

Chapter 2

Essentials of Community Intervention

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Introduction

Clinical sociology is a creative, rights-based specialization that seeks to improve the quality of life in the world around us (Fritz 2008). Clinical sociologists incorporate scientific knowledge from a number of disciplines and fields (for instance, sociology, psychology, social work, economics, political science, organizational development, and/or planning) as well as experience, in a variety of settings, when they assist with or undertake interventions. Like a number of other fields, clinical sociology is both scientific and artistic. While scientific research guides analysis and intervention, each intervention situation is unique and the interventionist—whether an internal or external practitioner—is expected to be artistic in collaboration, analysis, design, implementation and evaluation. Many of the clinical sociologists work as external consultants on issues facing a community and that kind of work is the focus of this book.

This chapter presents some of the basics regarding interventions that are undertaken when working with and in communities by different kinds of practitioners. The following two chapters discuss the research process that often is part of the interventions. The ideas in the three chapters were influenced by research in many fields as well as by the work of the contributors to this volume.

Intervention and Interventionists

The clinical sociologist will move among a number of levels (e.g., individual, small group, organization, neighborhood, local community, region, nation, world) to analyze and/or intervene. The lines among the levels show that clinical sociologists

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Fig. 2.1 Levels of Intervention



who are interested in focusing on one level (e.g., local community) also have an additional focus or at least a background in one or more of the other levels and integrate that knowledge in their work.

The intervention levels (from individual through global) are depicted in Fig. 2.1. While no level is assumed to be more important than another, the local community level is highlighted here as it is the focus in this volume. Shading in the national and international levels indicates that these levels also can be viewed in terms of community. The global level refers to work done on a worldwide basis as well as to a time when other worlds may converse with us (and we with them). The global level also has the possibility, at some point, of being viewed as a community.

Intervention refers to taking action in an existing situation and that situation may, or may not, be defined by one or all involved as something that is problematic. Parties may want to understand, improve or prevent something and still not think of the current situation as something that is a problem.

There are many kinds of interventions and they may be initiated by a community representative with authority to do so (e.g., mayor, manager, supervisor); those representing a community organization or government agency; and/or an advisor, arbitrator, coach, consultant, or judge. The person or team undertaking the intervention may be an inside individual or group (e.g., a planning unit of a city initiating discussions about possible changes in the city) or an outside individual or group (e.g., a national consulting group that is not a part of the community where action will be taken). The clinical sociologist who works as a community consultant is a resource and may work as a consultant within a community or be an external consultant with no permanent role in the system to which she or he acts as a facilitator or advisor. While clinical sociologists may hold either kind of role, the focus in this book is on the clinical sociologist as an outside consultant who is working with the

community or as an analyst who may be assessing the effectiveness of community-initiated or collaborative projects.

Consultation is a professional activity for members of every social and behavioral discipline and other fields such as business, education, and health. One of the most complete listings of the *characteristics of a good consultant*,¹ regardless of discipline, is that developed by Ronald Lippitt and Gordon Lippitt (1978). They list the characteristics under three areas of competence:

1. *Knowledge areas*, including a thorough grounding in the behavioral sciences; knowledge of systems, human personality, and oneself; and an understanding of philosophical systems as foundations for value systems.
2. *Skill areas*, including communication, teaching, counseling; ability to form relationships and work with groups in planning and implementing change and ability to conduct research and diagnose problems.
3. *Attitude areas*, including open-mindedness, courage, and the possession of a humanistic value system.

Gordon Lippitt and Ronald Lippitt (1986) also identified eight roles for consultants: objective observer; process counselor; fact finder; identifier of alternatives and resources; joint problem-solver; trainer/educator; information specialist, and advocate. Consultants may combine these roles or do some of these in a sequential fashion.

The objective of intervention can be different in various situations. In general, an intervenor tries to help participants understand, deal with, and/or alter a situation and may do this in any number of ways. These interventions can include undertaking needed research, critical education, training, leadership development, strategic planning and/or assessing different kinds of actions. The tasks might be manageable or quite daunting.

