoting job-interviewing skills may reshuffle which people become homeless and which do not, but it does nothing to increase the availability of housing. Addressing community or societal problems such as homelessness requires a shift in perspective—from an individualistic perspective to a structural/ecological one. Within this broader perspective, community psychologists have much to contribute (e.g., M. A. Bond et al., 2017). We revisit the issue of homelessness and what can be done about it in Chapter 13.

The shift from an individualistic to a structural/ecological perspective is related to another issue we would like you to consider in this class: problem definition. As we are sure you have learned in other psychology courses, human beings are rarely content to just observe something. We want to understand it, and we will, almost automatically, construct some sort of explanation. These personal explanations then become the basis for how we define social problems. If you view an issue through an individualistic perspective, your definition of the problem will center on individual-level variables. The issue of

Community psychology examines societal issues like homelessness through an ecological lens, addressing systemic causes rather than just individual factors.

problem definition is not an incidental one. How we define a problem shapes the questions we ask, the methods we use to answer those questions, and the way we interpret those answers. And all those things affect the types of interventions we will consider. How we define a problem has such far-reaching effects that social scientists have declared problem definition to be an ethical issue (O'Neill, 2005).

Assumptions we make about a problem determine how we define the problem, which in turn determines the ways we approach and try to solve it. This may be particularly true when we are not consciously aware of the assumptions we are making. Our cultural background, personal experiences, education, and biases (and sometimes the biases that came with our education) help shape those assumptions, which may actually prevent effective responses to the problem. Our assumptions can thus become the real problem. If we ignore how problems are framed—the viewpoint through which we derive our definitions—we will be imprisoned by those frames (E. Seidman & Rappaport, 1986). In this book, we hope to broaden your thinking about framing problems and the process of problem definition. We will encourage you to become participant–conceptualizers for how problems are defined and addressed in your communities. Community psychologists strive to think outside the traditional boxes of psychology to define problems and generate interventions at many levels.

Actually, there are no truly individual problems or interventions. Everything that humans do takes place in social contexts: in a culture, a locality,

a setting (e.g., workplace, school, playground, home), and a set of personal relationships. For example, a child matures within many social contexts that shape their development. When a client arrives for a psychotherapy session, they bring a personal set of life experiences (in social contexts), as does the therapist. The two form a relationship that is rooted not only in who they are as persons but also in cultural, gender, social, economic (e.g., who pays for treatment, and how does that affect it?), and other contexts. Even the atmosphere of the waiting room, interpreted in cultural terms, makes a difference.

In this chapter, we first expand our discussion of how community psychology involves a shift of perspective from the viewpoint of most of psychology. We then elaborate on the community psychology perspective by describing some of its basic assumptions about persons, contexts, and two types of change. Next, we discuss two conceptual frameworks central to the field: ecological levels of analysis (multiple layers of social contexts) and eight core values of the field. This chapter is the first of two that introduce and define community psychology in Part I of this book. In Chapter 2, we trace how community psychology developed a different way of "doing" psychology and provide examples of its current practice.

## Community Psychology: A Shift in Perspective

In the previous section, we presented homelessness as an example of how a shift from an individualistic perspective to a structural/ecological perspective changes how we define a problem and what types of interventions we consider. In this book, we discuss a number of approaches to addressing problems from a structural perspective. Here is an overview:

- **Prevention/promotion programs** reduce the future likelihood of problems—for example, by strengthening protective factors and reducing risk factors in individuals, families, schools, organizations, and communities (see Chapters 10 and 11).

- **Consultation** focuses on roles, decision making, communication, and conflict in organizations to promote employee job satisfaction or effectiveness of human services, social change organizations, or schools (see Chapters 12 and 13).

- **Alternative settings** arise when traditional services do not meet the needs of some populations (e.g., women's centers, rape crisis centers, self-help organizations for persons with specific problems—see Chapters 9 and 13).

- **Community organizing** at grassroots levels helps citizens organize to identify local issues and decide how to address them. Community

coalitions bring together citizens and community institutions (e.g., religious congregations, schools, police, business, human services, government) to address a community problem together instead of with separate, uncoordinated efforts (see Chapter 13).

- **Participatory research**, in which community researchers and citizens collaborate, provides useful information for action on community issues. Program evaluation helps determine whether community programs effectively attain their goals and how they can be improved (see Chapters 3 and 4).

- **Policy research and advocacy** includes research on community and social issues, efforts to inform decision makers (e.g., government officials, private sector leaders, mass media, the public) about courses for action, and evaluation of the effects of social policies (see Chapter 13). Community psychologists are engaged in advocacy regarding homelessness, peace, drug abuse, positive child and family development, and other issues. One goal of this book is to introduce you to tools for advocacy, as a citizen or professional, at levels from local to international.

Any reader of this book is quite likely to participate in community initiatives such as these in the future, whether as a community psychologist, clinical counseling psychologist, or another health professional, educator, researcher, parent, or citizen. One goal of this book is to give you tools for doing so.

Understanding diverse cultures, including your own, may also require another shift of perspective. Cultural traditions of individuals, families, and communities provide personal strengths and resources for effective action. Community psychology emphasizes understanding each culture's distinctiveness while not losing sight of that culture's core values and shared human experiences. A further goal of this book is to provide you with some tools for learning about and working in diverse cultures (see Chapter 7).

# Persons, Contexts, and Change

The shifts of perspectives that we have described involve underlying assumptions about two questions: How do problems arise? How can change occur? Every day, each of us acts on our own assumed answers to these questions. Next, we describe some assumptions among community psychologists about these questions.

## Persons and Contexts

Some of our most important assumptions about problems concern the importance of persons and contexts. Shinn and Toohey (2003) coined the term

**context**
encapsulates all the structural forces that influence an individual's life, including family and social relationships, neighborhood, school, religious and community organizations, cultural norms, gender roles, and socioeconomic status. Not adequately accounting for these structural forces leads to flawed research and practice, which is called context minimization error.

*context minimization error* to denote ignoring or discounting the importance of contexts in an individual's life. **Context** (a term we use throughout this book) refers to the encapsulating environments within which an individual lives (e.g., family, friendship network, peer group, neighborhood, workplace, school, religious or community organization, locality, cultural heritage and norms, gender roles, social and economic forces). Together, these make up the structural forces that shape the lives of individuals. Context minimization errors, where people focus primarily on an individual's behavior and overlook or discount structural factors, lead to psychological theories and research findings that are flawed or that hold true only in limited circumstances. These errors can also lead to therapy interventions or social programs that fail because they attempt to reform individuals without understanding or altering the contexts within which those individuals live.

A key concept of social psychology is the *fundamental attribution error* (Ross, 1977)—the tendency of observers watching an actor to overestimate the importance of the actor's individual characteristics and underestimate the importance of situational factors. When we see someone trip on a sidewalk, we often think "how awkward" or wonder if the person has been drinking. We seldom look to see if the sidewalk is flawed. Context minimization is similar but refers to contexts and forces that include those beyond the immediate situation. Cultural norms, economic necessities, neighborhood characteristics, and the psychological climate of a workplace are examples. Contexts influence our lives at least as much as individual characteristics do.

