8

Anti-Oppressive Practice With Communities

A number of terms are used to describe practice at the community level, including *community practice, community intervention, community organization,* and *community organizing*. While they are sometimes used interchangeably, a distinction is usually made between *community organizing* and *community organization*. In the social work field, community organizing is often identified as a subcategory of community organization, yet some community organizers, often from the labor movement, see their work as squarely outside of the field of social work (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010). Social workers have typically embraced a number of different models and processes in community work, which are often identified as community organization work.

For clarity, we use the term *community intervention* or *community practice* to describe the social work practice of intervening at the community level. Community intervention falls between micro-level work with individuals and families and macro-level work in large-scale movements and state or federal policy practice.

> What does the term *community* mean to you? Before reading on, we encourage you to think about the various ways you identify community. What is encompassed in the term? What is excluded? What community or communities do you see yourself as being a part of—has your community identity changed over time?

Community is a contested and complex concept. A common way to conceptualize community is either by geography/place or by interest/identity. Clearly these two categories are not mutually exclusive—some communities that are bound by "place" may also be bound by "identity." For example, consider a neighborhood that is inhabited mostly by a particular racial/ethnic group or an intentional community that is drawn together in a particular place by certain values or practices, such as a religion or sustainability. Additionally, communities

that are defined by geography may be populated by individuals who share little, if any, affiliation beyond proximity. By the same token, communities that are defined by identity or interest may have widely divergent views on what that identity or interest means, and will also have multiple, intersecting identities.

Nevertheless, community is an important aspect of our daily lives. Geographic communities are typically where the day-to-day interactions and experiences of our lives occur. For social workers and consumers of their services, community is also important because social services and housing provisions are typically delivered at the community level (DeFilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010). Communities also tie us to larger societal forces: They influence labor markets, and they are where most people learn about politics and become involved in political life. All these factors support the potential for collective action at the community level.

COMMUNITY INTERVENTION

Theorizing about "community" has a long history in various disciplines. In sociology, the work of German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies is often cited as foundational to the understanding of community. Tönnies distinguished between *Gemeinschaft*, which represents reciprocal, informal, and mutual relationships, and *Gesellschaft*, which represents formal, industrial, and bureaucratic relationships (Weil, 2005a). A related theory can be seen in German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's earlier concepts of "family-society" (comparable to *Gemeinschaft*) and "civic-society" (comparable to *Gesellschaft*) (Sorokin, 2002, p. 8). Image 8.1 summarizes the two concepts.

Tönnies also applied these two "ideal types" (that is, types not necessarily found in pure form) to the development of social structures over time. As societies have shifted from agrarian to industrial and postindustrial, many theorists, including Marx, Hegel, and Tönnies, saw *Gemeinschaft* as giving way to *Gesellschaft* and the eventual demise of what they considered a more functional type of community (DeFilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010).

Image 8.1 Theoretical Types of Community	
Gemeinschaft	*Gesellschaft*
Agrarian	Industrial
Informal	Formal
Reciprocal and mutual relationships	Bureaucratic relationships
"Family-society"	"Civic-society"

Source: Adapted from Sorokin, 2002.

Modes of Community Intervention

One additional way to understand the various models and forms of community organization work is to look at variations in the work that is undertaken. A community intervention model, first developed in 1968 by social worker Jack Rothman, outlines three modes of effort (Rothman, 2001): locality development, social planning/policy, and social action. Of course, in "real life," these approaches intersect and overlap.

- *Locality development:* A broad spectrum of community members work together to address certain goals or simply to support community well-being and civic participation. The prototype is "community development," defined by the United Nations (UN) as "a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance on the community's initiative" (as cited in Rothman, 2001, p. 29). Locality development typically focuses on community building and leadership development. This mode can be equated with certain feminist perspectives related to democratic participation and consciousness-raising (Rothman, 2001). Community development has often been co-opted by conservative and business interests, which strongly support privatization and the devolution of the welfare state and pass the onus of social development and services onto the community. Some have observed that, although the goals and processes of locality development are laudable, the hoped-for changes are often not attained and the process can be slow.
- *Social planning/policy:* This mode is typically more routinized and technical than locality development, with much less focus on community participation and community building. Social planning/policy often encompasses detailed needs assessments to support the creation and organization of services and programs in a community. It also fosters coordination among agencies in an attempt to avoid duplication of services and to aid in filling in any service gaps in the community (Rothman, 2001). It is important to note that, although planning and policy are combined into this one mode and do overlap, they also have distinct features. Social planning has more resonance on the local level (although it can be done via national and international development organizations) and social policy is often more macro in nature (although it can be developed by local organizations and governments). We examine social policy in Chapter 9.
- *Social action:* This mode encompasses local, national, and international social movement and advocacy work. The focal point is structural change, which likely includes the redistribution of power and resources; the focus is on groups that have been historically marginalized and oppressed. Tactics used in social action include demonstrations, picketing, civil disobedience, and other disruptive actions. This form of practice is one of the primary topics in Chapter 10.

Rothman applies 12 practice variables to each mode and examines the manner in which each mode employs these variables. Image 8.2 specifies these variables. Each mode has its own distinct focal areas and intervention techniques. Locality development is based on engaging the entire community (however defined) through group efforts to problem solve and create collaborations through consensus. Social planning/policy uses data collection to develop and implement programs and policies that address community needs. Social action focuses on shifting power relations via conflict rather than consensus, and works to mobilize disenfranchised community members.

Image 8.2 Practice Variables for Three Community Intervention Modes			
	(Locality Develpoment)	*(Social Planning Policy)*	*(Social Action)*
1. Goal categories of community action	Community capacity and integration; self-help (process goals)	Problem solving with regard to substantive community problems (task goals)	Shifting of power relationships and resources; basic institutional change (task or process goals)
2. Assumptions concerning community structure and problem conditions	Community eclipsed, anomie; lack of relationships and demographic problem-solving capacities; static traditional community	Substantive social problems, mental and physical health, housing, recreation, etc.	Aggrieved populations, social injustice, deprivation, inequality
3. Basic change strategy	Involving a broad cross section of people in determining and solving their own problems	Gathering data about problems and making decisions on the most logical course of action	Crystallizing issues and mobilizing people to take action against enemy targets
4. Charcteristic change tactics and techniques	Consensus; communication among community groups and interests; group discussion	Consensus or conflict	Conflict conformation, direct action, negotiation
5. Safer practitioner roles	Enabler-catalyst, coordinator; teacher of problem-solving skills and ethical values	Fact gatherer and analyst, program implementer, expediter	Activist, advocate, agitator, broker, negotiator, partisan
6. Medium of change	Guiding small, task-oriented groups	Guiding formal organizations and treating data	Guiding mass organizations and political processes

	(Locality Develpoment)	(Social Planning Policy)	(Social Action)
7. Orientation toward power structure(s)	Members of power structure as collaborators in a common venture	Power structure as employers and sponsors	Power structure as external target of action; oppressors to be coerced or overturned
8. Boundary defnition of the beneficiary system	Total geographic community	Total community or community segment	Community segment
9. Assumptions regarding interests of community subparts	Common interests or reconcilable differences	Interests reconcilable or in conflict	Conflicting interests which are not easily reconcilable, scarce resources
10. Beneficiaries	Citizens	Consumers	Victims
11. Conception of beneficiary role	Participants in an interactional problem-solving process	Consumers or recipients	Employers, constituents, members
12. Use of empowerment	Building the capacity of a community to make collaborative and informed decisions; promoting feeling of personal mastery by residents	Finding out from consumers about their needs for service; informing consumers of their service choices	Achieving objective power for beneficiary system the right and means to impact community decisions; promoting a feeling of mastery by participants

Source: Rothman, J. (1996). The interweaving of community intervention approaches. *Journal of Community Practice,* 3(3-4), 69–99. Taylor & Francis Ltd. http://www.informaworld.com

As can be seen in Image 8.2, there are some areas of overlap between modes. For example, a blending of locality development and social action can be seen in practices that combine education and consciousness-raising with social action. Social action organizations like the United Farm Workers may primarily focus on advocacy (social action) for farm workers, yet mutual aid and community building (locality development) may be a component of the organization. It is also possible that community practice can incorporate all three modes at once.

Can you think of other examples of community practice that illustrate these intersections?

Rothman's classic three-mode schematic has been expanded into an eight-mode model of community practice that can be understood and practiced through the contexts of multiculturalism, feminism, human rights, and globalization:

- Neighborhood and community organizing: defined by geography
- Organization of functional communities: defined by characteristic or goal (such as members of the LGBTQA community organizing across geographical boundaries around a common goal or an international organization working on anti-poverty initiatives)
- Community social and economic development: primarily focused on impoverished communities
- Social planning: primarily concerned with planning and integrating various services
- Program development and community liaison: addresses a specific service or program that the community requires
- Political and social action: seeks social justice via policy change at a local or state level
- Social movement: addresses larger societal and structural changes that result in paradigm changes among the general public
- Coalition building: brings together multiple organizations to develop a stronger power base for enacting social change (Gamble & Weil, 2010)

A Brief History of Community Practice

Social work sees community practice as historically connected with the settlement house movement. However, labor organizers and other community organizers tend to align their history with Saul Alinsky and his organizing work in the 1930s—ignoring or even disdaining social work examples. Activists of color often have yet another frame of reference, focusing on W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey's work in the 1920s. Despite these differences, these organizing efforts are still located in similar political or historical moments (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010).

When examining the history of social work in communities, one helpful framework is to distinguish between dissensus—periods of progressive community efforts—and consensus—periods of conservative or retrenchment efforts (Piven & Cloward, 1979). No era is wholly one of either dissensus or consensus, but there are clearly dominant movements based in the political and historical climate. Most social worker theorists identify three progressive "heydays" of dissensus in U.S. community work: 1900–1920, 1930–1946, and 1960–1975 (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010). Image 8.3 shows these periods, as well as the periods of conservative community work (discussed later).

Image 8.3 Social and Political Developments and Predominant Type of Community Practice			
	Social and Political Developments	*Conservative Community Practice*	*Progressive Community Practice*
1900			Progressive Era
1910	World War I		
1920	Great Depression, Red Scare	Social Planning Era	
1930	New Deal		
1940	World War II		Depression and Post-Depression Era
1950	McCarthyism	Neighborhood Associations Era	
1960	War in Vietnam, Antiwar movement		Civil Rights Era
1970	Oil embargoes	Anti-Abortion, Christian, and New Right Era	
1980	Trickle-down economics		
1990	Gulf War		
2000	9/11 attacks, Iraq War, Great Recession		
2010	Tea Party Movement		

Progressive Era (1900–1920)

During the Progressive Era, the more progressive settlement houses, particularly in New York City and Chicago, developed a community-based practice with four essential elements (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010, p. 45):

- Focus on social and economic conditions: Settlement workers rejected the attribution of poverty to individuals' actions, which was common to charitable work, and instead emphasized the conditions that oppressed workers and immigrants.

- Integrated approach: Settlement workers sought to provide services, engage with residents and the community, and develop "cross-class solidarity" between residents and settlement workers.
- Communitarian perspective: Settlement workers placed high value on building community, getting recent immigrants to participate, and developing local networks within the community.
- Advocacy: Settlement workers were willing to participate in political campaigns and movements in the pursuit of "social, political, and economic justice at the local, state, and even national level."

