

1 Promoting Change amid Systemic Oppression

A Twenty-First-Century Call to Action for Communities and Community Psychologists

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The events of 2020 remind us that community is absolutely critical to who we are and our connections with one another (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019). Experiences such as the global COVID-19 pandemic tell us that we are inextricably linked across the globe. They underscore the reality that the experiences of a community in one nation can mirror and connect with those of others. At the same time, the differential impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, those who are incarcerated, people with disabilities, and the elderly tell us that there are systemic challenges to reducing medical and mental health disparities. The deaths of Ahmaud Marquez Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd in February 2020, March 2020, and May 2020, respectively, highlight national and transnational concerns with police brutality and racial violence. Questions emerging from these events include: What does it mean to belong to a community? How do systemic racism and discrimination interfere with belongingness, access to freedom, and life and survival? How can communities push macro-level change in the face of systemic oppression?

The events of 2020 appear to demonstrate varying community dynamics. On the one hand, dynamics related to COVID-19 show how communities can learn and quickly adapt new behaviors in response to a deadly virus and global pandemic. When COVID-19 made its appearance, communities around the world responded to sheltering-in-place and quarantine orders. Children stayed home from school, adults in nonessential roles and those who lost their jobs stayed home from work, and essential workers faced the pandemic in health, nursing, retail, food-related, supermarket, and community facilities. Communities adapted to protect themselves in response to recommendations from the medical community (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], n.d.). Wearing masks, maintaining a six-foot distance from one another, using gloves, and being even more mindful about washing hands were precautions communities around the globe adapted in a short period of time.

These rapid-response behaviors demonstrate community change. Communities can adapt to crises presented before them and work together to promote health, safety, and save lives. Communities can support their members through community rituals, for example the 7 p.m. clapping for essential workers every evening in New York City (Gleason, 2020). They can give voice to not being able to honor all rituals, for example the devastating

impact of being separated from loved ones who were hospitalized. For those who died, this meant that family members could not be together to say goodbye. Funerals were no longer gathering places for larger communities, leaving many devoid of closure and with no formal process to deal with grief and collectively mourn (Weir, 2020).

Communities can learn from each other. Countries made decisions about transnational travel. Social media platforms allowed for communication with people across countries and globally. Families connected across generations in new ways, sharing technology that promoted regular family discussions (Cohen, 2020).

The way teachers teach and students learn abruptly changed. For instance, in the United States many schools were closed the first week of quarantine while school personnel worked to roll out an online curriculum for students that sought to engage them despite a remote learning environment. For many students and families, the online platform presented equity issues related to not having internet access and/or access to a device (Seale, 2020). Students had mixed responses to online learning. Some appreciated the work-at-your-own-pace schedule, the lack of peer pressure and distraction from classmates, and benefited from being able to focus on course material with the added support of parents at home. For other students, the online format was overwhelming. They feared they would miss class sessions and realized how much they missed the routine of school and being with their friends (The Learning Network, 2020).

The quarantine introduced sudden shifts in the implementation of mental health treatment. While recent barriers to teletherapy usage included concerns regarding a lack of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)-compliant online platforms, such platforms emerged, with teletherapy being implemented as a common quarantine practice. This shift indicates further how policies can promote rapid change through concerted efforts and a coordinated crisis response (Goode & Shinkle, 2020).

However, while in many ways COVID-19 was greeted with rapid policy and personal changes to promote safety, thus showing how communities can shift and change in response to efforts to protect themselves, the virus was also met with great inequities. Magnification is a term that refers to health and economic disparities, and has been applied to the disparity resulting from COVID-19. Pappas (2020) states: “The virus and the resulting economic shutdown are exacerbating long-standing inequities in American society, widening economic gaps and health disparities. And the impacts – both physical and psychological – are likely to be long-lasting.” Such disparities include, but are not limited to, those suffering from unemployment and unable to access food, those with disabilities who have higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, the elderly who may have fewer resources and less protection if they are in residential care, data that indicate African Americans and Latinx communities are disproportionately affected by the virus with regard to being infected and dying, anti-Asian xenophobia and violence in response to comments such as those by the US President describing

COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus,” and outbreaks of the virus in prisons and jails, among which those who are incarcerated disproportionately represent people of color (Pappas, 2020). Despite the changes that were instituted to protect communities against COVID-19, these realities underscore the great inequities that emerged and exist amid such efforts.

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed in police custody after police officer Derek Chauvin arrested him. The arrest was made in response to a 911 call that accused Floyd of trying to purchase cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill. A timeline of events published by the *StarTribune* (Xiong, 2020) based on charging documents, indicates that George Floyd was calm when arrested and told officers he was claustrophobic and couldn’t get into the back seat of the police car, all the while sharing that he was not resisting arrest. In response, Derek Chauvin pulled George Floyd out of the car and put him on the ground at 8.19 p.m. Officer Kueng held onto George Floyd’s back while Officer Chauvin had his knee on George Floyd’s neck. George Floyd told the officer that he was about to die. Another policeman, Officer Thao, continued to stand watch and ignored the pleas of witnesses to stop the police brutality. None of the officers moved from their positions during the incident. According to the *StarTribune* timeline, by 8.25 p.m. the officers were unable to find a pulse. George Floyd was pronounced dead at the Hennepin County Medical Center at 9.25 p.m. (Xiong, 2020).

The murder of George Floyd follows the loss of many African Americans due to police brutality. In response to George Floyd’s death, on May 31, 2020, National Public Radio (NPR)’s program *Code Switch* published a “non-comprehensive list of deaths at the hands of police in the U.S. since Eric Garner’s death in July 2014” and on June 5, 2020, SCAPE (2020) presented names of African Americans who have been murdered by police on their website (Demby & Miraji, 2020; SCAPE, 2020): Eric Garner, John Crawford III, Michael Brown, Ezell Ford, Dante Parker, Michelle Cusseaux, Laquan McDonald, George Mann, Tanisha Anderson, Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, Romain Brisbon, Jerame Reid, Matthew Ajibade, Frank Smart, Natasha McKenna, Tony Robinson, Anthony Hill, Mya Hall, Phillip White, Eric Harris, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, William Chapman II, Alexia Christian, Brendon Glenn, Victo Emmanuel LaRosa III, Jonathan Sanders, Joseph Mann, Salvado Ellswood, Sandra Bland, Albert Joseph Davis, Darrius Stewart, Billy Ray Davis, Samuel DuBose, Michael Sabbie, Bryan Keith Day, Christian Taylor, Troy Robinson, Asshams Pharoah Manley, Felix Kumi, Keith Harrison McLeod, Junior Prosper, Lamontez Jones, Paterson Brown, Dominic Hutchinson, Anthony Ashford, Alonzo Smith, Tyree Crawford, India Kager, La’Vante Trevon Biggs, Michael Lee Marshall, Jamar Clark, Richard Perkins, Nathaniel Harris Pickett, Jr., Bennie Lee Tignor, Miguel Espinal, Michael Noel, Kevin Matthews, Bettie Jones, Quintonio LeGrier, Keith Childress, Jr., Janet Wilson, Randy Joe Nelson, Antronie Scott, Wendell Celestine, David Joseph, Calin Roquemore, Dyzhawn L. Perkins, Christopher Davis, Marco Antonio Loud, Peter Gaines, Torrey Lamar Robinson, Darius Robinson,

Kevin Hicks, Mary Tuxillo, Demarcus Semer, Willie Tillman, Terrill Thomas, Sylville Smith, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Paul O’Neal, Terence Crutcher, Freddie Blue, Alteria Woods, Jordan Edwards, Aaron Bailey, Ronell Foster, Stephon Clark, Antwon Rose II, Botham Jean, Pamela Turner, Dominique Clayton, Atatiana Jefferson, Christopher Whitfield, Christopher McCorvey, Eric Reason, Michael Lorenzo Dean, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Tony McDade (Demby & Meraji, 2020; SCAPE, 2020).