Consider the multiple contexts that influence a child in a first-grade public school classroom. The personalities of teacher and students certainly influence the classroom context; the curriculum and routine ways that the teacher engages with students are also important. But also consider the relationships of the school principal, faculty, and staff with the child and their family. The class occurs in a physical room and school in a wider neighborhood and community, which can support or interfere with learning. Relationships between administrators, school board members, and citizens (and taxpayers) certainly influence the classroom environment, as do community, state, and national attitudes and policies about education. These contexts have important influences beyond simple effects of the individuals involved. Actions to improve learning for students in that first-grade classroom will need to change multiple contexts (Weinstein, 2002a).

***Persons and contexts influence each other.*** Community psychology is about the *relationships* of persons and contexts. These are not one-way streets. Contexts affect personal life, while persons, especially when acting together with others, influence and change contexts. Stephanie Riger (2001) called for community psychology to appreciate how persons respond to contexts and how they can exercise power to change those contexts.

Persons influence context when, for example, citizen efforts in a neighborhood lead to improved safety, neighboring connections among residents, assistance for people affected by domestic violence, affordable housing, or reduced pollution from a neighboring factory. Persons who share a problem or illness can influence contexts of human services or health care when they form a mutual help group to support each other. Community psychology seeks to understand and to improve individual, community, and societal quality of life. One of our goals for this book is to whet your appetite for involvement in community and social action in ways that draw on your personal strengths and community resources.

***Reading this book "in context."*** In reading this book, we expect that, at times, you will disagree with or recognize limitations to what we write. Respectful disagreement is important in community psychology. Community psychologist Julian Rappaport (1981) playfully yet seriously proposed Rappaport's rule: "When everyone agrees with you, worry" (p. 3). Diversity of views is a valuable resource for understanding multiple sides of community and social questions.

As you read this book, identify your specific life experiences that lead you to agree or disagree, and identify the social contexts of those experiences. If possible, discuss these with your instructor, with a classmate, or in class as a group. In our experience, many disagreements in communities and societies are based on differing life experiences in different contexts. It is important to discuss those experiences with respect and to understand them. That discussion can deepen your own and others' learning. Sharing your perspectives can help others be better participant–conceptualizers in their communities.

## Structural Perspectives and First-Order and Second-Order Change

Developing a comprehensive understanding of the problem of homelessness introduced earlier in this chapter requires a conceptual shift from an individual-level only perspective to a person-in-context, structural perspective. This perceptual shift may be particularly difficult for those of us who were raised in the American cultural tradition of individualism. This tradition holds that America, from its founding, has offered equal opportunities for all, so what we make of our lives solely depends on individual talent and effort. While we do not discount the importance of individual knowledge, skills, and effort (in fact, community psychologists actively work to develop programs to increase these attributes in individuals, as you will see in Chapters 10 and 11), we believe that the role of structural forces in human behavior has been undervalued in psychology as a whole. One of the major skills we want you to take away from your reading of this book is the ability

**first-order change**
altering, rearranging, or replacing the individual members of a group without addressing the structural issues that are the root cause of the problem.

**second-order change**
resolving a problem by changing relationships within a community, which includes shared goals, roles, rules, and power dynamics. This approach requires more extensive and dynamic efforts but is more likely to result in positive, long-term change.

to look at a problem and ask yourself, "What structural factors influence this problem or behavior? How could those be modified to improve the lives of individuals and families?"

One of the first major studies demonstrating the importance of structural forces was a study of crime and juvenile delinquency in Chicago in the first half of the 20th century. Two sociologists, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1969), looked at official sources of juvenile delinquency rates (e.g., arrests, adjudications) in Chicago neighborhoods during three time periods: 1900–1906, 1917–1923, and 1927–1933. These were periods of rapid change in Chicago: successive waves of immigration by different ethnic groups, increased industrialization, sharp increases in population density, and high levels of mobility. What they found was that, over time, rates of juvenile delinquency remained high in certain neighborhoods, even though almost the entire population of those neighborhoods had changed! Even when the ethnic makeup of a neighborhood completely changed (as existing immigrant groups moved to more desirable neighborhoods and new immigrant groups moved in), the high rates of juvenile delinquency persisted. Shaw and McKay concluded that it was structural factors in the neighborhoods (poverty, overcrowding, and the social disorganization that accompanies rapid change) that were causing the high crime rates, not the characteristics of the individuals who lived there. The theory they developed, social disorganization theory, is still an influential theory in the field of criminology, but the general point about the importance of structural forces has important implications well beyond that field. Their research also illustrates the difference between first-order and second-order change.

Writing of the family as a social system, Watzlawick et al. (1974) distinguished between two kinds of change. **First-order change** alters, rearranges, or replaces the individual members of a group (the neighborhood in C. Shaw and McKay's, 1969, research). This may resolve some aspects of the problem. However, in the long run, the same problems often recur with the new cast of characters, leading to the conclusion that the more things change, the more they remain the same. Attempting to resolve homelessness by counseling homeless individuals without addressing the supply of affordable housing represents first-order change. You may help that individual, but the social problem will persist because you have not addressed all the reasons that homelessness exists.

A group is not just a collection of individuals; it is also a set of relationships among them. Changing those relationships, especially changing shared goals, roles, rules, and power relationships, is **second-order change** (Linney, 1990; E. Seidman, 1988). For example, instead of preserving rigid lines between bosses who make decisions and workers who carry them out, second-order change may involve collaborative decision making, giving workers power to make decisions. Instead of rigid lines of expertise between mental health

professionals and patients, it could involve finding ways that persons with disorders may help each other in self-help groups. The point is not that specific interventions need to be used but rather that the analysis of the problem takes into account these sets of relationships, power, and contexts as possible contributing sources of the problems. Second-order change can help transform individuals' lives and the communities where they live.

Try a thought experiment suggested by community psychologist Seymour Sarason (1972) to analyze the educational system. Criticisms of schools, at least in the United States, often focus blame on individuals or collections of individuals: incompetent teachers, unmotivated or unprepared students, or uncaring parents or administrators. Imagine changing every individual in the school—firing all teachers and staff and hiring replacements, obtaining a new student population, and changing every other individual from the school board to the classroom—yet leaving intact the structure of roles, expectations, and policies about how the school is to be run. How long do you think it will be before the same issues and criticisms return? Why? If you answer "not long," you are seeing the limits of first-order change. It is sometimes enough, but often, it is not.

Next, we present two detailed examples of second-order change, one in relation to substance abuse recovery and the other in relation to the role of youth in their communities.

### Oxford House: Second-order change in recovery from substance abuse.

Traditional professional treatments for substance abuse have high recidivism rates. Methods that rely more on persons in recovery helping each other offer promising alternatives. One example is twelve-step groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Another is Oxford House, a network of residential settings (Jason, Olson, & Harvey, 2015).