Settlement houses also created the National Federation of Settlements in 1911 so they could harness their collective power together to advocate for larger political and structural changes.

The work of Lugenia Burns Hope and the Atlanta Neighborhood Union is another example of Progressive Era organizing. Hope had worked in social service and advocacy organizations in Chicago, where she met Jane Addams and was influenced by the work being done at Hull House. When she moved to Atlanta she was drawn into community work. In 1908, the death of a young local woman motivated Hope to call a neighborhood meeting to assess the community's interest in settlement work. This was the beginning of the Neighborhood Union, which would be at the forefront of activism in the Black communities of Atlanta. Using community surveys and assessments, the Union identified numerous concerns to members of these communities, such as lack of proper lighting and sewage facilities, poor housing, and dilapidated school buildings. The Union was instrumental in providing health services through a health clinic and public health education programs, improving housing conditions, and supporting the development of recreational areas; it also advocated for improvements in the public education system (Rouse, 2004).

Depression and Post-Depression Era (1930–1946)

During the Depression/post-Depression era, dire economic conditions prompted critiques and dissent regarding capitalism and the manner in which the economic system had failed. Local and national organizing became much more radical than was apparent during the more conservative 1920s. The strategies and tactics at this time became more militant. For many historians, this period is seen as the foundation of conflict-based organizing work (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010).

This more dynamic organizing period was based on a burgeoning and vibrant radical union movement and the creation of New Deal social welfare policies. Some of the primary organizing groups at this time included the Communist Party, the Catholic Worker Movement, and Saul Alinsky's early Back of the Yards project in the slums behind Chicago's Union Stock Yards. Organizing work, particularly through the Communist Party, was a combination of local and state and national organizing. For example, the Unemployed Councils, developed

through the Communist Party, were local groups that addressed evictions, unemployment, hunger, and racism. While some of the organizing work was broader in scope, Alinksy tended to privilege local organizing in his work and maintained a suspicion of ideological organizing, seeing it as undemocratic.

Civil Rights Era (1960–1975)

From 1960 to 1975 there was an upsurge in large-scale social movement activity, which developed from local community organizing and sparked new community organizing efforts. In the 1950s, *Brown v. Board of Education* and the bus boycotts initiated by the Montgomery Improvement Association laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement, supported by groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panthers, and others. Drawing on the tactics of these groups, other groups, such as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Brown Berets, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), engaged in organizing and activism throughout this period. Other contributing factors during this era included the federal Great Society programs initiated through Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty and the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity, which required the "maximum feasible participation" of community members experiencing poverty in the development of anti-poverty programs (however, this program was short-lived).

The primary sites of organizing work also shifted from industry and factory organizing to college campuses and poor local communities, as the activists were not connected to factories in the same way as they had been in the previous periods. Specific to this time was the framing that social movements provided to organizing—that community was framed as "inherently alternative and oppositional to mainstream society" (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010, p. 53).

Conservative Responses to Community Organizing

While community organizing is seen as a liberal or progressive endeavor during periods of dissensus, organizing has also been pursued by conservative organizations, especially during more conservative eras of consensus. The Red Scare in 1918 was one significant barrier to progressive activism in the 1920s. Socially, there was an increased focus on individualism and materialistic pursuits, and a business ethic replaced community organizing (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010).

Social planning developed significantly in the more conservative era post 1920, which was heavily influenced by Frederick W. Taylor's work in scientific management regarding efficiency in organizations. At the same time, there was a growing trend toward professionalism in the social work field. The focus among practitioners shifted to planning services and developing funding sources—essentially the bureaucraticization of community organizing to create the umbrella field of community organization. As social planning was taking hold,

community work began to encompass interorganizational coordination and social work administration—precursors to the United Way. Funding also became more dependent on local community chest campaigns, which tended to require standardization of operations. While there was action oriented, "radical" organizing in the form of labor strikes and the formation of self-help groups, social work moved toward the more regimented and bureaucratic developments.

Previous organizers, those in settlements for example, shifted programming in this conservative political climate. Jane Addams noted that social work at that time reflected the "symptoms of panic and with a kind of protective instinct, carefully avoided any identification with the phraseology of social reform" (as cited in DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, p. 59). It is also during this time that religious fundamentalism grew and the second iteration of the Ku Klux Klan and other racist and nativist organizations developed (Austin & Betten 1990; DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010).

Post WWII through the 1950s was another era steeped in conservatism, idealization of material gains, the "nuclear" family structure, and nationalism. Community work was seen within the growth of neighborhood homeowner's associations, whose goals were to protect property values and maintain community. Their work was typically related to racism and "white flight" into the suburbs. These neighborhood associations helped enforce deed restrictions, which were restrictive covenants that enabled communities to maintain racial/ethnic segregation. As with the 1920s Red Scare, anti-Communist fervor in the form of McCarthyism had a chilling effect on progressive community change efforts (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010).

Of course, even in this period there was important work being done, specifically crucial civil rights advocacy. The Montgomery (Alabama) Improvement Association and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were active in legal advocacy leading to *Brown v. Board of Education*.

There were also social workers who actively spoke out about the repression of progressive and radical activism. Most notably, Bertha Capen Reynolds, who had been blacklisted due to her association with the Communist Party, presented a paper in 1953 titled "Fear in our Culture." She was not allowed to speak at the NASW conference because of her political views so she spoke at the Cleveland Council of Arts, Sciences, and Professions that was held the same week. She closed her speech with an entreaty to social workers and activists to re-engage:

> What kind of country will we have? What kind of people will we be, as we live in this most critical time of all history? Once we get into motion with other courageous men and women, fear will dissolve in the outpouring of living energies. The point is to get to work with others, where we are, and now. (as cited in Reisch & Andrews, 2002, p. 116)

In the post-1975 conservative, consensus era, Community Development Corporations (CDCs) expanded. CDCs are nonprofit organizations that provide programs and services geared toward economic development with a primary focus on affordable housing projects.

The CDCs grew out of the community control movement, which was a movement that began in the 1960s to shift control of public education to community and away from teachers and administrators. CDCs were originally created to address civil rights and economic empowerment, but became more conservative in subsequent years.

A number of conservative, regressive groups developed in response to the progressive gains and movements of the mid-1950s to early 1970s. For instance, ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights) was opposed to school busing and integration efforts. Other conservative organizing efforts were undertaken by anti-abortion groups and the Christian and New Right movements. Some argue that the New Right has been the most "successful social change initiative" since the mid-1970s (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010, p. 65).

This era of conservative organizing has been accompanied by Cold War politics and a free-market economic stranglehold. Much of it has been top-down organizing, with elites funding conservative groups that promote ideologies that help them remain in power. In terms of organizing by more liberal groups, the last 35+ years have been strongly affected by political climate, and community work has become primarily a matter of community building and consensus work rather than community organizing in the tradition of the conflict model.

Approaches to Community Organizing

There are a number of ways to conceptualize community practice and intervention at the community level; one is on a continuum from progressive to conservative. In broad terms, community organizing has historically been the more progressive and radical practice, while community development has been more neoliberal and conservative. Since the mid-1970s, community practice has shifted into the hands of more conservative and neoliberal practitioners (DeFilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010).

It is particularly important to understand how strongly neoliberal politics, which its adherents consider a more pragmatic form of traditional liberalism, has influenced community practice. Neoliberal practices tend to focus on finances and economics, partnerships with business entities, relationships with other organizations, and the development of community assets (DeFilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010). Neoliberal community practice privileges the consensus model over the conflict model. In many ways, it has co-opted community work for the benefit of capitalism, the free market, and further retrenchment of the state.

Anti-oppressive practitioners need to be mindful of the ways in which community work can be harnessed for emancipatory social justice goals, but also the ways in which the language of community practice can be used to further promote the mythology and ideology of "bootstrap capitalism" (see Stoesz, 2000). In the following sections, we discuss several approaches to community organizing that focus on social justice instead of social control. These approaches are grounded in historical community organizing models and in anti-oppressive theoretical frameworks.

Community Inquiry

Jane Addams and others in the settlement house movement saw group work as a key to civic participation and community mobilization. Their idea of community building can be seen as a "process goal" within Rothman's locality development mode of community intervention (Rothman, 2001). However, the work of the settlement house groups extended far beyond developing a sense of community, as they moved from community building to action.

So that they could develop plans of action that were tied directly to the needs of the community, workers at Hull House and other progressive settlement houses used community assessments to understand community problems from the ground up. The "investigations" that the settlement house members engaged in included assessing garbage collection and sanitation efforts, housing conditions, and plumbing conditions related to a typhoid outbreak. These investigations were often initiated because the community identified a problem, such as higher death rates in their neighborhood. The settlement house members then set out to collect information to determine what may be causing the problem so they could devise a plan of action.

In one example, Addams and her colleagues undertook the "systematic investigation of the city system of garbage collection, both as to its efficiency in other wards and its possible connection with the death rate in the various wards of the city" (Addams, 1990, p. 165). After discussing these issues with the Hull House Women's Club, the women went out three times a week to investigate the conditions of the alleys and sent reports from the investigations to the health department. As a result, Addams was named sanitation inspector of the ward and was able to push for a number of improvements during the time she held this position. These investigations also prompted the settlement house workers to gather additional information regarding housing conditions, as their initial observations had uncovered "wretched housing conditions" (1990, p. 168).

The intersections of group work, community building, participatory democracy, needs assessment, and collaborative social action are clearly seen in many of the efforts and successes of the settlement house workers. This assessment process, which may be called community inquiry (Bruce, 2008), is a process of critical praxis in which the community is seen as a "living social organism" (Bruce, 2008, p. 11) where people's values, beliefs, and lived experiences are harnessed through inquiry, which leads to action.

A present-day example of the community inquiry process is the work of members of the Paseo Boricua community in Chicago, a "contemporary Hull House" (Bruce, 2008, p. 12). Initiatives and projects are led by community members and grounded in community organizations, such as the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. For example, when the community recognized that only 25% of the youth in their community were graduating from high school, they created an alternative high school within the cultural center; in 2008, it had a 75% graduation rate. A project undertaken by the high school science teacher, Carlos DeJesus, exemplifies the use of community inquiry to meet the needs of the community. Students learned about gardening, urban culture, community wellness and economic development. This inquiry

resulted in students growing plants to create salsa de sofrito, which they bottled and sold. This project is grounded in their own community and not only enables them to learn, but also taps into issues of economic development, cultural awareness, and environmentalism.

Community Mobilization

Saul Alinsky is seen by some as the founder of modern community organizing. His organizing work in Chicago in the late 1930s (i.e., a poor slum area on the Chicago south side which came to be known as "Back of the Yards") was the start of a career of close to 40 years of community organizing. By creating coalitions of seemingly disparate groups, including local union workers, church leaders, and community members, Alinsky organized the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, which successfully made gains in a variety of arenas, including child welfare and public school improvement (Pyles, 2009). While Alinsky's early work focused on labor organizing with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), he expanded his focus shortly thereafter, organizing communities around issues of poverty, labor, and racism and mobilizing them for action. In an interview shortly before his death in 1972, Alinksy states:

> What I wanted to try to do was apply the organizing techniques I'd mastered with the C.I.O. to the worst slums and ghettos so that the most oppressed and exploited elements in the country could take control of their own communities and their own destinies. Up till then, specific factories and industries had been organized for social change, but never entire communities. This was the field I wanted to make my own—community organization for community power and for radical goals. (Alinsky, 1972b, p. 1)

Alinsky was known for promoting tactics that would take "the enemy" by surprise and would be unnerving and unpredictable. He outlines thirteen "rules" related to organizing tactics in his book *Rules for Radicals,* which include these five:

- Power is not what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have.
- Never go outside the experience of your people.
- Whenever possible, go outside the experience of your enemy.
- A good tactic is one your people enjoy.
- A tactic that drags on too long can be a drag.

