The term “Inclusive Communities” has increasingly featured in recent years, at policy, practice and theoretical levels, drawing from different disciplinary standpoints. Much of this has been spurred by efforts at understanding the exclusions confronted by certain populations, to develop the notion of and mechanisms by which communities can include those who are marginalised and/or oppressed, and in some contexts to ‘bring back’ community as something real or imagined. In spite of this, this deceptive term remains shrouded in epistemological darkness, conveniently endorsed but often little theorised and less understood. This text provides an exciting introductory textbook, drawing academics, policy makers and activists from various fields to theorise, create new and innovative conceptual platforms and develop further the hybrid idea of inclusive communities.
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES
STUDIES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
Volume 16

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Scope
This series addresses the many different forms of exclusion that occur in schooling across a range of international contexts and considers strategies for increasing the inclusion and success of all students. In many school jurisdictions the most reliable predictors of educational failure include poverty, Aboriginality and disability. Traditionally schools have not been pressed to deal with exclusion and failure. Failing students were blamed for their lack of attainment and were either placed in segregated educational settings or encouraged to leave and enter the unskilled labour market. The crisis in the labor market and the call by parents for the inclusion of their children in their neighborhood school has made visible the failure of schools to include all children.

Drawing from a range of researchers and educators from around the world, Studies in Inclusive Education will demonstrate the ways in which schools contribute to the failure of different student identities on the basis of gender, race, language, sexuality, disability, socio-economic status and geographic isolation. This series differs from existing work in inclusive education by expanding the focus from a narrow consideration of what has been traditionally referred to as special educational needs to understand school failure and exclusion in all its forms. Moreover, the series will consider exclusion and inclusion across all sectors of education: early years, elementary and secondary schooling, and higher education.
Inclusive Communities
A Critical Reader

Edited by
Andrew Azzopardi
University of Malta, Malta

and

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Manchester Metropolitan University, UK
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INTRODUCTION

SHAUN GRECH AND ANDREW AZZOPARDI

SCOPE AND BACKGROUND

The term *Inclusive Communities* has increasingly featured in recent years, at policy, practice and academic levels, drawing from different disciplinary standpoints such as education, anthropology, sociology, psychology and philosophy among others. This has included efforts at addressing the exclusions confronted by certain populations, or to develop the notion of and mechanisms by which communities can include those who are marginalised and/or oppressed. Still, this deceptive inter-disciplinary term remains shrouded in epistemological darkness, conveniently endorsed but often little understood and insufficiently theorised and developed.

This text provides an exciting introductory textbook, drawing from various fields of knowledge, in an effort to theorise, create new and innovative conceptual platforms and develop further the hybrid idea of inclusive communities. Drawing from policy, practice and research perspectives, this rich text provides global perspectives highlighting the challenges faced by multiple populations. It brings academics and activists to fill the persistent gap in the problematisation of these issues, and in the process pushes the envelope and understanding of inclusion, communalism, membership, citizenship, identity and identification among other critical issues. The end is the reinforcing of the pledge towards inclusivity. More specifically, we seek to:

– Push the theoretical boundaries of the notion of ‘inclusive communities’: this book is highly interdisciplinary ranging from fields including anthropology, development studies, critical disability studies, race and migration theory, cultural studies and environmental studies among others. Texts also approach the subject from alternative epistemological stances such as post-structuralism and postcolonialism.

– Highlight the threats to inclusive communities and factors and processes creating opportunities to combat the disenfranchisement of marginalised groupings

– Engage with policy, practice and other challenges confronting specific marginalised populations, and through these to critically engage with a wide range of themes: disablism, race and racism, (dis)empowerment, identity, gender, globalisation, social cohesion and social capital among others.

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This edited book has therefore been compiled with a view to providing an innovative and comprehensive reading for students, academics, practitioners, activists as well as any other person looking for a critical text into inclusive communities. In light of this, the themes and questions that are problematised and explored are also far reaching:

– What are inclusive communities, and alternatively what are non-inclusive communities?
– What are the challenges and opportunities faced by specific populations, and what spaces can be nurtured and/or created to challenge marginalisation?
– What potential impacts (present and future; opportunities and threats) confront specific populations from micro, macro and global processes, ranging from economic factors to stigma?
– What is the role of culture, history, religion and/or rights in impacting lives and communities?
– How are new technologies and social media used to de/construct communities?
– Do discourses on inclusion and inclusive communities cater for the needs of marginalised populations/oppressed peoples?
– The relationships, dynamics and impacts between development, poverty and inclusive communities
– Human rights: from rhetoric to practice
– Researching marginalised populations – new frontiers, new methodologies, new and decolonising approaches

LAYOUT OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1: Understanding Communities: Rebecca Lawthom and Pauline Whelan

Implicit in the term community are processes of inclusion and exclusion and people are counted in or out of settings with potentially serious consequences. To understand inclusion/exclusion we need to theorise what communities are, and how participation happens. In this chapter, we present a flavour of established ways of thinking about community, followed by a contemporary approach-communities of practice. This framework describes how these participatory trajectories are structured and facilitated by particular group practices that can promote or inhibit inclusion. We invoked an example from an inclusive initiative in primary schools where the communities of practice model, was employed to understand and elaborate the different positions and practices adopted by various members of the research project. The identification and elaboration of these positions and practices served to highlight the utility of operationalising the model within groups specifically oriented towards positive social change. The example from the teacher training programme showed how transgressions from the expected participatory trajectories afforded by the model can help isolate and elucidate exclusionary practices. It is important to understand the socio-historical context of various definitions of community, and also to acknowledge the Global North bias of many
INTRODUCTION

existing theories (Grech, 2010). Understanding various conceptions can inform and further current notions of community by avoiding the academic reproduction of social marginality, and by extending the conceptual boundaries of community. However, when considering the inclusive or exclusive nature of communities, the exigency of arriving at an absolute definition of the term ‘community’ seems to fade. Instead, we need to shift the focus towards understanding the participative trajectories and group practices that contribute to, or inhibit group cohesion and social inclusion. Communities of practice can therefore contribute to our understanding of these inclusive or exclusive processes.

Chapter 2: Community development’s radical agenda: Social justice and environmental sustainability: Margaret Ledwith

Its process, although often a practical response to immediate issues, involves popular education, learning to question the everyday taken-for-granted contradictions that are woven through our everyday lives. Out of these altered perspectives on life emerges a more critical awareness, and this gives rise to the confidence, autonomy and insight to act collectively together to improve the quality of life for everyone. For practitioners, this calls for an analysis of power, the generation of theory in action, and the organisation of collective action from neighbourhood to global levels with the purpose of creating inclusive communities in a more inclusive world. Social divisions are greater than ever, both within and between countries, as neoliberal globalisation extends its reach, beaming a free market principle based on a profit imperative across the world. At the same time, community development’s commitment to social change is being distracted under a smokescreen of managerialism, as our transformative concepts become diluted and our practice becomes embedded in policy as improved service delivery. Meanwhile the world faces escalating humanitarian and environmental crises. This chapter is based on the hope and optimism that we can easily and readily reclaim our radical potential if we identify the spaces for creating critical dissent dialogue as a basis for vigilant practice for a fair and just democracy, a world build on respect for all people and the earth itself.

Chapter 3: Spaces for inclusive communities: Reflections on contemporary society: Andrew Azzopardi

What happens when people find themselves left out of communities? Who is missing and why does it matter? What can one do to narrow the gap? How has community been represented in theory? The discourses around community are countless. The quality of life of a population is an important concern in so many areas and a significant part of our standard of living is measured by social and economic factors. This chapter will conceptualise ideas and theories of association and associated life, social capital and civic community. It will weave what I consider to be some of the most significant, focal and complex issues in this debate in an attempt to locate boundaries and space. The notion of ‘community
development’ is central to this debate and crucial in the representation and understanding of what encapsulate this phenomenon. The discourses around community are myriad (Mills, 2006) but the debate centers around an engagement that makes us more confident and in charge of our lives, more able to contribute to our local community and to assimilate social and cultural activities as an illustration of citizenship (Lotz, 2008). This chapter concludes that community has been associated with learners engaged in establishing effective public participation within participatory processes and how the role of social operators, community leaders and social activists should be prominent in policy-making and development whilst the State’s primary role is to focus on policy co-ordination.

Chapter 4: People like us: Queering inclusion, rethinking community: Mark Vicars

In this chapter, I draw upon my own and other gay/queer men’s life stories to speak out about how heteronormative practices in everyday life can create the conditions which silence and performatively exclude sexual differences. I suggest how a queer location can be a way of critically being present to, and a way of interrupting how heteropower/knowledge gets materialised and rethink the notion of community which doesn’t include the ‘longing for inclusion’. Contesting and problematising how belonging is habitually embedded in social practices, in the inter-relationship between culture, social structure and individual lives, this chapter endeavours to show something of how the critical practices of inclusion/exclusion get worked and re/worked. The experiences outlined in this chapter bring together understandings of community which are intimately connected to the informants’ chosen manner of being in the world, and position an understanding of community as thinking and feeling in relation with self and others. This chapter suggests that inclusion requires a commitment to making ‘Other’ interpretative locations more than available. It requires an understanding that in our various attempts at ensuring we remain inside the culturally intelligible, all of us have the potential to marginalise and exclude. It shows how difference matters and posits the notion that none of us are immune to being worked over by the us/them, inside/outside dichotomizing practices that make differences exclusionary.

