

Community Psychology

AN ORIENTATION TO THE FIELD

BUILDING BLOCKS OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

Social justice. Action-oriented research. Global in nature. Influencing public policy. Working for empowerment. Multidisciplinary in focus. Celebrating culture. Preventing harm. Behavior in context. Social action. Supporting community strengths. Reducing oppression. Promoting well-being. Scientific inquiry. Honoring human rights. Respecting diversity.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY?

“Community psychologists go beyond an individual focus and integrate social, cultural, economic, political, environmental, and international influences to promote positive change, health, and empowerment at individual and systemic levels.”

COMMON RESPONSIBILITIES

- Expand helping beyond traditional psychotherapy
- Engage in action-oriented research to develop, implement, and evaluate programs
- Better understand multiple influences of social environment on health and well-being
- Build collaborative relationships w/ community members, groups, and organizations
- Consult w/ and provide tools to organizations to build capacity to address social problems
- Analyze government, civic life, and workplace settings to understand and improve fair and diverse participation
- Fight oppression, work to reduce social inequalities, and work w/ marginalized people toward empowerment

DEGREE OPTIONS

- **Masters-Level**
 - 2 years to complete coursework, field work, and capstone project/thesis
 - Focus on practicing community psychology for hands-on skills
- **Doctoral-Level**
 - 4-6 years to complete coursework, field work, and dissertation
 - Focus on practical skills and more comprehensive research skills
- **Typical courses include:**
 - Social psychology
 - Advanced research methods
 - Organizational structure and community development
 - Intervention and social change
 - Prevention theories and practices
 - Empowerment theories and practices
 - Personal development
 - Social justice and diversity
 - Health psychology
 - Statistics

CAREER OPTIONS IN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

Community psychologist work as educators, professors, program directors, consultants, policy developers, evaluators, and researchers in community organizations, universities, or government agencies to promote health and well-being. Some typical titles include:

- Director of a community service agency or charitable foundation
- Evaluators of community programs, policies, and grants
- Self-employed consultant to community development organizations
- Community or neighborhood council advisor
- Health prevention researchers or community health program implementer
- Grant writer
- Community mental health worker
- Grassroots organizer
- Professor or researcher at a college or university
- Director of research at mental health or community-based center

STANDARDS FOR GRADUATE PREPARATION

Community psychology programs ensure that all candidates demonstrate basic professional competencies, including both knowledge and skills, in the foundational competencies defined by the Community Psychology Practice Council and Council of Education Programs. The 18 competencies include:

- Ecological perspectives
- Empowerment
- Sociocultural and cross-cultural competence
- Community inclusion and partnership
- Ethical, reflective practice
- Program development, implementation, and management
- Prevention and health promotion
- Community leadership and mentoring
- Small and large group processes
- Resource development
- Consultation and organizational development
- Collaboration and coalition development
- Community development
- Community organizing and advocacy
- Public policy analysis, development, and advocacy
- Community education, information dissemination, and building public awareness
- Participatory community research
- Program evaluation

APPLICATION PROCESS TIPS

- Written application materials are typically due December 1
 - Personal statement, resume/CV, GRE scores, Letters of Recommendation
- If programs decide that you “look good on paper,” they will invite you to campus for an interview day!
- Interview day is all about determining how good of a “fit” there is between you and the program.
 - Remember... this goes both ways. This is your chance to see whether the program matches your needs.

INTERVIEW DAY TIPS

- Come prepared!
 - Check out the program's website ahead of time to refresh your memory of the faculty you will be meeting with. Make note of the faculty's research areas, and brainstorm questions or talking points you may want to use in interview sessions. This goes for faculty members beyond the one you indicated interest in working with.
 - Make note of what stood out to you about the particular program you are visiting with. What sets it apart from the others? You can almost guarantee that you will be asked, "Why this program?" during your interview day experience.
 - Because interview days can happen several months after you submitted your application, it may be helpful to review your own CV and personal statements so that you don't forget about key experiences or talking points.
- Ask questions
 - Ask questions to faculty and students alike. Asking questions demonstrates your interest in the program.

INTERVIEW DAY TIPS (CONT.)

- Whenever possible, attend the extra social events hosted by the program
 - This can help you get a better understanding of what the students and faculty are like. If the program offers an event the evening before interviews, this is a great way to settle nerves and make introductions before the big day.
- Don't think of the other interviewees as your "competition"
 - Be mindful of your social interactions with everyone at interview day, not just the students and faculty at the graduate program. It may reflect poorly on you if you ice others out and appear rude.
- Be yourself!
 - While professionalism is important during interviews, it's just as important to be yourself.
 - Dress for the occasion (business casual or business professional, depending on the recommendations of the program), but make sure you feel comfortable and confident. This will help your personality shine through.

**Best of luck during the
application process!**

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