Many recovery homes (halfway houses) are located in areas of higher crime and drug use, have crowded and time-limited accommodations, and impose rules that limit resident initiative and responsibility. Some of these limitations reflect the reluctance of the larger society to support or have day-to-day contact with persons in recovery. In contrast, Oxford Houses offer more spacious dwellings in lower-crime residential neighborhoods. Residents are required to be employed, pay rent, perform chores, and remain drug-free. The resident may choose whether to be involved in professional treatment, mutual help (e.g., twelve-step) groups, or both. Separate Oxford Houses exist for women and men. Each house is governed democratically, with leaders chosen by residents but without professional staff. Current residents vote on applications of prospective residents to join the house; a resident who returns to drug use or who is disruptive can be dismissed by a similar vote. The new resident joins a community in which there is support, shared responsibility, and shared decision making.

Oxford Houses represent second-order change because they alter the usual roles of patient and staff, making persons in recovery more accountable for their own behavior and for each other, in a context of equality, support, and shared community. Evaluations indicate positive outcomes and reduced recidivism.

In many cases, achieving second-order change requires not only a shift in how we think about a problem but also a change in the methods we use to understand and address the problem. Youth inquiry approaches are an example of this.

***Youth inquiry approaches: Creating second-order change in the environments of children and adolescents.*** Children and adolescents have been studied intensively in social science research, including in a whole field of study—child development—devoted exclusively to them. But in all that research, youth have been the objects of study, not the creators of research. That distinction illustrates a specific structural understanding of the role of children and adolescents in the research process. Their role is to be studied by adults. Their voices have been silent in deciding what questions should be asked, what methods should be used, what data should be collected, how those data should be understood, and what should be done with the results.

Over the past 2 decades, that structural understanding of the role of youth in the research process has been challenged through the use of youth inquiry approaches (Kennedy et al., 2019; Langhout & Thomas, 2010a). Youth inquiry approaches are research and social change methods that center youth, rather than adults, as the primary knowledge generators and change agents. Adults are involved as collaborators and support providers, not as directors. All these changes in role relationships represent second-order change.

Instituting that second-order change in our structural approach to understanding and improving the environments in which youth live has resulted in measurable changes in those environments. A majority of studies of projects using youth inquiry approaches demonstrate significant environmental outcomes (Kennedy et al., 2019; Langhout & Thomas, 2010a). These include changes in the way youth are perceived and valued by the adults in their schools and communities, changes in peer norms, the development of new programs and improvement of existing ones, and the adoption of new policies.

For example, youth participatory action projects in two urban high schools resulted in more diversity-related discussions between adults and students and in structural changes within the schools through which students could inform and influence hiring decisions, teaching practices, and other policies at the schools (Ozer & Wright, 2012). A youth participatory action program in Minneapolis involved youth investigating and mapping youth-friendly opportunities in their neighborhoods. They then developed innovative ways to bring those opportunities to the attention of other youth

and their families. Finally, they worked to educate their communities about unmet needs of youth and barriers to participation in existing opportunities. Safe and reliable transportation to youth programs was identified as one such barrier, and youth in one neighborhood were able to create two new bus routes specifically to transport youth to parks, libraries, and other youth programs (Walker & Saito, 2011).

***Limits of Change in Social Contexts.*** Even second-order change does not "solve" community and social problems. Attempts to resolve community and social issues represent a problem-resolution process rather than problem solving. A series of changes is likely needed to transform the lives of individuals and their communities. Every problem resolution creates new challenges and perhaps new problems: unintended consequences, altered alignments of human or material resources, or new conflicts involving human needs and values. This is not a reason to give up. The change process leads to real improvements if communities and societies carefully study both history and likely future consequences (Sarason, 1978).

## Ecological Levels of Analysis in Community Psychology

As individuals, we live within webs of social relationships. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed a levels of analysis framework (describing levels of social contexts) that is influential in developmental psychology and community psychology. Our discussion of ecological levels is partly based on Bronfenbrenner's approach, but our frame of reference is the community, not just the developing individual. Thus, we differ in some details from his approach. Historically, community psychology has used ecological levels as a way of clarifying the different values, goals, and strategies for intervention associated with each level of analysis (Rappaport, 1977a, 1977b; E. Seidman & Rappaport, 1974). In addition, this approach helps us focus on the interactions between systems (see also different concepts of ecological levels in Maton, 2000; Moane, 2003; G. Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Thinking in terms of ecological levels of analysis helps clarify how a single event or problem has multiple causes. For example, factors that contribute to a child's problems in school may include forces at multiple levels. Powerful adults at school, in the local community, and at national and global levels make policy decisions that affect the resources that determine the quality of education the child receives. Family members, friends, and teachers have a great impact, but even their thinking and values are influenced by the school system; the local community; and cultural, societal, and even global levels.

Thinking in terms of ecological levels of analysis also helps illustrate multiple ways to address an important question for community psychology: What is a community? While originally tied to place or a locality, "community" has come to refer to sets of relationships among persons at many levels—whether

tied to place or not (see Chapter 6). Thus, a classroom, sorority, religious congregation, online community, or cultural group (e.g., the Mexican American community) may be considered a community.

Figure 1.1 illustrates our typology of ecological levels of analysis for community psychology. The most proximal systems, closest to the individual and involving the most face-to-face contact, are closer to the center of the diagram. The more distal systems, less immediate to the person yet having broad effects, are toward the outside of the diagram.

As you can see in the diagram, some of these systems overlap; for example, some organizations, such as small businesses or community groups, are so small that they have many of the psychosocial qualities of microsystems. The examples in italics in Figure 1.1 are illustrative and do not represent all groups at each level.