Chapter 5: Disability, communities of poverty and the global South: Debating through social capital: Shaun Grech

This chapter bridges the gap between disability and development studies by exploring avenues for the application of social capital in elucidating and exploring broader epistemological and practical issues in the debate on disability in the majority world. The chapter argues that social capital, despite its neoliberal undertones and opportunistic stance in its adoption by the development sector, provides useful avenues for bringing development and disability closer together, as well as focusing discussion on local contexts, and the role of social relationships and community in the construction of disability, as a source of security, access to resources, and often survival in the absence of formal safety nets. Social capital
may also draw attention to and potentially challenge the Western emphasis on self-reliance and independence (individualism), as well as discourse about the presumed (universal) treatment of disabled people across cultures. This opens up the analysis to more micro views of disability within local and social settings and associated factors and processes, notably poverty and its dynamics.

**Chapter 6: Negotiating stigmatized identities and overcoming barriers to inclusion in the transition to adulthood: Marilyn Clark**

Traditionally, research on stigma has focused on the perspectives of dominant groups and how they respond to stigmatised populations and minority groups (Crocker & Quinn, 2003). In this chapter, the focus is on the perspectives of the stigmatised. Through the use of the narrative approach, a plurality of truths is encouraged in order to understand the interactions that occur among young people, groups and societies (Jackson, 1998; Plummer, 2001). Different narratives of stigma are examined to this end. The chapter draws on Goffman’s concept of stigma to explore youth transitions in a society that retains many traditional characteristics. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with stigmatised young people with the goal of producing narratives, and the chapter presents an analysis of the main emergent conceptual categories, namely: the experiences of stigma; stigma effects; and stigma management strategies. The chapter concludes by drawing attention to the pervasive nature of stigma and the importance of structure, agency and reflexivity in youth transitions. Despite the reduced power that a stigmatised situation may place young people in, the successful negotiation of risk trajectories can translate in the development of a resilient self and a successful negotiation of the passage to adulthood.

**Chapter 7: Latin American women and inclusion in public and private communities: Monica Rankin**

Gender relations in Latin America are based on long-standing, yet constantly-evolving cultural norms and social expectations. Those norms and expectations are unique to Latin America and do not fit the concepts of feminism, individual rights, and marginalization that often dominate discussions of gender and the notion of inclusive communities in the western world. Gender expectations in Latin America are tied to centuries-old Iberian customs, a pervasive religious culture, and laws designed to preserve and protect those traditions. My chapter historicizes the role of culture, customs, religion and/or laws on inclusive communities through the lens of Latin American gender relations. I frame the notion of “community” according to well-established historical models based on women, family, and communities in Latin America as public and private spaces. This differs from western culture where, according to liberal theory, the individual is the defining unit of around which society should be organized. In Latin America, the ways in which women are either marginalized or included in the larger community are often based on more intimate cultural relationships within the family. The ways in which many
Latin Americans define “inclusion” or “marginalization” are often quite different from the ways in which western cultures approach those concepts. As a result the notions of “rights” and “equality” in Latin America are generally tied to the well-being of the family. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a brand of feminism specific to Latin America emerged through which women have demanded rights based on their role as part of the family unit. For example, many suffragists argued that women be granted the right to vote not because it was a natural right to which each individual was entitled, but rather so they could effect political change to benefit the family. By considering important moments throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I argue that many Latin American women traditionally viewed their place within the family as one of “belonging” rather than an externally-imposed notion of “inclusion” based on equality and individual rights. But as the public and private community space for those women continually intersected, concepts of “belonging” and “inclusivity” also melded.

Chapter 8: Economics, game theory and disability studies: Towards a fertile dialogue: T. Kawagoe and A. Matsui

This chapter analyses inclusive communities by applying economics, mainly microeconomics and game theory to disability studies. First, we give a brief overview of the basics of economics and the key concepts in game theory, including strategic complementarity and network externality. These not only make a departure from the standard price theory, but also respond to some of the misguided criticisms against economics, particularly market fundamentalism and the supremacy of the rational agent. Economics affirms the modern view of a human being as an autonomous, rational decision maker. However, some, if not all economists recognize that in the real world, there is no human being who has such cognitive/computational capacity. Instead, human beings are actually influenced by their surrounding socio-cultural environments, develop some boundedly rational behavior, or blindly follow established conventions in order to resolve the many problems they face. We explain a recent game theoretic attempt in which, first, discrimination emerges as an equilibrium even if there is no inherent factor. Following this, if one tries to understand such an equilibrium based on one’s limited experiences, prejudices may emerge. The endogenous emergence of stigma is explained. The capability approach (Sen, 1999) may enable us to incorporate the social model of disability into economics. It can provide us with insight into the existence of discrimination resulting from a disabling society lacking appropriate accommodation. We also point out that the dichotomy between the society and individual implicit in the social model of disability is problematic from the perspective of economists adopting methodological individualism as a research methodology. Overcoming such a dichotomy in disability studies therefore seems to be necessary to initiate a conducive dialogue for building truly inclusive communities using economics and game theory.
Chapter 9: Female asylum seekers living in Malta: approaches to fostering 'inclusive communities': Maria Pisani

This chapter seeks to problematise notions of community and position this debate within the odyssey of female migration, more specifically Sub-Saharan African asylum seekers in Malta. I confront the assumed homogeneity of any community, and hope to demonstrate how contrary to the generalizing and essentialising political and public discourse in Malta, the Sub-Saharan African asylum seeker population also exhibits diversity, hierarchal structures and exclusion. This, I argue, is particularly salient in the case of female asylum seekers whose experience is often one experienced at the margins – gendered and racialised, frequently marked by poverty, violence, and political disempowerment. A consideration of such matters requires the need to explore understandings of 'community', their scope and place in an increasingly globalized and yet localized world, and to reconsider concepts of inclusion. Despite the influence and importance of transnational communities and varied influences from overseas (e.g. financial, relational, political or others), physical place remains central since this embodies the tangible proximity wherein female asylum seekers live out their day to day lives. It is within this space, that alliances and solidarities may be forged between communities made up of composite representations of identification and belonging. The issue of inclusion however, cannot be separated from issues of access to power, rights and material wellbeing. In conclusion, a pedagogical response is considered as a means of transcending gendered and racialised structures and forging alliances based on common interests within transient communities.

Chapter 10: The value of mutual support through client communities in the design of psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation programs: James M. Mandiberg and Richard Warner

Drawing an analogy with immigrant and ethnic minority communities, we argue that mainstreaming is not necessarily the best solution for many people with mental illness. Ethnic minorities have multiple successful pathways towards community. They can choose to live, work and socialize in the dominant community, they can remain in their sub-communities, or they can move back and forth, choosing some activities in each. We suggest that people with psychiatric disabilities should be allowed these same three choices and that we should not assume that integration into the broader community is the ultimate goal. Further, without the option of a strong and accepting sub-community, many people who cannot assimilate into the broader community are condemned to a marginal status, fitting in nowhere. With this in mind, we cite successful models such as the therapeutic community and the psychosocial clubhouse model that build on the value of the community of people with psychiatric disability. We discuss business incubators that help community members develop micro-businesses and the possibility of a user-friendly bank to assist in capitalizing such ventures. We describe an economic development approach which points the way to enterprises that can advance the economic
circumstances of the service-user community and offer members of the group work opportunities and leadership roles. Finally, we highlight the mutual support advantage which is present in the social firm approach to creating job opportunities when compared to the supported employment model.

Chapter 11: Beyond networked individualism and trivial pursuit: Putting disruptive technologies to good use: Alex Grech

People with access to a computer and an internet connection can now use web 2.0 or social media technologies to identify, mobilise and lead online tribes and start to break down some of the barriers to more inclusive communities. This chapter argues that despite long-standing concerns about the digital divide, privacy and control, access to disruptive technologies by networked individuals offers an opportunity for the creation and distribution of information without mediation. Although online tribes may be more ephemeral and temporal than offline networks, they may also lead to activism beyond geographical confines, with new leaders empowered to raise their voice and engage with a sense of purpose, hence creating new stocks of social capital in the process.

Chapter 12: Please, just call us parents: Engaging with inclusive approaches to researching marginalised communities: Alessandro Pratesi

This chapter reports on the complexities and rewards involved in engaging with inclusive and qualitative approaches to research, notably with marginalised communities. It draws on research conducted in Philadelphia (US), the aim of which was to build a phenomenology of informal care, that is, unpaid care work carried out by relatives or friends in private and non-professional settings. More specifically, the study explored the care experiences of 80 carers/parents living in the urban and suburban areas and diversified by gender, sexual orientation, marital status and type of care. One of the research’s goals was that of gaining deeper insights into the mechanisms through which dynamics of inclusion or exclusion and social inequality are interactionally and situationally constructed and/or challenged. The study was based on the hypotheses that emotions are a key element in understanding such mechanisms, and that informal care is a strategic site to analyse them.

Chapter 13: New frontiers in research: Using visual methods with marginalised communities: Anne Kellock

This chapter seeks to demonstrate the potential of visual, participative and indigenous methodologies with marginalised communities. In particular, the chapter details research conducted mainly with primary school Māori children (aged 8-10 years old) in New Zealand investigating well-being from their own perspective utilising a range of creative methods. Further methodological approaches used within marginalised communities are also considered. There were
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various activities that the children participated in towards discovering how they considered their own well-being. The chapter highlights how photography allowed the children involved in the research to become fully engaged and express themselves through the visual techniques employed. It then discusses and demonstrates aspects of the children’s outcomes in their explanation of well-being. Furthermore, I also map out the double-barrelled outcome whereby not only did the children show how they understood well-being but also how they experienced enhanced self-confidence and other positive changes as a result of engagement in the programme. The chapter concludes with a summary of the impacts of using visual methods.