Alinsky believed that the role of a community organizer was to come into a community from the outside and—by listening to the community issues and "rubbing raw the resentments of the people" as a way to counteract "quiet desperation" (1972a, p. 116)—to eventually recruit community members who would take over the project. He also felt that it was imperative to develop winnable goals as a way to maintain community motivation and buy-in. Characteristics of a good organizer, according to Alinksy, included curiosity, irreverence,

imagination, a sense of humor, "a bit of blurred vision of a better world" (p. 75), an organized personality, "a free and open mind, and political relativity" (p. 79). He also stressed the need for an organizer to have confidence in the form of a strong "ego." An organizer should be "a well-integrated political schizoid" (p. 78), which is a person who can commit to the need to polarize an issue 100%, yet also know there may come a time for negotiation. He situated his brand of organizing solidly within the conflict perspective, which holds that "all new ideas arise from conflict" (p. 79). It is also interesting to note that Alinsky and other organizers of a similar propensity felt that social work training in community organizing does not truly get at the source of community problems and has the effect of turning an exciting field into a boring one (Fisher, 1999).

The Alinksy tradition has been critiqued on a number of fronts, such as privileging the role of the outsider, essentially subscribing to an "end justifies the means" approach, prioritizing a utilitarian "winning" approach, and focusing on "organizing for power" without determining what power was to be used and how. However, Alinsky and those who followed in his footsteps made a significant impact on the field of community organizing. Placing a premium on mobilizing communities by developing leaders and building on successes while consistently viewing community issues through a lens of power relationships are valuable contributions that continue to be an important influence on community work for social justice.

Popular Education

Popular education approaches share some common features, many of which resonate with anti-oppressive goals and practices. One of the core components of this form of community organization is the belief that the individuals and communities most affected by the issues at hand are the ones who can best identify the issues and the solutions—they are the "experts" (Baker & Williams, 2008; Pyles, 2009).

Popular education approaches are based in the work of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (see Chapter 3), Myles Horton's work at the Highlander Research and Education Center (formerly the Highlander Folk School), and participatory research methodologies, such as participatory rural appraisal. Horton's work, like Freire's, is firmly grounded in participatory dialogue as a way to engage community members to tap into their own knowledge through their lived experiences. Both Horton and Freire saw this as the groundwork for social change, calling this type of knowledge "people's knowledge" (Horton & Friere, 1990, p. 98).

The Highlander Research and Education Center, co-founded in 1932 by Horton and Don West, used popular education philosophy and techniques in their trainings and workshops, hosting grassroots leaders working in labor unions, the Civil Rights movement, and anti-poverty, environmental, LGBTQ, immigration, and prison reform movements, among others. The mission statement of the center sums up the center's approach:

> Highlander serves as a catalyst for grassroots organizing and movement building in the Appalachia and the South. We work with people fighting for justice, equality and

sustainability, supporting their efforts to take collective action to shape their own destiny. Through popular education, participatory research, and cultural work, we help create spaces—at Highlander and in local communities—where people gain knowledge, hope and courage, expanding their ideas of what is possible. We develop leadership and help create and support strong, democratic organizations that work for justice, equality and sustainability in their own communities and that join with others to build broad movements for social, economic and restorative environmental change. (Highlander, 2012, para. 1)

Participatory Action Approach

Another style of intervention that sees the local community as the source of wisdom and skills is Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s from the global South, particularly South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The focus of PRA is community development and the integration of community organizing and development through PRA. PRA typically begins when an outside practitioner/facilitator is invited into a community to assist with a development project (Chambers, 2002). Based on an approach that is seen from the very start as a partnership, PRA is founded on the following principles (Castelloe & Gamble, 2005):

- Hand over the stick—turn over the process to the community so that they can do the research and planning needed for their own project; eventually, they become the facilitators of their own process;
- Regard locals as the experts;
- Respect local knowledge;
- Be inclusive;
- Believe in local capacity;
- Let the people create the data; and
- Behave in ways that may be contrary to formal training—for example, knowing when to sit back and listen and letting go of a "blueprint" of how to facilitate.

Thus, PRA is an example of Rothman's bimodal development/planning and, from the eight-mode model of community intervention, a synthesis of neighborhood/community organizing and community social/economic development.

Robert Chambers, who contributed extensively to the development of PRA's principles and approaches, developed a number of exercises for participants in the process (Castelloe & Gamble, 2005). For example, participants map social, health, or demographic conditions. These maps can be created with whatever tools are accessible and applicable—chalk, pens, seeds, or powders. Participants can also create timelines of community events or changes that they have witnessed or that have been documented in the community. In another exercise designed to examine issues of poverty and marginalization, participants identify and make

cards representing individuals or groups of individuals in the community and then sort the cards into groups of most well off and most deprived (Castelloe & Gamble, 2005, p. 270).

While PRA is primarily situated in development in the global South, the principles and tools used are transferable to other community development projects. For example, the Advancement Project's HealthyCity.org program in Los Angeles provides a computer platform for community organizations and community members to create maps of their communities. Users can search through a directory that contains data on services, demographics, economic indicators, health and safety, and housing. They can use this information and their own knowledge to develop a map of their community and supplement the map with personal stories and videos (Healthy City, n.d.).

As with any model, approach, or tool in social change work, PRA can be used for progressive social justice and social change, and it can also be co-opted as a way to maintain the status quo of those in power. For instance, three types of tyranny can be found in participatory development models (Cooke & Kothari, 2001):

- power that multinational agencies and funders continue to wield, even if a project is labeled as "participatory";
- local power dynamics that may continue to play out during a participatory development project and may actually be strengthened by the approach; and
- popularity of the participatory method since the 1990s, which resulted in limiting conversations about other possible approaches (Christens & Speer, 2006; see also Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004).

Sustainable Development

Community development can be seen as having three components: social, economic, and environmental development (Gamble & Weil, 2010). All three forms of development intersect to support sustainable development. The term *sustainable development* is linked to the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development. The Commission Chair, Gro Harlem Brundtland, defined sustainable development as "a path of human progress which meets the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (as cited in Gamble & Weil, 2010, p. 214).

Since the 1980s there has been increased attention to the interconnection between environmental degradation, racism, and poverty. The term *environmental racism,* coined by Dr. Benjamin Chavis, refers to

racial discrimination in environmental policymaking that results in the deliberate and disproportionate exposure of racial and ethnic minorities to toxic and hazardous environmental conditions. These conditions include residential proximity to toxic and hazardous waste sites, unsafe toxic emissions and pollutants in air, water and soil, public and private incinerators, landfills, and other prolonged harmful exposures that

have an adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of persons, families and communities. Environmental racism is also the systematic exclusion of minorities from participating in the regulatory bodies or agencies, forums, institutions, and organizations that determine remedies and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and public policy. Environmental racism is a devastating manifestation of environmental injustice and inequality. (Chavis, 2009, para. 1)

While social work often promotes viewing the individual in a "person-in-environment" context, ironically there is a significant neglect in attention to the actual physical environment. Certainly, social workers have been involved in addressing issues related to housing and housing conditions and have also addressed sanitation and public health issues (as exemplified in the work of Hull House and other settlement workers). What has been missing is an understanding and prioritization of environmental issues—deforestation, environmental degradation, and climate change, to name just a few.

> Think for a minute about how environmental issues affect the people you selected as the focus of your work.

The effort to encourage sustainable development does face interference from outside the communities that need environmental relief. There is a conservative backlash against the wealth of scientific data that compels us to see that the impact of humans on the biosphere is significant and that we are weakening humanity's chances for survival if we ignore this data. In addition, what is sometimes referred to as community development is often "code" for corporate development as a way to sustain a system of unregulated, unfettered capitalism with little or no attention to its real impact on the environment, and on the structural origins of poverty. Since the terms *sustainability* and *sustainable development* are now more commonplace, businesses often co-opt the language of "green" and "sustainable" as a catchy public relations and profit-enhancing maneuver. That being said, there are also many organizations devoted to a progressive vision of environmental justice and sustainability.

For example, in Huntington Park, California, a town southeast of downtown Los Angeles and home to 60,000 residents, 21% are living below the poverty line and a majority are Latino. Huntington Park is also a site of toxic emissions from local industries, exhaust from nearby heavily used highways, and a 110-acre "brownfield"—an expanse of vacant land. Using participatory strategies and a focus on both environmental and economic sustainability, the Communities for a Better Environment "Brown to Green Project" was formed to assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields and is an example of participatory sustainable planning and development.

Social, economic, and environmental health and development are interconnected in numerous ways. Three principles espoused by Gamble and Weil (2010) can enable social workers to promote sustainability in development:

- *Equality* includes respect for diversity in all three spheres (social, economic, and environmental).
- *Opportunity* is access to social, economic, and environmental resources.
- *Responsibility* is the social workers' responsibility to uphold social justice and human rights, to act as stewards to the environment and the planet, and to help more vulnerable communities.

Sustainable development work may sometimes focus on one or two levels, yet ultimately all three levels need to be addressed for sustainable development to be truly justifiable.

One concept that allows us to evaluate the level of sustainable development in a community is human development, which is measured in a number of ways, including the following:

- Human Development Index (HDI): is used by the United Nations to measure the relative health of a population based on scores on life expectancy, education, and income. The HDI provides a somewhat limited picture for defining the communities most in need of help, but it still is a more useful measure than measures such as the Gross National Product or the Gross Domestic Product, which are purely economic measures.
- Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM): include additional information regarding inequalities between women and men. The GDI is very similar to the HDI. However, the GEM includes measures of political participation (via parliamentary seats); top executive positions; and differences between mens' and womens' earned income.
- Ecological footprint calculations: provide data about the impact of humans on the planet, such as how much humans, businesses, and nations consume, pollute, and recycle. The Global Footprint Network offers one such tool.
- National Priorities Project: provides U.S. federal budget information and includes an interactive "trade-offs" tool. Users can try different combinations of budget levels for various departments and thus see the impact of Defense Department spending on social, economic, and environmental development and programs in their community.

Another concept that underlies sustainable development is the evaluation of livelihood, which goes beyond simply paid wage labor to include care labor, which includes all forms of caretaking. Care labor, which is often devalued as being "women's work," could be childcare, caring for elderly or disabled family or friends, or volunteer work. Additional assessments of livelihood can include the prevailing minimum wage, levels of living wage advocacy, and the benefits of microcredit programs (Gamble & Weil, 2010). Considering livelihood is relevant to sustainable development because it is important to assess how the members of a community sustain themselves through their work, both paid and unpaid.