**Figure 1.1** Ecological Levels of Analysis for Community Psychology
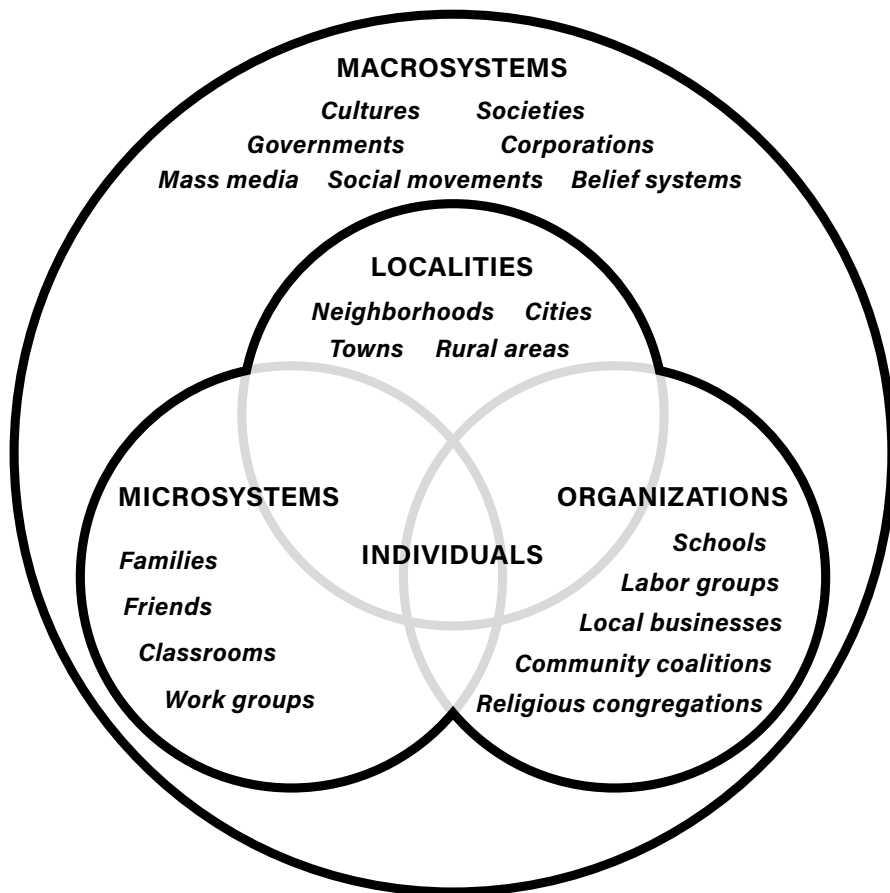
**individual**
the smallest ecological level, it involves total consideration of a person's experiences, memories, thoughts, feelings, relationships, culture, and other defining factors.

**microsystems**
smaller environments or groups within an ecological framework where the individual often communicates or interacts directly with others (e.g., families, classrooms, musical groups, sports teams).

Individuals, societies, and the levels between them are interdependent, and their contributions to behavior and social problems may overlap in different ways. Indeed, community psychology is based on that interdependence of persons in contexts. It is at the point where these systems link that community psychology interventions can often have their greatest impact: the point where community members have identified an issue and where multiple people, groups, and community resources must be brought together in an intentional way to address it. It is for this reason that community psychology is referred to as a linking science (see Chapter 2).

## Individuals

The concept of the **individual** in this model encompasses all of a person's experiences, relationships, thoughts, and feelings. Consider the individual person, nested within the other levels. The person chooses their relationships or environments to some extent and influences them in many ways; likewise, these influence the person. Each person is involved in systems at multiple ecological levels (e.g., family and friends, workplace, neighborhood). Much research in community psychology concerns how individuals are interrelated with social contexts in their lives.

Community psychologists and others in related fields have developed individually oriented preventive interventions to increase personal capacities to address problems in communities. These interventions have been documented to be effective in reducing such problems as difficulties in the social and academic development of children, adolescent behavior problems and juvenile delinquency, adult physical health and depression, HIV/AIDS, difficulties during family transitions such as parenting and divorce, and family violence (we discuss these in detail in Chapters 10 and 11). Many preventive approaches promote social-emotional competence and skills for adapting to challenging contexts or ecological transitions from one context to another, such as entering school or becoming a parent (Weissberg et al., 2003).

## Microsystems

**Microsystems** are environments in which a person repeatedly engages in direct, personal interaction with others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). They include families, classrooms, friendship networks, athletic teams, musical groups, neighborhoods, residence hall wings, and self-help groups. In microsystems, individuals form interpersonal relationships, assume social roles, and share activities (Maton & Salem, 1995).

Microsystems are more than simply the sum of their individual members; they are social units with their own dynamics. For example, family therapists have long focused on how families function as systems beyond their individual members (Watzlawick et al., 1974). Members have roles, differential power in making decisions, reactions to the actions of other members, and so on.

**setting**
an important concept in community psychology that encompasses physical surroundings and relationships among individuals. It can span multiple places and can apply to microsystems and larger organizations.

**organizations**
large ecological systems with solid, clearly defined structures, including titles, missions, rules and policies, schedules, and hierarchies, among other things (e.g., workplaces, religious congregations, neighborhood associations, schools). They often consist of multiple microsystems and can be part of larger social units (e.g., a neighborhood association operates within a city).

**localities**
geographic settings within an ecological framework—such as counties, towns, neighborhoods, or even entire cities—that often contain multiple organizations or microsystems, including governments, economies, media outlets, and educational and health systems.

Microsystems can be important sources of support for their members but also sources of conflict and burdens.

The concept of a **setting** is important in community psychology (see Chapter 5). In this psychological usage of the term, setting is not simply a physical place but an enduring set of relationships among individuals that may be associated with one or several places. A chapter of a self-help group is a setting, even if its meeting place changes. Physical settings such as playgrounds, local parks, bars, or coffee shops may provide meeting places for microsystems. The term "setting" is applied to microsystems and to larger organizations.

## Organizations

**Organizations** are larger than microsystems and have a formal structure: a title, a mission, bylaws or policies, meeting or work times, supervisory relationships, and so on. Organizations studied by community psychologists include human service and health care settings, treatment programs, schools, workplaces, neighborhood associations, cooperative housing units, religious congregations, and community coalitions. These important forms of community affect whom people associate with, what resources are available to them, and how they define and identify themselves. Employed persons often introduce themselves by where they work.

Organizations often consist of sets of smaller microsystems. Classes, activities, departments, staff, administrators, and boards make up a school or college. Departments, shifts, or work teams make up a factory or restaurant. Religious congregations have choirs, religious classes, and prayer groups. Large community organizations usually work through committees. However, organizations are not simply the sum of their parts; the dynamics of the whole organization, such as its organizational hierarchy and its informal culture, are important.

In turn, organizations can be parts of larger social units. A local congregation may be part of a wider religious body, or a retail store part of a chain. A neighborhood association offers a way for citizens to influence city government. The largest organizations (e.g., international corporations, political parties, religious denominations) are macrosystems, which are discussed later.

## Localities

Although the term "community" has meanings at many levels of analysis, one prominent meaning refers to geographic **localities**, including rural counties, small towns, urban neighborhoods, or entire cities. Localities usually have governments; local economies; media; systems of social, educational, and health services; and other institutions that influence individual quality of life.

Localities may be understood as sets of organizations or microsystems. Individuals participate in the life of their shared locality mainly through

**community coalitions**
representatives of multiple community groups and organizations that come together to address broad community issues, such as public health concerns. They are effective means of mobilizing community resources to address shared goals.

**macrosystems**
the largest systems within an ecological framework that form contexts that influence individuals, microsystems, organizations, and localities. These other ecological systems can in turn influence macrosystems through social advocacy or widespread action. Example macrosystems include cultures, political parties, corporations, religions, and governments.