Kelly and Caputo (2011, p. 2), for instance, focus on the move toward neoliberalism² in Canada and noted that the national government has withdrawn backing from social support programs and “download(ed)” that responsibility to local communities. As Kelly and Caputo note (2011, pp. 2–3), this is a “significant shift away from a welfare state approach” and the safety net for individuals in the society has been reduced or eliminated. The outcome has been that a small percentage of the population (in countries like Canada and the U.S.) has become increasingly wealthy

¹ Block’s (2011, pp. 37–50, 121–126) “flawless consultant” has authentic behavior (which, he says, leads to higher trust from the client) and knows about the requirements of each stage of a project (contracting, discovery/inquiry, engagement/implementation). In addition, Block describes the similarities and differences between internal and external consultants. For instance, Block mentions that an internal consultant’s job level/status in an organization can limit the internal consultant’s access to high-level people. An external consultant’s status is ambiguous and that allows the external consultant to more easily move among the levels of an organization.

² *Neoliberalism* is “a philosophy and a political approach to governing that includes the belief that the state’s role is to protect individual and property rights. According to this view, the state should not interfere in areas beyond these two and especially should not interfere in the operation of free markets (Kelly and Caputo 2011, p. 112).

while most of the population has less and “the gap between the rich and poor... continues to grow” (Kelly and Caputo 2011, p. 108). Interventions in this situation may be difficult because there can be competing demands and not enough resources to provide adequate social support programs.

Intervention can begin in different ways. For instance, national or regional policies may be put in place or an arm of a global organization (e.g., UN Security Council) may have mandates that must be followed. Frank Moulaert et al. (2010, p. 5) think the urban neighborhoods are “pivotal sites for initiating and implementing social change that may ripple through the city.”

They offer these experimental innovative sites from which new and emancipatory initiatives emerge. The main argument... is that locally based initiatives, often much more so than official state-led programmes, can galvanise a range of publics to engage in activities that have city-wide (if not greater) impacts on the dynamics of urban cohesion and social development.

One of the premises of this book is that community groups can be drivers of change. An entity, through its social relations, can foster or deliver effective change if it is operating in a structurally-conducive setting.³ It is difficult for change to occur if the political-economic-social setting is not open to that change.

Approaches to Community Intervention

Whether the interventionist is a head of a community group, mayor, city planner, consultant, or developer, each person will have a certain mindset about working with communities. For instance, for some of these individuals, the most important aspect may be that the intervention will bring high profits, others might want the fastest approach, some might want specific outcomes, and, for some, the desired approach will be one that has engaged the highest number of different kinds of stakeholders.

Numerous categorizations have been proposed to capture the different kinds of approaches to community change. Robinson, Jr. and Fear (2011, pp. 57–58), for instance, indicate there are three broad *approaches to planned change*: *self-help* (individuals/groups/communities “working together can improve the quality of life in the community”); *technical assistance* (community power structure is usually the employer or sponsor, “economic growth or improvement of the physical infrastructure is typically the focus...”; “advancing community-based capacity may or may not be a central concern”) and *conflict* (groups struggle to maintain or increase their power).

Ohmer and DeMasi (2009, pp. 8–13) discuss what they view as the seven major approaches to community organizing. These are *two kinds of social action approaches*—one aims to “build/shift power” and the other aims to “radically

³ *Structural conduciveness* refers to the organization of the larger entity (e.g., society, region) in which a community is based. For instance, if the larger entity has a good communication network and open administration, this sets the stage for certain changes to be considered or implemented in a local community (Fritz 2002).

restructure power and institutions.” The third approach is *locality development/civic organizing* and it sees the “power structure (as) a potential partner;” it aims to “restore social order” and emphasizes social integration. The fourth approach is *social planning* (“offering expert solutions to problems”) and the fifth is *community building* (“aims to strengthen the social fabric and connect to outside resources”). The sixth approach is *women-centered/feminist* and it aims to “link private women/family and public issues.” The seventh approach, and the one the authors favor, is *consensus organizing* (“power creation based on mutual self-interest, parallel organizing among residents and power structure”).

In 2013, Ohmer and Brooks (2013, pp. 234–238) expanded on the thinking in the 2009 Ohmer and DeMasi article as they now included previously mentioned approaches either as *conflict* or *consensus approaches* to community organizing and then introduced a third approach. Ohmer and Brooks indicated *conflict* approaches were “direct action organizing,” “social action” or “Alinsky-style” organizing. On the other hand, the authors noted that the philosophy behind *consensus* approaches is “finding ways to realize or develop mutual self-interests and the belief that power can be grown and shared.” The authors link this latter idea to Jack Rothman’s original three models of community practice,⁴ “primarily in locality development.” Locality development “reflects a consensus approach, emphasizing engaging a broad range of key stakeholders in solving problems by fostering harmonious relationships among people.” Ohmer and Brooks also present a blended approach involving both conflict and consensus. The authors think community organizers must be open to the use of both conflict and consensus approaches and then blend them, “strategically select and utilize” the approaches as needed.