These forms of addressing poverty in a community are often tied to economic justice. But, they are not without flaws as they are clearly grounded in a capitalistic, conservative bootstrap ideology that shifts the responsibility for ameliorating poverty to the individual rather than to social and economic structures. In contrast, a movement known as *economia solidaria,* or solidarity economics, aims to shift the dominant capitalistic economic structure. It is most popular in countries in South America, Africa, and Asia (Gamble & Weil, 2010). A solidarity economy is "built on the values of cooperation, complementarity, sharing, mutual support, human rights, and democratic control over economic decisions and resources" (U.S. Solidarity Economy Network [SEN], 2012a, para. 6). Examples of projects that support a solidarity economy include cooperatives, fair trade agreements, cohousing, land trusts, community supportive agriculture, community-based kitchens (e.g., in Latin America), and movements to reclaim the commons, among others (U.S. SEN, 2012b). Individuals and groups from throughout the world gathered together at the People's Summit 2012 to imagine a world based on a solidarity economy and sustainable development, which was held in conjunction with Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

Guiding Steps for Community Organizers

Image 8.4 presents a framework for organizing community work (Gamble & Weil, 2010). Using many of the approaches discussed here, it includes ten steps for community organizers to take with the goal of bringing together community members and mobilizing them for action.
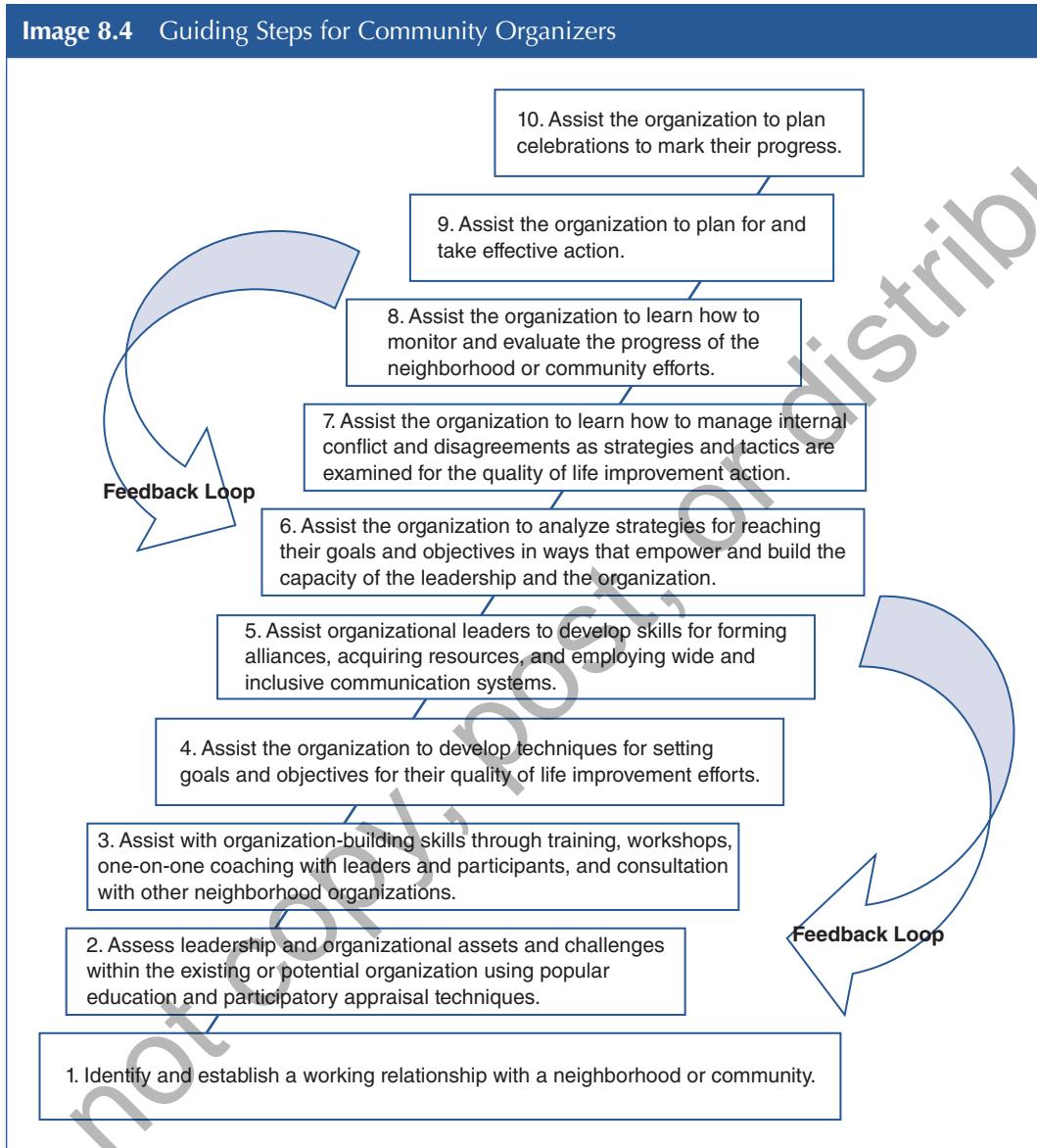
An important component of these guidelines is the feedback loop. It suggests that organizers must continually return to previous steps as new information is gathered or as the situation and context shift. So although the steps appear linear, the inclusion of the feedback loop suggests an ongoing reflective and reiterative process rather than a strictly linear approach.

SOCIAL PLANNING

Social planning is an effort to design services and a social, economic, and physical environment that serve the needs of a community (Weil, 2005b). It is found in all planning arenas, from program planning and development within one agency, to community-wide planning of services for specific populations, to community revitalization projects and community development projects. Social planning can be found in urban and rural settings; neighborhoods and communities; groups focused on specific social issues; city and regional authorities; and international or global agencies (Gamble & Weil, 2010). One way of conceptualizing planning in social work that brings some order to this complex list of possibilities is to categorize a planning project into one or more of four categories (Weil, 2005b):

- broad-based planning: focused on federated fundraising as seen in United Way programs;
- sectorial planning: focused on a specific population, such as services for the elderly;

Image 8.4   Guiding Steps for Community Organizers

10. Assist the organization to plan celebrations to mark their progress.

9. Assist the organization to plan for and take effective action.

8. Assist the organization to learn how to monitor and evaluate the progress of the neighborhood or community efforts.

7. Assist the organization to learn how to manage internal conflict and disagreements as strategies and tactics are examined for the quality of life improvement action.

Feedback Loop

6. Assist the organization to analyze strategies for reaching their goals and objectives in ways that empower and build the capacity of the leadership and the organization.

5. Assist organizational leaders to develop skills for forming alliances, acquiring resources, and employing wide and inclusive communication systems.

4. Assist the organization to develop techniques for setting goals and objectives for their quality of life improvement efforts.

3. Assist with organization-building skills through training, workshops, one-on-one coaching with leaders and participants, and consultation with other neighborhood organizations.

2. Assess leadership and organizational assets and challenges within the existing or potential organization using popular education and participatory appraisal techniques.

Feedback Loop

1. Identify and establish a working relationship with a neighborhood or community.

Source: From *Community Practice Skills* by D. Gamble and M. Weil, p.127. Copyright © 2010 Columbia University Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

- planning to address physical or infrastructure changes: such as building a new hospital or solar-powered electricity generators; and

- participatory neighborhood or community planning: driven by community members with the support of professional planners who serve in a consulting role.

Social planning can arise from community organizing efforts or from the efforts of a nonprofit, public, or even business organization whose purpose is to plan improvements to a community or to coordinate and develop services (such as the United Way, a local or regional aging council, or an international NGO, such as UNICEF). However, although social planning has potential for social change and participatory, anti-oppressive practice, it also has the potential to merely extend the existing social order and maintain dominant values and structures. It has often been the province of "experts" and is often done "to" and "for" people. Instead, the focus here is on the models and efforts at social planning that are participatory and strive to be "community driven."

Historical Development of Social Planning Practice

Historically, social planning developed through the work of Charity Organization Societies (COS), which focused on rational planning and service delivery. The assumption was that services needed to be rationed due to a greater need than available resources and thus efforts to provide effective and efficient services needed to be coordinated.

The COS developed into the Community Chests, which had two focal points: social planning and federated fund-raising, which is fund-raising through a primary organization that then allocates funding to member organizations. The Community Chests eventually became Health and Welfare Councils, which were instrumental in social planning and resource distribution. The significant need for resource development was the impetus for the development of United Way programs, which were formed to undertake both planning and fundraising, but ended up being primarily involved in community funding. More recently, the United Way is beginning to renew their focus on social planning (Gamble & Weil, 2010).

Planning Councils, originating from Health and Welfare Councils, typically engaged in one or more of the following activities:

- problem-solving planning, typically related to service development and implementation;
- inter-agency program development and coordination;
- agency administrative planning, typically via consultation with a specific agency to assist with agency-specific programming; and
- community policy planning.

There was a significant decrease in the number of planning councils between the late 1960s and 1980s due to increased social planning by the federal government during that time; the growth of specific needs-based organizations; expansion of the United Way; and the need for greater policy planning expertise.

Since the late 1980s, the resurgence of planning councils was marked by the incorporation of the National Association of Planning Councils (NAPC) in 1992 (National Association of Planning Councils, 2012a). It is interesting to note that the resurgence of planning councils occurred during a time of increased focus on community building, which was strongly influenced by the neoliberal political climate.

The National Association of Planning Councils (2012b) delineates the following values, strategies, and methods for planning councils if approached with a critical, participatory, and ground-up perspective:

- An openness to involvement of a wide constituency in decision making throughout its board and committee structures, supporting community sanction for council actions.
- A "big-picture" perspective on community needs, problems, and possibilities for improvements, generating a broad agenda of work.
- A plan of work based on an objective review of data and information from a wide variety of sources, such as census reports, sponsored task forces and coalitions, public surveys, focus groups, and consumers' views.
- Action based on consensus among those most concerned about a particular issue.
- A planned approach for involving those directly affected by critical problems and needs in organizational decisions—in other words, a strong emphasis on a "bottom-up" approach to planning.
- An effective working relationship with all sectors—voluntary, public, and private—to help promote effective community-wide action.
- A close connection at the neighborhood level to provide strong links for community-wide action and to support effective integration of helping resources where people are—in their homes, schools, churches, and neighborhoods.
- A recognition that, for the comprehensive community planning function to occur, organizations, such as councils at the community-wide level, are the critical link—the "intersection" between the neighborhoods and the state and nation.

Participatory Planning

The three primary objectives of participatory planning are to engage the individuals, groups, and communities most affected by the issues at hand; to promote power sharing; and to create a bottom-up process. Participatory planning can range from extremely limited participation (for example, providing a seat on an advisory or consulting board for a community member) to more inclusive, ranging from participation in the initial problem and needs assessment stage through the implementation and evaluation stages of a project.

Community participants can be incorporated into all stages and components of program development (Nicols, 2002, pp. 11–12).

- *Participatory input:* Potential program participants are identified and encouraged to provide input regarding their experiences.

- *Stakeholder check-in:* The program development team includes groups and individuals who may provide resources, mobilization, and support or create roadblocks to the program plan. Joint collaboration may evolve if the stakeholders are brought to the table early, although it may turn out that they are not willing to share power, create consensus models, or truly listen to the participants.
- *Definition of need and program purpose*: Community needs and program purpose are identified.
- *Resource and asset mapping:* Individual resources, program and organization resources, and community resources are identified.
- *Ecological environment assessment:* An ecosystems approach is used to assess micro, mezzo, exo, and macro contexts.
- *Program design or replication* (of an existing program): A new program is developed or decisions are made about how to replicate existing program.
- *Program theory:* All programs are ideally theoretically based, even if the theory is not explicitly stated.
- *Program goals:* Decisions are made regarding the explicit and implicit goals of the program.
- *Policy considerations:* The political environment and funding possibilities that influence the potential program are examined.
- *Evaluation plan*: Plans are made to evaluate program, such as when to evaluate, what tools to use, and what type of evaluation (process and/or outcome).