**populations**
a broadly shared characteristic that links people together within a macrosystem. They can form the basis of a community (e.g., the Deaf community),

smaller groups. Even in small towns, individuals seldom influence the wider community unless they work alongside other citizens in an organization or microsystem. An association of neighborhood residents is an organization, while the entire neighborhood is a locality. That neighborhood may also host microsystems of teen friends, adults who meet for coffee, and parents and children who gather at a playground. However, a locality is not simply the sum of its citizens, microsystems, or community organizations. Its history, cultural traditions, and qualities as a whole community surround each of those levels.

An example of the linkage between organizations and localities is the development of **community coalitions**, composed of representatives of various community groups and organizations and formed to address wider community issues such as drug abuse or health concerns. While community coalitions may be a new concept for many of you, they are important elements of community psychology practice and have been shown to be effective in increasing and mobilizing community resources to achieve community goals (Bess, 2015; C. Harper et al., 2014; Oesterle et al., 2018; V. Shapiro et al., 2015). We discuss community coalitions in detail in Chapters 10, 11, and 13.

## Macrosystems

**Macrosystems** are the largest level of analysis in our system. While Figure 1.1 portrays only one macrosystem, in fact individuals, microsystems, organizations, and localities are all continually influenced by multiple macrosystems. Macrosystems include societies, cultures, political parties, social movements, corporations, international labor unions, multiple levels of government, international institutions, broad economic and social forces, and belief systems. Community psychology's perspective ultimately needs to be global.

Macrosystems exercise influence through policies and specific decisions, such as legislation and court decisions, and through promoting ideologies and social norms. Ideals of individual autonomy greatly influence U.S. culture and the discipline of psychology. Mass media communicate subtle forms of racial stereotyping and cultural expectations for thinness, especially for women. Macrosystems also form contexts within which the other levels function, such as how the economic climate affects businesses. But systems at other levels can influence macrosystems through social advocacy or through actions such as buying locally grown foods.

An important level of analysis that we include under macrosystems is the population. A **population** is defined by a broadly shared characteristic (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, income, religion, sexual orientation, ability or disability status). Populations can be the basis of a broad form of community (e.g., the Jewish community, the gay community). However, not all individuals within a population will identify with it as a community.

Many studies in community psychology concern more than one level of analysis. For instance, a study of children in Head Start programs investigated

**mediating structures**
institutions that link individuals to public life, including formal organizations and settings (e.g., schools, churches) and less formal ones (e.g., self-help groups, clubs, organized supporters groups for a favorite sports team). They can act as a buffer in dealing with stressors from larger institutions (e.g., unemployment, discrimination) and can be important intervention points when helping communities.

neighborhood-, family-, and individual-level factors related to educational success. The researchers found that neighborhood-level factors (including the number of families of low or high socioeconomic status and the number of homes in which English was a second language) had significant *direct* effects on the cognition and behavior of children in Head Start (Vanden-Kiernan et al., 2010). These direct neighborhood-level effects were not mediated by such family-level factors as family structure, income, ethnicity, or family processes (e.g., amount of social support available to parents, parents' involvement in their children's education). What this means, for example, is that living in a neighborhood marked by concentrated poverty had a significant negative effect on the cognitive and behavioral development of children, even if those children lived in a two-parent home with high income and parents who were highly involved in their education. The negative neighborhood-level effects were strong enough to overwhelm any positive effects the children received from their parents. We discuss the strong effects of neighborhood context on child development in Chapter 5.

## What Do You Think?

1. What are the most important microsystems, organizations, localities, and macrosystems in your life? How are those settings related to each other?
2. Think about one specific setting in your life. What resources does it provide for you? What challenges or obligations does it present? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
3. Name something that you would like to change about that setting. Why?
4. At what level does that setting exist (microsystem, organization, locality, or macrosystem)? How would changing that setting affect settings at the other levels? How would changes at the other levels affect that setting?

## Levels of Intervention

Ecological levels of analysis are helpful tools in shifting perspective about where to look to improve social outcomes. Systematically examining an issue across levels of analysis can uncover multiple contributing factors to that issue. However, examining social issues across levels of analyses is not sufficient to promote change; that is, understanding where to look is only the first step of the community psychology shift in perspective.

One way in which levels of analysis can help suggest appropriate points of intervention is through the concept of **mediating structures**, "those institutions standing between the individual and his private life and the large institutions of public life" (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977, p. 2). Peter Berger and John

Neuhaus were sociologists who developed a strategy to promote well-being for individuals and communities by developing mediating structures. Central to this theory is that society can exert stressful conditions on individuals, some of whom have difficulty coping with these stressors. However, a strategy of promoting the development of mediating structures focuses on settings that can assist individuals in coping with society's stressors. In our ecological levels of analysis framework, these might be organizations (e.g., schools, mutual help groups, churches) or less formal settings. Community psychologists have been interested in the potential of settings that can serve as mediating structures—many of which are underutilized resources in communities already. In some cases, community psychologists focus on creating new alternative settings that better meet the needs of the individuals affected by the focal concern.

What to change and how to change it are crucial components of any change strategy. In the coming chapters, we elaborate on how and what to change. For this introduction of the community psychology perspective, we emphasize two related points that need to be paired with any consideration of ecological levels of analysis: problem definition and selection of interventions that are linked to ecological levels of analysis.

The focus of any change effort requires a problem definition to organize resources and action. It is critical to examine how a problem is framed and how this dictates interventions. In the example of homelessness presented earlier, if homelessness is defined as a problem with the person only (e.g., addiction, mental health, lack of job skills) or problem of the environment only (e.g., lack of affordable housing), the selected interventions will be quite different (e.g., a treatment for an individual deficit vs. the creation of a program to increase access to affordable housing). By focusing on a single level of analysis (e.g., individual problems), the intervention strategy is constrained to individual change efforts and will be ineffective in addressing homelessness if aspects of the problem at higher levels of analysis are not addressed (e.g., access to safe, affordable housing). Too often, the change strategy ignores or does not match the level of analysis. In North America, many communities have programs to help homeless individuals change but do little to address the lack of affordable housing. From a community psychology perspective, addressing such issues as homelessness or joblessness will require multiple interventions at more than one level of analysis. If interventions are not implemented at multiple levels of analysis, they will likely fail to effectively address the issue.

Furthermore, there are three ways that we may fall short of addressing issues even if we examine multiple levels of analyses. First, it may be that action is necessary but not taken (e.g., additional resources for treatment of homeless persons or affordable housing are not committed). Second, it may be that action is taken where it should not be (e.g., arresting homeless

**errors of logical typing**
taking action at the wrong ecological level (e.g., city ordinances that limit panhandling, which targets individual behaviors resulting from homelessness, not the root causes of homelessness within localities and macrosystems).

persons for sleeping on the street; how does this prevent homelessness?). Third, and perhaps more common, action is taken at the wrong level of analysis (e.g., the only action taken is passing city ordinances to limit panhandling or loitering—observable individual-level behaviors of some homeless persons that are troubling to many community members). In community psychology terms, this is referred to as an **error of logical typing** (Rappaport, 1977b; Watzlawick et al., 1974). While panhandling and loitering can be problematic, focusing change efforts on this individual level of analysis likely will not reduce homelessness. These efforts may also not reduce behaviors perceived to be problematic; rather, these behaviors will likely be moved to different locations as the root causes for homelessness have not been addressed.