Clinical sociologists use a number of approaches, but whatever the approach, they usually emphasize community involvement in all stages of a community project. A good example of this kind of community involvement comes from The Huairou Commission, a global organization that establishes partnerships between grassroots women’s groups and professionals to make sure that women have a central role in their communities. Huairou has talked about the need to identify the Community Justice Path in each community. Huairou recognizes the path may be different in different communities but, based on their work with communities in Africa, the Huairou Commission suggests the following process for women’s groups in their own communities:

1. Come together, get organized
2. Know community issues
3. Know community power holders
4. Engage community leaders
5. Engage and equip community justice workers
6. Raise community awareness
7. Sustain support for community justice

⁴ Rothman’s three models were social action, social planning and locality development.

An example of more limited community involvement, would be the one proposed by Coyle (2011, p. 25) in moving a community to be a pedestrian-friendly, low-carbon community. He suggests the following steps:

1. Define the project type (planning framework)
2. Determine the project pathway (primary means for accomplishing the goals)
3. Prepare the team (determine the composition of the team)
4. Select the tools (e.g., visual mapping, data gathering)
5. Prepare the place (research existing conditions)
6. Prepare the people (involve only those essential to plan development or engage all stakeholders)
7. Develop goals, objectives and performance measures
8. Develop the strategies (draft preliminary actions, develop evaluative criteria)
9. Develop the action plan
10. Implement the Action Plan (includes deciding on monitoring and reporting)

From these examples, the Huairou Commission, like many clinical sociology projects, appears to involve the community (or community representatives) throughout the whole process. It is true, however, that there could be extensive work done prior to the implementation of the seven steps that are listed here and those steps may or may not have involved the community. Community involvement is only introduced explicitly in step six of Coyle's model. Steps 1–5 could include community representation but that is not clear. Clinical sociologists, in general, would try to include community representatives as early as possible in planning and intervening.

Community Intervention Tools/Techniques/Ideas

There are, of course, many tools, techniques and ideas available for all kinds of community interventions for positive change. Eight interesting ones have been selected for discussion:

1. Community Mapping. The Huairou Commission stresses the importance of community mapping and documentation. Community mapping is defined as “a participatory process for raising peoples’ awareness and informing decision-making” (Ransom and Brown 2013, pp. 12–13, 22). Huairou uses five kinds of community mapping activities: (1) A *community survey* is the most common method. A survey team goes through the community in order to identify issues and/or problems. (2) A *physical map* is drawn to show demographics and the location of the community members who are affected by issues or problems. (3) *In-depth interviews* are held by community members with those neighbors who can help the whole community understand the issues or problems that have been identified in the community. (4) *Key informant interviews* are held with neighbors who know many people and know what is going on in their lives. (5) *Focused group discussions* are held with a

group of neighbors to understand how the participants see the situation and the roles of different individuals and groups in relation to the issue or problem that is being discussed. After all the information has been collected and documented, the findings are discussed in a community meeting. Huairou finds the community meeting is an essential part of the process in order to get community ownership. Huairou's community mapping has allowed grassroots women's organizations to develop their own knowledge about the community as well as projects that involve advocacy and action planning. Outcomes of community mapping can include creating a fact sheet based on the findings, holding community meetings and developing publicity ("advocacy messages") based on the findings of the mapping.

2. Community Organizing. Community organizing (see Appendices 2-5) is a process in which people who live near each other come together to promote their shared interests. This may be a process that is developed by those in a community; a facilitated process in the community (as was the case with Jane Addams and the women of Hull-House); or one in which an organizer or team comes from outside the community (as was the case with Saul Alinsky).