A common pitfall throughout the process relates to power sharing and stakeholders' opinions of the input of other participants. Anyone on a planning team—whether they are stakeholders (e.g., funders, community leaders, and other service providers), facilitators, or potential program participants—can discount the knowledge and wisdom of the other participants. However, typically the potential program participants hold less power in the planning process than anyone else. They are often representing a historically oppressed and vulnerable group, so their knowledge is more likely to be marginalized. Interestingly, the agency personnel organizing a program development team often become the mediators in power struggles (Nicols, 2002). Also, participatory planning often taps into the community for their feedback and lived experiences, yet does not pay them for their work, which brings up additional considerations related to the question of "who participates?"

Imagine that a program is being developed for survivors of domestic violence. Is it likely that the most affected individuals have the time, support, resources, and feelings of safety that they need in order to volunteer hours of their time to community meetings? What are the ways that volunteers can be disempowered or exploited? How can power sharing be strengthened in a program development team?

One useful example of the challenges and benefits of participatory planning involves a community needs assessment (CNA) in Miami Dade County, Florida, targeting gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth (Craig, 2011). The ultimate goal was to develop pertinent and viable services for the youth. Local GLBTQ youth were included in three out of four of the CNA phases:

- Phase 1: The first phase did not include GLBTQ youth, which had drawbacks. Outreach and discussion with local key informants (such as service providers and community leaders) took place without the specific input of the local GLBTQ youth to assist in the planning approach.

> What are the pros and cons of this choice? Do you see other options for this process?

- Phase 2: Focus group sessions were held with the local GLBTQ youth to gain a greater understanding of their needs and concerns. The initial number of planned focus groups more than doubled due to youth demand and unanswered questions, and included a total of 180 youth.
- Phase 3: A Gay Advisory Board (GAB) was developed, which met monthly for 10 months and consisted of 10 core GLBTQ youth leaders. The group was remunerated for their work with gift cards to a local store, which is one way to address the issue of compensation for participants' work. The development of the GAB was not without flaws, as some youth were not represented—specifically, those who could not access transportation, did not have the free time, or did not feel safe being affiliated with the GAB. During phase 3, a survey instrument was developed and administered to 273 GLBTQ youth in the area to add to the focus group data. The GAB reviewed each iteration of the survey as it was being developed. Tensions developed at this stage, with some of the service providers questioning the need for the GAB to give feedback on the survey. One service provider went so far as to say, "I have worked with this population for 20 years—I probably know better than a group of 16-year-olds what they need" (Craig, 2011, p. 282).
- Phase 4: the GAB and service provider team presented findings to a larger community group and developed a plan for a system of care. The plan included prevention and early intervention programs for individuals, families, and the community. Youth were included in Youth Speaker Training programs and incorporated into the prevention education workshops. There were also socialization programs and youth development programs that provided safe spaces and activities for GLBTQ youth. Additional services included Care Coordination, which provided guidance and community support for youth; counseling services; and housing and reunification services for GLBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Some of the additional challenges for the partnership included the potential that the representation of GLBTQ youth was incomplete and that hard to reach subpopulations were not included. Also, in identifying needs, some of the service providers appeared to stress services that they specifically provided while ignoring other possibilities. For example, counseling programs stressed the primary need for counseling in an agency setting, while the youths stressed a range of services, including safe socialization spaces and services delivered in a field-based setting to increase accessibility. There were also clear generational challenges: for example, some providers suggested that the youth should always remain closeted in high school, fearing that to come out would jeopardize their future careers, yet this was not specifically in line with the youths' perspectives on their lives and experiences. There were also turf issues demonstrated by two agencies that wanted to be the sole provider of sensitivity training for adults regarding issues relevant for GLBTQ youth.

COALITION BUILDING

This method of community practice, even more than others, seems to cut across other community practice arenas. Coalition building is a tool that can be used by community organizers, community development practitioners, and social/program planners, in addition to policy advocates and social movement organizations.

A coalition is a group of organizations and individuals who join together to work in alliance with one another. Collaborations are different from coalitions, as collaborations are more task-oriented, smaller, and likely more time-limited than coalitions (Mizrahi &Rosenthal, 2001). Coalitions may develop for a variety of purposes, including "information and resource sharing; technical assistance; self-regulating purposes, such as setting minimum standards; planning and coordination of services; and advocacy or social, economic, and environmental change" (Gamble & Weil, 2010, p. 326). The members of social change coalitions maintain their autonomy, but share a purpose and decision making in order to influence an external force (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001). Coalitions can be temporarily formed to address a specific community issue or they can be long term, with fluctuating levels of activity depending on the current needs or issues.

The purpose of a coalition can also change over time. For example, a coalition organized by a social or program-planning group may contribute to a needs assessment by sharing information and resources and then decide to continue their collaboration through a planning project. Another common occurrence is an advocacy or social change group coalition formed as a result of neighborhood or community organizing work that eventually becomes the basis for a social movement. Alternatively, a coalition may spring from a larger social movement as a way to integrate social movement activism into local organizing work.

Mizrahi and Rosenthal (2001) stress that successful coalition building has four components:

- *Conditions:* the political, economic, and community circumstances that either support or hinder the coalition's work. Focus group and survey data collected from 40 coalition leaders in the metropolitan New York City/New Jersey area suggest additional external factors that fall into this category, such as the issue itself, the timing, and the social target.
- *Commitment:* continuing involvement of a core group of members who are aligned with a coalition model and with a common goal or issue.
- *Contributions:* pooled resources and strengths, which include tangible resources, such as funding and staffing, and intangible resources, such as expertise and networks. Member groups can also contribute an ideological lens that can benefit the coalition and enable them to build power together.
- *Competence:* three levels of ability that enhance the coalition's efforts: the ability to sustain the coalition in their work to effect social change; the ability to maintain internal cohesion; and the ability to develop trust, accountability, and contributions among members.

REVIVAL OF COMMUNITY PRACTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

As Image 8.3 shows, neoliberal and conservative strategies have dominated community work for 30+ years in the United States. However, DeFillipis, Fisher, and Shragge (2010) identified six ways of formulating community organizing for progressive change under current circumstances, and they are outlined in Image 8.5.

Image 8.5 Principles for Reviving Community Practice in the 21st Century	
Principle	*Rationale*
Understand the importance of community	Communities are central to our daily life and are also connected to the larger political economy, which is the arena for broader social movements.
Organize beyond community	Social change must be about more than a particular place, although it can grow from within that place.
Analyze conflict and power as a prelude to action	Tactics do not have to be confrontational, but a power analysis provides a platform for challenging structural power and transforming power relations, in society as a whole, or in the social work profession.

Principle	Rationale
Unite community and social movement efforts	Many social movements have community roots, and many social movements are sustained through local efforts.
Undertake critical analysis and political education throughout the process	Organizations must not shy away from overtly ideological perspectives—recognizing, however, that any analysis changes with the social, political, and economic contexts.
Make history	Social change depends on action, not just analysis and planning.

Source: Adapted from DeFillipis, Fisher, and Shragge, 2010.

It is not unrealistic to hope that we are at a historical moment that holds possibilities for grassroots organizing and social change:

People make history when they challenge the existing power and when the times are right. But, those right times are few and far between, and they do not last very long . . . We see the current moment as filled with potential, but only if people act. (DeFillipis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2010, p. 182)

STORIES FROM THE FIELD: ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE WITH COMMUNITIES

1 Social Justice Lawyering: How Legal Services Can Fit Into a Broader Movement for Social Justice, by Gabriel Arkles & Anya Mukarji-Connolly   p. 325

In this community intervention story, Gabriel and Anya engage in conversation as they examine how their work in transformative justice fits into larger AOP work through community collaborations. As a staff member at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, Gabriel mostly advocates for imprisoned trans, intersex, and gender nonconforming people around conditions of confinement. Anya represents homeless LGBTQ youth in New York City and discusses her work with FIERCE!, an organizing project in NYC serving LGBTQ youth of color.

2 When Urban Renewal Strikes Home, by Cheryl Distaso   p. 329

In this story, Cheryl Distaso describes her work with the Fort Collins Community Action Network (FCCAN), a social and environmental justice nonprofit. She shares an example of a small housing community that experienced forced relocation and her role in bringing together the community and mobilizing the people of the neighborhood to advocate for themselves.

3 Transformative Organizing through Collective Living: El Hormiguero in Pacoima, CA, by Marcos Zamora-Sánchez   p. 332

In this story, Marcos Zamora-Sánchez describes the formation of a collective living space in an urban community, El Hormiguero. It began with six individuals from various lifestyles joining in a journey to relearn and reclaim the traditional ways of their indigenous ancestors. Marcos's story exemplifies how community organizing at a micro level transforms those involved and how this collective reaches out to engage in the greater community where it is located.

4 Listening to Community Voices, by Daniel Moore   p. 335.

In this story, Daniel Moore describes how community canvassing with a specific political goal turned into a larger community action project. Daniel and his fellow organizers decided to seize on the momentum gained from mobilizing disenfranchised voters to create a platform for the community to voice their concerns. Building on a shared sense of hope in the community, they were able to work together to address policy within the local school system and support the families who were most affected by inequitable policies.

1

SOCIAL JUSTICE LAWYERING: HOW LEGAL SERVICES CAN FIT INTO A BROADER MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

GABRIEL ARKLES AND ANYA MUKARJI-CONNOLLY

Below, Gabriel and Anya discuss their experiences as attorneys working collaboratively within broader liberatory and anti-oppression movements.

Gabriel: The last three years that I worked at Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) as staff, I mostly advocated for imprisoned trans, intersex, and gender nonconforming people around conditions of confinement. That type of work is hard to do because of all of the horrific institutional violence that imprisoned people face all the time. Often, I think that a particular experience both is and isn't completely shocking. It should be shocking, but some of the most terrible things in the world can come to seem depressingly mundane given sufficient repetition. One of my clients said that she was sexually assaulted around 80% of the times she got searched and that she got searched several times a day. She shrugged and said, "You can't really do anything; you just got to get used to it."

I've learned a lot of things from a lot of people over the years about how to do this work and about why it matters. Organizers have taught me to talk about legal problems in a way that is not isolating and disempowering. Instead, I try to highlight to clients that a lot of people are getting hurt by the same rules, and I try to provide openings for involvement with others who are fighting to change those rules. Attorneys have shown me that information about the law is a kind of power and that sharing that information also shares power. Colleagues, co-workers, and comrades of all kinds have taught me linking direct services with direct action and shown me that with vision amazing things are possible. Again and again, clients have shown me what fearless advocacy and commitment to community looks like, as they have stick up for each other everywhere from welfare offices to holding cells.

I believe that if we can support people in attaining the "small victories"—fewer months in prison, a name change, lower risk of rape, access to hormones, a filled tooth cavity, meds for diabetes or HIV, clothes consistent with their identity—they will have more resources available to them to keep doing work that is ultimately world-changing. Of course services alone are not enough, but I do think they can be an important part of social change work. So I try to value the "small victories"—the victories that are actually momentous in terms of harm reduction.

