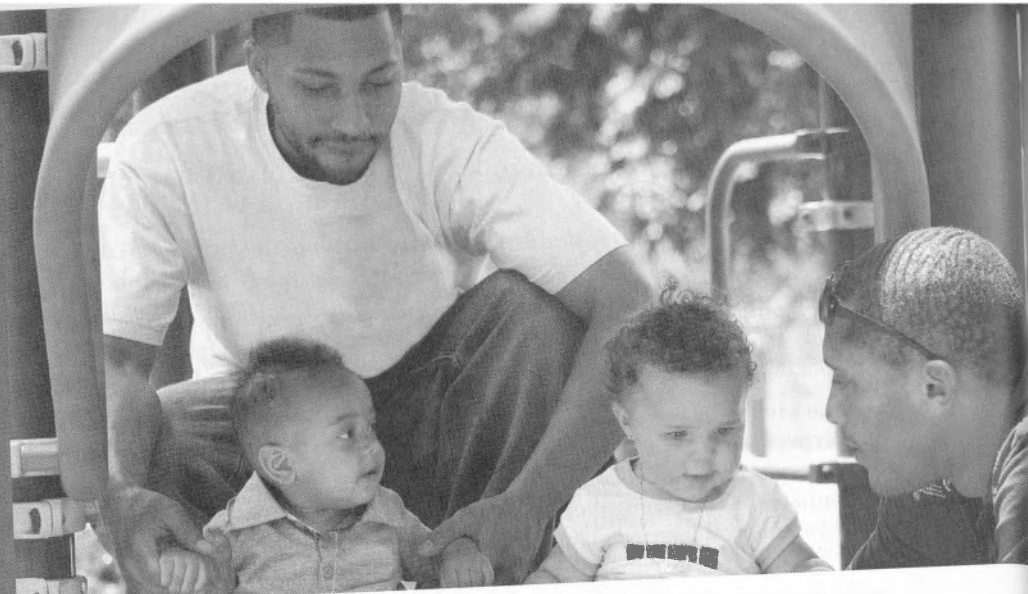




Understanding Communities

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INTRODUCTION

Communities are the arenas in which macro practice takes place, but they are so diverse that no one definition or theory seems able to capture their total essence. Terms such as *global community* and *world community* are used in contemporary society to refer to the complex array of relationships among the people of the world. Yet, when most people think about communities that are important to them, they usually think on a smaller scale—remembering where they grew up, identifying with where they live today, or focusing on relationships based on affiliations or interests rather than geographic proximity. These relationships may be bound by characteristics such as shared history, cultural values and traditions, concern for common issues, or frequent communication. Many people identify with multiple communities, thus making “the community” a misnomer. For many, affiliation with more than one community is an intrinsic part of who a person is.

Based on their life experiences, social workers will have their own perceptions of what a community is, along with expectations about what it should be. These perceptions and expectations will influence how they approach work in communities that are new to them, and it is important to recognize that experiences with and feelings about community as a geographic locality vary. Some communities will be viewed nostalgically, as desirable places, evoking warm memories. Other communities will be seen as oppressive, restrictive, or even dangerous to both residents and outsiders. At times, these differing views will be held about the same community, because each person’s experience is unique. Community-based groups, ranging from youth gangs to garden clubs, represent attempts to create specialized communities of interest within geographical communities, sometimes in ways that intentionally run counter to the local culture.

Some observers believe that “community” as a geographically relevant concept began to erode with the expansion of suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s (Gerloff, 1992). Others see unlimited human potential lying dormant in inner-city communities that have been rendered dependent on social welfare organizations by an overzealous provision of services (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). One of the big issues we confront in this chapter is whether social workers are best served by looking at communities as places where people’s interests are linked by geographic closeness, or whether—in an era of cell phones, email, instant text messaging, Twitter, Facebook, online interactive games, and any number of methods of easy long-distance communication—the whole idea of community needs to be radically redefined. Also, perhaps a problem confronting social workers in helping the poorest members of society is that they are forced to remain in a world where geographic proximity *does* matter because their environment is dangerous and lacks resources such as transportation, jobs, and child care. Conversely, proximity becomes ever less relevant to more affluent members of society who can afford the technologies that allow them to transcend geography. It may happen within a single episode of change that multiple definitions of *community* are needed to help keep commitments and relationships clear. For example, while the target of change may be a specific neighborhood (a geographically bounded community), those needed to support the change may be linked through concern and commitment, but may come both from the neighborhood and from across the entire city.