Chapter 14: Decolonizing methodology: Disabled children as research managers and participant ethnographers: Dan Goodley and Katherine Runswick-Cole

We approach this chapter with a number of communities in mind. Disabled people, people of color and gay, transsexual and queer people share a common history of being colonized by researchers who “have probed, recollected, appropriated and ultimately exploited their lives in insensitive and offensive ways” (Llorens, 2008, p. 3). Research is an imperialist, disablist and heteronormative peculiarity of modernist knowledge production. In 1999, Tuhiwai Smith issued a call for the decolonizing of methodologies and in this chapter we take up that call. Tuhiwai Smith demands us to think again about how research can be enacted – as a liberatory rather than oppressive venture. We do so in the context of a research study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council ‘Does Every Child Matter, post-Blair? The Interconnections of Disabled Childhoods (http://www.rihsc.mmu.ac.uk/postblairproject/). The aim of the project is to explore the lives of disabled children in the North of England in the light of the policy agenda for children under the umbrella of Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004). It is our attempts to listen to children and young people, and our on-going struggle to decolonize methodologies that is the focus here. By ‘decolonise’ we are referring to approaches to research that (1) do not contribute to the pathologisation, othering or individualisation of communities who have historically experienced marginalisation; (2) subvert traditional researcher-led, academia-based, and top-down models of research that have denied marginalised groups access, participation and power to the research venture; and (3) work with the complex and expert knowledge of these groups, as necessary resources for the generation of theories and practices and more inclusive approaches to research. While queer, postcolonial and disability studies overlap and are drawn upon in this chapter, our question is more specific: how can research be implemented in ways that do not colonize or exclude disabled children?
CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES

What is community and what are useful concepts in trying to understand communities? The term, community, is used in daily interaction with rather different meanings. The usage and therefore reach of the concept does not lead to a neat summary. In this chapter, we set ourselves a difficult task – which is to unpack understandings of community. This occurs in a field where writings around community are in abundance. Implicit in the term community, are processes of inclusion and exclusion – people are counted in or out of settings with potentially serious consequences. To understand inclusion/exclusion we need to theorise what communities are and how participation happens? To do this, we present only a flavour of traditional established ways of thinking about community and then a contemporary approach, communities of practice. The chapter has three aims. First, we present some perspectival ideas which derive from predominantly sociological paradigms. This approach features types and models of community. In doing this, it is noteworthy that much of the theorising around community comes from Global North settings (for example, Germany, UK and US). Secondly, we focus in on the understandings from Psychology, in particular community psychology, which offers theorising on sense of community. Whilst this addresses the human component and focuses on capacity building, there is less to offer on how communities allow participation. Thirdly, we offer a particular approach around communities of practice. This conceptual framework allows us to explore the various participatory trajectories mobilised within group settings that can enable, or inhibit social inclusion.

To start at the beginning, the word community originated from the French term communite which derives from the Latin communitas, a generic term for organized society. Further back, this connects with the notion of Polis for Greek society and ideas of citizenship in the Roman era. These ideas form the epistemology of community. Indeed, ideas of connectedness, relationality and embeddedness are core concepts in disciplines which focus on human subjectivity. How bonds form, break and how people feel, experience, perceive these bonds are the very stuff which fascinates social scientists and the lay public alike. Whilst there is no one established community definition, the centrality of it merits a review of what we know.

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Hoggett (1997, pp. 6-7) highlights the demise of ‘community’ as a useful concept and its return in the mid-1990s. A new generation of sociological and geographical researchers appear to have registered the fact that outside of the seminar room the idea of community appears to remain alive and well and people, misguided or not, continue to refer to it either as something they live in, have lost, have just constructed, find oppressive, use as the basis for struggle and so on.

For most people, lay and scientific alike, community refers to an actual place, a set of relationships or a way of delineating quality of life. The ‘return’ of community in policy debates and academic theorising appears to be around issues of errant communities, ones where marginalisation and exclusion are present. Community here can signify, system dysfunction or social pathology, social instability and threat to the existing order, an imaginary safety net or a form of social capital to be enlisted in the competitive struggle for survival … [but also as a form in emancipatory politics] … as a resource of resistance signifying the commonality of class, the uniqueness of identify or the lost ideal of a more intimate society. (Hoggett, 1997, p. 11)

The definition above, signposts the deficit or lack associated with the term, the historical ideal and the possibility of change. Hoggett (1997) argues that there are distinct dimensions key to understanding communities. The first is whether communities are related spatially or not as this related to the complexity and heterogeneity of communities and ways in which boundaries are drawn. For example, in Manchester UK there are many ‘old’ white working class areas which now include diverse refugee and migrant people, impacting upon the community. Secondly, the way in which social networks are configured and the centrality of women as residents, neighbours, carers and activists within them is a further dimension. Thirdly, Hoggett talks about feelings, sentiments and emotions where pride, fear, belonging and longing impacts upon relationships, trust, boundaries and identities. The ideas of sharing and connectivity are not new ones and most definitions of community imply interdependency, bonding or loyalty. These ideas were central to Tonnies’ (1887) work in the nineteenth century.

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS OF COMMUNITY

The German sociologist Tonnies (1887, cited in Harris, 2001) whose seminal ideas posited two distinct forms of community, have been taken up and utilised to show the waning of community spirit or sense of community. The basic thesis here is that the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of countries, leads people to focus on self, separate more from others and become more concerned with self (Harris, 2001). The term gesellschaft (association or society) refers to this mode of being co-located with others in urbanised spaces with little sense of bonding or community sense. People in this account link with each other but the motivation for doing so, is more likely to be self interest. In the other type of human association, gemeinschaft (or community), is a tighter and more bonded social
grouping, where people know each other, are linked and dependent, resulting in
social cohesion. The picture painted in this account is a rural idyll where people
live harmoniously and have ‘unity of will’ is an idealised version of human
connectivity. Family and kinship are perfect accounts of gemeinschaft but pure
forms of either are unlikely to be found. Critiques of this account, query the
existence of this idealised form even in history but the myth continues to dominate.
If we consider modern twenty first century communities, in many settings, they are
characterised not by homogeneity but by diversity. Issues of age, race, gender,
disability, class and sexuality permeate community relations. Community members
may take up different positions within these groupings and belong to particular
associations, which have their own community agendas. The different sets of
concerns can result in excluding and including values and behaviours. Ultimately,
violence can ensue when members feel marginalised and ignored. Whether
communities of this nostalgic ‘golden’ era were knitted together and tightly bonded
is speculative but the positive vision and promise of what this entails continue to
enthral. Indeed, a more contemporary account of building, bonding and bridging
ties in communities is found in Putnam’s notion of social capital.

Putnam defines social capital as ‘the collective values of social networks (who
people know) and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for
each other (norms of reciprocity)’ (Putnam, 2000, p. 13). Broadly speaking this
refers to feeling connected and forming social networks. He argues in Bowling
Alone: The Collapse and Revival of America Community (2000) that social capital
is declining in the US. In support of this, he presents figures which show that
family dinners, visiting friends, and club attendance are all falling. These same
patterns of lack are also prevalent in other Global North settings. These cultures
appear to be losing a sense of community and ‘we-ness’ that used to predominate.
This sense of loss is a key concept in community psychology where the term sense
of community or psychological sense of community is used (Sarason, 1974). Ideas
of social capital have been subject to critique and commentators have attacked the
neoliberal notions upon which community and capital are predicated upon (see
Grech, 2010).

Community Psychology and Psychological sense of community

Whilst community is a term used in many disciplines (sociology, anthropology,
geo) its usage in Community Psychology, as sense of community is an
influential concept. Community Psychology, in contrast to other forms of
psychology, is a radically different approach. Burton, Boyle, Harris and Kagan
(2007) propose,

Community psychology offers a framework for working with those marginalised by
the social system that leads to self aware social change with an emphasis on value-
based, participatory work and the forging of alliances. It is a way of working that is
pragmatic and reflexive …. It is community psychology because it emphasises a level
of analysis and intervention other than the individual and their immediate
interpersonal context. It is community psychology because it is nevertheless
concerned with how people feel, think, experience and act as they work together, resisting oppression and struggling to create a better world. (p. 219)

From this definition the Psychological sense of community (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1988) refers to the experience of community. McMillan and Chavis (1986) proposed that sense of community is a feeling of belonging that members share, along with a faith that togetherness will meet needs. It was designed in reference to geographical spaces, such as neighbourhoods but also other discrete functional entities such as schools, religious groups, workplaces and communities of interest. There are four elements to this, which are membership, influence, integration and shared emotional connection. There is a dynamic between these four elements as members belong, influence the group and each other, feel rewarded for other participation in the community and through sharing, identify emotional connections. Their approach led to a Sense of Community Index (SCI), an operationalised concept, which has generated much empirical work (e.g. Long & Perkins, 2003) measuring sense of community within areas and groups of people. Research centres on the idea that sense of belonging to a community impacts positively. This is articulated in different outcomes dependent on the study. The ideas of social solidarity captured in Psychological sense of community address this feeling of belonging and camaraderie which is redolent in idyllic accounts of community. It is probably questionable whether this sense can be adequately harnessed through an instrument or whether there is something less measurable and more experiential at play. Whether community is conceptualised as a common bond, a shared place; life stage; shared interests or links between individuals is unpacked in the next section. What about notions around community development discourses?

Community as place

Oldenberg (2006) notes that people, at least in the Global North, need three distinct places – the home, the office and the community hangout or public gathering place. Whilst the work component (the second place) again biases this Global North thinking, the so-called “third place” is meant to capture the longing for spirit of community. Third places, then, are “anchors: of community life and can facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction. All societies already have informal meeting places; what is new in modern times and in Global North settings is the intentionality of seeking them out as vital to current societal needs – the idea of place as related to well-being. Oldenberg suggests these hallmarks of a true “third place”: free or inexpensive; food and drink(while not essential, are important); highly accessible: proximate for many (walking distance); involve regulars – those who habitually congregate there; welcoming and comfortable; both new friends and old should be found there. Place – a social, psychological and geographical entity however, is not as straightforward as first seems. Whilst lay and policy notions of community centre on the idea of community as place, defining place is more problematic. When someone uses the term Community care – it refers to care which is outside of the formal institution and somewhere which is more domestic.
For people with long term mental health difficulties, community care in the UK refers to care outside the hospital – within homes or hostels. Key here is the idea that community is non-institutionalised. When, however, someone refers to community shops, these tend to serve a particular geographical location. Community anchors or hubs denote local facilities designed for use by people living nearby – in a certain place. When people refer to ‘my community’ they will mean the place they live or the people they are connected to.

Community as a socio-spatial entity

At times, community refers to people who have face to face contact and live close to each other. A group of people attains community status when there are adequate numbers of sufficient connections between them which enables them to organise for a common purpose. This kind of mapping of and understanding of community is the one linked to community work or community development work. Here, the mapping of space and place is an important precursor prior to development occurring. Community development practitioners need to understand how to work with individuals and communities. This is usually done by working with groups with the intention of building and improvement of community. These principles pivot around the promotion of empowerment of individuals and communities. Through supporting communities to develop skills to take action, autonomous and accountable structures are promoted. Members are encouraged to learn and reflect on experience in order to enable change. These community development principles share much common ground. This idea of community, can be, of course differently understood by rather different stakeholders in the community (and indeed contestations sometimes occur around the boundary).

Community as links between people

Anthropological understandings of community centre around binding signs and symbols (Cohen, 1986). This assumes at some level, that a shared set of morals, values and behavioural norms exist. This kind of community may be related to place – individuals having Celtic origins for example may indicate these in their identity. A common bond here may be felt due to sharedness of identity and not be a result of knowing each other. Lay perceptions of community assume that strong communities are characterised by deep and positive relationships. On the contrary, when people do not feel connected, do not care about each other or have things in common, the term community breakdown is often used. In the UK terms such as ‘sink estates’ signal breakdown, poverty and marginalisation. Implicit in these understandings are ideas of inclusion and exclusion – excluded out of communities or included in. Putnam’s social capital approach (linked to Bordieu’s ideas of capital) argues that reciprocal relationships where people habitually help others out are indicative of social capital. Critics have pointed out that over strong links can be dangerous and excluding of difference. Sixsmith, Boneham and Goldring (2003) researched a strongly bonded community where homophobic attitudes were
expressed. Whilst insiders felt strongly bonded and a dominant masculinity pervaded, individuals who may sexually identify differently or espouse different views felt quietened by others. Here insiders are protected and heavily involved whilst outsiders are restricted. A key issue here is one of participation – who is allowed to participate and how? In contemporary Global North settings, participation has been understood both as tyranny (Cooke & Kothari, 1995) and as transformation (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). The reality of where one sits or is positioned within a community, is therefore not simple a construction or view, it has real effects – effects which are visible particularly in participation and its impact.

Community of interests

Communities of interest are more invisible, less obvious, than communities with geographic boundaries. They pull in and link, through common experiences and concerns, individuals why may be scattered across a geographical area. However they experience difficulty, discrimination or lack of recognition when trying to put their views forward. There are communities who may share an identity and those who share an experience and concern. Examples of communities who share an identity such as heritage and marginalization (for example, the black community). People who consider themselves as having an impairment may share an experience or concern. A community of interest is defined as a group of people who may share interests. Wilmott (1986, p. 83) states that:

‘interest’ is broadly interpreted to cover shared characteristics as diverse as ethnic origin, religion, politics, occupation, leisure pursuit and sexual propensity.

Members of a sports club may not live in close proximity but may have much in common with each other, depending on each other for help and support. At times, communities of interest may form when groups of individuals get together to share life experiences – such as an alcohol anonymous (AA) support group. Communities of interest will share beliefs, interests and activities and are closely linked to social networks. The idea here is that those who may share a marginalised experience may well benefit from getting together and sharing.

Communities linked to life stage

Shared life experiences sometime result in communities of interest (as discussed above) or are determined by the particular life stage we are in. Interest communities are sometimes formed around these shared life experiences rather than more personal interests. Mothers with pre-school or school age children may form a ‘school gate’ community of interest around the politics of school and share things whilst children are at school. Playgroups and mother and baby groups may function in the same way for pre-school interest. Here, the community is one in which membership is evolving – there is always a ‘school gate’ community although members may come and go. Crow and Allan (1994) term these short term
communities as ‘communities of limited liability’ with short term interdependence and an element of autonomy as people exercise choice about involvement. The voluntary nature of these communities hinges on temporary participation where individuals feel enabled through a common bond.

Common bond

Whichever approach is taken to interpret the nature of community, a salient and defining issue which constructs ‘community’ is a sense of a ‘common bond’. This may be a subjective feeling (for example an internet community group around an issue such as self harm), or objective (individuals working in the same school). Indeed, in internet communities or social networking sites, the common bond – the joining element, such as an element of identity, is sometimes the only link which defines the virtual community. The boundaries of community as place, interest, life-stage seem messy and overlapping – this adds richness and complexity to our understandings and possibilities for theorising. For example, a new mother may join a local parent toddler group which can be related to her life stage (parenthood) and place (wanting to meet other parents in the area). She may simultaneously be a member of a Single parent action network (a community of interest campaigning for action) and a Green party. Here place, interest and life-stage intersect to create a fluid constellation of bonds. Whilst political affiliation may be life long, other groupings (toddler group) may be more temporal.

Having explored how community as place making, or sense of community, as seen in psychological and sociological paradigms, a key theme seems to hinge on not only how people experience the community, but how participation occurs. In understanding communities, not only do we need to see structures and types of communities, but we need to understand how humans bond, connect and participate in communities. A useful way of doing this is through communities of practice. As noted above, how participation occurs in communities can relate to very real effects. To understand participatory trajectories within communities, in the next section, we turn to explore communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998a). The notion of access to participation within communities is shown to be central to processes of social inclusion and exclusion.

Communities of practice

As we define enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly. Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities, communities of practice. (Wenger, 1998a, p. 45)

The identity of the person who originally coined the term ‘Communities of Practice’ is unclear (Wenger, 1990) but the term first appeared in the seminal work
of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger: “Situated Learning and Legitimate Peripheral Participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Using the idea of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’, they described how novice apprentices developed expertise by engaging legitimately in practices of the community and how their learning trajectory typically involved moving gradually from simple, peripheral tasks to more involved activities that were central to the community. This theory of learning within its localised apprenticeships was then further extended by Wenger (1998a) to develop a more generalised socially-situated theory of learning. In terms of understanding communities, communities of practice provides a flexible framework for exploring learning, participatory trajectories, identities and social change initiatives within group contexts. Its versatility and adaptability for exploring diverse communities is evidenced by its expansive adoption across a range of disciplines including, among many others, education (e.g. Bathmaker & Avis, 2006), community psychology (e.g. Lawthom, 2010), healthcare (e.g. Davis, 2006), women’s studies (e.g. Paechter, 2003) and sexuality (Whelan, 2009).

A community of practice is defined as a group of people uniting to mutually engage in a joint enterprise, who together develop and share a common repertoire of resources (Wenger, 1998a). A community of practice therefore requires three key dimensions: mutual engagement, shared repertoire and a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998a). The notion of ‘mutual engagement’ describes the interpersonal relations that emerge from, and are negotiated through, the communal activities of the community. Wenger (1998) uses the term ‘joint enterprise’ to describe the negotiated processes that create relations of mutual accountability between community members, and to describe the shared activities that structure and lend coherence to the activities of the group. The final element of the tripartite definition, ‘shared repertoire’, incorporates the “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice” (Wenger, 1998a, p. 83).

Each of the three defining elements of a community of practice are, therefore, intimately bound up with the notion of ‘practice’. Indeed, it is this connection with practice that distinguishes communities of practice from other notions of ‘community’. In light of the sociological theories of community outlined above, it is worth briefly clarifying how communities of practice distinguish themselves from other notions of belonging and togetherness. Wenger (1998a) clarifies that a community of practice does not exist merely as a consequence of members sharing geographical proximity – the notion of community within community of practice moves distinctly beyond the idea of community as merely concerned with members belonging to a shared space. Neither is a community of practice solely concerned with the interpersonal relations of community members, in the way that some sociological theories consider the term. Indeed, a community of practice explicitly differentiates itself from definitions of community that are constructed purely in terms of interpersonal networks. It is expressly “not defined merely by who knows whom or who talks with whom in a network of interpersonal relations through which information flows” (Wenger, 1998a, p. 74). Rather, a community of practice
“exists because it produces a shared practice as members engage in a collective process of learning” (Wenger, 1998b, p.4).

Before considering the potential of communities of practice to explore community engagement and processes, and with particular reference to the idea of inclusive constructions of community, it is first worth briefly outlining the ethical-political motivation that drove the development of the framework. The genesis of the communities of practice framework lies partly in the desire to avoid perpetuating processes of social exclusion:

I began by arguing the importance of exploring a social rather than psychological theory of learning, motivated in part by a concern not to add blame for “failure to learn in school” to other burdens of social marginality. (Lave, 1996, p. 161)

Rejecting traditional psychological theories that situated learning inside individual heads, or modelled isolated learning trajectories as mirrored patterns of artificially intelligent computer programs, Lave and Wenger explored learning within its social context. As Lave describes the motivation behind this conceptual shift, her deliberate attempt to avoid the conceptual reproduction of social marginalities becomes apparent:

It seems imperative to explore ways of understanding learning that do not naturalize and underestimate divisions of social inequality in our society. (Lave, 1996, p. 149)

The situated nature of learning described by the communities of practice framework also challenges the traditional supremacy attributed to academic learning and appreciates the knowledge of ordinary people in everyday contexts (Hammersley, 2005). In this respect, it clearly aligns with the principles of community psychology, which also recognize the expertise and value of people over their own experiences in their own contexts (Lawthom, in press).

This ethical-political motivation is sometimes overlooked, or overshadowed by the extensive deployment of the communities of practice framework in explicitly commercial contexts. However, there is also a considerable body of research that continues the tradition of employing communities of practice to explore and overcome the boundaries of social marginality. An example of research employing communities of practice in a project oriented towards social transformation is the No Outsiders project (DePalma, 2009). Taking its name from a phrase in a 2004 speech by Archbishop Desmond Tutu: “Everyone is an insider; there are no outsiders – whatever their beliefs, whatever their colour, gender or sexuality”.

The project involved primary classroom teachers and university researchers working together to tackle homophobia and heteronomativity in primary schools. It specifically aimed to collapse the “traditional binaries between teaching and reflection, academia and activism, researchers and research participants” (DePalma, 2009, p. 3). While the project itself involved traversing various communities (teacher professional communities, academic research communities, school communities and so on), the framework of communities of practice was invoked to underpin the creation and development of a research community that could support primary teachers in challenging heteronomativity.
The No Outsiders research team drew on communities of practice to explore the transformative potential of community engagement (DePalma, 2009). Critical of Wenger’s over-emphasis on the reproductive nature of practice and learning within the communities of practice model, DePalma (2009) describes how the framework can also be utilised to explore participation in communities that are oriented towards social transformation and change. Central to DePalma’s analysis of the No Outsiders initiative is Wenger’s description of the processes of participation and reification.

Participation, within a communities of practice framework, refers both to the engagement with community practices and to the interpersonal relationships that are negotiated through this engagement. Complementing this conception of participation, Wenger describes the process of reification, which involves the creation of a meaning that becomes independent of its creators. The continual interplay between reification and participation described by the communities of practice model was highlighted during the course of the No Outsiders project. At different time points during the course of the project, the research team strategically adopted various reified policies and discourses as they tailored their presentations to align with a variety of audiences – to academic audiences they often employed discourses founded on queer theory, for example, while the authoritative discourse of governmental policy was typically invoked to enlist support from professional primary school teachers (DePalma, 2009).

A communities of practice framework, therefore, permits an identification and exploration of the complementary processes of participation and reification that are negotiated over time through engagement with the practices of particular communities. The strategic deployment of reifications across community practices was shown to mediate processes of social inclusion.

Participation is a crucial aspect of the communities of practice model, and, as outlined earlier, Lave and Wenger employ the term ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ to describe the learning of novices of a community. Peripherality, in this view, can be either empowering (when a novice progresses to full participation in the community), or disempowering (when the novice is prevented from participating more fully in the community) (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36). This focus on participation has clear resonances with conceptualisations of inclusive and exclusive strategies of community engagement; identifying available participatory trajectories of community members permits an identification of the practices that foster or suppress inclusion and community cohesion. This, in turn, can open up opportunities for transforming oppressive practices. Indeed, this analytic promise of communities of practice was realised in a study that explored the trajectories of further education trainee lecturers in the UK (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005). Rather than trainee teachers navigating from legitimate peripheral participation to full membership of the further education teaching community, as is expected in the communities of practice model, Bathmaker and Avis (2005) found that the newcomers were repeatedly marginalised by their new community. This power of the communities of practice framework to identify these diverse trajectories can
therefore contribute to an elaboration of the processes of inclusion and exclusion that are defined and shaped by community practices.

CONCLUSIONS AND INCLUSIONS

The domain of conceptualising communities is notoriously contested. Historical perspectives from psychology and sociology exhibit conflicting trends towards delineating groups of people by geospatial locations, shared relational networks, common interests or some combination of these.

Given the multifarious theories of community and their differential adoption and rejection across disciplinary divides, it seems unlikely that a single, consensual definition will ever emerge. Rather than pursue this potentially endless quest for an all-encompassing definitive theory of community then, we have argued instead for the strategic deployment of a communities of practice framework (Wenger, 1998a). Communities of practice offers an understanding of the various participatory trajectories mobilised within group settings where people are actively engaged in the pursuit and negotiation of common activities.

The communities of practice framework, describes how these participatory trajectories are structured and facilitated by particular group practices that can promote or inhibit inclusion. We invoked an example from an inclusive initiative in primary schools where the communities of practice model, was employed to understand and elaborate the different positions and practices adopted by various members of the research project. The identification and elaboration of these positions and practices using a communities of practice framework served to highlight the utility of operationalising the model within groups specifically oriented towards positive social change. The example from the teacher training programme showed how transgressions from the expected participatory trajectories afforded by the model can help isolate and elucidate exclusionary practices.

It is important to understand the socio-historical context of various definitions of community, and also to acknowledge the Global North bias of many existing theories (Grech, 2010) Understanding various conceptions can inform and further current notions of community by avoiding the academic reproduction of social marginality and by extending the conceptual boundaries of community. However, when considering the inclusive or exclusive nature of communities, the exigency of arriving at an absolute definition of the term ‘community’ seems to fade. Instead, we need to shift the focus towards understanding the participative trajectories and group practices that contribute to, or inhibit, group cohesion and social inclusion. Communities of practice can contribute to our understanding of these inclusive or exclusive processes.

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REBECCA LAWTHOM AND PAULINE WHelan


CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT’S RADICAL AGENDA

Social justice and environmental sustainability

Community development is founded on principles of social justice and environmental sustainability. Its process, although often a practical response to immediate issues, involves popular education, learning to question the everyday taken-for-granted contradictions that are woven through our everyday lives. Out of these altered perspectives on life emerges a more critical awareness, and this gives rise to the confidence, autonomy and insight to act collectively together to improve the quality of life for everyone. For practitioners, this calls for an analysis of power, the generation of theory in action, and the organisation of collective action from neighbourhood to global levels with the purpose of creating inclusive communities in a more inclusive world. Social divisions are greater than ever, both within and between countries, as neoliberal globalisation extends its reach, beaming a free market principle based on a profit imperative across the world. At the same time, community development’s commitment to social change is being distracted under a smokescreen of managerialism, as our transformative concepts become diluted and our practice becomes embedded in policy as improved service delivery. Meanwhile the world faces escalating humanitarian and environmental crises. This chapter is based on the hope and optimism that we can easily and readily reclaim our radical potential if we identify the spaces for creating critical dissent dialogue as a basis for vigilant practice for a fair and just democracy, a world built on respect for all people and the earth itself.

Community development clings boldly and unambiguously to principles of social justice and environmental justice in a world in which, paradoxically, we face escalating crises created by social divisions and environmental degradation. These are witnessed in the form of widening inequalities cleaved by poverty and privilege, not only increasing the divide between rich and poor countries, but creating strange anomalies, such as escalating social divisions in rich, western countries which give rise to persistent generations of poverty. For example, in the UK, child poverty continues at a rate of one in every three children, despite government policy that committed to halving this rate by 2010, and ending it by 2020, and global child poverty continues at 1:2. In relation to environmental
sustainability, rising sea levels as global warming causes the polar ice caps to melt threatens all forms of life on earth, not only posing questions of how to deal with countries and coastlines disappearing below sea level, but creating unstable weather conditions and changing weather patterns in the short term. For example, localised flooding caused by excessive rainfall or hurricanes (tropical cyclones) has caused damage and loss of life in local communities from Madeira to Cumbria to New Orleans, and is forecast to increase in intensity as global warming progresses. And, on a scale larger than the combined impact of the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), the Kashmir earthquake (2005) and the Haiti earthquake (2010), the heavy monsoon rains which gave rise to flooding in Pakistan in July 2010, continue to affect the lives of an estimated 20 million people, most of them women and children, months after the event (UNICEF, 2010; www.direct.gov.uk). In these ways, we begin to see how social justice and environmental sustainability are inextricably linked.

These are important points to understand at the outset of this chapter for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is impossible to practise community development without situating communities within the wider context of our times. This calls for an analysis of power if we are to begin to understand disempowerment and the way that lives are differently constructed according to poverty and privilege. By questioning power, we begin to discover ways in which the personal is political and the local is global. Secondly, it is only possible to develop the critical approach to practice that this calls for if we generate theory in action, and action from theory, creating an ongoing praxis, a unity of theory and practice. Without this, we have a dangerous “actionless thought” and “thoughtless action” (Johnston, cited in Shaw, 2004, p. 26) dichotomy which cannot achieve social change, nor engage with such transformative concepts as participation and inclusion. When the transformative potential of concepts such as these is not fully understood, there is a danger that they become mainstreamed and diluted, and our practice does not hold up to scrutiny. If we claim to be working to principles of social justice, environmental justice and collective well-being, we need to be able to evidence this in our thinking and action. Otherwise, our practice is based on a false premise: claiming to be emancipatory while, in reality, doing quite the opposite. In this respect, Cooke and Kothari (2001) name participation the ‘new tyranny’ emphasising that key concepts reduced to buzzwords reduce transformative practice into serving the interests of the powerful by maintaining the status quo. Participation, far from a feel good factor that involves touching the surface of community life, is a key concept in the foundation of participatory democracy, a worldview in which communities are inclusive, healthy and flourishing; in which local people have control over the decision-making processes that affect their lives. My third point is that community development is about collective action for social change. Practice falls short of its potential for change if we fail to organise collectively, following through from issue to project, and from projects to campaigns, networks and alliances which reach beyond the boundary of individual communities to harness collective energy and span multiple issues of justice and sustainability, gathering momentum as a movement for change.
Working with these three points in mind, towards a more specific working model, let us move on to explore the ways in which they are interlinked in relation to practice. Transformative change for a world that is cooperative, diverse, equal and flourishing calls for an understanding of the interrelatedness of the core components of our practice, and with this intention I am going to begin my exploration in the widest context for our work, that of globalisation.

GLOBALISED TIMES

Globalisation is not new; it provided the foundations for empire and slavery. But while the beginnings of globalisation are rooted in colonialism and the drive for wealth and power by European nations, the last three decades have seen that process accelerate, influenced by new technology, the power of multinational corporations and the free-trade agendas of neoliberalism. It is vital for community development that we understand the impact that this process is having on the social justice and environmental justice agendas. We are witnessing the systematic destruction of indigenous cultures founded on biodiversity, the increased polarisation of poverty and privilege, both within and between countries, as well as widespread environmental degradation, destroying natural habitats and depleting natural resources. Some of the main areas I have in mind are deforestation, non-renewable energy sources (coal, petroleum, natural gas), air pollution, ozone depletion and marine destruction. Some of this can be attributed to population increase that is creating too many people for the planet to sustain, but much is due to cultures that encourage individualism, which in turn gives rise to irresponsible levels of consumption without any collective responsibility for the well-being of humanity and the natural world. The result is extreme forms of alienation and fragmentation, a crisis of ecological and ethical balance. I want to emphasise here that globalisation is not simply about economic domination, but it carries more sinister implications.

Neoliberal globalization is not simply economic domination of the world but also the imposition of a monolithic thought … that consolidates vertical forms of difference and prohibits the public from imagining diversity in egalitarian, horizontal terms. Capitalism, imperialism, monoculturalism, patriarchy, white supremacism and the domination of biodiversity have coalesced under the current form of globalization ….

(Fisher and Ponniah, 2003, p. 10)

This comment from Fisher and Ponniah is important in the way that it addresses the power of the public imagination. Attitudes of superiority and inferiority based on social difference become embedded in popular consciousness, justifying why some people are worth more than others. The notion that western culture is influencing other cultures worldwide, not only with technological progress (modernisation), but also with western ideology (westernisation) is important in understanding how ideas are transmitted. In fact, the link between technological progress and embedded western values raises questions about the destruction of diverse world cultures in the name of progress. This is why Fisher and Ponniah (2003) claim that the competitive western worldview is not only destructive
because it is driven by a profit imperative, but it also embodies political, cultural, racial, patriarchal, heterosexual, ecological and epistemological attitudes. Understanding the way in which Gramsci developed insight into the concept of hegemony by discerning the difference between power asserted by coercion and power through ideological persuasion is relevant here. Traditional Marxism defined hegemony as coercion, the way in which the state exercised control through the law, the police and the armed forces. Gramsci extended this understanding by identifying the way in which dominant ideology as a form of ideological persuasion permeates our lives through the institutions of civil society – the family, schools, religious organisations and all other community groupings, “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (Gramsci, 1986, p. 244). Foucault extends this insight into the transmission of ideas to the micro-relations of everyday life, embedded in discourse, not only words but practices – educational, scientific, religious, legal. Power, in this sense, “must be analyzed as something which circulates … never localized here or there [but] is employed and exercised through a net-like organization” (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). So, as we look into different ideas about power, we begin to see how Fisher and Ponniah’s claim makes sense, that discriminatory attitudes permeate life itself, that “power comes from everywhere, from above and from below; … inextricably implicated in micro relations of domination and resistance” (McLaren, 2009, p. 72). The result is an increasingly divided world. In the west, individualism has replaced collective responsibility with self-interest, consequently poverty is escalating in rich countries as well as in the developing world. Seabrook refers to the Western poor as the “dead souls of democracy”: “the US and Europe have performed a vanishing trick on their own poor [and] … this makes poor people harder to see in the rest of the world as well” (Seabrook, 2003, p. 10). This issue of the invisibility of poor people the world over is obscuring the reality of an increasingly divided world. McLaren and Jaramillo identify “a central antagonism of the current historical moment [as] that of empire”: in the name of global democracy, the “transnational ruling elite is being afforded a rite of passage to scourge the earth of its natural resources while besieging the working-class, women, children and people of color” (2007, p. 63). They use Hurricane Katrina, and the human catastrophe that ensued, as an example of ‘race’, class and gender warfare in the US today, challenging that, post-Katrina, fundamental questions about democracy have not been raised. Giroux highlights this escalating politics of disposability as a product of neoliberal times, times in which “market fundamentalism elevates profits over human need” (Giroux, 2006a, p. 85). The politics of disposability is a concept central to any anti-discriminatory practice, capturing the way in which some lives are seen as ‘disposable’ according to their centrality to the economy as producers and consumers. Giroux problematises the racist dimensions of the ‘politics of disposability’: a pair of Black feet with cardboard ‘shoes’ held in place by rubber bands is photographed on the front cover of his book (2006a). The image that it creates defies the belief that it could capture life in the USA today. This reification
of the market as a tangible force that is somehow separate from people, social justice and democracy justifies the ranked importance of some lives over others. The unproductive are considered expendable and a drain on public resources; investment in the public collective good is ‘dismissed as bad business’ (Giroux, 2006b). Giroux warns that these are ‘dark times’ in which our struggles should challenge war as a political act in the name of peace and markets as a measure of democracy.

In relation to becoming critical in our approaches to community development, it is necessary to grapple with concepts of hegemony, or the way that power is asserted by some groups over others, and counter-hegemony as our understanding of globalisation deepens. Counter-hegemonic globalisation is a form of resistance to hegemonic globalisation. It reaches from grassroots participation through networks and alliances in movement for change for justice at a global level and is committed to countering the impact of globalisation (Borg and Mayo, 2006). My suggestion at this point is that an inclusive, anti-discriminatory approach to practice cannot justifying attending to the local, and overlooking global forces of oppression. Unregulated markets, a free-market economy and globalisation do nothing to protect the natural world and the most vulnerable people of the world from the drive of capitalism to produce at lowest cost and maximum profit.

Evidence of this can be witnessed in the example of deforestation: the depletion of the tropical rainforests to meet the high economic demand from the West for timber and meat has trapped indigenous farmers into not only destroying their own futures, but also destroying major ecosystems which ultimately threatens the future of the entire planet. Encouragingly, we are seeing signs of a counter-hegemonic movement. We could certainly see the fair trade movement and the local economies movement as gathering momentum and significance. Another such example is the International Forum on Globalisation (IFG), an alliance of North-South activists, economists, scholars and researchers who analyse and critique the cultural, social, political and environmental impacts of economic globalisation. This Forum was formed in 1994 from concerned people who perceived that we have been led into a period of historic change more significant than any since the Industrial Revolution without discussion of the liberal, free-trade principles which have been promoted by powerful bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the IMF, the World Bank, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the latter of which united the USA, Canada and Mexico in 1994 forming the largest intergovernmental agreement to remove trade barriers (trade bloc) in the world in terms of purchasing power parity. The IFG aimed to stimulate new thinking, collective action and popular education about this changing state of world affairs. Vandana Shiva, a director of the IFG, offers an eco-feminist perspective on the urgency for a global analysis of local practice:

As the globalization project unfolds, it exposes its bankruptcy at the philosophical, political, ecological and economic levels. The bankruptcy of the dominant world order is leading to social, ecological, political and economic non-sustainability, with societies, ecosystems, and economies disintegrating and breaking down. (Vandana Shiva, quoted in Fisher & Ponniah, 2003, p. 1)
Today, the IFG offers community development a global connection for action on climate justice and social justice, providing information and organising campaigns with a local-global reach that contribute to a climate justice movement. Challenging the rhetoric of the World Bank claims that free trade and poverty alleviation work in partnership, their position is that the benefits of globalisation continue to go to the few, not the many. Their vision is to promote equitable, democratic and ecologically sustainable economies (www.ifg.org).

Ecological thought emphasises biodiversity and the way that indigenous cultures have evolved in balance with their natural environments. Cultural diversity is essential for biological diversity, and local economic development as a local-global movement offers alternatives for the future that reflect values other than consumer lifestyles.

In relation to the interface of social justice and environmental justice, Crescy Cannan emphasises that the environmental crisis is not only a crisis for us all, but it disproportionately affects both the poor and the South, and so ‘intensifies forms of inequality and threatens collective goods – thus it is a human crisis as well as a threat to the entire planet’. (Cannan, 2000, p. 365)

At this point, I want to dig a little more deeply under the surface to explore specific evidence related to social divisions.

THE WORLD’S CHILDREN AS A MEASURE OF SOCIAL DIVISIONS

Reification of the market within neoliberalism has raised the profit imperative above wellbeing as a measure of success.

The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born. (UNICEF, 2007, p. 1)

I do not think any of us would argue differently, yet UNICEF, in its report State of the world’s children 2005: Childhood under threat (2005), provides evidence that more than one billion children, one in every two children in the world, are denied the healthy and protected upbringing defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and are reduced to growing up in poverty. We begin to uncover strange anomalies, a worldview that prioritises profit for the few at the expense of the wellbeing of the many. This is clearly a choice that profit is more important than justice, if we take justice to mean responsibility for a common good.

The strange phenomenon of child poverty in rich countries is even more startling. A UNICEF report on childhood in industrialised countries, produced in February 2007 (available at www.unicef.org.uk), ranked the UK at the bottom of 21 countries on an overall measure of child well-being based on six dimensions: material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relations, behaviours and risks, and young people’s own subjective sense of their own well-being. Within these six dimensions, 40 separate indicators of child well-being were developed. It seems that in the UK we are creating conditions for generations of
unhappy children who are denied their full potential in life when there is no apparent need. Child poverty in the UK remains hidden beneath the surface of prosperity, and justice remains blinkered.

Asking ourselves ‘Who is poor in the UK?’, we uncover an even more disturbing insight. Child poverty targets those from minority ethnic families. Whereas 30% of all children are growing up in poverty, a different picture emerges when we look at ethnicity: 27% of White children are growing up in poverty, whereas this figure escalates to 36% Indian, 41% Black Caribbean, 56% Black non-Caribbean and 69% Pakistani and Bangladeshi children, based on 2006/07 statistics (CPAG, 2008).

Until politics engages effectively with the wider struggle against racism, it is impossible for the demands of social justice to be met. (Craig et al, 2008, p. 245)

Similarly, ‘dis’abled children or those with a ‘dis’abled parent are much more at risk of poverty, inadequate housing and social exclusion from public and community services (Flaherty et al., 2004). In addition to this, we begin to see anomalous concentrations of poverty. For instance, London, with a thriving economy that has generated 620,000 jobs in the past 10 years, has a child poverty rate of 39% (Oppenheim, 2007). We know that poverty creates ill health and premature death; in the UK, children of those in the bottom social class are five times more likely to die from an accident and 15 times more likely to die in a house fire than those in upper social classes (Flaherty et al., 2004). So you begin to see that by digging beneath the surface, we begin to make more critical connections that provide us with a complex picture of the interlinking dimensions of poverty. The correlation between unemployment, poor mental health, homelessness, school exclusions, children in care/leaving care and high levels of youth suicide add further depth to that picture (Howarth et al., 1999). This is not only a profound social injustice, but its cost to society as a whole is immense, creating generations of unhappy, unhealthy children who are denied their full potential.

Children who are poor are not a homogeneous group, although they are often represented as being so. Their experiences of being poor will be mediated by, among other things, their age, gender, ethnicity, health and whether or not they are ‘dis’abled.

In addition, children will interpret their experiences of poverty in the context of a diverse range of social, geographical and cultural settings. (Ridge, 2004, p. 5)

Since the Blair government’s commitment to halve child poverty by 2010 and end child poverty by 2020, we have seen rafts of policy changes under the banner of Every Child Matters aimed at reducing family and child poverty, yet nothing is making a difference. Similar issues are mirrored on the world stage. In 1999, the World Bank and IMF took a new approach to reducing poverty in which, in just the same way as the Blair government, participation in civil society was key, and the poor became written in as players in their own transformation. In other words, rights have become tangled up with responsibilities to such a degree that responsibility for social justice is being laid at the feet of those who are victims of an unjust system. Kane (2008, p. 197), in a critique of these developments, cites Arundhati Roy’s comments that while the World Bank policies are now written in
“socially just, politically democratic-sounding language … they use language to mask their intent … the language of dissent has been co-opted” (Roy, 2004, p. 74). This last point, the co-option of the language of dissent, is vital to understanding the struggle for participatory democracy. Laying the responsibility for poverty at the feet of the victims of injustice has nothing to do with lessening the divide between the poor and the privileged, and we are deluded if we think differently. We need to get our thinking inside the links between distributive justice and cultural justice, so that gender and ‘race’ are understood in relation to the traditional class struggle, not as competing with it, but as interacting with it to continue to privilege Whiteness and maleness (Lister, 2008). Killeen (2008) challenges poverty as a human rights issue. His argument is that the demonisation of the undeserving poor under Thatcherism which led to policies that simultaneously increased poverty and prosperity has had such a hold on popular opinion, carrying an enduring message that poor people do not deserve to be lifted out of poverty, that it has led to reluctance on the part of the UK government to redistribute wealth back to pre-Thatcher levels, despite the overwhelming evidence of the impact social inequalities have on health and well-being (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006, 2009; WHO/CSDH, 2008). The ingrained nature of public attitudes to poverty combined with the reluctance of government to risk becoming unpopular by adopting redistributive policies, in Killeen’s analysis, has given rise to povertyism, a form of discrimination which denigrates poor people. This constitutes a violation of human rights if considered against the UN Declaration of Human Rights which addresses the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, and which calls for states to meet their responsibility to provide for their citizens. (Killeen, 2008). Since the crisis of capitalism in 2008, inequalities are being further exacerbated by a world recession that is hitting the poorest hardest, and widening divisions even further.

THEORY IN ACTION AND ACTION AS THEORY

Community development has an eclectic theory base. In other words, there is no one theory that informs our practice, but there are many theories that influence our understanding of power and so inform our anti-discriminatory approach to practice. Some of those that I have in mind are Gramsci, Foucault, feminism, Black feminism and eco-feminism, extending our understanding of the complexity of power relations.

Domination and liberation need to be understood in relation to intersecting and overlapping oppressions that include class, ‘race’ and gender. “Critical theorists begin with the premise that men and women are essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege” (McLaren, 2009, p. 61, emphasis in original). As critical educators we seek theories that are dialectical, that locate the individual as one who both creates and is created by society, to the extent that it is impossible to understand one without the other. In this way, “critical theory helps us focus simultaneously on both sides of a social contradiction” (McLaren, 2009, p. 61, emphasis in original). By focusing on this
idea, you can see that any site of domination is also a site of liberation, and it is by understanding the nature of power that we are able to transform it into empowerment.

Becoming critical in our approach to practice involves questioning the ideas that construct everyday lives. Ontology, or a theory of being, is the way we see ourselves in relation to the world around us, helping us to make sense of why we live life as we do and how we give meaning and purpose to our lives, the way we act in the world. Epistemology, influenced by our ontological perspective, is a theory of knowledge, or making sense of the world that is informed by particular values. So, if dominant attitudes persuade us to see the world in terms of a natural order of superiority and inferiority, we are likely to make sense of our lives according to a common sense that makes no sense at all, one full of contradictions that escape our notice. Questioning the nature of everyday life is the beginning of this process; it leads us to different ways of knowing, and in turn, to different ways of being. In these ways, epistemologies and ontologies are part of a living theory, or practical theory that evolves from everyday life in order to transform the way things are for the better. Theory and practice become synthesised into praxis as we create theory as part of life itself. The process of becoming critical has inner and outer dimensions; as Judi Marshall (2001) puts it, we need to use both inner and outer arcs of attention. Inner reflection allows us to reach levels of critical reflexivity, to reflect on our reflections in order to get deeper insights. This inner criticality is in symbiotic relationship with our outer perceptions, continually questioning and exploring meanings, possibilities and purpose in relation to life experience. The outer process of consciousness is explored in groups where an issue, or in Freirean terms a 'generative theme', a situation from everyday life that will generate a passionate response out of everyday apathy, is the focus of dialogue. This can be done effectively through the use of stories about life experiences, but must always be carried out in a context of trust, respect and confidentiality. It is our responsibility to maintain a culture of respect in a world that often rewards disrespect. Conscientisation, or the processing of becoming critical, deepens through this practice and forms the basis for determining action.

A worldview is a paradigm for framing the way we collectively see the world, the way we think about the world and the values that inform this perspective. These ideas have a profound influence on the way we act out our everyday lives. The roots of critical consciousness lie in questioning taken-for-grantedness, the unquestioning acceptance of the way life is. So, by questioning the ideas implicit in a western worldview, which work on class, cultural, ethnic, religious, racial, gendered, sexual and many other social differences, we begin to identify the structural roots of discrimination. Our identities, a sense of who we are in the world, are formed within this complex, interconnected hierarchy of poverty and privilege. But a worldview is not fixed. As Reason (2002, p. 4) says:

The worldview of a culture changes from time to time … worldviews are not simply rational things, they are about the mood of the times, the metaphors we use without knowing we are using them, the spirit of the times.
In terms of change, the latter part of the 20th century brought more than could have been imagined prior to this. I have in mind, not only the impact of the technological revolution on world-wide, immediate communication, but absolutes have been dismantled before our eyes, and in this I include such iconic examples as the Soviet Union, the Berlin Wall, Apartheid in South Africa with Nelson Mandela freed after 27 years’ imprisonment to become president and world peacemaker, and more recently the ‘twin towers’ at the World Trade Center in New York, which prompted the West’s ‘war on terror’. The illusion of stability in the West has now been replaced by instability, exacerbated by the 2008 banking crisis that triggered the global recession. Boundaries of nation states no longer offer any protection from global phenomena, and issues such as HIV/AIDS and climate change place social and environmental justice at our feet, rather than distant and in someone else’s backyard. Global justice is now a preoccupation of governments, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and people in general, particularly young people who are moving towards adulthood with very different views of the world (Piachaud, 2008). Social justice is increasingly becoming embedded in policy at national and global levels. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO)/Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) (2008) call for closing the health gap in a generation, saying:

Social and economic policies have a determining impact on whether a child can grow and develop to its full potential and live a flourishing life, or whether its life will be blighted. Increasingly the nature of the health problems rich and poor countries have to solve are converging … reducing health inequities is … an ethical imperative. Social injustice is killing people on a grand scale. (CSDH, 2008)

My overriding theme, in exploring the political context in which community development takes place, has been that our western worldview is in a period of crisis, challenge and change. The Enlightenment, the philosophy that developed in Western Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries with its emphasis on an objective, rational, unemotional, scientific knowledge embedded in masculinity, has formed the basis of our ways of making sense of the world by seeking a single, scientific truth. As the social and political theorist John Gray comments:

To attempt to prescribe for a recovery from Western nihilism is merely another form of Western humanist hubris. We can nevertheless discern a few of the steps we need to take, if we are to have any chance of opening a path through the ruins in whose shadows we presently live. (Gray, 2007, pp. 268-269)

Our worldview in crisis offers an opportunity to explore different ways of seeing the world that create better possibilities, but for this to happen we need to embrace the notion of critical praxis, a unity of theory and practice.

CRITICAL PRAXIS

Becoming critical, in Ira Shor’s words, involves “extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary” by teaching teaching people to question answers, rather than
CHAPTER 2

answer questions (Shor, 1992, p. 122). From the time we come into the world, we absorb a way of making sense of what is around us to such a degree that we take it for granted, and cease to see the contradictions acted out in everyday life. Our lived experience invades the very essence of our being, and we do not spontaneously see the world in a critical light unless something triggers our consciousness. Only then do we begin to question what we have previously accepted unquestioningly. A problematising or problem-posing approach involves identifying everyday contradictory aspects of life that capture issues of discrimination, and representing these in a decontextualised way in a form that will invite curiosity (Freire, 1972). This is a codification, and can be captured in photograph, drawing, drama, story or many other art forms. In the process of decoding (analysing the codifications), the animator encourages a community group to question what is happening. Hope and Timmel (1984, p. 58) identify six stages that lead to critical consciousness, and I have added one more based on the importance of insight into connected knowing as a way of hearing the truths of others, simply meaning that in dialogue we suspend our own truth to listen from the heart to the truths of others as an essential component of working with difference/diversity (Belenky, 1997).

SEVEN STAGES TO BECOMING CRITICAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description:</th>
<th>what do you see? What is happening? Where is it happening?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First analysis:</td>
<td>why is this happening? – ‘why’ questions move the process from observation to thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected knowing:</td>
<td>how is this experienced differently by different people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real life:</td>
<td>once the group in immersed in the issue, the next level is elicited by asking, does this happen in real life? Who is affected? In what way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related problems:</td>
<td>if it seems appropriate, the next stage is to move laterally to related, connected issues – what does this lead to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root causes:</td>
<td>this reaches out to much deeper connections with structural discrimination at the heart of critical consciousness – what are the causes/what has created this situation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action planning:</td>
<td>what can we do about it?</td>
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**Fig. 1. Seven stages to becoming critical [developed from Hope and Timmel (1984)]**

Through this simple form of problematising, the initial attention to the codification begins to change focus to group discussion of the wider issue rather than the specific ‘code’. The key to the success of this method is that the issue is relevant to the lives of the people concerned and will generate from its relevance to their lives, the curiosity necessary for questioning. Listening respectfully, from the heart, to personal stories builds trust. The group share more deeply, and begin to empathise with different experiences and different ways of seeing the world. Empathy builds. Through dialogue, a more critical analysis of the political dimensions of personal stories emerges. As critical consciousness develops, a paradigm shift takes place,
dislocating the dominant way of seeing the world, and re-visioning what is desirable and possible. The world we know changes when we see it in a different light; we engage with it in a different way. But transformation is active not passive; it calls for us to examine old ways of knowing in order to explore new ways of knowing. Cycles of thinking and doing only become transformative when participants are fully engaged in the process; they see the need for transformation, and actively work together to bring about change for a happier, healthier and flourishing world.

However, the process of conscientisation is not liberating until it becomes a collective process. As Paulo Freire puts it:

> Liberating education is a social process of illumination .... Even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom. (Freire, in Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 109)

Changed awareness of the injustice of existing conditions is sufficient to empower a collective movement for change, but this cannot be left fluid and intuitive. Fay suggests that our goal can only be achieved when “all three phases of the tripartite process of enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation are completed” (Fay, 1987, p. 29). I am impressed with the way that he structures this into a ‘complex of theories which are systematically related’ (Fay, 1987, p. 31):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I A theory of false consciousness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) This needs to explain how people’s understandings of their life experience are incomplete or contradictory;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) it also needs to explain how people accept these understandings without question;</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) at the same time as offering alternatives that makes greater sense.</td>
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<th>II A theory of crisis</th>
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<tr>
<td>d) This needs to spell out the nature of a social crisis;</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) this evidence is substantiated by such statistical analyses as child poverty, its class, ‘race’ and gender connections, and the resulting social divisions that threaten not only social cohesion, but the future stability of the world, and the way in which has become embedded into the existing social order;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) a historical account of how both false consciousness and the structural forms of discrimination came into being is also necessary, and we trace this with the help of theories of power.</td>
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<tr>
<th>III A theory of education</th>
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<tr>
<td>g) This needs to offer insight into the educational context necessary for critical consciousness;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) and it also needs to identify the approaches, skills and methods needed for critical pedagogy.</td>
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IV A theory of transformative action

i) This needs to focus on the particular aspects of society that need to be changed in the current context;

j) there must be a strategic plan of action that at very least identifies the catalyst for social transformation, for example Gramsci’s concept of the intellectuals.

Fay suggests that it is only when these four theories, together with their sub-theories, are consistently interrelated that there is a structure capable of explaining, criticising and mobilising for transformative change.

I would like you to consider this framework offered by Fay in relation to the critical approach to community development that I have threaded through this chapter. Here, I summarise the essence of this approach:

Transformative change begins in the stories of everyday lives. Every stage of the process is framed within an ideology of equality, founded on values of mutual respect, dignity, trust, mutuality .... Through the diversity of practical projects that are developed in mutual partnership with local people in response to immediate issues, there is a strong educational element threaded through: teaching to question the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life involves questioning answers rather than answering questions. This process of becoming critical, or conscientisation, involves re-experiencing the ordinary as extraordinary, and a tool for this is problematising. Problematising involves decontextualising relevant everyday situations, capturing them in story, drawing, photograph, drama or any other. In a community group, the animator supports people to question the representation by posing: What do you see here? Do you recognise where this is? What is happening and to whom? Why? As the process unfolds, the questioning turns from the representation to focus on group experience that is relevant to the focus. In dialogue, a respectful form of communication that calls for suspended truth, the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life is dismantled and the contradictions exposed, the political construction of local lives becomes apparent, and the personal is seen as political. At a relevant stage of this development, attention will be focused on action: what are we going to do about it? Praxis is the essence of this approach: the way that theories of power inform the purpose of community development engages local people in examining their own reality, developing practical theories that are context-specific. At a relevant point, thinking engages with action. This cyclic process of action and reflection is the essence of critical praxis. Whilst theories of power and false consciousness will prompt the seeking of evidence of discrimination, from that point on, local practice develops an ongoing research project of its own, generating practical theory in action, engaging educationally with local people in critical pedagogy – a search for a critical consciousness of the everyday. Emancipatory action research is the glue that binds community development theory and action into a unity of praxis. It is an approach to action research which:
– aspires to an ideology of equality, informed by values of dignity, respect, mutualiy, reciprocity, compassion, conviviality;
– adopts a methodology that is collaborative and so attempts to identify and change power relations within its process, is rooted in dialogue, attempts to work with not on people, and intends that its process should be empowering for all involved;
– its methods are grounded in everyday narratives, giving voice to silenced voices, and being open to ways of knowing that extend beyond the intellectual. For example, it uses self-reflexivity and dialogue, but may also use story, music, drama, poetry, drawings, photographs, and any other medium that gives rise to different ways of knowing.
– It is overtly committed to transformative change, and as part of its process changes the way we see the world.

Changed epistemologies lead to changed ontologies: seeing the world differently results in a changed engagement with the world. A worldview based on competition, exploitation and inequality gradually becomes informed by a new possibility, a world based on equality and diversity, cooperation and general human and environmental flourishing – a participatory worldview. This is where collective action fits into the process: a changed way of seeing the world gives rise to the confidence to act together to bring about change. This action needs to operate in all contexts from local to global, but of course we cannot all be involved in action at all levels and so strategically engaging with others in alliances and networks connects people at all levels in all contexts.

Finally, I want to emphasise the cyclic nature of action and reflection as a process that continuously flows from grassroots to global movements for change. It is essential that the process is seen as a continuous cycle that flows back and forth in order to connect local action with global change. This is how community development can contribute to a movement towards participatory democracy, “opening a path through the ruins in whose shadows we presently live” (Gray, 2007, pp. 268-269). Creating critical dissent dialogue is the key to the possibility of a new world, once which is built on the fundamental principles of a respectful ecosystem in harmonious balance with life on earth. And, as Mae Shaw says, “an open culture of debate is one of the best ways to protect community development and democracy” (Shaw, 2004, p. 28).

A TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR CHANGE

In conclusion, I suggest that the key components (Ledwith & Springett, 2009) of such an approach can be seen in the following model:
Fig. 3. Key components of transformative model for change

Contained in this model are five related key components. Each pair operates on a continuum, and is only relevant in combination, as indicated by the horizontal arrows. In addition, each of these components is only relevant in relation to the dynamic interconnected whole, as indicated by the vertical arrow. The interconnectedness of the whole is vital to the process of change. This is a symbiotic whole, and it is these core dimensions of critical practice, in dynamic interaction, that provide the potential for transformation. Without this synthesis, that potential is fragmented. Constant feedback between all dimensions of the whole, in cyclic interaction, keeps practice relevant to its changing contexts. It is this cyclic action/reflection process that sustains the ongoing process of change, offering community development the potential to keep its promise to social justice and environmental sustainability.

The collective process presents a real challenge to practitioners in an age of individualism in which hope is so easily turned to hopelessness, in which fragmented lives become alienated from the whole, and in which self interest is elevated over the need for a flourishing and cooperative world where the well-being of the many is our prime purpose. Unless we find ways to connect the self to the project, the project to the community, the community to alliances and alliances to movements for change, we will fail in our transformative intention.

Education, or the act of knowing as Freire calls it, is an ongoing research programme into aspects of people’s experience and its relationship to wider social, economic and political factors. (Kirkwood, 1991, p. 103)

The optimistic note that I want to end on is to remind you that the beginning of this complex process lies in simply listening from the heart to the stories of everyday lives. This notion of beginning in experience reveals multiple truths and different ways of knowing. We begin to rewrite our stories with new insight – Black feminist thought emerged from the particular realities of Black women’s lives and the interlocking, intersecting inequalities that get reproduced as a complex web of oppressions related to ‘race’, class and gender that result in marginalisation from knowledge production (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 70). Rewriting our stories from reclaimed identities is important, for “in changing the story we change the world” (Ledwith & Springett, 2009, p. 221).
NOTES

1 The core ideas in this chapter are developed from Ledwith, M. & Springett, J. (2009). Participatory practice: Community-based action for transformative change, Bristol: The Policy Press. Throughout, I have used ‘Black’ to signify my generic, political use of non-White, and ‘race’ and ‘dis’ability to indicate the social construction of these concepts.

REFERENCES