But, some of those battles shouldn't have to be won at all and they still leave our community members in awful situations. For example, I had a client who, like almost all imprisoned transgender women, was being held in a men's prison. She wasn't allowed to take a shower because the prison administrators thought having a woman in a shower with men might be "disruptive" and they wouldn't give her time to shower alone. She couldn't even wash in her cell because her sink was broken. After I wrote and called the superintendent of the prison a few times, my client finally got access to a shower and eventually they also fixed her sink. This client had suffered the harm of not having access to basic hygiene for a long time before I got involved so that was a

huge victory! At the same time, why is it that this woman needed a lawyer to fight for her just to be able to take a shower? And how great a victory is it when she is still a captive of the state and endures violence every day?

One of my favorite parts of my job at SRLP was coordinating the Prisoner Advisory Committee, which is a group of incarcerated people who participate in and advise SRLP on our work. The members decided they wanted a newsletter, so I got to read all of their submissions of inspiring poetry, beautiful artwork, heartbreaking narratives, and visionary essays and put them into a format that would get the newsletter back into the prisons. I also got to work with incarcerated people when we were trying to push government agencies to make things less terrible for trans people in prison, educate lawyers on how to work with trans people in prisoners' rights cases, and share self-advocacy tips with other trans people in prison.

I learned a lot from members, who helped me and others to understand what changes would be helpful, what changes would do nothing, and what changes would actually make things worse. Those types of collaboration I think helped us all to feel less alone and more positive about the potential for change. Getting to do legal observing and other work for and with community organizers also helped me to feel connected and inspired.

Anya: It's an honor to be engaging in this conversation with you. I appreciate the opportunity to think through what it means to be a radical lawyer fighting for liberation from state oppression. In law school, we spent time reading the work of progressive lawyers and thinkers who paved the way for many of us and inspired us to study the law. The day to day work as attorneys, with the high volume of intense cases, can leave little room most days to consider how critical legal theories can be incorporated into our work. But, it is essential to take a step back every now and then to reevaluate our work, our relationship to the communities we work with and our role.

I believe I had just graduated from law school when I first met you, Gabriel. Immediately after law school, I received a fellowship to work as a lawyer at the Peter Cicchino Youth Project, a small law project representing homeless LGBTQ youth in NYC. In fact, we may have even shared the same work space, since SRLP was housed with this same law project very briefly at its inception. What an incredible way to begin working as a lawyer, surrounded by radical, queer attorneys who were challenging the way we thought about direct legal services. Those first few years were filled with so many questions; we were learning how to be lawyers and also questioning what it meant to be progressive lawyers connected to a larger movement for social justice. It was this connection to a greater movement that inspired me.

Like many lawyers, there were moments when the work also felt very disconnected from the larger social justice movement. As an attorney, I provided legal services to LGBTQ youth who were homeless or marginally housed. The vast majority of the youth I served were youth of color who had experienced violence or trauma at home or in the institutional settings where they were living. By the age of 18, most of these young people were living in shelters or on the streets and struggling each day just to find their next meal. Most of the youth I worked with were not in school and spent their days trying to access services to survive. Local and state laws fall short of guaranteeing those in need with adequate housing, a source of income, health care and education, all which are necessary not merely for survival, but to live with dignity. And yet my work many times focused on survival—working to ensure that these young people were not illegally denied foster care services, shelter, public assistance, health care and other desperately needed services. For

many trans youth, survival meant having government-issued identification that matched their identity. In a highly policed city like New York, youth need ID just to enter most buildings. I advocated on behalf of individual youth and when necessary, engaged in systemic reform efforts to ensure that these systems were safe and accessible to homeless LGBTQ youth.

Yet there is always this tension that exists because we are often working for individual goals within a broader, unjust system. The system itself is often the problem. One example is advocacy work in the juvenile justice system. It operates to punish and rehabilitate youth who have committed crimes. As an advocate, I have worked to make these facilities safer for LGBTQ youth. However, I believe this system is inherently violent and punitive. And yet, so many marginalized youth have to be involved in this system and efforts to protect them are critical.

The bulk of my day-to-day work was fighting for the rights of LGBTQ youth to have a safe place to sleep and a source of income. The legal system is not well equipped to handle the realities of homeless and low-income people of color, especially youth. When we saw patterns of discrimination or mistreatment, we considered legal action, but often these issues were more effectively addressed through advocacy or education. The realities of pursuing a lawsuit were challenging for homeless youth since most of the youth I worked with did not have a regular address or phone access and were living very transient lives. At times I worried that the legal process felt too alienating for the young people I worked with. Advocating within the legal system also required a re-victimization of these young people. The legal system pathologizes low-income LGBTQ youth, requiring them to emphasize a physical impairment, mental health diagnoses, and traumatic experiences in order to access services and benefits. While the end goal can be empowering, the process is often a disempowering one. It maintains a system of inequality while benefiting those already in positions of power. It's no wonder then we keep asking ourselves how is it that we can responsibly navigate this unjust system for our clients' advantage without compromising our contribution to the fight for liberation.

Ultimately, change through litigation is slow and often unfulfilling. Even a successful lawsuit requires enforcement. Defendants don't always comply with court orders. Partly for these reasons, I focused a lot of my efforts on working in coalitions to try and change the culture and the understanding within the local systems that most impacted my clients' lives. As lawyers, we went into shelters and drop-in centers where youth sought other services and offered them legal assistance. Through our legal services we were able to see patterns of discrimination and used our clients' experiences to engage in systemic advocacy and policy change efforts. But, over time we realized that we were using our own personal and professional privilege to interpret these problems and to try and resolve them. Rarely were youth involved in the problem solving.

Some of my most important lessons were learned while working with FIERCE!, an organizing project in New York City designed to serve LGBTQ youth of color. In 2000, FIERCE! launched its Save Our Space campaign to challenge the displacement and criminalization of LGBTQ youth of color from the West Village. The West Village is the community where the modern LGBTQ movement was born in response to police repression and where homeless and LGBTQ youth of color gather today. As this neighborhood gentrified, the community and police intolerance for youth of color increased. The youth were targeted for "quality of life" offenses, such as turnstile jumping, loitering for the purposes of prostitution or sex work, noise violations, and things like that—minor crimes that have historically targeted the poor, homeless and people of color in many urban communities. In fact, this neighborhood in New York was the testing grounds for many of the current

quality of life policies that we have on the books today.

The LGBTQ youth of color in this community were considered outsiders, despite having strong roots in the community. But these young people were not property owners and were not considered valuable stakeholders. Decisions affecting their ability to access public space were being made without their input. In response, the youth organized a multi-year campaign to gain recognition and a stake in decisions made by the community that directly affected their lives. I recall some of those early community board meetings and was shocked at the blatant racism and classism that was shared by members of the local community. But, the youth stood strong and persisted. After all, their lives and homes were at stake. And over time, the community of LGBTQ youth of color has achieved incredible victories. They were recognized as a stakeholder in the neighborhood and had the ear of many of the local decision makers. The youth, through sustained organizing efforts, had gained a level of political power that they had been previously been denied.

As lawyers, we did not set the campaign priorities and we did not create the strategies on our own. We used our privilege to support the campaign in ways that did not co-opt the organizing efforts. We conducted legal research, secured meetings with local officials and provided Know Your Rights trainings for youth and youth service providers who were being targeted by the police. This was a strong lesson for me in the power of community organizing and supportive role that lawyers can play in these efforts.

Internally in our law project, we began to discuss the absence of low-income and homeless LGBTQ youth in our advocacy work. Involvement in the criminal (in)justice system was by far the most common legal issue these young people faced on a daily basis. As low-income and homeless LGBTQ youth of color, nearly all of the young people I worked with were targeted by the police. They were targeted for their gender expression, engaging in sex work, and jumping subway turn-stiles. Their schools and shelters and public assistance offices are all heavily policed. Youth often asked us what their rights were when they encountered the police on the street. Many of the youth were involved in sex work and had formed informal networks in order to share safety information and to support one another.

As lawyers we were providing advice regarding these issues to individual young people through our legal clinics, but we knew that this information would be more valuable when more young people could access it and could share with their peers. We also knew that young people were hungry to be a part of broader advocacy efforts to change the systems that impacted their daily lives. In order to participate, they needed to be compensated and supported. And this is how our youth development project, "Streetwise and Safe," was born. Working with lawyers who shared their knowledge and understanding of the criminal legal system, an inaugural group of LGBTQ youth of color studied the information and worked to collect it in a format that they believed would be most useful to their peers. Over the course of a few months, these young people created a media project that was used as a Know-Your-Rights tool for other LGBTQ youth to learn about their rights during street encounters with the police.

1. What are some of the community organizing tactics that Gabriel and Anya mention in their story?

2. What are some of the intersecting issues that required collaborative approaches?

2

WHEN URBAN RENEWAL STRIKES HOME

CHERYL DISTASO

"I want a flower on my cheek, Say-wo!"

Emma, not yet 3, pushed an index finger, muddy from playing in her yard, onto the precise spot on her chubby cheek where she insisted I paint a flower. With her other hand, she very diligently pointed to each color she determined I should use from a face painting kit, which I had in my car as a stroke of luck, on the first of many visits to her home. She was, fortunately for me, more interested in process than product, and quite forgiving of my inept artistic skills. Looking at the creation in the bathroom mirror became part of our ritual, and when she nodded approvingly at what was, in reality, barely recognizably a flower, I knew I had a friend for life.

Emma is one of seven children who lived on Grape Street in Fort Collins, Colorado. I first met her, her family, and her community on a brisk October day in 2008. The previous spring, before I met Emma or her neighbors, I expressed concern to Fort Collins City Council members about what might become of the tenants in what I only knew to be a small mobile home park, slated to be demolished for a mega-shopping center. I was told that the residents were transient single men, typically renting there for only a few weeks, who were satisfied with the relocation assistance ($2,000 per household) offered to them by the City of Fort Collins and the developer. Having talked to no one who actually met the neighbors directly, I decided to go out to the neighborhood, along with a volunteer from the Fort Collins Community Action Network (FCCAN), a social and environmental justice nonprofit, where I work as a coordinator.

The first thing that caught my eye when we pulled onto the dusty dirt road on that autumn day was a tire swing hanging from a branch of a large elm tree in a fenced yard. My eyes followed the trunk of the tree to the ground, where a bright yellow pedal car was parked among other toys. Halloween decorations playfully embellished the porch. This was a neighborhood of families.

After we introduced ourselves, the neighbors poured out their stories. The landlord and owner of the mobile home park, Stan Hoover, had just given them 30-days' notice to move that morning. Emma's father, Jack, shared concerns about finding a new home for his family, changing schools for his children, and finding money to move, all on short notice in a city lacking in affordable housing. I asked them if Hoover had informed them of the financial assistance. He had not. I suggested that I learn specifics about their relocation package, and that we meet again later that week.

Although there was confusion about timelines and details, the City did confirm with me that each household would be compensated $2,000—half to come from the city and half to come from the developer. I told the neighbors everything I learned, including how the money would be distributed and who they could contact at the City. We began to meet regularly at Grape Street to discuss rental possibilities and to brainstorm different solutions.

