

# 4

## The Concept of Community in Social Work Practice

As we neared the end of the twentieth century, the rich were richer, the poor, poorer. And people everywhere now had a lot less lint, thanks to the lint rollers made in my hometown. It was truly the dawn of a new era.

*Michael Moore, American film maker, writer*

This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century—solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.

*Elie Wiesel, writer, political activist, Nobel laureate*

The American city should be a collection of communities where every member has a right to belong. It should be a place where every man feels safe on his streets and in the house of his friends. It should be a place where each individual's dignity and self-respect is strengthened by the respect and affection of his neighbors. It should be a place where each of us can find the satisfaction and warmth which comes from being a member of the community of man.

*Lyndon B. Johnson, 36th president of the United States*

We all have a mental image of community. Fraught with personal meaning, the word *community* conjures up memories of places where we grew up, where we now live and work, physical structures and spaces—cities, towns, neighborhoods, buildings, stores, roads, streets. It calls up memories of people and relationships—families, friends and neighbors, organizations, associations of all kinds: congregations, PTAs,

clubs, congregations, teams, neighborhood groups, town meetings, and even virtual communities experienced through chat rooms. It evokes special events and rituals—Fourth of July fireworks, weddings, funerals, parades, and the first day of school. It stirs up sounds and smells and feelings—warmth, companionship, nostalgia, and sometimes fear, anxiety, and conflict as well. We all grew up somewhere; we all live in

communities somewhere; we all desire human associations, some degree of belonging to a human community; we all carry around some sense of community and communities of memory within us. It goes deep into our souls.

But it is hard to imagine a more elusive concept than the idea of community. Its elusiveness comes from its multidimensionality. Cohen (1985), as cited in Chapter 1, found 90 different definitions of community in the 1985 social science literature. Community means a lot and it means different things, from the romantic and mystical to the mundane. Bellah and his colleagues define a community as a “group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, p. 333). Cohen’s (1985) conception of community has emotional charging, personal identification, and symbolic construction by people. Resting on its meaning, community is “a system of values, norms, and moral codes which provoke a sense of identity to its members. . . . Structures do not . . . create meaning for people. . . . [Without meaning] many of the organizations designed to create ‘community’ as palliative to anomie and alienation are doomed to failure” (p. 9). “Community, therefore, is where one learns and continues to practice how to ‘be social’ (p. 15).” The British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development (2003), following Mattessich and Monsey (1997), define community more dryly as “people who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live.” Berry (1996) argued that community has no value that is economically or practically beneficial. The reasoning is that if something can’t be assigned an economic value, it serves no purpose.

We take a less neoliberal economic position and argue that communities have consummate value. We have adopted Fellin’s (2001) formal definition of communities as “social units with one or more of the following three dimensions:

1. a functional spatial unit meeting sustenance needs
2. a unit of patterned interaction

3. a symbolic unit of collective identification” (p. 1)

We also borrow from Willie, Willard, and Ridini (2008) with our concern for horizontal and vertical community linkages and the nature of the institutional interactions.

This conception of community is compatible with that used by other community practice authorities (Butcher, Banks, & Henderson with Robertson, 2007; Delgado & Staples, 2008; Hardina, 2002) and has the value of recognizing the spatial, interactional, and emotional components of community.

This chapter establishes the basic concepts, variables, and changes related to community life. The following two chapters examine methodologies of studying communities and methods for hearing community concerns. To change community, its parts, processes, and particularities must be understood.

The common elements in sociological definitions of community are geographic area, social interaction, common ties, and shared sentiments. While connection to a territorial base is common with neighborhoods, villages, or cities fitting the definition, functional and cultural communities or “communities of interest” without clear geographic bases (such as the social work community, the Chicano community, the gay and lesbian communities) are also included. Spatial units with clearly defined geographic boundaries are seemingly becoming less important to a sense of community because rapid electronic communication technology enables virtual communities and ease of physical mobility. We can be connected to several communities of interest because we are geographically mobile and increasingly tied together through electronic and other media. We can interact globally on collective interests. As social workers, we need to understand that our clients belong to multiple communities of identity.

Communities provide people with rich social and personal lives. They shape the way we think and act. They surround us with values and norms of behavior, explicit laws, and unwritten rules of conduct. They furnish us with meanings and interpretations of reality and assumptions about the world. They provide resources and opportunities, albeit highly unevenly—places to work, to

learn, to grow, to buy and sell, to worship, to hang out, to find diversion and respite, to care and be cared for. They confront us with challenges, problems, and traumas; they intrude on our lives, and they hold out the possibilities for solutions. Communities are where we live our lives.

The social work ecological model's emphasis on person-in-environment places communities as objects of social work intervention as much as individuals, families, and groups. Social workers can build competent communities. A competent community, according to Fellin (2001), is a community that "has the ability to respond to the wide range of member needs and solve its problems and challenges of daily living" (p. 70). Community competence is enhanced when residents have (a) a commitment to their community, (b) self-awareness of their shared values and interests, (c) openness in communication, (d) wide participation in community decision making, and (e) a sense of collective self-efficacy and empowerment.

## Basic Community Concepts

### Community, Neighborhood, and Public Life

Community empowerment, community control, and community partnership abound in political and policy discussions. Community and grassroots have a salient kind of social currency. They are buzzwords in politics and ideologies of the left and right. By *grassroots*, we mean a bottom-up approach, starting with the people who live in a geographic and social community. *Community* and *neighborhood* are sometimes used interchangeably to mean a local area (e.g., a section of a city or a county, where many residents develop a shared worldview). Residents can unite as indignant utility ratepayers or exuberant sports fans in ways that can facilitate shared community identity and action transcending deep differences.

*Community* suggests people with social ties sharing an identity and a social system, at least partially, while *neighborhood* suggests places that are grounded in regional life where face-to-face relationships are possible. See Fellin (1995, 2001) for an in-depth discussion and definition of community and neighborhood. *Public life* refers

to the civic culture, local setting, and institutional context that also are part of the "environment-surrounding-the-person" (Johnson, 2000). Your public life is available to others. Lappé and Du Bois (1994) provide a delineation of some roles in the various sectors of public life.

Geographic communities evolve in many forms and have been classified in numerous ways such as enclave, edge, center, retreat (Brower, 1996); white versus blue-collar; and boom versus bust. These descriptive structural ideas cannot substitute for the community narrative. Community is more than just local physical space, especially in urban areas, and needs social identity (Fellin, 2001). Residents can share the same geographic space and hold widely differing ideologies and particularistic religious, ethnic, and class identities. They may not constitute a community. Gays, Cuban Americans, and Hassidic Jewish Americans inhabit South Beach, Florida, without sharing the same private languages, political agenda, social interests, or social institutions. A London resident may think about himself more as a businessman or an immigrant from Pakistan than as a Londoner. People in physical proximity—that is, expatriates, international travelers, guest workers, or illegal immigrants—can still share more cultural affinity with those back home than with the new neighborhood.

People in our caseload and communities also have complex allegiances and affiliations. Think of a child who has a father in urban Michigan and a mother in rural Montana and, in either state, bounces from one relative's neighborhood to the next—bringing along clothes, attitudes, haircuts, and slang from the last school that is always one step behind and never quite fits at the new school.

We often bemoan the loss of community with its fragmentation, alienation, and increased mobility accompanied by a decline in public life, with fewer residents involved in voting and volunteering. Today, many people choose their degree of commitment to their neighborhoods and towns. Using length of stay as a variable, Viswanath, Rosicki, Fredin, and Park (2000) found four types of residents:

*Drifters:* Less than 5 years of stay and a high likelihood of moving away from the community

*Settlers*: Less than 5 years of stay and less likelihood of moving away from the community

*Relocators*: More than 5 years of stay but likely to move away from the community

*Natives*: More than 5 years in the community and unlikely to move away (p. 42)

We have added an additional type, *dreamer*, not discussed by the authors, someone who lives in a community without commitment to the community and dreams of being somewhere else, either a past community or a mystical one. Dreamers can fit into any of the above types.

Natives often blame problems on new arrivals, such as have the nativists in America and Europe blaming illegal immigrants.

### Place and Nonplace Communities

The real estate agent's mantra is *location, location, location*. The community practitioner's mantra is *context, context, context*. Where do people come from? To whom do they relate and why? Where is their identity and communities of sentiment? What gives meaning to their lives? Social workers should learn about their clients' place and nonplace communities. Locational communities are a definable area, with boundaries that often constitute a political jurisdiction (Ginsberg, 1998). It focuses attention to a physical and social environment surrounding providers and consumers of services. However, within and outside such spatial and structural communities are other influential nonplace groupings based on identity, profession, religion, ideology, interests, and other social bonds that represent a

more amorphous type of community. Social workers must pay attention to an individual's or family's diffuse nonplace social networks, nonplace communities, and solidarity bonds. Place and nonplace communities represent two forms of "we-ness" and identity. Box 4.1 compares the two types of communities.

A client's or case's complete social history ought to include the client's and case's community history and a client's experiences in communities as well as personal and family history—not only where was a person born, but what the person gained from living in prior locales. Social workers will want to get a complete picture of how both types of communities—place and nonplace—figure into an individual's present life.

### The Changing U.S. Community

To understand the modern community as a context for social work practice, we will briefly review some important changes in U.S. life that have occurred over the past 50 years. The contemporary U.S. community has undergone significant and perhaps profound changes over the past half century. The United States has vast resources and ambitious people with the freedom and energy to invent, to explore, to develop, and to challenge. We also are a very ideological and jingoist people. Some of the changes are positive, but many, unfortunately, are not. Except for its wealth and power, in many ways the United States approaches Third World status. The United States has fallen to 15th from 2nd in 1980 on the United Nations' Human Development Indices (Conley, 2009; United Nations

#### BOX 4.1.

#### Differences and Similarities Between Place and Nonplace Communities

##### Differences

Place—Bounded Location  
Collective territorial identity  
Intertwined processes  
Empathetic connections

Nonplace—Bounded Interest  
Relationship identity and dispersion  
Specialized processes  
Mixed allegiances

##### Similarities

Traditions  
Mutual constraints  
Lack of absolute boundaries

Development Programme, 2008). It also ranks first among industrial nations in infant mortality rates, with a higher rate than Cuba (United Nations Development Programme, 2008). The United States has a higher incarceration rate and more actual inmates than do 36 European nations combined (Blow, 2009).

During most of the last half of the twentieth century, the U.S. economy expanded and especially boomed to end the millennium, only to welcome the new millennium with severe economic recession, corporate greed, financial system collapse, and falling in 2006 to 8th globally in gross national product per capita (United Nations Economic Development Programme, 2008). We were clear about the constellation of a good family and family values, even if we were not always faithful to them and were growing socially more intolerant. The new millennium is accompanied by threats to retirement income and Social Security, with an expanding duration of work life for an aging population. College education, seen as an American birthright until the 1980s and 1990s, has become inordinately expensive. Tuition and room and board at all four-year institutions rose in 2006–2007 dollars from an average of \$2,577 for 1976–77 to \$19,362 in 2007–08 (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). World peace and stability, on the horizon with the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991, appears to have collapsed into global ethnic strife and terrorism. And on September 11, 2001, global terrorism came to the United States.

As Bob Dylan predicted, “The times they are a-changin’” (Dylan, 1963), but not in the ways he prophesized. The social movements of the 1960s—civil rights, community action, women’s liberation, peace—together with the Vietnam War did much to shake the complacency of the 1950s United States. However, the radicalism of the 1960s was followed by conservatism since the 1970s, and it’s still with us.