Core Competencies in this Chapter (Check marks indicate which competencies are covered in depth)

☐ Professional Identity	☐ Ethical Practice	☐ Critical Thinking	☒ Diversity in Practice	☒ Human Rights & Justice
☐ Research-Based Practice	☒ Human Behavior	☐ Policy Practice	☒ Practice Contexts	☐ Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate

We believe that social workers have a responsibility to recognize that community can be a powerful medium for enfranchisement and empowerment when its potential is understood and skillfully brought to life. We also believe that social workers must recognize that problems and needs can often be addressed more effectively by dealing with them collectively than they can by dealing with them individually. The major focus of this chapter will be on understanding communities from a theoretical perspective as a first step toward better informed and more skillful community-level intervention.

Defining Community

There are many definitions of *community*, and we will provide only a sample here. As early as the 1950s, one scholar identified over ninety discrete definitions of *community* in use within the social science literature (Hillery, 1955). No matter what definition is selected, concepts such as *space*, *people*, *interaction*, and *shared identity* are repeated over and over again.

Irrespective of the changes to be made in community arenas, the social worker will want to be aware of how persons affected by change define and perceive their communities. The social worker must understand alternative perspectives, recognize the assumptions and values that undergird these views, and understand how differing perspectives influence change opportunities (Gamble & Weil, 2010). It is also important to recognize that even persons within the same community will differ in their perspectives of what that community is and of what changes are needed. For example, it is not unusual within the boundaries of a community for one ethnic or cultural group to believe that schools are relevant and city services adequate to meet local needs, whereas another ethnic or cultural group believes they are irrelevant and inadequate.

One of the most cited definitions of community was provided by Warren (1978) who viewed community as the organization of social activities that affords people access to what is necessary for day-to-day living, such as the school, grocery store, hospital, house of worship, and other such social units and systems. Many people customarily think of social units as beginning with the domestic unit, extending to the neighborhood or to a voluntary association, and on to larger spheres of human interaction. Community may or may not have clear boundaries, but it is significant because it performs important functions necessary for human survival. Warren identifies five community functions, which we will discuss later. See Table 5.1.

Communities can be formal or informal, and the variable that usually determines the level of formality is *boundary clarity*. Cities and counties have clear boundaries, whereas neighborhoods are often less clearly defined, and a community based on common interests of its members may not have geographical boundaries at all. The boundaries may be based on a common interest, a cause, and even personal or professional characteristics that transcend space. The clarity of boundaries varies not only across different communities, but, as will be seen in later chapters, the presence of a formal boundary is often a key feature that differentiates organizations and communities.

Communities can exist within other communities, and they are often experienced in different ways by their members. Residents in a desperately poor inner-city neighborhood may be part of the same larger community as those who live in posh high-rise penthouses near downtown, yet they would likely define their “community” in sharply contrasting terms. When communities

Even persons within the same community will differ in their perspectives of what that community is and what changes are needed.

Table 5.1 Warren’s Definition of Community

Community is that combination of social units and systems that perform the major social functions relevant to meeting people’s needs on a local level—Roland Warren (1978). Warren’s social functions are:		
Function	Definition	Example
Production, distribution, and consumption	Community activities designed to meet people’s needs	Grocery stores, gas stations
Socialization	Learning prevailing norms, traditions, and values	Understanding how community members perceive the value of education
Social control	The process by which community members ensure compliance with norms and values	Establishing stringent eligibility requirements for public aid and social services
Social participation	Interaction with others in community groups, associations, and organizations	Local churches
Mutual support	Supportive functions carried out by family and community members in times of need	Neighbors helping neighbors during a natural disaster

exist within each other, they also intermingle in complex ways. The working mother in the poor neighborhood and the corporate leader in the penthouse may have little interaction with one another and may be opposed in their views on most “community” issues, yet they may sit next to each other on the subway train on which they both depend, and their interests in keeping it running on certain schedules and along certain routes may be identical. They might also support the same sports team or vote for the same mayoral candidate, meaning that commonalities and ways of grouping the two of them into the same “community” could be discovered in unexpected places.