How do community psychologists decide how to frame problem definitions? How can you choose which levels of analysis need to be included in an intervention strategy? In the next section, we present core values of community psychology that help guide these decisions.

## Eight Core Values in Community Psychology

**values**
deeply held ideals in individuals and communities about what is considered moral, right, or good. They can influence goals, the means to achieve those goals, or both. Community psychology is guided by eight core values, as shown in Exhibit 1.1.

*Our personal values about relationships, accountability, social change priorities, and our personal political world view all shape our priorities and agenda for community work.*

—M. A. Bond, 1989, p. 356

*Our work always promotes the ends of some interest group, even if we do not recognize that explicitly.*

—Riger, 1989, p. 382

Values play a central role in both research and social action. The decisions about what issues to investigate, how to research them or intervene, and who should be involved in those activities are all formed by the values of the people involved. This is true for all research and action, but for much of history the central role played by values in those activities has been largely ignored. Many of you are likely aware of the Tuskegee syphilis study conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service from 1932 to 1972 (CDC, n.d.). A research program that was intended to provide data supporting more resources for the treatment of syphilis in poor Black communities resulted in hundreds of men being denied effective treatment, even when it became available. There were many systemic failures responsible for this ethical catastrophe, but at the heart of them all were the values of the people designing and running the study. They valued the data they received from the men recruited for the study more than they valued the men themselves.

But what exactly do we mean by "values"? **Values** are deeply held ideals about what is moral, right, or good. They have emotional intensity; they are

honored, not lightly held. Values may concern ends (goals), means (how to attain goals), or both. They are social; we develop values through experiences with others. Individuals hold values, but so do families, communities, and cultures. Values may be rooted in spiritual beliefs or practices but can also be secular. Many ethical conflicts involve choices about which of two worthy values is more important in a given situation (R. Campbell & Morris, 2017b; G. Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; O'Neill, 2005).

In community psychology, discussions of values are useful for several purposes. First, values help clarify choices for research and action. Even defining a problem is a value-laden choice, strongly influencing subsequent action (E. Seidman & Rappaport, 1986). Public definitions of community and social problems often reflect the worldviews of the powerful and thus help maintain the status quo. Attending to values can lead to questioning those dominant views.

Second, the discussion of values helps identify when actions and espoused values do not match (Rappaport, 1977a). Consider a community leader who helps found a neighborhood social center to empower teens who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning their sexuality. The leader decides how to renovate the space and plans all the programs, allowing the youth themselves little say. Despite the leader's intent, this actually disempowers the youth (Stanley, 2003). The leader talks the talk but does not walk the walk.

Or consider an alternative high school that seeks to empower students, their families, and teachers (Gruber & Trickett, 1987). But when decisions are to be made, the teachers have sources of day-to-day information and influence that students and parents lack; teachers thus dominate the discussion. Despite the espoused values of all involved, the organizational practices do not empower students and families. The problem is not individual hypocrisy but an organizational discrepancy between ideals and outcomes.

Third, understanding a culture or community involves understanding its distinctive values. For instance, Potts (2003) discussed the importance of Africanist values in a program for middle school African American youth. Native Hawaiian cultural conceptions of health are closely tied to values of 'ohana and lokahi (family and community unity) and of interdependence of the land, water, and human communities. A health promotion program in Native Hawaiian communities needs to be interwoven with these values (Helm, 2003).

Fourth, community psychology has a distinctive spirit (J. G. Kelly, 2002)—a shared sense of purpose and meaning. That spirit is the basis of our commitment and what keeps us going when obstacles arise (J. G. Kelly, 2010). It is thoughtful but also passionate and pragmatic, embodied in research and action.

In our experience, the spirit of community psychology is based on eight core values, listed in Exhibit 1.1. Our discussion of these eight values is influenced

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**Exhibit 1.1  Eight Core Values in Community Psychology**

1. **Social justice** is the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, obligations, and power across communities within a society. All members in a socially just society have the same rights and are subject to the same processes, which are developed collaboratively with input from all members of that society.

2. **Respect for human diversity** acknowledges and honors the variety of communities and social identities based on gender, ethnic or racial identity, nationality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, socioeconomic status, age, religious and spiritual beliefs, and other characteristics. Communities are understood on their own terms, and research, interventions, and other psychological work are tailored based on those terms.

3. **Sense of community** is a feeling of belongingness, interdependence, and mutual commitment that links individuals as a collective. It is integral to community and social action and is a resource for social support and clinical work.

4. **Collective wellness** is an overall sense of contentment within a community that balances the objective and subjective needs of all individuals and groups within that community and resolves conflicting needs for the general good.

5. **Empowerment and citizen participation** are essential components to all work in community psychology, ensuring that community involvement exists at all ecological levels in making decisions and that community members can exert control.

6. **Collaboration** entails an equal relationship between community psychologists and community members. Psychologists lend their expertise but do not assume a position of hierarchical superiority, giving citizens the opportunity to contribute their own knowledge, resources, and strengths.

7. **Empirical grounding** is using empirical research to make community action more effective and using the lessons from that work to make research more valid for understanding communities. Community psychologists also acknowledge that no research is unbiased, so they are open about values and the impact of context in their work.

8. **Multilevel, strengths-based perspective** avoids focusing only on the individual level and addresses all ecological levels of analysis, recognizing and integrating community strengths at these levels in the work of community psychology.

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by, yet different from, the discussions of values by Isaac Prilleltensky and Geoffrey Nelson (2002; G. Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Prilleltensky, 1997, 2001, 2012). These eight values are just one way of summarizing the field's values. In addition to these common values, each individual and working group within the field must decide what values will be central to their work. Our discussion here is intended to promote the discussion of these values and the issues they raise for community life. As M. A. Bond (1989) and Riger (1989) asserted in quotations at the beginning of this section, community psychology will be guided by some set of values and serve someone's interests, whether we realize it or not. It is better to discuss and choose our values and how to put them into action.

**distributive justice**
an aspect of social justice that involves the fair and equitable allocation of resources (e.g., money, access to quality education and healthcare) among community members.

**procedural justice**
an aspect of social justice ensuring that everyone within a setting has the same rights and is subject to the same rules and procedures. In law, it is understood as due process, but it applies to other settings as well.