The 1980s saw the need for two wage earners to support a family; burgeoning health care costs; expansions of unemployment, welfare rolls, homelessness, and crime; and a growing income and wealth disparity between the wealthy and the poor and middle classes. The 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century have reversed some of these trends and accelerated

others. Welfare, crime, and taxes decreased while income inequality, corporate power, and the influence of money in politics increased. Privatization of social welfare and public services as well as government became trendy. Prisons are a growth industry, with many operated by proprietary corporations, and the United States led the world in incarcerations (Blow, 2009). These all spoke of complex forces at work in U.S. society, seemingly unresponsive to easy fixes. Americans are no longer as optimistic about the future as they once were (Pew Data Trends, 2009). Let’s now consider some of the more important forces and trends to deepen our understanding for social work practice in the twenty-first century. The changes reviewed in the following paragraphs reflect our views of what seems significant. They are not presented in any particular order of importance.

- Urbanization and suburbanization continues (Scott, 2001). Most U.S. citizens (over 83%) live in metro areas with a core city of 50,000 or more. Less than 10% live in low-density rural areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Population continues to shift from the old Rust Belt, mill towns, and smokestack cities of the Northeast and Midwest to the Sunbelt of the South and Southwest, especially California, Florida, and Texas. California and Florida had a growth slowdown with the Great Recession’s burst housing bubble. Reflecting the population shift is a change in the economy from manufacturing and farming to information, personal, and entertainment services, technology, and e-businesses. Most metropolitan area growth is in the new outer ring suburbs beyond the old suburbs. Even with periodic energy crises, costs, and chronic dependence on foreign energy sources, the automobile and high-energy consuming, single-family homes still are preferred. Metropolitan area growth hasn’t compelled metropolitan government to coordinate the multiple jurisdictions within the metro areas. Probably the greatest resistance to metropolitan governments comes from wealthier suburbanites’ not wanting to mingle their public amenities and tax resources with the poorer neighboring core cities. The metropolitan areas are becoming increasingly balkanized and hyper-segregated with more

centers of ethnic minorities and poverty, while the outer suburbs are less ethnically, economically, and socially diverse (Scott, 2002).

- Differences between rural, urban, and suburban areas will increase, with rural and city problems neglected for at least the first part of the 21st century. Poverty will continue to be disproportionately greater in rural areas than in metro areas; most of the poor counties in the United States are rural (Samuels & Whitley, 2008). Most rural poor residents are white and non-Hispanic, but poor rural counties, like poor urban areas, have a disproportionate number of poor ethnic minorities (except for the poor Southern mountain counties). Rural areas are less healthy than metropolitan counties (Samuels & Whitley, 2008), and the county in America with the lowest Human Development Indices score is a rural California county, Kings County (Conley, 2009). The natural resources and economic base of rural areas will continue to decline, with low-skill jobs largely lost to even lower-wage global competitors. The wage gap between metro and rural areas continues to widen, as does the gap in college completion rates in favor of metro areas (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). Distance and a lack of sufficient density hinder rural economic development. Rural localities will continue to lose population, especially younger and more educated residents (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). The proportion of the nation's population that is nonmetropolitan continues to decrease (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, Table 28). Agriculture is declining in the United States based on acreage cultivated, total farmland, and number of farms. Large farms (over 2,000 acres) account for 3% to 4% of the total number of farms, 52% of farm land, and 34% of cultivated land. The number, but not the size, of corporate farms is decreasing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009b, Tables 793, 794, 796). The exceptions to these trends are the scenic, high-amenity rural areas with mild climates, which are becoming gentrified and gaining populations, and also the growing green movement in small farming slowing the decline in the number of farms (Hoppe, Korb, & O'Donoghue, 2007).
- The 1990s and beyond have seen an escalating economic inequity in the workforce. There has

been an extensive loss of well-paying, stable manufacturing blue-collar jobs, with job growth in lower-paying service jobs. During the Great Recession living costs outran wage increases (Grynbaum, 2008). Unemployment in August 2009 reached 9.7%, up from 4.1% in August 2000 and the highest since the 1980s, and this trend shows no signs of abating (Andrews, 2009; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). The 21st century has seen high and persistent rates of unemployment and underemployment among older industrial workers and unskilled men and women of all ages. A rising retirement age is reversing a decade-long trend of earlier retirements (Walsh, 2001). Later retirement ages will be accelerated with the decline in value of stock-based retirement plans and pensions and the increasing age requirements for Social Security retirement benefits.

Even with the Great Recession; the Enron, Lehman Brothers, and AIG fiascos; the Wall Street meltdown; the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP); and other corporate failures and bailouts, executive and management salaries and bonuses have continued to increase (Executive Pay, 2009). From 1983 to 2004, the median net worth of upper-income families grew by 123%, while the median net worth of middle-income families grew by just 29% (Pew Research Center, 2009). The middle class made some absolute progress but fell behind in relative terms during the economy's boon years (Krugman 2002). Inflation during this recession is rising faster than the working-class America's income (Cavanagh & Collins, 2008; Grynbaum, 2008). During 2007, CEOs of major U.S. companies collected as much money from one day on the job as average workers made over the entire year. These CEOs averaged \$10.8 million in total annual compensation, according to an Associated Press survey of 386 Fortune 500 companies, the equivalent of over 364 times the pay of an average American worker (Anderson, Cavanagh, Collins, Pizzigati, & Lapham, 2007). From 1980 to the end of the century, the average pay of ordinary working people increased by 74%, while the average compensation to corporate CEOs exploded by a gigantic 1,884% (Executive Pay Watch, 2000; Executive Pay, 2002, 2009; Johnston, 2002c). The average pay for chief executives was 36 times that

of the average worker in 1976, 131 times in 1993, and 369 times in 2005. In 1976, if an average worker's annual pay was \$10,000 and a chief executive's was \$360,000, the income differential was \$350,000. In 2005, if the average worker's annual pay increased to \$20,000, the CEO's compensation engorged to \$7,380,000, for a \$7,360,000 compensation differential (Mintz, 2007).

Studies indicate there is no direct correlation between executive compensation and corporate performance (Madrick, 2009). As the 2008 fiscal burnout indicated, many poor corporate performers continued to receive huge bonuses and severance packages (Leonhardt, 2002; Madrick, 2009; McGeeham, 2003; Mintz, 2007). The U.S. worker now works more hours a year than workers in other industrial countries. The hours in the work year are increasing in the United States but decreasing in other countries (Greenhouse, 2001).

- Unfortunately, social workers' salaries did not even keep up with inflation during the boon era (Gibelman & Schervish, 1996, p. 166), and they suffered more from the Great Recession. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2008, the average salary for community organizers was \$41,790 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). Other social work practice areas had similar salaries in 2009. Social workers in mental health and drug treatment has a mean or average salary of \$41,350, social workers in health care mean salary was \$48,350, and all other social workers' mean was \$50,470. The salary distributions were skewed with the median or midpoint social worker salaries lower than their mean salaries: \$38,200 for mental health and drug treatment, \$46,300 for health care, and \$49,420 for all other social workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). s. The highest mean annual social work category's salary was \$50,470; this was less than 00.5% of the average CEO compensation. It will require approximately 214 years for the average social worker to earn as much as the average CEO's compensation.
- As would be expected from the earnings and compensations differences, the United States now is more income unequal, with a greater concentration of income at the top, than any other industrialized nation. The middle 60%

of U.S. society have seen their share of the national income fall from 53.6% in 1980 to 46% by 2006. The highest fifth improved their share of the national income from 46.6% in 1990 to 50% in 2008. The bottom 80% saw a decline in their share from 53.3% to 50% over the same period (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a, p. 10). According to von Hoffman (2007), "[A] mere 300,000 people had incomes equal to the total income of the bottom earning half of the entire population." Only people at the very top made any real economic improvements during the boon years, and they saw little or no decline during the recession (Madrick, 2009). Tax policies, economic policies, the recession, and a devolving welfare state have led to increasing poverty in the first years of the new millennium. According to some economists, including the conservative libertarian economist Milton Freidman (Hamilton & Derity Jr., 2009) and an economics founding father Adam Smith (1922, p. 17), one's position in the unequal income distribution is largely a matter of birth. James Heckman, a libertarian University of Chicago economist, as quoted by Stille (2001), asserts, "Never has the accident of birth mattered more. If I am born to educated, supportive parents, my chances of doing well are totally different than if I were born to a single parent or abusive parents. . . . This is a case of market failure: Children don't get to 'buy' their parents, so there has to be some kind of intervention to make up for these environmental differences" (p. A-17).

Adam Smith, the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher and later labeled economist wrote,

The difference of natural talents in different men is, in reality, much less than we are aware of; and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of different professions, when grown to maturity, is not on many occasions so much the cause, as the effect of the division of labour. The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between the philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education....they came into the world...very much alike....(Smith, 1922, p. 17)

- The 1990s saw the U.S. economy and world economy globalize and the nation-states and

welfare states begin to devolve. It should be recognized that globalization has been going on since humankind became more mobile than simply by walking. What makes our current globalization different is the speed that current technology allows in communication and mobility. Economic globalization aims to treat the world as a single economic system.

Globalization's intent is to reduce state sovereignty and the constraints of national borders and any social and cultural arrangements and relationships that hinder economic exchanges (Dickens, 2003; Gray, 1998; Held & McGrew, 2007; Stiglitz, 2003, 2009; Tanzi, 2002). Globalization weakens the economy's basic social partnership by shifting the balance of power to capital and corporations, and it reduces the power of labor and the state (land) (Dickens, 2003; Gray, 1998; Mishra, 1999; Stiglitz, 2003, 2009; Tanzi, 2002). Transnational corporations, especially financial ones, have reduced public regulation and responsibilities for community social welfare and any ecological agenda. As seen by the environmental unilateralism of the United States, sustainable global growth limits can be set but they need not be heeded by a single nation or global corporation (Deacon, 1997, p. 54; Dickens, 2003, Gray, 1998; Stiglitz, 2003, 2009). Competing nation-states pursuing global corporations in a global economy discard social obligations to their citizens, with a subsequent erosion and downward spiral of social provisions that can lead to the lowest social welfare denominator (Deacon, 1997, p. 196).

The economic upheavals of the globalized turbo-economy have been as dramatic as those of the industrial revolution. The Great Recession followed a global boom and with a global economic meltdown a global economy encouraged and achieved cheap labor, lower or no taxes on the rich and on corporations (Gray, 1998; Johnston, 2002b, 2002c), corporate welfare, tight money, market deregulation, protection of capital over labor and anti-labor policies, and a decline in welfare state provisions and benefits for labor as employees and as citizens of a welfare state (Freudenheim, 2002; Gray, 1998; Held & McGrew, 2007; Johnston, 2002a; Mishra, 1999; Pear, 2002; Stiglitz, 2003, 2009; Wagner, 1997). In the G7 nations, the globe's top economic

powers, national marginal personal tax rates declined in all seven countries, with the greatest decline in the United States. Globalization increases aggregate national wealth, poverty, and social and income inequality within and between nations (Deacon, 1997, pp. 34–35; Halsey, Lauder, Brown, & Wells, 1997, p. 157; Room, 1990, p. 121). All suffer from the economic meltdown it causes.

With our current globalization, labor is no longer a significant force in the political economy. Labor, both as a component of production and a social institution, is weaker today than at the middle of the 20th century. Labor's decline is partially due to technological innovations, partially due to the anti-labor social policies began by U.S. President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and carried on by their successors, partially due to the successes of the welfare state (retirement, social security, health services and insurance, limited work week, publicly funded education, etc.), and partially due to the loss of community with globalization. Labor is more local as a force in the global political economy. While capital is allowed greater freedom of movement, the U.S. and European Union (EU)'s problems and resistance to free immigration indicated that labor is not seen similar to capital. Even within the EU there is debate and dissent regarding the free movement of labor between member nations, while there is far less debate regarding capital's movement (Dickens, 2003; Joppke, 1998; Tanzi, 2002). There are no true international labor unions or labor movement, but there is a profusion of global corporations. There are simply few, if any, countervailing forces to capital, certainly not labor or governments, within the global economy.