Saul Alinsky is one of the best known community organizers not only because of his work in high-profile organizing efforts but also because of his publications, particularly *Reveille for Radicals* (1945) and *Rules for Radicals* (1971). Alinsky (1971, pp. 7, 12, 18, 21) wanted to develop a "science of revolution." He provided words and rules for community organizers to move forward. For instance,

- My aim is to suggest how to organize for power: how to get it and use it.
- A word about my personal philosophy. It is anchored in optimism.
- The basic requirement for the understanding of the politics of change is to recognize the world as it is (not as you think it should be).
- The setting for the drama of change has never varied. Mankind has been and is divided into three parts: the Haves, the Have-Notes, and the Have-a-Little, Want Mores.
- The leader goes on to build power to fill his desires... The organizer finds his goal in creation of power for others to use.
- I believe that man is about to learn that the most practical life is the moral life and that the moral life is the only road to survival.

Alinsky (1971, pp. 72–81) also discussed the ideal qualities of an organizer: curiosity, irreverence, imagination, a sense of humor, a bit of a blurred vision of a better world, an organized personality, a well-integrated political schizoid; a strong ego, the art of communication, a free and open mind and political relativity. Alinsky thought "the best of organizers should have...all (these qualities), to a strong extent, and any organizer needs a least a degree of each."

As an example of this work, Huairou (Ransom and Brown 2013, p. vii) discusses community organizing activities in relation to improving grassroots women's access to land and property. The four community organizing activities they identify are:

- Conducting community-driven processes for resolving land disputes

- Raising awareness of land rights issues
- Providing advice and help in dealing with the legal system
- Offering support to people who might not be able to afford legal services

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the Institute for Inclusive Security (IIS) provide 23 tools for women to take action for Security Sector Reform⁵ (Bastick and Whitman 2013, pp. 36–63) so security institutions are “something people run to and not from.” Among the tools are a stakeholder mapping exercise, a sample invitation for women to join a new coalition that will involve women in SSR, a template for an action plan and a sample action plan.

3. Leadership Development. Leadership is generally defined as the process of influencing the activities of a group to accomplish common goals (Stovall et al. 2011, p. 143; Northouse 2013, p. 5). The two most common kinds of leadership are *assigned* (e.g., occupying a head position in an organization) and *emergent* (leadership does not come because of one’s position in the hierarchy of an organization, but because others support and accept the views of the person.) Either kind of power may be characterized in a variety of ways. A person may be seen, for instance, as a *charismatic* leader (inspiring or motivating others based on strongly-held values/beliefs) or a *servant* leader (putting followers first, empowering them and helping their development) (Northouse 2013, pp. 395, 219).

Leadership development is very important in open communities. Huairou (Ransom and Brown 2013, p. viii), in its community work with women’s organizations, uses four kinds of leadership development activities:

- Conducting assessments to identify community, group and individual needs
- Deciding relevant training objectives and planning training activities
- Identifying potential trainees and selecting training participants
- Organizing, conducting, and evaluating community events and training activities

Leaders and potential leaders can benefit from field trips/externships (an internship or field experience outside of one’s own community). These experiences can energize people who have lived in one place for a rather long time as they can give the opportunity to see how matters are handled in other communities and consider new ideas, projects and/or processes.

4. Appreciative Inquiry. The basis of appreciative inquiry is that “every living system has something that works well already, where people have experienced some success, some satisfaction, something positive in their lives” (Stratton-Berkessel 2010, p. 2). Appreciative inquiry is a way for each person in a group/community to uncover the capacities and the strengths that already exist in the community. Know-

⁵ Security Sector Reform (SSR) “aims to increase a country’s ability to meet the range of communities’ security needs in a way that is efficient but also consistent with the standards of civilian control, transparency and the rule of law. SSR also works to ensure security sector institutions operate with full respect for human rights and do not discriminate against anyone” (Bastick and Whitman 2013, pp. 5–6). Security is broadly defined and includes, for instance, the ability to go to school and walk down a street as well as have access to justice systems.

ing the “positive core” makes it easier for the community to “to embrace change and creative... value” (Stratton-Berkessel 2010, p. 3). The focus is on what the group wants and people are mobilized through their “positive images of the future” (Stratton-Berkessel 2010, pp. 27–28). The five core principles are:

- Constructionist Principle: Words create worlds
- Principle of Simultaneity: The very first question starts the change
- Poetic Principle: What we focus on grows
- Anticipatory Principle: Image inspires action
- Positive Principle: Positive affect leads to positive action

The narrative (story being told) comes from asking “positive questions that guide the conversation” (Whitmore et al. 2011, p. 23). The flow of Appreciative Inquiry is discover, dream, design and destiny (Stratton-Berkessel 2010, pp. 31–32).

Different workshops are offered based on this approach. One of these, the Creating Change Positively workshop (Stratton-Berkessel 2010, pp. 65–68), is held when change is occurring and “there is some resistance or discomfort.” Participants start in pairs with storytelling that focuses on their highs from previous change experiences. The pairs then form small groups to share stories and to decide on “three wishes to make the next change a positive experience.” Small groups then discuss the new things that might be done to ensure the change will succeed and will present the group’s dream. The last part of the workshop would be for small groups and individual reflection. The topics would be what needs to be done to strengthen the “change muscle” and what each individual thinks is the high point of the day and how she/he can support the change process.

Representatives of the Community Engagement Division of the city of Charlotte, North Carolina (USA) reported on their involvement in an Appreciate Inquiry training workshop and follow-up work in their communities (Alexander et al. n.d.). In a process that involved five categories of stakeholders (including neighborhood leaders and community volunteers), they discussed the merits of a deficits-based approach and compared it to a strengths-based approach in planning for positive change. This discussion “resulted in a process called ‘Vision 2 Action’, where (they) facilitate(d) a community driven process to assist neighborhood organizations and their partners in planning and prioritizing for their future through positive inquiry” (Alexander et al. n.d., p. 1). Reported outcomes (Alexander et al. n.d., p. 4) included:

Neighborhood based groups feel that this process has been extremely helpful in changing the way they work together and their ability to improve their community. This has enabled us as city staff to engage with the community in a more meaningful way. It has reshaped our conversations, from answering complaints to providing preemptive citizen service and engaging neighborhoods as partners... Appreciative Inquiry has fundamentally changed our platform of community engagement.

5. Asset-Based Community Development. The basis of asset-based community development (ABCD) is that “communities have individual, organizational, and institutional resources that are often overlooked and can be used to enhance the quality of life” (Green 2010, pp. 71–79). The approach builds on Appreciative

Inquiry. This approach fits well with the self-help approach to planned change in that “asset building assumes that significantly relying on technical assistance and external resources does not build community capacity. Instead, it creates dependencies that constrain the ability of community residents to solve their social and economic problems.” Asset-based community development focuses on “mapping and mobilizing local resources.” Examples of community resources include “physical capital and infrastructure (buildings, roads, open and public spaces such as plazas and parks); finance and economic capital; and political and social capital” (Arefi 2008). The community’s social capital is “the trust, norms and social networks” (Green 2010) that can facilitate change efforts.

Focusing on assets does not mean that communities and practitioners disregard needs. As Green and Haines (2012, p. 10) have noted:

In many cases, it may make sense to begin by identifying a community’s assets and then assess its needs. A discussion of the needs and problems is almost inevitable in community processes and often serves to mobilize residents to act on an issue. The concern with an exclusive focus on needs is that a community often jumps immediately to problem solving rather than identifying its goals and strengths.

According to Russell Cormac and Ted Smeaton (2009), most of the NGOs that worked in Sub-Saharan Africa had used one or some combination of four approaches in their development work: “a needs-based approach, a sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA), a rights-based approach, and/or participatory rural appraisal (PRA).” The co-authors (2009, p. 1) think assets-based community development (ABCD) when used “intentionally and consistently” with the latter three approaches will have “significant and sustainable development impacts.”

In 2010, an ABCD workshop was held in Woyin-Woya, a village with over 1,000 residents in Ethiopia (Gilfoy n.d.). It involved:

appreciative interviewing and reflection on past successes, asset mapping, and community economic analysis using a simple “Leaky Bucket” diagram showing how money flows into the local economy and either stays or leaks out... The intention (was) to shift the community’s focus from needs to assets and opportunities as a way to stimulate activities that it could undertake using primarily its own resources and expertise. In turn, these activities would inform the program decisions of (the trainers) so that it could invest in and complement community-owned initiatives while increasing its own relevance and the sustainability of it programs.

Five months after the workshop, an ABCD group was formed in the village. Many activities were put in place the first year, but “the most remarkable initiative... (is the one that used) some of the income generated by... activities to support local children affected by HIV/AIDS and food insecurity” (Gilfoy n.d.)

6. Community Money. In 1991, a local currency system (HOURS) was put in place in Ithaca, New York (USA). Paul Glover (2000), a community economist in Ithaca, learned about a local currency being used in South Dakota and decided to develop Ithaca HOURS. Ithaca has put more than \$ 100,000 of its own money (Hours) in circulation (Mascornick 2007, p. 11). Ithaca’s money stays in its own region to help community members hire each other. Paul Glover, the creator of the system, has explained, “While dollars make us increasingly dependent on the

multinational corporations and bankers, HOURS reinforce community trading and expand commerce which is more accountable to our concern for ecology and social justice.”

Glover (1997, p. 1) described the operation of HOURS system as follows:

The Ithaca HOUR is Ithaca’s \$ 10.00 bill, because ten dollars per hour is the average of wages/salaries in Tompkins County. These HOUR notes, in five denominations, buy plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, roofing, nursing, chiropractic, child care, car and bike repair, food, eyeglasses, fireworks, gifts, and thousands of other goods and services. Our credit union accepts them for mortgage and loan fees. People pay rent with HOURS. The best restaurants in town take them, as do movie theaters, bowling alleys, two large locally owned grocery stores, our local hospital, many garage sales, 55 farmer’s market vendors, the Chamber of Commerce, and 300 other businesses. Ithaca’s new HOURLY minimum wage lifts the lowest paid up without knocking down higher wages. For example, several of Ithaca’s organic farmers are paying the highest common farm labor wages in the world: \$ 10.00 of spending power per HOUR. These farmers benefit by the HOUR’s loyalty to local agriculture. On the other hand, dentists, massage therapists, and lawyers charging more than the \$ 10.00 average per hour are permitted to collect several HOURS hourly. But we hear increasingly of professional services provided for our equitable wage.

Everyone who agrees to accept HOURS is paid one HOUR (\$ 10.00) or two HOURS (\$ 20.00) for being listed in our newsletter *HOUR Town*. Every eight months they may apply to be paid an additional HOUR, as reward for continuing participation. This is how we gradually and carefully increase the per capita supply of our money. Once issued, anyone may earn and spend HOURS, whether signed up or not, and hundreds have done so.

Ithaca’s decision to develop a local currency was not the first in the US. Local currencies (or scrip) were used in some form by 400 communities during the depression (Shaffer 1998, p. 1; Fritz 2002), and there were at least a number of local currencies in the 1970s and 1980s—for example, Constants in Exeter, New Hampshire (USA); LETS (local economic trading system) on Vancouver Island (Canada); and Deli Dollars in Great Barrington, Massachusetts (USA) (Swann and Witt 1998). There are now at least 4,000 local/complementary currencies around the world (Block n.d.) including in Central Europe (i.e., Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary); Tokyo, Japan; and Argentina (Jelinek et al. 2012; Kurita et al. 2012; Gómez 2012).

A local currency can help develop a local or regional economy in a number of ways, for example (Solomon 1996, p. 32):

1. Encouraging local businesses and individuals to patronize with each other;
2. Allowing small businesses to obtain credit without competing with larger, more established enterprises;
3. Encouraging the development of small businesses, which in turn promotes a more viable (stable and flexible) regional economy;
4. Assisting rural and inner-city communities away from being more dependent, subsidized economies.

The premise here is that the development of a local currency can allow a community to develop from within and be proactive in shaping its economy. One innovative case is Vermont’s VSBR Marketplace, a “partnership between a state-wide membership association, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility and

a currency design and management organization, Vermont Sustainable Exchange (Kirschner 2011, pp. 68–72). VSBR Marketplace has a credit line granting process, connects with the business community through trade, views its accounts as a member benefit to be activated rather than having a separate membership organization, and supports relocation initiatives.

Blanc (2012, p. 4) reviewed the research about community currencies around the world. He noted, “one major strength of CCs (Community Currencies) over the last 30 years has been their impressive capacity to give birth to social innovation.” Blanc concludes, however, “they still have to prove they can change the present state of things.”

7. Sustainable Communities. Sustainable communities meet multiple functions and do so within a setting that is “walkable or drivable” (Coyle 2011, p. 3). They are resilient in that their buildings are durable as well as adaptable to changing needs/demands. These can include *conventional/high-carbon communities* (low density, less mass transit, less walking) as well as *low-carbon communities* (compact, pedestrian-scale blocks and streets, manage available resources, value natural environment).

Sustainable community development is more than limiting waste, preventing pollution, and promoting energy efficiency. Sustainable community development “practice leads to a holistic development strategy that strives to integrate environmental, economic, and social factors in such a way that, for example, biodiversity and cultural diversity can both be protected” (Gamble and Hoff 2013, p. 215). This brings us to a discussion of justice, inclusivity and democracy (Reisch et al. 2013, pp. 86–87). Social justice principles and practices need to be incorporated in the work of communities and organizations. Community practice work involves transforming institutions, systems and relationships and dealing with the gaps between stated values and goals on the one hand and reality on the other.

Communities can be changed as a whole (e.g., moving from a high-carbon to a low-carbon community, becoming more just and inclusive) or in terms of their component systems (e.g., food production, education, water, economic, land distribution, energy, health). Morton and Glasgow (2011, pp. 240–241), for instance, describe a component system change—a food and fitness initiative—that took place in a regional area in the state of Iowa (United States). A strategic plan among food producers, processors and storage businesses to support and expand the local food and farm economy led to the food and fitness initiative. A university community extension group received a two-year Kellogg grant for a community planning effort that would increase access to physical activity and local healthy food. The regional process involved five local planning teams that “assess(ed) local conditions, develop(ed) priorities and initiate(ed) activities in support of the region’s vision” and a regional team that, among other initiatives, created “policy and wellness change.”

8. Reducing and Resolving Disputes and Conflicts. Disputes (when participants and issues can be easily identified) and conflicts (where it is rather difficult to understand who all the participants may be and the issues that are problematic) can be challenging situations in many communities. In order to establish a just peace

in a community (Fritz 2014), a consultant, working with community groups, may have to undertake or use a number of different approaches. These approaches might involve changing norms, strengthening organizations to take leadership in difficult situations or putting processes and organizations in place to deal with disputes and conflicts. In a number of countries, community members are trained to help assess, reduce and/or resolve disputes and conflicts. In some cases this might involve training people in cultural competency/cultural diplomacy skills (Fritz 2014, pp. 17–33), establishing community mediation centers (Cutrona 2014, pp. 69–89) or developing other kinds of innovative projects to deal with problematic situations.

An example of a particularly creative project is the one put in place by a physician and her colleagues in Enugu State, an Igbo-speaking area in the South East region of Nigeria (Nwadinobi 2014, pp. 167–188). Widows, women whose husbands have died, can be subjected to harmful traditional practices (e.g., forced hair shaving, periods of confinement, loss of property) carried out by in-laws and other community members. Conflicts arise when widows protest unfair treatment. WIDO (the Widows Development Organization) is a non-governmental organization based in Enugu, the capital of Enugu State. WIDO has been in existence for 15 years and provides support for widows whose rights have been violated. These violations include eviction, disinheritance, abduction of children and wrongful arrest. WIDO has held mediations—in the community, at the WIDO office or in a Traditional Ruler’s residence—to deal with the problems faced by widows. WIDO’s approach included a Vanguard Team (investigator, counselor, scribe, para-legal officer, photographer) that went to a communities to facilitate the resolution of problems faced by widows. The project also included Community Focal Persons who were given cell phones and asked to alert WIDO when they heard about any widows having problems within their communities. Unfortunately, WIDO could not find continued funding for the full Vanguard program and, as the author notes (Nwadinobi 2014, p. 187), this “shows the difficulty of sustaining the work of small but effective organizations in economically developing countries.”

Conclusion

The challenges for community practice often include addressing, in some ways, the world’s core economic challenges (Gamble and Hoff 2013, p. 238):

- poverty and mass unemployment...
- greater equity, stability, and transparency needed among regulatory structures of the world market and finance systems...
- more sophisticated and comprehensive measures of societal progress (e.g., alternatives to gross domestic product) that take into account human well-being and environmental resource protection

Communities and organizations, often with the help of internal or external consultants, have initiated or participated in new kinds of relationships, projects or

structures to address economic problems as well as other social, political and ecological challenges. These ideas catch the attention of other communities and policymakers, and the new initiatives (or adaptations of them) spread and can help dramatically change the social-political-economic-ecological landscape, in our time, in very important ways.

Community intervention is undertaken by different kinds of internal and external practitioners. These practitioners differ in a number of ways (e.g., expertise, disciplinary background, approach, access to decision-making). While clinical sociologists, like other practitioners, are very concerned with outcomes, they also particularly are concerned about the amount and kind of community involvement in their activities. For clinical sociologists, effective community involvement at all stages of an intervention process is extremely important in order to achieve an inclusive, sustainable as well as desirable community.

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