## Social Justice

*Social justice* can be defined as the fair, equitable allocation of resources, opportunities, obligations, and power in society as a whole (Prilleltensky, 2001, p. 754). Social justice has two aspects especially important here. **Distributive justice** concerns the fair and equitable allocation of resources (e.g., money, access to good quality health services or education) among members of a social group. **Procedural justice** ensures that everyone has the same rights and is subject to the same procedures. Procedural justice is often understood in terms of due process in the legal system, but Prilleltensky (2012) argued for an expansion of that concept to include all settings and all relationships. So if two children commit the same transgression, they both receive the same treatment from their parents, and they both understand the basis of that treatment and consider it (reasonably) fair. Or if an organization has a pool of money to use for staff raises, everyone in the organization understands how the raises are distributed and considers that process fair. From a community psychology perspective of social justice, in order for processes to be just, everyone should be involved in their development. Following these definitions, a just setting is one in which every member receives an equitable share of the resources, everyone is involved in the development of the processes that govern the settings, and those processes are applied fairly.

Psychology's record of support for social justice in the United States has been mixed. It has sometimes been at the forefront of social justice struggles, as in the involvement of psychologists Mamie and Kenneth Clark and others in research cited in the 1954 school desegregation case *Brown v. Board of Education*. However, psychological research and practice has also had the effect of supporting sexism, racism, and other injustices, for instance in the area of intelligence testing (Gould, 1981; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). The tradition of liberation psychology, rooted in Latin America, and the related fields of critical psychology and feminist psychology exemplify psychological pursuit of social justice (M. A. Bond et al., 2000a, 2000b; Martin-Baro, 1994; Montero, 1996; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Watts & Serrano-García, 2003).

## Respect for Human Diversity

This value recognizes and honors the variety of communities and social identities based on gender, ethnic or racial identity, nationality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, socioeconomic status and income, age, religious and spiritual beliefs, or other characteristics. Understanding individuals-in-communities requires understanding human diversity (Gomez & Yoshikawa, 2017; Trickett, 1996). Persons and communities are diverse, defying easy generalizations and demanding that they be understood in their own terms.

This is not a vague respect for diversity as a politically correct attitude. To be effective in community work, community psychologists must understand the traditions and folkways of any culture or distinctive community with whom they work (Gomez & Yoshikawa, 2017; O'Donnell, 2005). That includes appreciating how the culture provides distinctive strengths and resources for living. Researchers also need to adapt research methods and questions to be appropriate to a culture. This is more than simply translating questionnaires; it involves a thorough reexamination of the aims, methods, and expected products of research in terms of the culture to be studied.

Respect for diversity must be balanced with the values of social justice and sense of community—understanding diverse groups and persons while promoting fairness, seeking common ground, and avoiding social fragmentation (Prilleltensky, 2001). To do that, the first step is usually to study diversities in order to understand them. A related step is to respect others as fellow persons, even when you disagree. We explore the value of human diversity in relation to community psychology throughout the book and provide additional conceptual frameworks for understanding diversity in Chapter 7.

## Sense of Community

Sense of community is the center of some definitions of community psychology (Sarason, 1974). It refers to a perception of belongingness, interdependence, and mutual commitment that links individuals in a collective unity (D. McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). For example, community psychologists have studied sense of community in neighborhoods, schools and classrooms, mutual help groups, faith communities, workplaces, and internet virtual environments (e.g., Buckingham et al., 2018; Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002; Newbrough, 1996). Sense of community is a basis for community and social action as well as a resource for social support and clinical work. We discuss psychological sense of community in detail in Chapter 6.

## Collective Wellness

Community psychologist Isaac Prilleltensky (2012) defined wellness as "a positive state of affairs, brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of diverse objective and subjective needs of individuals, relationships, organizations, and communities" (p. 2). This definition differs from others in its focus on multiple ecological levels. Prilleltensky believes that the concept of wellness extends beyond the individual. Organizations can experience varying degrees of wellness, as can communities and societies.

This definition also reflects the diversity embodied in those settings. The needs of individuals, families, communities, and societies are multiple, complex, and sometimes in conflict. It is in recognition of these points that we have chosen the term "collective wellness" to describe this value in community

psychology. This value as it is reflected in the field of community psychology is further discussed in Chapters 7, 10, 11, and 13.

## Empowerment and Citizen Participation

You are probably familiar with the concept of empowerment viewed through an individualistic perspective—a feeling people experience of being able to exert power over their own lives. Community psychology views empowerment through ecological, collaborative, and structural perspectives; at multiple levels; and as a process rather than a feeling (Christens, 2019). *Empowerment* is the process of enhancing the possibilities for people to control their own lives (Rappaport, 1987). From this perspective, empowerment is an empirical construct. Tangible changes are made in settings that increase the opportunities for members to come together to exert control over how those settings function.

*Citizen participation* can be defined as "a process in which individuals take part in decision making in the institutions, programs and environments that affect them" (Wandersman et al., 1984, p. 339). Increased citizen participation both results from and contributes to increased empowerment. These values will be explored further in Chapter 8.

## Collaboration

Perhaps the most distinctive value of community psychology, long emphasized in the field, involves *relationships* between community psychologists and citizens and the *process* of their work (Case, 2017). Psychologists traditionally assume an "expert" role, which creates a hierarchical, unequal relationship of expert and client—useful in some contexts but often inappropriate for community work. Psychologists also traditionally address deficits in individuals (e.g., diagnosing a mental disorder), while community psychologists search for personal and community strengths that promote change. Community psychologists do have expertise to share with communities. However, they also need to honor the life experiences, wisdom, passionate zeal, social networks, organizations, cultural traditions, and other resources (in short, the community strengths) that already exist in a community. Building on these strengths is often the best pathway to overcoming problems (D. D. Perkins et al., 2004).

Furthermore, community psychologists seek to create a collaborative relationship with citizens so community strengths are available for use. In that relationship, both psychologist and citizens contribute knowledge and resources, and both participate in making decisions (Javdani et al., 2017; Kelly, 1986). For example, community researchers may design a study to meet the needs of citizens, share research findings with citizens in a form that they can use, and help use the findings to advocate for changes by decision makers. Developers of a community program would fully involve citizens in planning and implementing it.

### Empirical Grounding

This value refers to integrating research with community action, basing (grounding) action in empirical research findings whenever possible (Rappaport, 1977a; Tebes, 2017). This uses research to make community action more effective and makes research more valid for understanding communities. Community psychologists are impatient with theory or action that lacks empirical evidence and with research that ignores the context and interests of the community in which it occurred.

Community psychologists believe no research is value-free; it is always influenced by researchers' values and preconceptions and by the context in which the research is conducted. Drawing conclusions from research thus requires attention to values and context, not simply to the data (Tebes, 2017). This does not mean that researchers abandon rigorous research but that values and community issues that affect the research are discussed openly to promote better understanding of findings. We explore how the field of community psychology approaches this integration of research and values in Chapters 3 and 4.

### Multilevel, Strengths-Based Perspective

Earlier in this chapter we introduced the concept of ecological levels of analysis, each of which offers a unique perspective for understanding and defining areas of concern and identifying potential points of intervention. That emphasis on moving beyond an individual level of analysis, and the shift in perspective that requires, is a defining aspect of the field of community psychology.

Along with that focus on context and an imperative to recognize and work in the multiple settings that structure our lives, community psychology shares with other disciplines a strengths-based perspective (Maton, Humphreys, Jason, & Shinn, 2017; Rappaport, 1977a). This is the understanding that all individuals, families, organizations, and societies have significant strengths and that those strengths must be acknowledged, celebrated, and utilized in efforts to enhance collective wellness.

The community psychology value of a multilevel, strengths-based perspective is reflected throughout the field and is specifically addressed in Chapters 5, 10, 11, and 13.

## The Interrelationship of Community Psychology Values

Of course, none of the eight values we have presented can exist in isolation. For example, in Chapters 7, 10, and 11 we discuss how evidence-based prevention and promotion programs (which are empirically grounded) should embody a multilevel, strengths-based perspective; be designed and implemented based on a collaborative, empowering relationship with the community; be adapted

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**Box 1.2     Community Psychology in Action: Tom Wolff and Community Coalitions**

Community psychologist Tom Wolff was engaged by a community health coalition to work with local citizens to plan health initiatives. He held an evening meeting open to all citizens. At such a meeting, one might expect to discuss a lack of affordable health care in the community, a need for health promotion and prevention programs, or mutual help groups. Instead, the most important need identified by many citizens was for street signs! Wolff barely contained his amazement. Yet recently in this community, emergency medical care had been delayed several times, with serious consequences, because ambulances could not locate residences.

Wolff duly noted this concern, then sought to turn the conversation to matters fitting his preconceptions. However, the local citizens would not have it; they wanted a plan for action on street signs. When that need had been met, they reasoned, they could trust the health coalition to work with them on other issues. Wolff then shifted to working with the citizens to get the municipality to erect street signs. Instead of pursuing his own agenda, he worked with citizens to accomplish their goals (Wolff & Lee, 1997).

**What Do You Think?**

1. What community psychology values are reflected in Tom Wolff's work?
2. How did recognizing and implementing these values affect his ability to effectively work with the health coalition?
3. Can you imagine yourself being part of a coalition in your community working together to solve a community problem? How might community psychology values affect your approach to that work?

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to reflect the diversity, history, and culture(s) of that community; and hopefully result in increased sense of community, increased collective wellness, and, ultimately, increased social justice.

This seems like a lot to expect from what are, in many cases, small interventions, but think back to the discussion of the evidence on youth inquiry approaches earlier in this chapter. There is a growing body of evidence for their efficacy at promoting change at multiple ecological levels, which results in increased collective wellness and a sense of community. They are based on a recognition of the existing strengths of children and adolescents and, often, on an explicit recognition of their diversity. Ultimately, they result in changed roles, increased power and recognition for youth in their communities, and a more equitable distribution of resources, even if only in relatively small ways. Community psychology practitioner Tom Wolff presents an example of small wins from his work in Box 1.2.

Not all interventions are small ones. In Chapter 13, we discuss public policy work, which can produce impacts at local, regional, national, and international levels. But large or small, the goal of community psychology is to promote the vision of Martin Luther King, Jr., and engage in creative maladjustment. The goal is to advance social justice.

## Overview of This Book

In this chapter, we discussed the shift in perspective that is central to community psychology and the values of the field. In Chapter 2, we present how the field developed core methods and concepts or adapted them to act on this shift in perspective. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the research methods that underlie community research and how those methods derive from the basic values of the field. Chapters 5–9 present some underlying concepts of the field and the theories and research related to them. These chapters present the field's approach to understanding communities. Chapters 10–12 present a major focus of intervention in community psychology: the prevention of disorder; the promotion of wellness for individuals, families, and organizations; and the implementation and evaluation of programs designed to meet those goals. Chapter 13 extends community psychology's approach to change to the community and society levels. In Chapter 14, the final chapter, we talk about some challenges and opportunities facing the field and encourage you to think about how you can use tools of community psychology as citizens, in human services careers, or even as aspiring community psychologists.

At the beginning of each chapter in this book, we present an opening exercise that is designed to help you explore community psychology. The exercise might present an opportunity for a shift in perspective or an expansion of what it means to engage in psychology. In many of the chapters, we also present stories of Community Psychology in Action, focusing on the personal stories of people doing community work. We also present similar Changing Perspectives features with examples that encourage you to look at the world in a different way and perhaps revisit your preconceived notions and biases. Along these lines, we present self-reflection questions that ask you to engage more directly with the material on a more personal and meaningful level.

## Using Respectful Language to Discuss Social Identities

As noted earlier in this chapter, respect for human diversity is a core value of community psychology. Language is a key factor in conveying this respect, particularly by referring to individuals and groups using their preferred self-identifying labels. In this book, we therefore refer to specific individuals and groups based on how they self-identify. We also try to use inclusive language when referring to groups more broadly. However, sometimes different members of the same community prefer different labels. For example, "Latina," "Latino," "Latinx," "Hispanic," and other terms may be appropriate when referring to some people from Spanish-speaking or Latin American cultural backgrounds but also inappropriate when referring to others from those backgrounds. We sometimes use "Latinx" as a broad, gender-neutral term,

but using this term can also sometimes diminish the experiences of Latina women. We encourage you to use more appropriate language as needed when referring to your own social identities, those of your classmates, or anyone else, whether those identities concern ethnicity, gender, ability or disability status, or any other characteristic that is important to someone.

## Learning Goals

While we hope that by the end of this book some of you will consider further education in community psychology, we realize that for many of you, this may be your only formal involvement with the field. However, it is our firm belief that all of you will—at various times in your life—be involved in initiatives that will benefit from the theories, research, and skills we present in this book. While the number of people who formally identify themselves as community psychologists may be relatively small, the influence of the field is much larger than those numbers would suggest. Community psychology theories and research are reflected or directly cited in the work of public health experts, social workers, sociologists, public officials, and other psychologists.

We hope that you finish this book with several accomplishments:

- a better understanding of community psychology;
- increased skills for working effectively in diverse contexts and communities;
- a greater appreciation of the intertwining of individual, community, and society;
- a greater awareness of your own values;
- a willingness to explore the many sides of community and social issues; and
- a passionate engagement in changing your communities and society for the better.

We came to community psychology because it engaged our minds, our values, and our lives. We hope this book does that for you.

## For Review

### Discussion Questions

1. Go back to the opening exercise in this chapter about the untested sexual assault kits. How have your answers to those questions changed after reading the chapter?

2. In what ways do your values align with those of community psychology?

3. Think of a current issue you care about in a community of which you are a member. Using the ideas and approaches discussed in this chapter, how might you analyze and define that issue?

4. How might you create an intervention to address that issue?

### Key Terms

community psychology, 3
individualistic perspective, 6
structural perspective, 6
context, 10
first-order change, 12
second-order change, 12
individual, 17

microsystems, 17
setting, 18
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### Learn More

A detailed summary of the chapter, along with other review materials, is available on the *Community Psychology, Fourth Edition* companion website at http://pubs.apa.org/books/supp/kloos4/.