Capital has increased in power at the expense of labor, and it dominates the political economy. A global corporation can increase the market value of its stocks by terminating a portion of its labor. Capital has an inherent advantage in a global political economy over labor and land. Capital is more mobile, liquid, and global, as represented by global corporations and financial institutions. Capital is more mobile, with off-shore tax havens available regardless of nation, trade within global corporations, the state's inability to tax the mobile individual or corporation,

and substitution of highly mobile electronic money for hard currency (Tanzi, 2002, p. 125).

Globalization has always been accompanied by arrogance and violence, but technology now makes it more rather than less volatile. Globalization cultivates national fragmentation and a civic decay, manifested by increasing income and social inequality, poverty, fear, violence, family breakdown, fundamentalism and political and social intolerance, social and economic ghettoization, social isolation and social exclusion, political and social marginalization, and political authoritarianism (Berry & Hallett, 1998, pp. 1–12; Dahrendorf, 1995; Gray, 1998; Held & McGrew, 2007; Mishra, 1999; Pear, 2002; Stiglitz, 2003, 2009; Thurow, 1995). As the economy becomes global, people seem to want smaller niches of identity. Trends indicate a demand for social work's and community practice's community development and social justice mission to challenge the growing community fragmentation.

Globalization challenges the need for and viability of multi-ethnic nation-states such as the old Soviet Union, China, the United States, and even smaller nation-states. Contrary to historical globalization, since the advent of our current globalization 25 additional nation-states have been created over the past quarter century (Glain, 2009). We also have seen a growth of separatist movements within large and small multi-ethnic nation-states (Schaeffer, 1997).

- Welfare states, as well as the multi-ethnic nation-states, are generally devolving globally as is the United States with its regional factionalism, *Red State - Blue State* divisions, and anti-federal rhetoric (Dodds, 2001; Berry & Hallett, 1998, pp. 1–12; Gray, 1998; Held & McGrew, 2007; Mishra, 1999; Pear, 2002; Stiglitz, 2003, 2009; Thurow, 1995). We commented in Chapter 1 on the growing political conservatism in the United States. Liberal government's traditional function in a market economy—to help communities manage and protect themselves from the excesses and vagrancies of the market economy—has been reduced with global deregulation. Even after a year into the Great Recession, no significant re-regulation occurred. Universal, public option health care in the United States was

rejected in 2009 as socialistic. Globalization's logic undermines the Keynesian welfare state as a means of mutual communal support and a first line of defense against poverty. It creates downward pressures on the welfare state and its social protections supported by public taxation, undermines the ideology of social protection and community undergirding the welfare state, subverts national community solidarity, and legitimizes inequality of rewards as a necessity for economic growth. The results are welfare reform's punitive and abstemious approaches. The welfare state's devolution is to motivate the poor to accept and depend on marginal, low-wage employment, and to reduce and keep taxes low on corporations and the extremely affluent (Tanzi, 2002). First instigated by conservative government, devolution has been subsequently embraced and expanded by traditionally liberal or left political parties, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States (Deacon, 1997; Gray, 1998; Held & McGrew, 2007; Kramer & Braum, 1995; Mishra, 1999; Pear, 2002; Stiglitz, 2003, 2009; Wagner, 1997). European conservative political parties have adopted many of the welfare state policies (Erlanger, 2009).

- Privatization, proprietarization, and commercialization are currently trends and shibboleths in the welfare state's as well as the nation-state's rollback. These also are manifestations of the conservative trend. The United States has privatized prisons and war-making by widely using mercenaries (Risen, 2008). The privatization movement assumes that economic market forces serve as the best means of allocating and conducting services (Gibelman & Demone, 1998; Moe, 1987; Morgan, 1995, Salamon, 1997). The primary argument of the privatization ideology is that it forces government to be more businesslike and efficient as well as smaller—*leaner and meaner*—although just the opposite is true. Privatization reduces public sector costs and competition for money either through taxes or by borrowing. Privatization diminishes public sector involvement in enterprise decision making through deregulation (Morgan, 1995). Privatization takes the focus and political pressure off government if poor services are provided, places a buffer between the public

and politicians, and transfers any onus for poor services and inefficiency to the market, resolvable by market forces. Privatization of government-financed vendor services also provides political spoils to the government's backers in terms of contingent employment and contracts (Berstein, 1997; Metcalf, 2002).

Privatization and commercial enterprises are increasing their share of education, health, and human services. In the United States, the for-profit sector has over a third of the social services market, with further growth projected over the next few years. Some of the proprietary firms involved are mammoth, vertically integrated global companies such as Lockheed Martin, Magellan Health Services, and Crescent Operating, Inc. (health and mental health), Wachenhut (corrections), and Xerox (for context, see Berstein, 1996; Fein, 1996; Freudenheim, 2002; Kuttner, 1996; Levenson, 1997; Myerson, 1997; Nordheimer, 1997; Rose, 1997; Salamon, 1997; Swarns, 1997, pp. A1, A12; Strom-Gottfried, 1997; Uchitelle & Kleinfeld, 1996). The business model of social welfare transforms social workers into producers and clients into consumers. As with most public policy pronouncements, privatization's efficiency claims have not been rigorously tested and are not generally supported (Morgan, 1995).

- United Way and charitable giving in the United States has decreased, especially during the Great Recession years (Giving USA, 2009; Press, 2009; Strom, 2009a, b, c). Over two-thirds of public charities suffered a funding decrease in 2008, despite the increased needs (Giving USA, 2009). Foundations also are retaining more of their funds during the high stock market growth era of the late 1990s. With the collapse of their investments they also distributed a smaller portion of swinking endowments (Giving USA, 2009). Many charities feel abandoned by the government (Strom, 2009b); some have sought bankruptcy protection (Strom, 2009a). Corporate contributions to health and human services have dropped and constitute less of total giving than prior to the corporate and income tax reductions of the past two decades as the charitable giving deductions are less attractive

(Giving USA, 2009; Marx, 1998, p. 34). Philanthropic giving largely serves the donor community's social and political ends and cultural institutions. The socially marginalized are effectively excluded from benefit (Abelson, 2000; Marx, 1998). The very affluent traditionally donate smaller portions of their income to philanthropy than do middle-income people (Phillips, 1993, p. 143; Salamon, 1997). Therefore, donations will continue to deteriorate even after the Great Recession is over as income concentrates at the top of the income distribution, a sense of a general community declines, and tax codes make giving less financially attractive (Freudenheim, 1996, p. B8; Phillips, 1993, p. 143).

- The United States is more ethnically and socially diverse and is approaching the time when no ethnic grouping will have a majority. California, Texas, and New Mexico currently have no ethnic majority (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009b, Table 18). Over a fifth of the populations of California, New Jersey, and New York are foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009b, Table 39).

While projections are always tentative, especially with a concept as nebulous as ethnicity, Table 4.1 illustrates both the growing diversity of the population as well as the absurdity of ethnic classifications (Patterson, 2001). The total white population, including white Hispanics, remains the majority population into the next century. However, the number of non-Hispanic whites is projected to decline to less than 50% by 2060, as Hispanics increase to over a fourth of population. Non-Hispanic whites, however, will remain dominant in political and economic power.

Appiah (1997) thoughtfully observes the inconsistencies in our obsession with race, multiculturalism, and diversity:

Some groups have names of earlier ethnic cultures: Italian, Jewish . . . Some correspond to the old races—black, Asian, Indian; or to religions. . . . Some are basically regional—Southern, Western, Puerto Rican. Yet others are new groups modeled on old ethnicities—Hispanic, Asian American—or are social categories—women, gay, bisexuals, disabled. . . . Nowadays, we are not the slightest bit surprised when someone remarks on a feature of the “culture” of groups like these. Gay culture, Deaf culture . . . but if you ask what

**Table 4.1.** United States Population Projections by Grouping in Percentages: 2010, 2050, 2100

Population Grouping	2010	2050	2100
Foreign-born	11.2	13.3	10.9
Total white	80.6	74.3	70.9
White, non-Hispanic	67.3	51.1	40.3
Total black	13.3	14.8	15
Black, non-Hispanic	12.5	13.3	13.3
Total American Indian	0.9	1.1	1.1
American Indian, non-Hispanic	0.8	0.8	0.7
Total Asian and Pacific Islander	5.1	9.8	13.2
Asian and Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	4.8	9.3	12.6
Total Hispanic	14.6	25.5	33.3

Note. Data in this table are adapted from *National Population Projections: I. Summary Files, Total Population by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity: 1999-2100*. U.S. Census Bureau, May 16, 2008. Retrieved October 1, 2009, from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/natsum-T5.html>

distinctively marks off gay people or deaf people or Jews from others, it is not obviously the fact that to each identity there corresponds a distinct culture. (p. 31)

An increased emphasis on the constructions of race and culture is misplaced and leads to greater balkanization, social marginalization, and challenges to a cohesive community (Appiah, 2005; Longes, 1997, p. 46). There are data to indicate that an increasing emphasis on multiculturalism leads to less hyper-segregation and balkanization. Coffe and Geys (2006) found that ethnic diversity was inversely related to social capital accumulation in communities. Appiah (1997) again provides some insight:

To an outsider, few groups in the world looked as culturally homogeneous as the various peoples—Serbs, Croats, Muslim—of Bosnia. (The resurgence of Islam in Bosnia is a result of the conflict, not a cause of it.) . . . [T]he trouble with appeal to cultural difference is that it obscures rather than illuminates . . . It is not black culture that the racist disdains, but blacks. There is no conflict of visions between black and white cultures that is the source of discord. No amount of knowledge of the architectural achievements of Nubia or Kush guarantees respect for African Americans. . . . Culture is not the problem, and it is not the solution. . . . So maybe we should conduct our discussions of education and citizenship, toleration and social peace, without the talk of cultures. (pp. 35–36)

The United States is becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse. Race as a social descriptor and divider has not been made obsolete (Morning, 2008). We have done relatively well in our diversity during the past two decades

when compared with the genocide, ethnic cleansing, and other types of violence that have occurred in other parts of the world. However, America has a history of all of these evils. We have seen citizens come armed to political debates in 2009. If we are to avoid these plagues in the future, we must emphasize our common community rather than our differences. As noted above, diversity doesn't promote community or the development of social capital.

- Despite advances in civil rights and the election of an African-American president, American communities are highly ethnically and economically segregated; differences are especially notable in some urban areas and between urban and suburban areas. This creates a significant barrier to upward social mobility. Poverty of women and children remains significant. Female-headed households represented 17% of all families but 48% of poor families in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009c). Twenty-two percent of black families are poor, and black families represent 26% of all poor families. Most black families live in central cities due to historical, still extant patterns of racial segregation and economic entrapment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009b, Table 694).
- Another product of globalization has been the increased vulnerability of the United States to terrorism, and the resultant impact of the war on terrorism and two wars we have subsequently entered. The drama and fear following September 11, 2001, was powerful, but it was often more symbolic than real for most

Americans. The United States instituted no military draft despite the two wars but did limit carry-on liquids on commercial airlines. The United States has become “the Homeland,” an appellation coined for political purposes after September 11, 2001, that was rarely if ever used before then.<sup>1</sup> Flags and other patriotic symbolism are everywhere: in office and home windows, on cars and lapels, and especially in commercial and political advertising. Politicians wave flags at every opportunity. The political scientist Robert Putnam, based on an October 2001 poll, claimed that one positive consequence of Sept. 11 was that “whites trust blacks more, Asians trust Latinos more, and so on, than did these very same people did a year ago” (as cited in Morin & Dean, 2002). The impact, sadly, on the U.S. sense of community has been more jingoistic than profound in producing solidarity and cohesion. The increase in trust from 22% to 29%, a 7% gain, was probably a function of social desirability responses brought on by a near-universal emphasis on the concept “United We Stand.” Even in the face of universal media efforts to create national unity after Sept. 11, 71% of those surveyed indicated no increase in trust.

- And other polls and indicators are less optimistic than Putnam’s (Clymer, 2002). Since Sept. 11, 2001 hyper-social segregation or extreme segregation by class, income, and ethnicity has been maintained. Devolution of the welfare state, with decreasing government general welfare services and increasing privatization, continues unabated (Pear, 2002). The Pew Research Center’s report *Trends 2005* indicates we remain divided along religious, political, and social ideological lines (Pew, 2005) and are less optimistic about the future (Pew, 2009). The affluent enjoy disproportionate relief from taxes and public responsibility for the nation’s welfare. Corporate flag-waving is accompanied by relocations to offshore tax havens to avoid paying taxes in support of the war against terrorism and other assumed enemies of “the Homeland” (Johnston, 2002a, 2002c). Rules of secrecy are imposed and due-process protections are weakened, also in the name of homeland security, recalling a dark Vietnam War-era slogan of *destroying the village to save it* (Broad, 2002; Ignatieff, 2002).

- The United States and the world are aging. Americans are getting older and working longer. The growth of the population between 65 and 85 and the population over 85 is a significant factor in health and welfare spending (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009b, Table 33). The frail elderly, in particular, require costly in-home and institutional support, as well as more complex and expensive medical care. With a devolving welfare state and a privatization ideology, despite the political power of the elderly, Social Security’s benefits and an improvement of elderly health care through Medicare or a national health insurance are at risk of cutbacks (Mitchell, 2002).
- The spiraling, pervasive, unbounded technological revolution in the United States—and our love of it—will continue. The widespread use of computers and other instant communication equipment for information access, data processing, and communication will continue to decrease the virtual time and space between people, organizations, and communities and will also reduce face-to-face interaction. As we balkanize, we are simultaneously served by national economic franchises, shaped by national and global media, and connected internationally by a high-tech information superhighway. Use of computer and electronic technologies can allow human and social services to be more widely distributed. A single professional can serve more people, and fewer professionals can serve more people. E-mails, Web pages, and tweets provide more opportunity for public information distribution, marketing, and case coordination. Internet chat rooms and social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace are used for information sharing and emotional support groups. As everyone from the liberal political advocacy organization MoveOn.org, and the Obama campaign to the radical right have demonstrated, networks, Web sites, and online chat rooms can be used for organizing both virtual and physical communities.

### Perspectives for Practice

As we become involved in developing new social work programs and services and redesigning old ones, as we provide community education and

client advocacy and help structure support networks, the models that follow suggest the kinds of information, contacts, and activities we should consider in our practice.<sup>2</sup>

### The Community as People: A Sociodemographic View

The U.S. Census Bureau collects, compiles, and distributes a huge quantity of information about the characteristics of the U.S. people and their activities. The annual *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, for example, contains aggregate information about the numbers of people, births, deaths, homeownership, occupations, income and expenditures, labor force, employment and earnings, health and nutrition, business enterprise, manufacturing, and more. In addition, the Census Bureau disaggregates information by census tract, its smallest spatial unit at the local level. The local municipal or county planning department and local libraries usually have census tract information that reveals a good deal about the composition and character of the local community. Thus, one can learn about the ages, nationalities, average income, and educational levels of people in different local areas, for example, and the data are available for comparative purposes across census tracts and municipalities. Comparisons can also be made for geographic areas over time, so that community changes can be examined. Social indicators of the relative well-being of a community can be developed, for example, by tracking crime statistics, infant mortality rates and various other health statistics, and so on. The utility of sociodemographic information to plan social programs and to understand the community is readily apparent. And, as indicated above, the way the U.S. Census Bureau chooses to divide people tells us something about the American community's perception of itself.

### The Community as a Social System

The concept of a community as a social system essentially views a community as a system of interrelated subsystems that perform important functions for their members. What differentiates the community as a system from an organization that is also a system of systems is that a

community's subsystems rarely are rationally organized and coordinated by a centralized authority to achieve a common goal. An American community as a political jurisdiction with a city with a mayor and a city council has important subsystems with limited or no central control, such as the nonprofit sector, the economic sector where multiple business firms produce and distribute necessary goods and services, the underground economy, and the illegitimate sectors. Communities evolve as people develop common needs, interdependencies, and sentimental bonds.

We use Warren's (1978) conception of community. It best serves our purposes of understanding community for intervention on both micro and macro levels. Following Warren's system analysis of the U.S. community, we may view the community as "that combination of social units and systems that perform the major social functions having locality relevance" (p. 9). Warren conceived of community functionally as the organization of social activities to afford people daily local access to those broad areas of activities and resources necessary in day-to-day living. A community, in this definition, has a locality but needs no well-defined and rigid geographic boundaries. Social work is concerned with where people live and, more important, with the influences of where they live on how they live. Social work is immersed in people, families, social relationships and networks for education, jobs, and values, and how people develop and maintain their social relationships and networks. Communities can be compared on the dimensions of (a) the relative degree of dependence of the community on extracommunity (vertical patterns) institutions and organizations to perform its locality-relevant functions (autonomy), (b) the extent that the service areas of local units (stores, churches, schools, manufacturing, and so on) coincide or fail to coincide, (c) the psychological identification with a common locality, and (d) the relative strength of the relationships between local, intracommunity units (horizontal pattern) (Mulroy, 2004; Warren, 1978, pp. 12–13).

Warren proposes five critical locality-relevant social functions: (a) production-distribution-consumption, (b) socialization, (c) social control, (d) social participation, and (e) mutual

support. These social functions are required for survival and perpetuation of a community and its members. A community fulfills the functions through a pattern of formal and informal organizations, groups, and networks. While an organization or entities can be identified with a primary social function and are discussed in terms of the primary function, such as a school system with the socialization function, the same social units generally perform more than one function. For example, a school provides socialization and also provides jobs, opportunities for social participation, mutual support, and social control. The units that provide these functions may have local physical sites but may not necessarily be controlled by members of the community or be truly "of" the community. A supermarket can serve several different communities and belong to a regional, national, or global corporation with interests adverse to the local community. A child protective service unit may serve several neighborhoods, but the number of workers it can hire to meet the local needs, and even its conception of child abuse and neglect, are controlled by state laws, the state's child welfare department, and federal grant-in-aid funding limits and laws.

The community as a social system operates systemically, with its entities interacting and affecting one another. The entities and institutional structures interact, shape, and contribute to shared purposes and support or hinder the capacity of the others to accomplish their social functions. Each component of a system is necessary for the system to achieve its purposes. All of the social functions and social structures are interdependent and have an impact on our well-being or welfare. A school system's capacity to educate and to socialize is affected by its community's economic viability and social stability. In turn, the school system contributes to the community's economic and social viability.

A poor community has consumption needs but lacks production and has externally controlled distribution system. Its socialization structures may be weak, with community members suffering from anomie. Social control is largely externally imposed, when it exists. The poor community has greater demands for mutual support, the welfare function, but has less capacity to provide mutual support. In contrast, an affluent community has a capacity, but it may provide

mutual support only if its commonly socialized values support public welfare and voluntary giving.

Before we consider each of the five functions in more detail, we need to lay a foundation by examining the concepts of vertical and horizontal integration, reciprocity, and social exclusion. These are critical to understanding the great changes within the community's functions and to understanding community.

*Changes in Communities From Horizontal to Vertical Systems.* Communities are undergoing great changes in transforming from locality-focused and horizontally organized communities emphasizing primary and holistic relationships and responsibilities to vertical integrated communities and extensions of a global economy. The terms *vertical entity* and *horizontal entity* describe the relationship between the entity or organization and the local community, and not the internal structure (Willie, Willard, & Ridini, 2008). It is important to know whether an organization has a vertical or a horizontal relation to the community. *Horizontal* organizations share the same geographic domain with a community and coincide or fit within the community. Their ultimate locus of authority situs is within the community, and their relationship with the community is horizontal; they are on the same plane.

The locality limited horizontal community is a community where people live and have their needs met by structures and institutions that are contained within the same community. The hierarchical structures of authority and loci of decision making are at a community level horizontal to one another and their constituencies. The locality limited horizontal community, with ultimate decisional authority for the five community functions located in the same community, is becoming rare as community functions become global and increasingly specialized in their divisions of responsibilities; become complex in internal structures and fragmented; lack congruence with one another or with a locality; and have little or no community loyalty.

*Vertical* entities, organizations, and structures are characterized by hierarchical levels of authority and decision making beyond the local community to regional, state, federal and national,

and global levels. The entity's verticality refers to its relationship with the local community and the community's capacity to influence its decisional authority and rule-making capacity in satisfying community needs.

In a vertical community, the decision makers for a community's social functions are beyond the local community and have little interest in it. Factories are closed regardless of community need. Decisions that affect one community social function may not correspond geographically or socially with decisions affecting another social function. This creates greater community complexity and makes decision making more remote from the individual. The local community and its welfare are unimportant to the vertical entities; a particular local community is simply one of many communities in its domain. Interests are specialized by functions, even when the vertical entity is a multifunctional entity. Economic entities are concerned with their economic interest rather than with the local community's economic and social well-being and quality of life. Vertically integrated communities have few definable geographic and social boundaries for functions, fragmented social relationships based on more explicit social contracts, extensive divisions of labor, and secondary and tertiary modes of social interaction. Individuals have a growing sense of isolation and increasing anomie, with a loss of community values to guide behavior. With alienation and normlessness comes a loss of local social control and a growth of a splintered lifestyle and social identity; special interest enclaves spring up in an effort to recreate community within the amorphous national and global social ecology (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, & Tipton, 1985, 1991; Etzioni, 1993).

Although our current conservative political rhetoric is for smaller, more local government and more individual responsibility, the reality is that our governmental and nongovernmental organizations are becoming larger, global, more remote in decision making from the community, more intrusive on and dominant over the individual and community, and more unregulated, uncontrolled, and uncontrollable. The community hospital and the independent family doctor have been supplanted by the proprietary and distant profit-driven national health maintenance organization operating under managed-cost

principles. The few community hospitals remaining are controlled by the national insurance community and federal regulations and funding requirements. The mom-and-pop family business has been replaced by the multinational mega-corporation. The global multimedia entertainment-industrial conglomerate has deposed the local newspaper. Decision making for all these structures is distant from the local community and is based on narrowing economic self-interest rather than a consideration of community well-being.

Community practice is concerned with vertical and horizontal relationships because they influence the relationships within and between communities: cohesion, power, dependency and interdependency, community commitment, and the capacity and willingness of the organization to respond to local community needs. Vertically related structures have less community interdependence and cohesion.

As communities have become more vertically integrated, the conception of locality has expanded for fulfilling the functions. Today some functions have a global or national community. Not only is the economy global, but social welfare, socialization, and social control entities are also global. With the expansion and complexity of community, unfortunately, as Nisbet (1953, p. 52) has stated, "For more and more individuals the primary social relationships [of community] have lost much of their historic function of mediation between man and the larger ends of our civilization."

A primary criterion in assessing whether an organization or agency has a vertical or horizontal relation is the ultimate locus of authority and a local unit's decision-making ability to commit resources to local community interests. A practice task for the community practitioner, in addition to assessing whether the entity is a vertically or horizontally related entity, is to help communities develop relationships with a more horizontal character and greater power equivalency and interdependence with these vertically related entities.