The 24 neighbors that made up Emma's neighborhood ranged in age from 3 months to 60 years old. They would have put our local co-housing communities to shame because of their

knack for a spontaneous community dinner, or the way they lovingly cared for each other's children at a moment's notice, or how they would pop in unexpectedly—always welcome—to a neighbor's for coffee and conversation. These folks had each other's backs in ways that most of us only dream of. Yet, their homes were barely habitable. As the neighbors got to know me better, they began to openly share the untenable conditions of their homes. The most glaring issues were leaky roofs, sinking floors, degenerate heating units, and broken electrical outlets.

And then there was the mold.

The mold problems in the Grape Street Mobile Home Park were dire. There was a family who had lived there for over two years, and at the time I met them, had a 3-month-old baby. Louise, the baby's mother, fixed up a nursery for him with great care and detail. Winnie the Pooh decals graced the freshly painted walls. Louise added a small remnant of fresh carpet to complete her brand new baby's nursery. Not long after those finishing touches were in place, the entire family was forced to move into the living room to escape the mold that was growing like a cancer in the bedrooms of their home.

Threats of having to move more rapidly also loomed. Soon after the original 30-day notice, Hoover began to serve the neighbors with 10-day eviction notices, allegedly for not paying November's rent. They all maintained that they offered to pay their rent, but that Hoover refused to accept it, leading us to the invaluable aid of Colorado Legal Services. Emails went out over the listserv of Uproot, a local activist group, when the neighbors needed care for children so they could get to legal appointments. Community members stepped up to help on a moment's notice.

As the neighbors continued struggling to find new housing, we were informed by the nonprofit distributing the relocation money that the funds would be partitioned. Rather than being compensated the full $2000, the neighbors would be given *up to* $700 for prorated rent, *up to* $700 for a security deposit, *up to* $300 for a moving truck, and *up to* $300 for utilities. Not only did the neighbors find it insulting that they could not be trusted with the best way to use $2000 to move, but the funds would have been virtually impossible to access completely. The neighbors decided to publicly tell their stories at a Fort Collins City Council meeting.

Jack testified that evening: "I moved in, in August, and I was told at the time that the land was going to be sold, but I would have 18 months. I was also told that a deposit would not be charged if I fixed up the place at my own expense, which I did I came up with $940 of parts and labor that I had to put into this house to make it habitable for my 3-year-old daughter and my 12-year-old little brother, who me and my wife took custody of this year. Also under the assumption that we would have 18 months, we enrolled him in Lincoln Jr. High School, where he started to make friends, started to fit in now I have to rip him out of that school, and put him in another school. There are a few people down there still who don't know where they are going yet. They've been in a state of despair. This isn't how a community should be. Communities should be tight knit."

After the testimonies began, we realized that each tenant was systematically being served an eviction notice in the lobby of City Hall after testifying. From our perspective it was reprehensible, but to the Grape Street landlord, it seemed business as usual.

One of the most telling testimonies that evening actually came from the woman who served the tenants with eviction papers: "I'm nothing but a process server, and everyone now has seen me and knows. I'm a single mother. I have two children, and I work two jobs. I pay my rent. I'm

not behind . . . and I am looked upon by other people as the bad person. But I am all of you people. I've been homeless in the city of Fort Collins for two months with no help. I work 60 to 80 hours a week sometimes to pay my bills. I have to pay my rent and everybody is thinking there's a way out. You just have to work hard. There are certain things that you have to do, and I'm not the bad person here."

She spoke the words of someone who was both the oppressor and the oppressed. They were the words of someone who felt obligated to do her job because she thought it was best for her family, yet who could not reconcile the impact that job had on other people—people who were struggling.

Also present that night was Stan Hoover, the Grape Street landlord: "I'll be honest. I've helped out everyone until some lady mentioned $2,000 and then everything went to hell. Until that $2,000 was ever mentioned, me and my wife had it under control . . . and now I'm the bad guy. That's not right. You got to pay rent to stay. I'm not a mission. . . "

The $2000 relocation money was never Hoover's responsibility, but that of the developer and the City. Thus, his staunch opposition to relocation assistance for the people he was displacing was completely outside of his purview.

As a result of the evening's testimony, City Council directed their staff to make the $2,000 more flexible so that every household was able to access the full amount.

After the meeting, several of us stood in the parking lot, making plans for the upcoming weeks. To our consternation, Hoover pulled up in his Cadillac, rolled down his window and threw coins at the ground beside us. "See, I am a mission!" he declared.

Icy winds often blow in Fort Collins toward the end of November. Such were the days that the Grape Street families packed and moved their belongings. Uproot activists and FCCAN volunteers continued to work with the appreciative families. We worked quickly during the blustery autumn to get the families out before the bulldozing of their homes. We left the mobile home park empty and desolate.

Although many among us would prefer to believe it was an isolated incident, the story of the Grape Street neighbors is really a microcosm of what happens every day. Theirs is not only the story of exposing an oppressive landlord, but of a system that allows such oppression to succeed. It's not only the story of people falling through the cracks, but of a system that allows and encourages such gaping cracks to exist. It's not only the story of a community that formed against all odds, but of the need for people to live together and to take care of each other. It's not only the story of activists stepping up to help, but of the fierce desire to create change in the lives of others.

1. Describe some of the ways that the tenants worked together both to form community and to advocate for themselves when they were required to relocate.

2. Using Image 8.2, Practice Variables for Three Community Intervention Modes, identify the types of practice you see demonstrated in the story about the Grape Street community.

3. Describe additional forms of community practice that could possibly have been used in this example.

3

TRANSFORMATIVE ORGANIZING THROUGH COLLECTIVE LIVING: EL HORMIGUERO IN PACOIMA, CA

MARCOS ZAMORA-SÁNCHEZ

Our collective goal began with an idea. Our idea was to create and live in a space that embodies the world we want to live in. The intention was to build in the community of Pacoima, California, located in the San Fernando Valley, simply because some of us grew up and worked in the area in various capacities.

Pacoima is no paradise, no hotbed of community organizing. It is a forgotten community that is part of the City of Los Angeles. We are surrounded by three freeways: I-5, the 210, and the 118. Most of the city's trash comes to Pacoima; we have three active landfills and thirteen are believed to be around the area. There are roughly 1,000 registered auto dismantlers in Pacoima and the near neighborhood of Sun Valley that emit toxins for our community to breathe. Pacoima also has an airport (ironically called Whiteman!) even though none of the residents in the area own an airplane to park at the airport. Yet, the community has to inhale the fuel toxins emitted by the planes. Because of the industries and toxins located in the area, Pacoima is considered a "toxic hot spot" in the City Of Los Angeles (Liberty Hill Foundation, 2013).

At this point, even considering the many atrocities occurring throughout the world, we understood that it would be best to use our energies in creating a new world rather than attempting to "fix" the one we already live in. It was an idea many of us already shared, but one that only a few can see flourish in everyday practice. Implementation of this idea is often limited and obstructed by social and popular media and those who own them. To begin with, we asked ourselves, "What is autonomy? What is collectivity? What is mutual aid? What does living with dignity look like? What is sustainability?" It looks like this: Six individuals from various lifestyles joined in a journey to relearn and reclaim the traditional ways of our ancestors in the urban community setting. We knew we wanted to live collectively because:

We want to live free of hate.

We want clean neighborhoods.

We need access to healthy food.

We want to depend on ourselves and each other.

We want to live with dignity.

We want a supportive household.

We have the right to live with dignity.

We want to learn and preserve our own music and art.

We have the right to defend our community.

We want to create something out of nothing.

And because "we didn't cross the borders, the borders crossed us."

We knew we had to reclaim and relearn the traditional ways our ancestors once lived, simply because they were wiped out by colonialism and hatred toward indigenous communities for the past 520 years. However, we knew there was not a formula that would result in reclaiming our ancestral ways of living. So we opted to emancipate together, as we knew we would have each other for support. We understood this would not be an easy process, but we all agreed to embark on this learning opportunity for the betterment of ourselves and our community.

Early on, we talked about our individual skills and pet peeves—what we were good at and what our challenges were. We knew that combining our skill-sets increases our ability to incorporate and strengthen what we've gained from the capitalistic arena and put it into practice. Some of the skills and areas of interest for our collective are transformative community organizing, education, gender and sexuality, collective living, arts and media, music, photography, talking circles, urban Zapatismo (a movement promoting community action to make a better world), and urban participatory planning, to name a few. Because all of the members have a university degree, graduate degree, or all but the degree, we expected our collective to offer a space that can question systems of power, privilege and oppression.

As a result, our collective aimed to integrate traditional indigenous customs like autonomy, mutuality, relationship building, and sustainability into our lives. Indigenous people work with what they have, and distribute labor that acknowledges people's roles in their community. Indigenous work follows non-hierarchical, consensus decision-making, an ideal structure to follow as we embarked on building a home. Understanding the idea that people have roles and responsibilities in their community, we actively articulated what exactly responsibilities meant, as well as work. Work for many of us is the notion of a nine to five job. Though some of the collective have nine to five's, coming home would include work as well.

El Hormiguero, which translates to Anthill in Spanish, was founded in 2011. We have opened our home as a community space. We have opted to relearn and unravel our role in community by adopting the concept of work done by the ant, bee, and spider: *el trabajo de hormiga, abeja, y araña*. The work of the ant is collective underground work. It is work that often goes without recognition, but it is essential work for the anthill's well-being: community building, collectivity, and mutual aid. Bees are pollen-carrying creatures, transferring the nectar they gather to other flowers, as they grow. The work of the bee keeps spreading information. The work of the spider is to build webs and networks.

Work from below: El Hormiguero acknowledges that community change occurs within the community. So unlike charitable and nonprofit organizations, which hire outsiders and often involve the community only by asking for tax-deductible donations, El Hormiguero is focused on building community and sharing roles and responsibilities. Our projects are self-sustaining, and people share their skills and knowledge to build community and not to win recognition. Our projects have included the skill sets of all collective members: Urban Regeneration, Queer Healing Oasis, The People's Musiq, The Berry, La Otra Berry, Bikesan@s del Valle Collective and Co-op, La Abeja, Art in Resistance. Our projects range from independent media productions to a

lending library, music and art classes, gardening, and healing talking circles. El Hormiguero has also hosted several events, such as an opening ceremony for the space, an anniversary celebration, several community gatherings, and movie nights.

The philosophical ideas of building from the underground, germinating seeds and coalescing networks with other groups and ideas are the foundation of our work. El Hormiguero provides a meeting space to organizations that are doing similar work in the area. Organizations like the San Fernando Valley Dream Team and Young Warriors, a youth group in Pacoima, meet regularly at El Hormiguero. So the work at El Hormiguero not only illustrates *el trabajo de hormiga, abeja, y araña*, but is the epitome of building rapport in community. We believe that by opening our doors, we will essentially become autonomous and not depend on others to keep doing our work.

The nature of our projects makes it feel good to come home and work there. We know and understand the importance of creating a safe space and being each other's support system. However, there are times where people have felt unsafe in our space. Challenges, such as issues with security, open hours, under aged youth, and alcohol and drugs have risen and been addressed collectively at El Hormiguero. Transformative organizing lets us build on the idea of including all parties and understanding our autonomy when resolving the issue. We do not include the police, as in the past they have stripped us of our autonomy. Instead, we attempt to provide a space for people to share and provide suggestions to move forward. For example, alcohol and drugs are not allowed during El Hormiguero projects and events because our events are open to everyone, though we often have a beer for a personal birthday gathering.