When we see this list, and how police brutality has led to the deaths of African Americans consistently since Eric Garner, other questions emerge: How is it that this keeps happening? Why can’t police brutality against African Americans be stopped? What is preventing us as a society from learning how to protect all of our citizens? Such questions show how we keep getting it wrong – resulting in a consistent pattern of murder, loss of life, trauma, and systemic oppression.

In response to systemic police brutality and racism, communities around the world protested to communicate the injustice of George Floyd’s murder. Like the response to COVID-19, communities joined globally – and this time for protection from another disease: injustice and racism. Communities organized to collectively promote systemic change. NBC News published a map of global protests (ones that included a hundred people or more) that extended from the United States to Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, the Republic of Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Scotland, Senegal, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, and Wales (Smith, Wu, & Murphy, 2020). Such global protests demonstrate the important impact that communities can have when joining together to voice oppression in search of justice and systemic change. The protests in the face of George Floyd’s murder demonstrate key aspects of community that are at the heart of this book: empowerment, social power, citizen participation, and community organizing (see Chapter 3, this volume).

1.1 The Founding of Community Psychology

Community psychology in the United States developed in response to the limitations of psychology in addressing social issues (Tebes, 2016). As a result, community psychology emerged amid a backdrop of mental health policies that promoted deinstitutionalization of people with mental illnesses, a focus on community-based mental health, the civil rights movement, the publication of *Action for Mental Health: Final Report, 1961* (Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health, 1961), and the passage of the Community Mental Health Act in 1963 (see Chapter 13, this volume).

Community psychology as a formal discipline within psychology in the USA was founded at the Swampscott Conference in 1965. Here, community

psychology was defined as an action-oriented approach to psychology that sought to address social issues through prevention, intervention, and community-based research (Society for Community Research and Action [SCRA], n.d.a; Tebes, 2016). SCRA presented organizing community psychology principles for research and practice that included:

1. Considering individual vs. systems change, including first order vs. second order change;
2. Understanding social ecological levels of analysis and intervention;
3. Focusing on wellness, strengths, and competence (vs. deficits and disorder), including an emphasis on prevention, resilience, and health promotion;
4. Valuing and promoting empowerment and social justice, including liberation from oppression;
5. Understanding human diversity and cultural contexts;
6. Advancing stakeholder participation, multi-level collaboration, and sense of community;
7. Developing empirically-based models for action; [and]
8. Promoting theoretical and methodological pluralism. (SCRA, n.d.a)

These community psychology principles introduced critical competencies for community psychology practice. Hence, a Task Group designated by the Community Psychology Practice Council and the Council of Education Programs developed key competencies in the community psychology field (SCRA, n.d.b). The community psychology competencies are not standards. Rather,

SCRA proposes the Competencies for Practice to promote dialogue and innovation in community psychology training and practice. These competencies are not intended as standards for accrediting programs or licensing individuals. Instead, they provide a common framework for discussion of the skills involved in community psychology practice, and how those skills can be learned. Skills for practice and the processes of learning them are contextual, and methods and opportunities for learning are always evolving. However, a common framework for discussion of these skills can promote a more articulate, productive dialogue about the nature of community psychology practice and how students can learn the skills for that practice. This common framework also can promote constructive dialogue with potential employers about practice competencies that community psychologists may have, in general. (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012, p. 9)

The eighteen competencies are divided under key community psychology areas that include Foundational Principles, Community Program Development and management, Community and Organizational Capacity-Building, Community and Social Change, and Community Research. Table 1.1 presents an overview of these key areas and relevant competencies based on information presented in Dalton and Wolfe (2012; see www.scra27.org/files/8713/8557/6003/TCP_Fall_2012.pdf for more detail). Table 1.1 presents *The Cambridge Handbook of Community Psychology* chapters that are largely representative of each competency area, while also acknowledging that each chapter overlaps with other areas of competence.

Table 1.1 *Community psychology competencies*

Competency Area	Specific Competencies	Overall Competency Area Theme(s)	Relevant Handbook Chapters*
Foundational Principles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ecological Perspectives The ability to articulate and apply multiple ecological perspectives and levels of analysis in community practice 2. Empowerment 3. Sociocultural and Cross-Cultural Competence The ability to value, integrate, and bridge multiple worldviews, cultures, and identities 4. Community Inclusion and Partnership 5. Ethical, Reflective Practice 	This group of competencies focuses on engagement of a contextual, ecological perspective in community psychology research and practice; systemic, ecological community empowerment; incorporation of diverse perspectives and an ability to incorporate cultural humility; active engagement in efforts that support full community representation and let diverse voices be heard; and involvement in ethical practice and intervention.	Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Community Program Development and Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Program Development, Implementation, and Management 7. Prevention and Health Promotion 	This group of competencies focuses on collaboration with community partners to forge community programs within diverse community contexts and incorporation of prevention- and health-promoting efforts in community-based initiatives.	Chapters 15, 17, 18, 26, 27
Community and Organizational Capacity-Building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Community Leadership and Mentoring 9. Small and Large Group Processes 10. Resource Development 11. Consultation and Organizational Development 	This group of competencies focuses on the promotion of community leadership by encouraging diverse constituencies to be involved in community efforts as defined by them; the mentoring and support community leaders and future community leaders	Chapters 10, 19, 20, 25, 27, 28

Table 1.1 (cont.)

Competency Area	Specific Competencies	Overall Competency Area Theme(s)	Relevant Handbook Chapters*
Community and Social Change	12. Collaboration and Coalition Development 13. Community Development 14. Community Organizing and Community Advocacy 15. Public Policy Analysis, Development, and Advocacy 16. Community Education, Information Dissemination, and Building Public Awareness	<p>can provide in efforts designed to promote leadership capacity and engagement; an awareness of dynamics in small and large group processes in efforts such as working across diverse constituencies; conducting culturally responsive community-based needs assessments; and to consult with organizations to promote their development and attainment of goals.</p> <p>This group of competencies focuses on efforts to promote systemic change at the community level. Such efforts include work to build coalitions; communicate lived experiences; actively engage in community development within one's community; engage in active community organization and advocacy; engagement with the community to promote policy change and implementation; and the promotion of awareness of key issues through dissemination of knowledge and information.</p>	Chapters 3, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 30
Community Research	17. Participatory Community Research 18. Program Evaluation	<p>This group of competencies focuses on research and evaluation within an ecological, community-based</p>	Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 29, 30

Table 1.1 (cont.)

Competency Area	Specific Competencies	Overall Competency Area Theme(s)	Relevant Handbook Chapters*
		perspective. Such competencies address the importance of developing true collaborations with community partners where the research process is shared and gives back to the communities where data are collected and where collaboration with community partners engages in comprehensive evaluation processes designed to promote program efficacy and accountability.	

Note: * Themes overlap across chapters, however, cross-reference with the main theme is presented here.

Source: This is an original table based on the competencies presented in Dalton and Wolfe (2012).

1.2 Rationale: A Grounded Ecological Approach

The Cambridge Handbook of Community Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Contextual Perspectives is timely given the global events we are experiencing. A review of current books on community psychology suggests that many of these existing works discuss various aspects of community psychology (e.g., social change, prevention) without taking an interdisciplinary, grounded ecological approach to what it means to be a community. The contributions in this volume address this gap given that they will (1) take a grounded ecological approach to specific aspects of the community psychology field; (2) consider global components of key community psychology concepts; (3) adopt a multicultural, transnational approach to understanding community psychology; (4) present practical applications and relevant implications within diverse contexts; (5) present critical case analyses that illustrate local/bottom-up programs that meet community needs; and (6) incorporate contributing authors from diverse disciplines and nationalities. The grounded ecological approach that is a central focus of this volume is a valuable framework for community psychology given that the “essence of the ecological perspective is to construct an understanding of the interrelationships of social structures and social processes of the groups,

organizations, and communities in which we live and work. The concept of interdependence is the basic axiom of the ecological perspective” (Kelly et al., 2000, p. 133).

The rationale for taking an ecological approach is further understood when we consider that the science and practice of community psychology is advanced when one understands how to create “new interdependencies” (Kelly et al., 2000, p. 133). The assertion by Kelly and colleagues (2000) supports this perspective: “*To create a resourceful social system requires that the initiator have a view of how people and social systems affect each other. The ecological perspective is proposed as a point of view that can elaborate structures and processes for both people and social systems*” (p. 134). The grounded aspect of the ecological approach taken is to provide a practical ecological aspect to our understanding of community psychology. The rationale here is to not lose sight of the practical application of community psychology theory. Taking a grounded ecological approach means that contributors are encouraged to apply theoretical constructs within the community ecologies presented.

In sum, *The Cambridge Handbook of Community Psychology* integrates (1) ecological factors that influence community psychology practice, (2) global considerations that examine how community psychology is experienced in different nations, (3) transnational considerations that demonstrate how community psychology concepts can be adapted for diverse country and community contexts, (4) interdisciplinary perspectives from colleagues who represent a range of professional disciplines, (5) a practical aspect that examines how community psychology frameworks play out in the local context with bottom-up solutions, and (6) current research and methodological approaches.

1.3 Community Psychology for the Twenty-First Century: Doesn't All Psychology Incorporate Community Psychology?

Community psychology began during a time of social change. The mental health system was moving from institutionalization to deinstitutionalization, the civil rights movement began, and psychologists were committed to making sure the discipline was responsive to social action change. Just as community psychology has its roots in these historical movements, so too can it reintroduce itself today as an aspect of psychology that focuses on community efforts to promote social action. The killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, among many other African Americans, and the disparity in medical and mental health care demonstrated by COVID-19, are social issues that underscore the need for a reintroduction to community-focused psychology.

Community psychology has an important role to play in response to the tension between our ability to change and our ability to maintain the status quo. Perhaps at no other more recent time in history has a commitment to and

an understanding of community been so important. In effect, community is everywhere – and yet many would propose that we lack community in the twenty-first century. This is ironic given that technology and social media have made community more possible in some ways. This duality of experience suggests the notion of community as one that is elusive. It raises the questions: What causes isolation for a community? What makes community members feel marginalized from their community? What encourages a sense of community membership? At the same time, psychology as a science is very much moving into an understanding of how behavioral science can be implemented in a community context.

While some might say that community psychology is a relatively young field – with roots in experiences such as the Swampscott Conference in 1965 – if we consider the fact that communities across the globe have been organizing for justice and well-being for centuries, we can consider community psychology as a discipline with a long history. Community psychology is growing in response to science and practice that takes us into real-world/real-life settings that represent lived experiences. The chapters that follow present examples of community psychology in action transnationally. *Handbook* chapters describe community-organizing efforts that include Black Lives Matter; #MeToo; March for Our Lives; #AbolishICE; the experience of Flint, Michigan; the Public Health Action Plan implemented in 2013 after the train derailment and explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Québec; the Newark Anti-Violence Coalition in Newark, New Jersey; The Carter Center Mental Health Program; the Gowanus Canal Community Advisory Group in Brooklyn, New York; Family Support Services (FSS) at Ronald McDonald House; mental health services in prayer camps in Ghana; crowdfunding via social media; the Strengthening Guided Pathways and Career Success by Ensuring Students Are Learning program; global community responses to climate change; a toolkit to develop school–family–community partnerships; interventions with young adults who have neurodevelopmental disabilities; school-based mental health programs in rural settings; mental health programs on college/university campuses; supporting LGBTQ+ communities, and many more. These advancements are fueled in part by access to emerging evidence-based interventions that can be adapted to diverse community settings.

These examples also illustrate that ours is an increasingly global society. What we experience as a community is influenced by access to global outreach through the Internet, social media, and transportation technologies. Relevant to globalization is consideration as to how community psychology plays out on the world stage. What community psychology approaches are being used in different countries? How does political context influence the development and extension of community psychology? What can nations learn from one another as they examine successful community psychology-based interventions?

1.4 Orientation to *The Cambridge Handbook of Community Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Contextual Perspectives*

The *Cambridge Handbook of Community Psychology* is divided into four parts. *Part I – Foundational Concepts: Interdisciplinary, Culturally Responsive, and Contextual Approaches* includes five chapters focused on foundational aspects of community psychology. Key themes presented in Part I include defining what is meant by having sense of community, stages of community development, and theories that apply to the work of community psychologists (Chapter 2); definitions of empowerment with a focus on how communities can promote local, national, and global change (Chapter 3); ethical guidelines in community-based research and how to assess ethical concerns within a community psychology context (Chapter 4); and defining wellness across diverse world regions including Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Australia/ New Zealand (Chapter 5).

Part II – Research, Assessment, and Program Evaluation: Ecological Considerations includes four chapters that focus on research methodologies, program evaluation, and assessment. Chapters presented in Part II consider culturally responsive community assessment processes and community action plans (Chapter 6), promotion of youth resilience in rural communities through a school–community–university partnership alongside program evaluation strategies (Chapter 7), implementation of the Constructive Diversity Pedagogy Participatory Action Research project to promote social justice and dialogues focused on diversity in higher education and beyond (Chapter 8), and the application of a critical ethnography approach to community-based research (Chapter 9).

Part III – Community Psychology in Action: Critical Themes and Areas of Application focuses on specific domains where community psychology can play a role and have significant impact. The 19 chapters in Part III discuss concepts from an applied perspective and incorporate case studies to highlight key concepts in action. While it was beyond the scope of this book to include all potential areas, chapters seek to cover a broad range of important systemic themes. They complement one another by focusing on the role of community psychology in diverse, but related, ecological contexts. Topics presented in this part of the *Handbook* include discussion of feminist community leaders with a focus on strategies to promote leadership among women who face barriers to leadership (Chapter 10); components of resiliency theory with an application to the experience of the Flint, Michigan community (Chapter 11); building community resilience through disaster reduction efforts (Chapter 12); discussion of the consumer recovery movement (Chapter 13); examining the concept of neighborhood with a focus on neighborhood empowerment in the South Ward of Newark, New Jersey (Chapter 14); the application of a transculturally informed approach to developmental neuropsychology (Chapter 15); the relationship between community well-being and environmental policies via a case study of the Gowanus community in Brooklyn, New York (Chapter 16);

discussion of FSS offered at Ronald McDonald House in response to families with children facing severe medical illnesses (Chapter 17); consideration of the implementation of mental health services within prayer camps in Ghana (Chapter 18); the impact of social media on our sense of community (Chapter 19); promoting educational access via the case study presentation of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Guided Pathways Project (Chapter 20); the psychological impact of climate change with consideration of experiences in Syria, Tuvalu, Haiti, and Central America (Chapter 21); understanding the connection between government size and the implementation of public services (Chapter 22); a public health approach to delinquency and incarceration with a focus on the USA and Australia (Chapter 23); presentation of a toolkit to develop school–family–community connections at urban middle schools (Chapter 24); experiences of immigration among women (Chapter 25); a transcultural approach to working with youth with neurodevelopmental disabilities (Chapter 26); provision of mental health services on college campuses (Chapter 27); and supporting LGBTQ+ communities (Chapter 28).

Part IV – Where Do We Go from Here? Gaps and Opportunities for Community Psychology focuses on next steps and future directions for community psychology. The two chapters that make up this section focus on significant gaps in research and practice in community psychology (Chapter 29). The *Handbook's* concluding chapter presents a call for action for community psychology with a focus on ways to address gaps in research and practice moving forward within an interdisciplinary, transnational, ecological approach (Chapter 30).

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