**Reciprocity.** Community cohesion requires reciprocity and responsibility commensurate with rights and benefits, whether individuals or larger social entities. People and corporations need to

give to the community on the basis of what they get from the community. This extends beyond the simplistic, though important, notion that public welfare recipients should reciprocate for the assistance received from the community. It includes obligations of the affluent to “give back” to the community for their prosperity. Global corporations have an obligation to all the communities where they operate at least equal to the gains they make. Adam Smith (1922), hardly a collectivist, advocated proportionate reciprocal community responsibilities:

The expence [*sic*] for defending the society . . . are laid out for the general benefit of the whole society. It is reasonable, therefore, that they should be defrayed by the general contribution of the whole society, *all the different members contributing, as nearly as possible, in proportion to their respective abilities. . . . The subjects of every state ought to contribute towards the support of the government, as nearly as possible, in proportion to their respective abilities; that is, in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the state.* [italics added] (pp. 300, 310)

**Social exclusion.** The growth of the global turbo-economy and vertically structured communities has been accompanied by increasing social exclusion in the United States and Europe. Social exclusion “restrict[s] or den[ies] people participation within society. . . . Individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live . . . [and represent] a failure or inability to participate in social and political activities” (Berry & Hallett, 1998, p. 2).

Social exclusion refers to individual social marginalization and alienation. Social exclusion is the flip side of the concept of social solidarity and social capital. Social exclusion can be a trait of powerless groups that are prevented from integrating themselves within the community. The poor tend to be the most structurally socially excluded. Social exclusion is a byproduct of the globalization that excludes most of us from economic and political decision making (Room, 1990; van Deth, 1997). A critical objective of community practice is to reduce social exclusion in its pursuit of social justice and empowerment for the socially disadvantaged and isolated (Butcher, Banks, Henderson, with Robertson, 2007).

## Community Functions

### Production-Consumption-Distribution

Production-distribution-consumption (P-D-C) is the system of organizing individuals and other resources for the production and distribution of goods and services for consumption. P-D-C is the economy. It is the most important community function. Heilbroner (1962, p. 5) pointed out that societies and communities must meet only two interrelated needs for short-run survival:

1. They must develop and maintain a system for producing the goods and services needed for perpetuation.
2. They must arrange for the distribution of the fruits of production among their members, so that more production can take place.

A community must meet its current and the next generation’s need for goods and services (until the next generation is able to provide for itself). If a generation doesn’t have consumption needs met, there will be no succeeding generation of producers and hence no continuation of community. Without production and its distribution, there is no consumption. Without production there are no goods and services for mutual support. Without consumption there is no energy for socialization, social control, social participation, or production. P-D-C therefore is necessary for a community’s survival, but alone it is not sufficient: communities are so much more than economic systems.

P-D-C doesn’t require a particular economic system or model. Economic systems are social inventions to support the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services by the community. P-D-C’s organization is highly flexible. The models can range from a wide variety of collectivist approaches ranging from the family and clan through to nation-state collectivism on one hand to individualistic laissez-faire and wanton neoliberal corporate capitalism on the other. No particular model represents “the natural order of things” or “a higher progression of humankind” more than any another model. Laissez-faire and corporate capitalism are social inventions of fairly recent historical vintage. In Adam Smith’s classic and seminal

work on laissez-faire capitalism, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776, Smith's concern was with the wealth of nations as communities, not with individuals or corporate wealth. The failure of the corporate model of neoliberal capitalism in the early 21st century reveals its weaknesses, such as the fact that it is susceptible to economic bubbles. A P-D-C system exists to serve a community's needs, rather than, as it currently often appears, for a community to serve an economic system's needs. This axiom is ignored by the neoliberal economic ideology that fragments, if not destroys, community cohesion and values. New models have been proposed that will return the focus of the economic system to community well-being rather than fiscal growth (Goodman, 2009).

P-D-C's structure has become increasingly vertical, with a concurrent distancing of decision making from the community and the individual without much regard for the community's interests and needs. As we move more totally to global, highly vertical economic structures, we should keep in mind several propositions:

1. Economies are social creations and not created by nature or divinely inspired. Economics as a discipline has largely left science for ideology.
2. No economic system has greater inherent morality than other systems. Any morality is determined by how well it serves its communities, not by how well it serves itself.
3. Economies should serve communities rather than communities existing for economies. This was forgotten with TARP and the economic stimulus package in 2009.
4. While structures for P-D-C—an economic system—are necessary for community viability, economic systems alone are insufficient for a viable community. The other functions also must be fulfilled.

## Socialization

Socialization is the process “through which individuals, through learning, acquire the knowledge, values and behavior patterns of their society and learn behaviors appropriate to the various social roles that the society provides”

(Warren, 1978, p. 177). Socialization is necessary for people to gain a shared set of values. It's a life-long formal and informal process of learning social values, constructions, roles, and behaviors. It's how we learn how and what to think and do. The community is the primary arena that instructs in the particular structures and strictures of social behavior for that community.

Socialization initially was the responsibility of such primary and secondary social entities as the family, religious bodies, informal peer groups, and, more recent, the tertiary institution of schools. Research is indicating that a community's organizations and social patterns and character have a significant impact on socializing its members (Eamon, 2002; Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2005; Sharkey, 2008; Vartanian, & Buck, 2005). However, these primary and secondary community associations now are losing their grip on socialization. Control of socialization in the contemporary community has moved beyond the local community and its structures to becoming the province of vertical, privatized, and proprietary structures. Education, religion, entertainment, and information distribution are no longer local but national, global, and proprietary.

The commercial, monopolistic, and global media, the Web, and the Internet are now significant instruments of socialization. Young people spend more time with television, video/computer games, and the Web than with family, religious groups, or schools. The values imparted are the values of the media's proprietors and not necessarily a community's values. These values will become the community's values as young and not-so-young Americans learn them (Stein, 1993). Television and the other components of an increasingly monopolistic global media (“The Big Media,” 2002) are most concerned with attracting viewers for advertisers and with shaping public opinion to support their sponsors' ideology. Cable “news” focuses less on reporting events than on shaping opinions, attitudes, and values. Socializing viewers to community values, educating them, or transmitting information has given way to tactics for luring and holding viewers. If random sex, frontal nudity, frequent violence, “reality television,” erectile dysfunction ads, and entertainment “news” attract viewers, so be it, regardless of their socializing implications.

Schools sell information systems, use commercially sponsored closed-circuit television for instruction, import fast-food franchises for food service, sell sports facility naming rights to national corporations, and buy commercially packaged teaching packages and tests (Metcalf, 2002). Privatized and proprietary profit-driven school systems are touted as educational reform. The goal of public education of creating community has been replaced by pecuniary motives.

Without strong socialization to a congruent and shared set of values, there is no internal control of behavior based on these values. And without internal behavioral control, there is a greater need for external social control to regulate behavior.

### Social Control

Social control represents the processes communities use to obtain compliance with their prescribed and proscribed social roles, norms, and behaviors.<sup>3</sup> Social control is inherent in any community and society. The concept is inherent in the notion of social living. Without social controls, there is chaos. The question is not whether a community will regulate and control its members' behavior, but how it will do so and for what reasons.

Behavioral control can be done in two ways: (a) by internal controls developed through socialization processes and (b) by external social controls, with a system of allocating rewards for acceptable behaviors and punishments for forbidden behaviors imposed by the community. Most social institutions perform some social control function. Trattner (1999) includes social work and social welfare as social control agents. Trattner sees social control as "those processes in a society that supported a level of social cohesiveness sufficient for a society's survival, including measures that enabled the needy and the helpless to survive and function within the social order—the very things we now call social work or social welfare" (p. xxvii).<sup>3</sup>

Etzioni's (1993) communitarianism discourse offers that when external social control is necessary, it is done best by primary groups in the community:

We suggest that *free individuals require a community*, which backs them up against encroachment by the

state and sustains morality by drawing on the gentle prodding of kin, friends, neighbors and other community members rather than building on government controls or fear of authorities. . . . *No society can function well unless most of its members "behave" most of the time because they voluntarily heed their moral commitments and social responsibilities.* (pp. 15, 30, italics original)

If socialization and civic society are weakened, more demands are placed on social control structures external to the individual in an extremely heterogeneous and differentiated community. As solidarity wanes, external social controls must be maintained for social order. These controls are most often represented by the regulatory powers of the state's legal system and extragovernmental groups, usurping the power of the community. External social controls represent a failure of socialization.

The growth of external and imposed social controls is an argument for improving socialization to a common set of community values. But as we have seen, socialization by communities has weakened and they have become more vertical, more sophisticated, more interdependent, and more pluralistic. Primary societies, the *gemeinschaft* societies, had no formal contracts or separate social control organizations. Pre-Columbian Amerindian nations generally had no separate police forces. The rules of contract and law have replaced the more informal means of social control through socialization. Tertiary, vertical social control systems have led to formal limits on individual freedom and an expansion of government and corporations into people's personal lives, justified as a community good and "security." Constraints on personal freedoms and local community authority have been constrained by a national government since Sept. 11, excused by the claim that they are protecting us from terrorism and preserving "the American way of life." Again, we are burning villages to save them. The state too frequently reneges on its social responsibilities for the public good and—as a creature of the community—is abandoning its socialization responsibilities for an increased reliance on social control. It is using draconian social control approaches such as the ineffectual "three-strikes-and-you're-out" prison sentencing, a ready use of capital punishment, imprisonment for mental illness and drug use,

limiting constitutional protections, and commercializing social control with the privatization of police and prisons. Law enforcement and corrections are growth industries in spite of cutbacks in education funding.

**Social Participation.** Social participation is the essential community function that allows—indeed, requires—its citizens to participate in the life and governance of the community if they and their community are to be socially healthy and competent. Research is replete with the importance of social participation for the individual as well as the community (Fogel, Smith, & Williamson, 2008; Ohmer, 2008; Putnam, 2009; Saegert & Winkel, 2004; Shaw, Gallant, Riley-Jacome, & Spokane, 2006; Sobek, 2008). Social participation is necessary to develop social capital. Fellin (2001, pp. 70–71) emphasized social participation in his definition of community competence as “the capacity of the community to engage in problem-solving in order to achieve its goals.” Various parts of a community collaborate, share decision making and power, and work together to address community needs. Community competence is enhanced with communitywide participation in decision making. Social participation is the core of community practice and a social component of social work practice. It is essential to participatory democracy. Social participation is indispensable to ameliorating possible adverse and arbitrary effects of a community’s social control institutions and policies. It is the restorative to social marginalization. The very concept of community entails direct and unbuffered social interaction and involvement by its members to develop communal character and to transmit and implement communal values.

Social participation entails social structures that develop, maintain, and mediate regulate communal life and the other community functions of P-D-C, socialization, social control, and the next community function of mutual support. It ranges from participation in informal primary and secondary group activities to civic participation in the community’s more formal tertiary rule-making governance.

Civic participation has become more remote and fragmented with industrial society’s separation of work from home, extension of the

community’s physical and geographic boundaries, and movement to a contract society. Social interaction and participation is more complex and distant, intricate, socially isolating, and detached. Tertiary social structures of larger and more impersonal communities have replaced direct, integrating, and bonding social interactions. Town meetings and informal face-to-face discussions and debates as consensus-building modes of political interacting have been replaced by political parties, extensive media political advertising, political action committees (PACs), public opinion polls, impersonal media talk shows, and the virtual reality of Internet chat rooms, Facebook, and Twitter. As the town-hall meetings of 2009 indicated, civil civic discourse often has been displaced by gun-packing seekers of TV exposure. These techniques allow politicians and marketers to bypass the mediating structures of associations, including grassroots political parties, and appeal directly to the voters. The mass marketing approach reduces the mediating function, reciprocity, and community accountability mechanisms. Participation in these more impersonal and technological modes may be virtual, but whether they enhance the social capital and reciprocity necessary for a community’s social cohesion is unclear (Beaudoin & Tao, 2008; Clifford, 2009; Everything, 2001; Kaiser, 2005; Menchik & Tian, 2008).

The current decline in social participation and engagement (other than the virtual form) within communities and an impotence of the political system contribute to contemporary social problems. Civic participation’s decline, including voting, by the poor, the working class, the middle class, and the young, is accompanied by a diminished government interest in and responsiveness to the interests of the non-voting community strata. This decline enhances their social marginalization and eventually social exclusion. It has also accompanied the relative economic decline of these groups. Governments generally favor the economic interests of the elites, who control both government and the economic institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Full social participation requires civic participation in the governance of local and national communities. The core and necessary trait or concept is primary and secondary participation

rather than just checkbook membership (Ladd, 1999, p. 16; van Deth, 1997).

Arneil (2006, pp. 210–223) argues that for diverse communities to be just communities, social capital must rest on more than simply participation. Social capital exists less in heterogeneous communities (Coffe & Geys, 2006). Trust is necessary for social capital, and trust requires connectiveness. Trust is distinct from participation. In diverse communities trust is still being negotiated, and until trust is negotiated the communities are more likely to be aggregations of individuals, or diverse groupings, than a collectivity. Diverse communities that have marginalized groups as part of their diversity have an aggregated history rather than a common history and values. In these communities, barriers to both participation and trust must be addressed. As Judd (2009) observed:

[I]t is not by chance that social democracy and welfare states have worked best in small, homogeneous countries, where issues of mistrust and mutual suspicion do not arise. ... where immigration and visible have altered the demography of country, we typically find increased suspicion of others and a loss of enthusiasm for the institutions of the welfare state. (p. 86)

The United States has the challenge of creating a common community from its diversity by making differences of color and ethnicity inconsequential.

Social and civic participation is especially important in democratic communities. Democracies, especially in a diverse mega-state, depend on their many organizations to influence policy. If people do not participate in this process, they are essentially excluded and not considered in the rule-making processes of government. In democracies, as Phillips (1990) has observed, the government's interests and policies reflect the interests of those who select the government: "Since the American Revolution the distribution of American wealth has depended significantly on *who controlled the federal government, for what policies, and in behalf of which constituencies*" (p. xiv, italics original).

Democracies respond to collective action. An individual voter exerts very little political influence in the act of voting, although an individual with great economic and social resources can have great influence in the commercialized political processes. An individual voter can share

political influence through mediating organizations. The totalitarian danger of mass society, according to McCollough (1991), lies less in a dictator's seizing control of the governmental apparatus than in atomizing effects of mass society arising from the vacuum of community where nothing stands between the individual and the state. Social and civic groups are an important influence on government. These structures and interests compete for resources. They differ in influence on a variety of factors, not the least being a willingness to develop and use influence.

**Voluntary Associations.** A remedy against the social atomization and social disintegration characteristic of mass societies is, of course, the active membership of individuals, especially including our clients, in all kinds of voluntary associations (van Deth, 1997, p. 5). Voluntary associations provide the opportunity to meet and network with new people, learn to work with them, expand reciprocity that integrates society, develop social and civic engagement skills, and expand social supports that reduce the impact of mass society. Participation breeds participation. People who participate tend to participate even more and have more social and political participation opportunities. Without participation on the level of association, an individual is limited in most forums of civic participation. Associations provide the individual with a network of contacts, whether or not the associations are overtly political (Foster-Fishman, Cantillon, & Van Egeren, 2007; Geoghean & Powell, 2006; Hannah, 2006; Ohmer, 2008; Nicotera, 2008; Pyles & Cross, 2008). Van Deth's (1997) meta-research led him to conclude that social participation and political behavior had a clear and direct relationship, "even when socioeconomic status or political orientation are taken into account" (pp. 13–14). Political and social participation reinforce one another (Dekker, Koopmans, & van den Broek, 1997; Moyser, 1997, p. 44).

**Mediating Structures.** Increasing social participation is a critical social work task. It is vital to countering complexity and size. Community-based associations are mediating structures and act as buffers between the individual and the uncongenial, complex mega-structures. They are necessary to protect the individual and

Individual ↔ Mediating Structures ↔ Society's Megastructures and Institutions

**Figure 4.1.** Mediating structures.

democracy from the imposition of the mega-state and mega-corporations of the global turbo-economy. They provide the individual with protective zones (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977, p. 2; Nisbet, 1953; van Deth, 1997, p. 6). Voluntary associations as mediating structures are an antidote to the social fragmentation, atomization, and social disintegration characteristic of our mass societies. Ladd (1999) points out that “joining face-to-face groups to express shared interests is a key element of civic life. Such groups help resist pressures toward ‘mass society.’ They teach citizenship skills and extend social life beyond the family” (p. 16). People who participate in voluntary organizations have more civic trust (Moyser, 1997, p. 43). Examples of mediating structures are family, churches, advocacy groups, labor unions, support groups, and neighborhood associations (Fig. 4.1).

With a global turbo-economy populated and dominated by mega-transnational corporations, individual and even additional communities as independent consumers become less relevant to a market without real competition. Competition, in the classic sense of no single or few vendors or purchasers are able to highly influence or control a market, is an archaic concept. Just as an individual voter in a mega-democracy is essentially powerless to influence the political marketplace, an individual consumer has little power to influence the global marketplace. In contrast, a single multinational and multifunctional corporation has great influence. “Some are “too big to fail.” Without mediating structures, an individual is relatively powerless compared to the mega-institutional structures of government and commerce. With mediating structures, individuals can aggregate their influence and seek social justice. The organizations, associations, and coalitions serve as mediators as well as action groups in dealing with mega-corporations and the mega-state.

Mediating structures need to be as continuous as the mega-structures. They need to parallel the mega-structures both horizontally and vertically. However, there is a risk that continuous

mediating structures will follow a developmental course similar to that of the mega-structures and become impersonal, imposing mega-structures themselves (Maloney & Jordan, 1997). This seems to be the path of mediating structures such as labor unions, political parties, and large voluntary checkbook membership associations such as the Red Cross.

Social participation's relevance for social work practice is explored more fully in the practice areas of community organization, networking and coalition building, and community social casework. Social participation is imperative to social work's obligation to social justice. Clients need to be brought into civic associations and social action coalitions. Integrating clients into community-based social support networks and organizations allows them to be in contact with a range of social support resources, provides social structures for reciprocity, and provides opportunities to develop social capital for social and political empowerment. Grassroots community organizations need to coalesce and form mediating structures for individuals to survive in our global economy. Social workers need to promote local and national participation of communities/constituents as social and political actors rather than as customers, consumers, and victims. Socially marginalized clients need to be linked to local and global networks of organizations (van Deth, 1997, p. 3). Social welfare organizations and social welfare professionals hold some potential as positive mediating forces if we can develop the fortitude and skills to intervene against the excesses of the corporate and social conservatism that has captured the nation, states, and communities. As Henderson asserts in *Critical Community Practice*, if the issue is not moved to the center of the profession now, participatory democracy may be lost (Butcher, Banks, Henderson, with Robertson, 2007, p. 161).

### Mutual Support

The mutual support function, the social welfare function, is the community's provision of help to

its members when their individual and family needs are not met through family and personal resources. Mutual support is helping one another in time of need. Primary and secondary groups—family, neighbors, friends—traditionally provided the first line of social support and protection. As communities have become more complex, more secondary groups and tertiary formal organizations have been developed to perform the mutual support function, such as governmental agencies, for-profit and nonprofit health and welfare agencies, other proprietary organizations such as insurance companies and day-care centers, and a host of voluntary, nonprofit organizations such as burial societies, credit unions, and child-care co-ops. The helping structures may be temporary or permanent. Mutual support helps to delineate a community from a simple aggregation of people. Under this conception of mutual support, social welfare is caring for others by virtue of their membership in the community. Inherent in mutual support are the reciprocity obligations and the development of social capital.

The functional and systemic questions for mutual support relate to community membership and community cohesion. Fullinwider (1988) argues, “We almost never encounter people, even strangers, whom we think of as ‘simply humans’; we encounter fellow citizens, coreligionists, neighbors, historic kinsmen, political confederates, allies in war, guests. Our typical moral judgments and responses are almost always made in the context of some connection between us and others that goes beyond being members of the same species” (p. 266).

In our current social climate, the strength of our social connectiveness may not be sufficient for adequate mutual support. During the 2009 health care debate a Bozeman, Montana, physician offered the following gloomy observation (Smith, 2009):

American culture simply has never been based on caring about what happened to your neighbor. It’s been based on individual freedom and the spirit of, if I work hard I’ll get what I need and I don’t have to worry about [the] fellow that maybe can’t work hard. ... I’ve done my job, I’ve worked hard, I’ve gotten what I’m supposed to get. I have what I need and if the other people don’t, then that’s sort of their problem. And unfortunately the big picture—that our nation can’t

thrive with such a disparity between the rich and the poor, the access people and the disenfranchised—that hasn’t seemed to really strike a chord with Americans.

To be part of this mutual support arrangement, does a person need to be a citizen of a certain political entity (the United States, Maryland, or Baltimore), or is a member of the community defined as simply someone who identifies with and is identified by the community as “one of us”? The identity position moves the conception of community toward the ethnicity and tribal position. The concern in the conception of community is the community cohesion required for mutual support with minimum coercion. If membership requires legal citizenship of a state and not simply functional membership in or identification with a community, then coercion probably plays a part in the process of mutual support. If functional citizenship and identification in a community is required of welfare recipients, community responsibility and reciprocity is inferred. The current debates on the exclusion of illegal (and in some cases legal) aliens from public mutual support and the denial of constitutional protections to aliens emphasize the problems in defining citizenship.

We are back, again, to the importance of civic participation by all in a community, especially by the poor and welfare clients. Civic participation creates the networks and social bonding necessary for social support as well as social justice. It provides opportunity for reciprocity and gives a claim and mechanisms for exercising the claim based on reciprocity.

Trust is required to develop the cohesion and bonding between people that is necessary for mutual support. People need trust each other to avoid the “free riders and the sucker’s challenge” (de Jasay, 1989). The 2008–09 California drought illustrates such a “free riders and suckers” quandary. The drought was the state’s worst in several decades. California needed to conserve water. Individuals were asked to sacrifice for the sake of the community and limit all water use. This is a classic case of individualism versus the community good. It is in an individual’s interest to shower daily, water the yard, and wash the car; his or her use will only marginally decrease the community’s supply, and the individual is better off and no one else is appreciably worse off, *if all*

*others follow the rules.* The individual is a *free rider* and makes no sacrifice but rides on the sacrifices of the community. If no one makes a sacrifice, then the individual is only following the behavior of the collective, and the collective made it worse. Now, if the individual makes the sacrifice but the collective doesn't, the individual is a *sucker*: the collective is better off in the short run and probably worse off in the long run, the individual conserving is worse off both in the short and long run—a sucker.

The free riders and suckers quandary is the tragedy of the commons argument made against the welfare state (Schmidtz, 1991). The tragedy of the commons argument, simply stated, is that if we all can have our needs met by doing nothing—the use of the commons or communally held resources such as water—there is little motivation for each of us to exercise restraint. We individually will be no better off. If the individual does not get his or her needs and preferences met from the commons, someone or everyone else may use up the common, thus leaving nothing for the first individual or for future generations. Personal denial ensures that our current needs will not be met, and it doesn't ensure that our future or future generations' needs will be met. Thus, the global warming conundrum. The commons can perpetuate itself only when all are in harmony and act in common. In other words, there must be strong community responsibility.