Living at El Hormiguero has allowed me to really understand community and the idea of reclaiming space. We know we live in a collective space open to the community, but El Hormiguero is also our home. El Hormiguero is where we cry, scream, share, heal, learn, reclaim, relearn, teach, and much more. It is a space we continue to build, as we share our experience and encourage others to do the same.

In an attempt to also share our stories about our collective work and transformative organizing in Pacoima, we present at various local community spaces and have been asked to share at several universities as well. Sharing and being asked to share about our work is humbling. We are happy people recognize our work and want to attempt the same in their communities. Imagine if we all lived this way? What could the world be? What would our connections with other people look like?

As a professional macro-social worker, my skill-set has allowed me to aid in strengthening collectivity, mutual aid, and sustainability. The ability to understand people in their communities is one of the fundamentals of social work practice. As a social worker, I am privileged to assist in elaborating and building community assets by focusing on people's strengths and skills and not dwelling on weaknesses. Our work at El Hormiguero attests to the validity of ideas of reclaiming, relearning, and living in a dignified world that we create together.

1. What are some of the tools of community organizing being cultivated at El Hormiguero?

2. How does El Hormiguero's work within the microcosm of their collective represent transformative community organizing?

4

LISTENING TO COMMUNITY VOICES

DANIEL MOORE

In the months leading up to the November elections in 2012, I spent most of my time registering voters, organizing civic engagement clubs at our local community colleges and canvassing for the passage of Proposition 30, a bill that would temporarily raise income taxes on persons earning $250,000+ in order to stop deep cuts to education and provide billions in education funding. In California, the budget was seriously out of balance, and the education system was shouldering a disproportionate share of the pain. Classes were being cut, teachers were being laid off and tuition was increasing consistently and this was only what was happening at the college level. Nearly all public K-12 schools were still feeling the effects of the housing market meltdown that had affected the whole country. Foreclosed homes were not providing support to community schools.

The pain of austerity was being felt among almost all income brackets and races, but most disproportionately by the group of citizens that have the least amount of representation and who have the lowest voter turn-out rate: low-income Latino/a students and their families. In Ventura County, California, as in the rest of the country, the voter turnout rate for college age students, Spanish speaking citizens and low-income neighborhoods is significantly lower than for older (55-64), English speaking, middle-high income citizens. In effect, decisions being made for the entire county are based on a fraction of the population.

Having Proposition 30 on the ballot that fall provided CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy) with a way to connect people to policy in a way that had been lacking for many years. We organized hundreds of volunteers every weekend to work phone banks and walk door to door in those communities that are ignored every election cycle. We spoke with thousands of families and registered nearly 700 new college age voters. High school and college students and their families and friends all came out to speak to their neighbors and peers about Proposition 30 and what it meant for their community. Through these efforts and others like them across the state Proposition 30 was successfully passed and tuition hikes and teacher layoffs were put on hold. This was a victory for college students and their families across the state, but there was something bigger and more powerful to be gleaned from the results of the elections.

In the November 2012 elections the United States saw an increase in the Latino vote like it had never seen in history and our community was part of that. Thousands of Latino voters mobilized in Ventura County, which is considered very conservative, and passed a progressive piece of legislation. The implications were enormous. Politically, the increase in Latino voters meant a potential shift in policy, specifically with regards to immigration reform, but at the grassroots level, where community organizing takes place, these results meant so much more. The election turnout combined with the prop 30 victory not only provided CAUSE with something we could point to

in order to encourage engagement, it also gave people hope and courage to speak out against other injustices they face on a daily basis. People were beginning to sense their power and policy makers had to listen. As organizers we wanted to nurture this sense of power and hope and use the momentum from this victory to further advance the needs of the community. So CAUSE began the year 2013 by asking the community what they needed and what they would like to focus on to change. While immigration reform is an important issue for this country it was not necessarily on the top of the list for Ventura County residents. Instead, we heard about the need for affordable housing, healthier grocery stores, safe parks for the children, and school assistance to improve graduation rates of high school students. Many of these issues had been raised in the past and CAUSE was already working on some but now we had leverage.

In February 2013, I began working with the local high schools regarding their English Learner programs. Graduation rates for Spanish-speaking students had dropped significantly as of late and a recent ACLU investigation found that some of the schools in our district had some of the worst performance records. In California, English Learner programs, supported in part by government grants, assist students for whom English is a second language. This funding is intended to pay for extra classes, Special Programs counselors, college prep events and other supplemental assistance these students may need in order to be successful. As I began going to the schools and talking to counselors and administration I learned that, in fact, most of the "supplemental" programs and special programs counselor positions had been eliminated. Students were no longer receiving that extra help they needed and were only given the guidance services that were standard for English speaking students.

The parents of these students, meanwhile, were only minimally aware of the available services for their children and when they tried to get involved they became frustrated by the bureaucracy of the district administration. One counselor revealed that at the high school where he worked the office administrator did not speak Spanish. This meant that in a high school where most of the students identify as Hispanic, the first person a parent would come in contact with would be someone who probably would not be able to understand what the parent was saying. Needless to say, parents who speak only Spanish had enormous difficulty getting involved in their children's education.

At this point, there was enough external pressure on the school board from the passage of Prop 30, the report from the ACLU, and the newly proposed budget from the governor to appropriate funding to public schools based on the number of English Learners. It would be possible to effectively create change, so long as enough internal pressure was applied. This meant mobilizing the students, their parents and the special programs counselors to attend school board meetings and make their needs and desires known.

At one of the high schools a group of English Learner students wrote a letter to the Superintendent requesting the reestablishment of the English Learner Coordinating Council. The ELCC was originally established with the intent of improving the EL program in the district. It consisted of special programs counselors, administration, teaching staff and parent liaisons. One of its major accomplishments was the development of the "Master Plan," which was a comprehensive approach to improve the EL program that provided accountability for both the staff and the administration. Unfortunately, two years prior, with the hiring of a new Superintendent, the

ELCC was eliminated and the "Master Plan" never was enacted. The students delivered the letter at a school board meeting and a month later the reestablished ELCC had its first meeting. The "Master Plan" was again the main focus.

It was important from an organizing standpoint that the school board not see this as an isolated problem at the one high school from which the letter came. Therefore, we had to ensure that parents, counselors and students from all the schools in the district were aware of the ELCC meeting and were free to attend. The attendance of students, teachers, counselors and parents from the other high schools in the area, highlighted that this was a district-wide issue and that there were a lot of problems with the EL programs at the schools. The ELCC reestablished the tenets of the Master Plan, but the real work of ensuring that the EL programs at the schools were meeting the needs of the students and their families would be an ongoing process that would require consistent participation and vigilance from all parties. The Master Plan does not address all the issues with the EL programs and each high school individually will need to address some problems like hiring bilingual staff.

For these efforts to be effective, there needs to be open and fluid communication between the school, student and the parents, but how can that be established when the front office staff is unable to direct parents' calls due to their inability to speak Spanish? Many of these parents are monolingual Spanish speakers who want to be engaged, but are unsure about how to navigate the public school bureaucracy. In speaking with a parent liaison, who happened to also be the college prep event coordinator, I discovered that many parents call her directly when they have concerns about their child's education, instead of calling the school. The parent liaison/college prep event coordinator speaks Spanish and can direct parents to the right people. It may not seem like a huge barrier, but it is part of a systemic problem that is perpetually preventing people of color from advancing and engaging in society.

Community organizing in this capacity is about addressing oppression on multiple levels. Through our efforts to engage the Latino community by registering voters and providing information about policy that directly affects them we addressed national disenfranchisement on a macro level and oppression in the educational system on a mezzo level. In turn, those efforts provided us an opportunity to address oppression on a micro level with students and their families directly in their community. This is what drew me to community organizing work and is what is so effective about the AOP approach to social work. Oppression and discrimination occur on multiple levels and often concurrently. Likewise, the approach to address oppression and discrimination needs to be comprehensive and individualized. For example, all of the high schools in our district are failing to provide the necessary resources for students in their respective EL programs, but each student is going to need assistance in different ways and at different levels.

1. Apply the basic intervention strategies shown in Image 8.2 to Daniel's example. What form(s) of intervention modes and practice variables are being used?

2. What steps in Image 8.4, Guiding Steps for Community Organizers, do you believe may have been implemented in Daniel's example? Since the story ends as a work in progress, hypothesize next steps using the feedback loop.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the common themes and characteristics found in each story?

2. What are some of the qualities that you believe would be helpful for a community organizer to possess?

3. What are some of the challenges you can imagine facing as a community organizer?

ACTIVITIES

Community Mapping

The purposes of this exercise are to:

- assess and evaluate your experiences as part of a community;
- tell a visual story of your experience;
- teach and learn about your community;
- provide a vision for the potential of your community; and
- identify resources and ways to create a desired community.

  1. Either individually or as a group, identify a community you know well—for example, you could use your university/college.

  2. What current elements consist in your community and what does your community look like? Identify:

     a. Assets and limitations

     b. Physical structures or place

     c. Demographic characteristics of all individuals

     d. Associations, clubs, organizations, alliances, and so on.

     e. Community links and collaborations

  3. What does an ideal community setting look like?

     a. Strengths and resources

     b. Areas for improvement

  4. What are the uses of a community mapping approach of teaching and learning about the community?

  5. What are some of the strengths of this approach?

  6. What are some of the challenges you might confront?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Websites

Global Footprint Network (ecological impact tool) http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/

Healthy City (California mapping tool) http://www.healthycity.org/

National Priorities Project http://nationalpriorities.org

Films

Bread & Roses (2000). K. Loach.

Building hope (2011). T. Pipkin.

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City of hope (1991). J. Sayles.

Erin Brockovich (2000). S. Soderbergh.

Freedom song (2000). P. A. Robinson.

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Harlan County U.S.A. (1976). B. Kopple.

Holding ground: The rebirth of Dudley Street (1996). M. Lipman & L. Mahan.

Hull House: The house that Jane built (1990). T. Ward.

Live nude girls unite! (2000). V. Funari & J. Query.

Man of iron (1981). A. Wajda.

Matewan (1987). J. Sayles.

Milagro beanfield war (1988). R. Redford.

Norma Rae (1979). M. Ritt.

Northeast passage: The inner city and the American dream (2011). S. Wolf & C. Swart.

One day longer (2000). A. Williams.

Roger and me (1989). M. Moore.

Silkwood (1983). M. Nichols.

Store wars: When Wal-Mart comes to town (2001). M. X. Peled.

The Democratic promise: Saul Alinsky and his legacy (1999). B. Hercules.

The fenceline (2009). B. Rasmussen.

The fight in the fields (1997). R. Tejada-Flores & R. Telles.

The Global Assembly Line (1986). L. Gray.

The long walk home (1990). R. Pearce.

The organizer (1963). M. Monicelli.

The take (2004). A. Lewis.

The times of Harvey Milk (2004). R. Epstein.

The uprising of '34 (1995). G. Stoney.

The Willmar 8 (1981). L. Grant.

This black soil: A story of resistance and rebirth (2004). T. Konechne.

We were here (2011). B. Weber & D. Weissman.

Books

Alinsky, S. (1989). *Rules for radicals*. New York: Vintage.

Crass, C. (2013). *Towards collective liberation: Anti-racist organizing, feminist praxis, and movement building strategy*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

Horton, M. (2003). *The Myles Horton reader: Education for social change*. Memphis: University of Tennessee Press.

Miller, M. (2009). *A community organizer's tale: People and power in San Francisco*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday.