

# COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

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Community psychology is a relative newcomer to the applied psychology field and has a focus on social change and social justice (Kagan et al., 2011). As a field it can be understood in three ways (Kagan et al., 2011: 471). First, as a psychological paradigm distinct from other applied fields: a form of critical psychological praxis with a particular ontology, epistemology, methodology, ethics and politics. Second, as a perspective that can inform and be integrated with other forms of applied psychology (as in community counselling psychology, community organisational psychology, community environmental psychology, community clinical psychology and so on). Third, it can be seen as a practice that can sometimes lie disguised in other community practices, such as community development, community organising, community health promotion and community work. In order to stimulate and support community psychology, we will need to:

- be flexible about the nature of community psychology but retain a reflective and critical stance on both it and other forms of psychology praxis;
- recognise that theory and practice, and research and action, are inseparable;
- retain a focus on social marginalisation and social change, and work with and celebrate diversity in all its forms with a focus on reducing inequality;
- collaborate with those who might be at the receiving end of practice from the start;
- identify the value base underpinning work for social justice and social change and be clear about how to ensure these values are not compromised in practice;
- think and work interprofessionally and interdisciplinarily, and prepare practitioners through interprofessional and non-professional learning opportunities;
- recognise that expertise by experience is as valuable as professional expertise and that popular (lay) and scientific (expert) knowledge should be combined;
- be prepared to acknowledge the contribution other people have made to the work – change is rarely achieved by community psychologists who at best can facilitate change;
- adopt a systemic approach that sees individual behaviour and experience as embedded in numerous social institutions and a wider social, historical and cultural context;
- not be precious about method and adopt a pluralistic approach that is determined by the issue at stake, the practical possibilities and the potential for the impact of any findings;
- seek to identify the implications of praxis at local, regional and global levels and find ways to maximise the impact of work undertaken through the development of partnerships and international links;
- be prepared to stand up and speak for what is right and to promote practice-based evidence;
- recognise that communities are made of people with experience and knowledge, but that connections between communities can be supported in order to achieve wider-scale impetus for change and social justice;
- understand the interconnectedness of things and find new ways to promote community