The fear of a tragedy of the commons is evident in our public health and welfare policies and programs. We do not feel responsible either as donors or as recipients. As donors, we resent the intrusion of the state on our resources and its making us share them with people who contribute little to our well-being. We have little bonding with the recipients as individuals or concern about them as fellow community members. They are not us. If recipients have little sense of communal responsibility, they are marginalized and excluded from the community. If mutual support recipients, whether from welfare, education, health, or disaster relief, fulfill no public or common good, if they demonstrate no communal responsibility and make no contributions to the commons or prudently use it, then they are free riders. And if recipients are free riders, then donors—the taxpayers and those who are communally responsible by not exploiting the

commons—are suckers. If we as donors view recipients as free riders, then we must view ourselves as suckers. If we do not wish to remain suckers or to view ourselves as suckers, we must rid the community of free riders. This is called welfare reform in current political rhetoric.

Trust is imperative to avoid the free riders/suckers dichotomy and tragedy of the commons. Trust and bonding are dependent on some mutual identity. Trust stems from and builds community. It involves commitment to others (Haley, 1999). Trust and mutual identity are diminishing factors between U.S. citizens and people globally.

A welfare state exists where state or public appliances provide mutual support. The welfare state provides a public structure and resources for mutual support and community building in response to the impersonal social contract of an industrial society. When there is a reliance on state appliances for mutual support without an underlying sense of community, community cohesion, and trust, there is a general increase in using social control to implement mutual support. Vertical approaches relying on taxes and transfers instead of community cohesion are used.

### Communities as Local, Global, or Virtual Networks

People have varying commitments to a variety of communities. Bennett Berger (1998) contends that people have “limited, partial, segmented, even shallow, commitments to a variety of diverse collectivities—no one of which commands an individual's total loyalty” (p. 324). We live in many communities and may feel totally a part of none. Wellman's (1999, pp. 97–100) analysis leads him to conclude that we in the Western, largely urban world live in a new type of world of loosely coupled communities with the following characteristics:

1. Community ties are narrow and specialized relationships are not broadly supportive.
2. People float in sparsely knit, loosely bounded, frequently changing networks, not traditional cohesive, tightly bound communities.
3. Communities are not neighborhood-bound, supportive, and are socially dispersed networks.

4. Private and virtual intimacy has replaced public sociability.
5. Communities have become more women-centered, although community power has become less so.
6. Political, economic, and social milieus affect the nature of communities.
7. Cyberspace supports globalized communities.

As we lose the cohesive traditional community, new models of communities are being formed, including the *virtual community*. A virtual community is a group of people “who interact primarily through computer-mediated communication and who identify with and have developed feelings of belong and attachment to each other (Blanchard, 2004, p. 55).”

Proponents argue that rather than lament fewer bowling leagues (Putnam, 2000) and a loss of a pub-culture camaraderie, we should appreciate coming together in new ways through the Web, use the Internet with its Facebook and MySpace to find each other, and recognize that we participate differently in civic and community life (Kirchhoff, 1999; Ladd, 1999; Oldenburg, 1999). Electronic linkage in a cyberspace community reduces social isolation (Clifford, 2009; McLeod, Bywaters, Tanner, & Hirsch, 2008). Internet support groups whose members are dispersed geographically but share narrow interests provide some of the functions of natural helpers and community face-to-face support groups (Beaudoin & Tao, 2008; Kaiser, 2005; Menchik & Tain, 2008; Pruden, 2006; Wellman & Gulia, 1999). While research on the efficacy of the Internet to create real community for the virtual community is mixed, it does indicate it should be pursued. The Internet can't be ignored. It has value for social contact in rural areas (Kaiser, 2005), between cancer patients (Beaudoin & Tao, 2008; McLeod, Bywaters, Tanner, & Hirsch, 2008), and between the elderly (Clifford, 2009), and within as well as between communities (Quan-Hasse & Wellman, 2004). Some research and observers indicate that its use strengthens communities beyond the virtual community (Artz & Cooke, 2007; Kaiser, 2005; Pruden, 2006; Shull & Berkowitz, 2005; Stern & Dillman, 2006-7). Quan-Hasse and Wellman, (2004) report that “people who engage in political and organizational activities tend to use the Internet

as much as those not engaged. There is no strong statistical association between Internet use and active participation” in any community (pp. 124-125). On the face of it, internet usage doesn't seem to matter.

Critics of the notion of a virtual community, such as the communitarian William A. Galston (1999), argue that the virtual community may be and contributes to many things, but it is not a community. It provide social interaction and support, communication and contact, but the virtual community does not meet the conception of community by fulfilling its varied functions. Frey (2005) argues that virtual communities suffer from being “like-minded” and homogeneous and having less density and intensity of relationships. They are less cohesive than physical communities, although they tend to be homogeneous as communities of interest, because their members can easily leave the community (by logging off), and they tend to be less authentic, because community members are limited in their information about other members and members can present themselves as they wish. Virtual communities' social capital and trust are virtual, not extant.

Procopio and Procopio (2007) concluded after an online survey of Hurricane Katrina's displaced residents about the connection between geography and the Internet that “researchers interested in promoting social capital need to recognize that the Internet is neither the panacea for building community that some suggest nor the harbinger of civil anarchy others fear” (p. 82). The authors urge that community practitioners, especially those working in crises, consider Internet connectivity issues as important as other staples.

The proponents of the loosely coupled new community conception, including the virtual community, hearken back to Nisbet, who, over a half-century ago in *The Quest for Community* (1953), argued that freedom came from multiple associations and authorities. Thus, “while the best life was to be found within community, people should not limit themselves to one community. They should experience many communities” (Brooks, 2000, pp. 244-245).

### The Community as an Arena of Conflict

Viewing the community as a social system has some built-in biases that make it insufficient

alone to serve as a framework for social work practice in the community. The systems perspective's basic bias assumes a set of integrated subsystems generally working together smoothly for the benefit of the whole. But there often are disagreements between powerful groups in different subsystems of the community system. We know, for example, that powerless groups' fundamental interests are not acknowledged or taken adequately into account by the powerful. The good of the system as a whole—that is, the inclusive community—does not necessarily mean the good of all of its subsystems. The recognition of community as an arena of conflict suggests that conflict and change are characteristic of U.S. communities and that the process of determining the public interest therefore involves conflict and negotiation as much as it does rational planning, collaboration, and coordination. Issues of power do not seem to enter into the systems perspective, but viewing the community as an arena of conflict brings power and politics to the fore. We are forced to ask a variety of questions: What does it mean to say that the community has a collective identity? How do we take into account community differences in values and beliefs, goals, and interests? Does the community have an overriding public interest, and, if so, how is that public interest determined? Who is influential? Is the public interest synonymous with the interests of the most powerful people in the community? To answer these questions, we must turn to conceptions of power and power structure.

**Power and community.** As discussed in Chapter 2, power is present in most social relationships. Power is the ability to get what you want when you want it despite the opposition of other people. As Box 2.2 indicates, power is varied. Generally people exercise power to gain more and give less than those over whom power is exercised. Power is about gaining and losing, about control and influence (Willer, 1999, p. 2) (Box 4.2).

Even for very powerful individuals and groups, however, power is rarely total. Jean Baker Miller (1983) offers a more feminist conception of power. She defines power, similar to influence, as “the capacity to produce a change—that is, to move anything from point A or state A to point B or state B. This can include even moving one's own thoughts or emotions, sometimes a very powerful act. It can also include acting to create movement in an interpersonal field as well as acting in larger realms such as economic, social, or political arenas” (p. 4).

In this view, fostering another's growth or increasing another's resources, capabilities, and effectiveness to act exercises power. People who nurture, socialize, and educate—parents, teachers, social workers—hold and can exercise a great deal of power or influence. This is quite different from a masculine conception of power, which often involves limiting or controlling the behavior of others.

Most theorists distinguish *power* from *authority*, defining *authority* as legitimated power that has been legally, traditionally, or voluntarily

#### BOX 4.2.

#### Facets of Power in Our Work

Power is the ability to control one's own destiny and the ability to form support systems that affect one's life. Power has three dimensions: personal, interpersonal, and political. The work of psychologist Robert White [enhances] and understanding of personal power. . . . [He] has suggested that all human beings have a basic drive, which he calls the effectuance drive, a drive to experience oneself as a cause, to interact effectively with the environment—in other words, to experience oneself as having power.

Interpersonal power is closely related to personal power because it carries it into the social domain.

[Inter]personal power is the ability to influence the human surround, and it is dependent upon social competence, on the ability to interact effectively with others. Political power is the ability to alter systems, to bring about some change in social structure or organization, to redistribute resources.

Source: Excerpts from a speech by Ann Hartman, then editor of *Social Work*, at “Integrating Three Strategies of Family Empowerment,” School of Social Work, University of Iowa, 1990.

granted to the holder of a particular position, such as a corporate CEO, an elected governmental official, or royalty in traditional societies. In the U.S. form of democracy, authority is granted to various elected officials to enact laws; to executives to carry out the business of the state; and to the courts to interpret, arbitrate, and enforce the laws in a tripartite system of balanced powers. The distinction between authority and power notes that while authority is a form of power, not all persons in authority are powerful, and powerful persons exist apart from authorities in any social system. Other than formal authority, the sources of power are multiple, including access to and control of strategic information, economic resources, connections to other powerful people, charisma, intelligence, wisdom, age, and more.

Finally, some theorists differentiate between *reputed* or *potential* power and *actual* power. We argue that power exists in its use. Potential power is only powerful in the threat to exercise it. If a threat to use it serves to constrain the actions of others, it is power. The classic example is the labor union, which has the power to strike. The potential for a strike often acts as a stimulus to negotiation and a resolution of differences. An actual strike, should it occur, is sometimes difficult to sustain and is often costly, so in this case a threat may be more potent than the reality. Or the capacity of bosses to fire can keep a workforce docile, even though workers may rarely be fired.

**Power distribution.** Communities can seldom express a clear and overwhelming public interest because they are composed of competing interests for limited resources. The public policy process invariably favors some interests, those of the elites, over others. The question, though, is “Does the process always favor the same interests?”

The gist of elitist theory is that community life is dominated by a small group of people with sufficient economic and political power to control public decision making in their own interests. Citizen participation, in this conception, is limited or ineffectual, or both. Mills (1956) contends that the structure of power in the United States resembles a pyramid with three levels (Kornhauser, 1968). At the top is the power elite,

a group composed of the leaders of (a) global mega-corporations, (b) the federal government executive branch, and (c) the military. This group controls large national and multinational corporations and their corresponding public organizations. They control the means of political power, production, and destruction. They have the power, through the control of dominant institutions and the media, to manipulate public opinion and ensure that the rest of society accepts their decisions. The intervention of the U.S. Supreme Court in the outcome of the 2000 presidential election and the fact that national politicians often seem to be either part of or in the service of corporate and economic elites lend support to this version of elitist theory.

The people who make the rules and who can change them at will generally win any competition. From an elitism perspective, top leaders determine the fundamental direction of public policy and shape the public interest to coincide with their interests. In the United States, as discussed earlier in this chapter, most of the resources have aggregated to the power elite as a result of policy changes.

Surrounding this power elite is a circle of sycophants who are advisers, technical experts, powerful politicians, regional and local upper classes, and celebrities. Some eventually may be elevated to the top level.

The second tier of the pyramid, at a middle level of power, consists of a variety of special interest groups, such as labor unions, media, religious and professional associations, and farm organizations, that struggle with modest influence only within the parameters established by the power elite.

Unorganized mass society falls into the bottom level of the pyramid—the majority of the populace. This group has little power over the decision makers at the top; rather, it is those in this level to whom the top leaders send orders, information, and interpretations of events. This base is becoming more socially and economically marginalized and excluded.

A number of studies using reputational methods (Hunter, 1953) have found evidence of an elitist power structure in both smaller and larger communities, although the makeup of these structures does not strictly follow Mills’ conception. Numerous studies have also found the

members of this group to be related by social class (Domhoff, 1967, 1974, 1990). The reputational method essentially involves asking many people (who are in a position to know) who they think the top community leaders are. Names that frequently recur are selected as the top leaders. Then, through interviews and further community investigation, the researcher begins to sort out the extent of these leaders' influence, how they exercise power in the community, and their patterns of interaction with each other.

Pluralist theorists have strongly criticized these elitism theorists along three lines. First, they argue that the basic premise of an ordered system of power in every human institution is faulty. Researchers who begin their studies by inquiring, "Who runs this community?" are asking a loaded question because the question assumes someone or a small group is running the community, and therefore that the researchers are sure to find it. Second, they argue that the power structure is not stable over time, as the elitism theorists contend, but rather is tied to issues that can be transitory or persistent. Therefore, the assumption of a stable coalition or set of coalitions in the community is inaccurate. Third, they contend that the elitism theorists wrongly equate reputed (and positional) power with actual power: power does not exist until it is actually exercised successfully.

In contrast to the elitism theorists, the pluralist theorists propose that power is distributed among many different organized groups, with control shifting depending on the issues. Citizens participate in the public policy process through a variety of interest groups. Because individuals potentially have the freedom to organize a group and compete in the policy arena, differences can be resolved amicably. The political system therefore operates much more democratically than the elitism theorists would have us believe, the public interest being whatever comes out of the pluralistic melting pot after the process is completed.

David Riesman (1951) argued that the power structure pyramid has only two levels, corresponding roughly to Mills's bottom two tiers. There is no power elite. "The upper level of the Riesman's pyramid consists of 'veto groups': a diversified and balanced body of interest groups" (Kornhauser, 1968, pp. 39–40). Each group

mainly wants to protect its own power and prerogatives by blocking the efforts of other competing groups. There is no dominant ruling group; instead there are multiple power centers, thereby creating a much more amorphous structure of power. The lowest level of the pyramid, as with Mills, consists of an unorganized mass public, but in this case the public is pursued as an ally rather than dominated by interest groups in their struggles for power (Kornhauser, 1968). Therefore, pluralist power figures are potentially more responsive and accountable to the majority of citizens than are elitist power holders.

Elitism theories imply that democracy is at best a weak institution or at worst a sham altogether, because the public interest is basically determined by a relatively small (though not necessarily conspiratorial) group of powerful leaders. Pluralist theories suggest that the political process is complex and increasingly remote due to the large number of interest groups protecting their turf and struggling for power. Because it is so hard to get anything done, leadership is weakened and political alienation begins to set in. Whether an issue involves the community or the country as a whole, no individual or group leadership is likely to be very effective due to the presence of entrenched veto groups—consider, for example, the battles to enact health care legislation during the Clinton and Obama administrations. For Banfield (1961), this struggle leads to public decision making that is seldom the result of deliberate planning. For Lindblom (1959), it leads to "disjointed incrementalism."

There can little argument with the data. Wealth, income, and political influence have become concentrated at the top (Krugman, 2002; Mintz, 2007). Even during the Great Recession the concentration continues: wealth and income continues to move to the top 1% and 5% despite Democratic Party control of both Congress and the executive branch (Cavanagh & Collins, 2008; Executive Pay, 2009; Forbes, 2008).

There are several lines of criticism of the pluralistic approach. One main criticism is that the pluralists present a rather idealized version of the political process. Since interest groups cannot be easily organized and sustained without many resources, a large part of the community cannot participate. Furthermore, the notion that the

pluralist process operates amicably and effectively by a set of institutionalized political rules does not conform to the experience of challenging groups, who have succeeded primarily by using norm-violating, disruptive tactics (Gamson, 1990).

Another main line of criticism is that pluralist theory does not recognize a hidden face of power (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962, 1963, 1970). That is, by assuming that power is played out solely in relation to concrete issues, pluralists omit the possibility that in any given community there may be a group capable of preventing contests from arising on issues that it considers important. Power may well be at work in maintaining the directions of current policy, limiting the parameters of public discourse to fairly safe issues—in short, the power elite, by controlling an increasing share of the media, can prevent some items from ever reaching the community agenda and even becoming issues. Moreover, as the pluralist methodology offers no criteria for adequately distinguishing between routine and key political decisions, by accepting the idea that in any community there are significant, visible issues, the researcher is examining only what are *reputed* to be issues. Hence, the pluralists are

guilty of the same criticism they level at the elitists. Pluralism appears to exist only on less important issues than on fundamental community welfare concerns.

Although both elitism and pluralist theories talk about “groups” in the political policy process, most of the early theories tended to focus on powerful individuals rather than powerful organizations. As communities become larger and more complex and their institutions become vertically integrated, power is exercised by a loose network of compatible interests rather than a small, tight cabal. Powerful fiscal corporations, such as Goldman Sachs, with their need to maintain a stable business market, and the growing power of government in American life have led power structure theorists to focus on networks of organizations as sources of widespread and enduring power (Perrucci & Pilisuk, 1970; Perrucci & Potter, 1989). Through such arrangements as interlocking boards of directors and government/corporation executive exchanges (see Box 4.3 for some of the Goldman Sachs–government exchanges), interorganizational leaders can mobilize the resources of a network of organizations (including governmental/military/media) to influence public policy. With the

**BOX 4.3. Goldman Sachs and the U.S. Government**

Name	Prior to Government Service	Government Service	Administration	Post Government Service
Stephen Friedman	Chair and CEO, Goldman Sachs	Assistant to President for Economic Policy; Director, National Economic Council; Chair, Federal Reserve Bank of New York	George W. Bush Barack Obama	Chair, Stone Point Capital (private equity company)
Robert E. Rubin	Chair and CEO, Goldman Sachs	Secretary of the Treasury	William J. Clinton	Senior consultant, Citigroup
Henry M. Paulson	Chair and CEO, Goldman Sachs	Secretary of the Treasury	George W. Bush	Visiting scholar, Johns Hopkins University
Jon S. Corzine	Co-Chair and CEO, Goldman Sachs	U. S. Senator	NA	Governor, New Jersey

Goldman Sachs in 2010 was being investigated for criminal and civil violations.

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vertical structuring of society, these sorts of interorganizational arrangements operate on the local level as well as state, national, and global levels. In the final analysis, it is not the specific people who occupy the organizational linking roles that are critical; the people change. It is the elite interests that shape the interorganizational networks that represent the enduring structuring of community power.

### Mediating Structures and Community-Sensitive Social Work Practice

This chapter argues that there is value in strengthening local communities and other mediating structures to meet the onslaught from larger forces outside their control. As discussed earlier, we agree with Berger and Neuhaus (1977) and propose a strengthening of mediating structures. They have great value for linking and empowering ordinary people. They stand between and protect individuals in their private lives from the alliance of global mega-corporations and the state. Berger and Neuhaus argue that “public policy should protect and foster mediating structures and wherever possible, public policy should utilize mediating structures for the realization of social purposes” (p. 6). In general, we support these propositions, but neither of them is simple to fulfill. As always, we have to find a balance between individual rights and community rights and between the protective functions of the state and the defensive functions of the mediating structures.

It is also possibly that mediating structures themselves, due to size and patterns of decision making that are not truly participatory, may have difficulty in building a strong sense of community among their participants. In a study of Baltimore’s African-American community, McDougall (1993) made a potent argument for even smaller, informal community building blocks called base communities:

Mediating institutions, such as churches, schools, and community organizations, are essential to this task [of community strengthening, institution building, and networking], but small base communities of one or two dozen people, spun off from mediating institutions or growing independently, are essential to counterbalance the tendency of mediating institutions to

mirror the hierarchical character of the public and private bureaucracies with which they contend. (pp. 186–187)

### Conclusion

The crucial premise of this chapter is that for social workers to be effective, we need to understand how the community affects our lives and the lives of the people we work with. We live and work and play in multiple, overlapping local communities of different kinds. These communities are often culturally diverse and generally quite different from the communities where we ourselves grew up and now live. The importance of community calls for a community-based social work practice. Some examples of how community may bear on practice will help clarify this idea.

Consider the social worker employed by a church-sponsored nonprofit social work agency. In her practice she has begun to see more and more clients who are HIV-positive or who have AIDS. How should she deal with this problem? Suppose that the church has strong anti-gay sentiments and sees AIDS as “a gay problem.” Suppose that the church reflects values that are prevalent in the community. What kinds of services can be provided for these new clients? How do clients themselves feel about their circumstances, given the community’s values? What kinds of services are needed in the community? How might the social worker begin to address that need? (Obviously many other kinds of problems, such as homelessness, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy, might raise similar questions.)

Take another example. Assume that, as a school social worker, you have encountered a Hispanic immigrant child, possibly illegal, who appears abused. You are obligated to involve Child Protective Services (CPS). Do you need to know how the Hispanic community views CPS workers or the nature of the relationship between the school, the Hispanic community, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)? How will the situation be handled if the police become involved? Will the police refer the case to USCIS? How do the school authorities feel about CPS and USCIS and potential disruptions

of the school day and possible bad publicity? How do you approach the family and the child? How can you get CPS to work with you to manage the situation in the most helpful fashion for all parties involved?

A third example. Suppose that you are a social worker in a large university hospital's department of family medicine. You suspect that the children in the family you are seeing have been poisoned by lead paint from their substandard apartment house. How can you prevent further damage? What about the children who live in other units in that building? Might there be legal or political issues that you should know about? What if the corporation owning the building is a large donor to the university and politically well connected? What are some of the different professional roles you might have to play to help your clients and their neighbors?

There are no simple answers to the questions posed in these illustrations. The answers require a sound understanding of community.

The fragmentation of some communities and the sense of distance between them and state institutions are major challenges. So too is the search by individuals for ways of acquiring a more meaningful sense of community. If these issues are not addressed then the fragility of representative and participatory democracy, ..., will be threatened. Our contention accordingly, is that critical community practice needs to move to centre stage—urgently. (Butcher, Banks, Henderson with Robertson, 2007, p. 161)

**Discussion Exercises**

1. How have vertical and horizontal changes in community functions affected social work practice? Give examples.
2. Select a client and describe the specific institutions and organizations in the client's life that are used to fulfill the five locality-relevant functions. How much do the organizations coincide in their service areas? What is the locus of decision making for the organizations? Repeat the exercise for yourself. How many of the specific structures are the same for yourself as for your client? Do any serve as mediating organizations?
3. In a small group discussion, consider the examples and questions posed in the "Conclusion"

section and try to answer them. Identify the mediating structures and their roles in your answer.

4. Identify an issue in your community relevant to the provision of social services, and try to follow it through a public policy process. Identify the stakeholders for various sides and facets of the issue. What are the roles of the media, elected officials, public agency representatives, leaders of voluntary associations, and corporation leaders in the process? Is the process democratic? Who has power? Who is left out? Is there a hidden face of power influencing the process?
5. What is the best community you have even lived in? Why do you select it? What made it the best? List the characteristics of this place. How can that community be made even better?

**Notes**

1. An exercise: Find a reference in the political literature to the United States as "the Homeland" prior to September 11, 2001.
2. In proposing these approaches, we are mindful that the literature offers many other useful models, such as the community as a system of interaction (Kaufman, 1959), as a system of human ecology (Fellin, 2001; Poplin, 1979), as shared institutions and values (Warren, 1978), and as an ecology of games (Long, 1958).
3. For a more sinister description of social control and public welfare, see Piven and Cloward (1971, 1982).
4. For a review of the use of the state's police powers and policies to create wealth for particular classes and community interests, see Barlett and Steele (1992, 1994) and Phillips (1990, 1993).

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