As communities get larger, they may become more heterogeneous. As noted, the small community of penthouse owners is likely to be composed of individuals having much more in common with each other across a range of variables than the much larger community of subway riders. This means that smaller communities may be more cohesive and easier to organize for macro-level change than larger ones. However, sharp differences can exist even among members of relatively small communities, although, as discussed, commonalities may be found even among individuals from seemingly different communities.

Dimensions of Communities

Fellin (2001) contends that community occurs when people come together around common physical location, interests, cultures, and/or other identities. In this definition, it is important to note that this coming together may be intentional or might even be facilitated by a change agent who points out what people have in common (Knickmeyer, Hopkins, & Meyer, 2003). Fellin distinguishes three dimensions of communities: (1) a place or geographic locale in which one’s needs for sustenance are met, (2) a pattern of social interactions,

and (3) symbolic identification that gives meaning to one’s identity. We will briefly examine each category.

Geographical, spatial, or territorial communities vary in how they meet people’s needs, how social interactions are patterned, and how collective identity is perceived. Local communities are often called neighborhoods, cities, towns, boroughs, barrios, and a host of other terms. Smaller geographical spaces are nested within other communities, such as neighborhoods within towns or public housing developments within cities.

In earlier times, before people were so mobile and technology transcended space, communities were much more place bound. Today, however, considerations of space must be juxtaposed with other ways of conceptualizing community. Although we may operate within geographical jurisdictions, the influence of forces beyond the spatial boundaries is almost limitless.

Patterns of social interaction can occur in geographical communities, but can also be part of “nonplace” communities (sometimes called functional communities, relational or associational communities, communities of affiliation or affinity, or even communities of the mind). These nongeographical or functional communities bring people together based on a variety of identifications and characteristics including, for example, religion, race, or profession (Fellin, 2001).

Functional communities, which are examples of communities that are based on identification and interest, are formed when people work as a group to jointly address social problems (Gamble & Weil, 2010). For the social work practitioner, it is important to recognize and understand communities that are formed around shared concerns, such as AIDS, gun control, terrorism, disaster relief, and political loyalties. It is even more critical to recognize that these communities are formed around deeply held beliefs and values that may conflict with those of other communities. For example, faith-based communities or congregations that believe that being gay or lesbian is morally wrong may have a clash of values when encountering the gay and lesbian community. Similarly, professional communities that believe in social justice and advocacy for the poor may encounter political communities formed to reduce government spending and to terminate public assistance to those who are on welfare, regardless of need or capacity for self-sufficiency. Communities of interest based on social interaction are becoming increasingly politically active, and many people have warned of the polarizing effects of special-interest politics.

A functional community may exist when many disparate individuals are working toward a goal or advocating for a cause. Those same individuals may not be aware of the existence of organizations formed to address that goal. In some instances, there may not yet be more formal groups formed to work in a more organized fashion. The change agent’s task may therefore involve making members of functional communities aware of one another and furthering the transition from functional community to formal organization. Thus, functional communities may form organizations that are more structured, with formally stated objectives and the resources, such as volunteers and staff, to get things done. An example is the number of persons in various communities and states who were frustrated over the conditions in the country’s nursing homes. Citizen groups, families and friends of residents, and residents themselves were expressing concern in various localities, but they were not organized to make legislative change at the national level. The National Citizens Coalition on Nursing Home Reform was formed at the national level as an organizational

Table 5.2 Fellin’s Dimensions of Communities

Dimension of Community	Definition	Example
Geographical Space—a place in which one’s needs for sustenance are met	A community with defined boundaries where one expects to meet basic needs	A neighborhood in which families fulfill their basic functions and raise their children
A pattern of social interaction	A place or nonplace community of identification and interest	Relationships with others of the same ethnic group, regardless of location
Symbolic identification that gives meaning to one’s identity	Attaching importance to groups and organizations as a means of helping to establish personal uniqueness	Identification with a religious group, a profession, or a cause

vehicle to raise the issues and concerns of residents and caregivers in long-term care facilities and to serve as a voice on Capitol Hill.

Fellin (2001) also identifies *a collective, symbolic relationship that gives meaning to one’s identity* as a dimension of some place- and nonplace-based communities. In a complex society, people establish constellations of relationships that give meaning to their lives. For example, a social worker is likely to identify with others who have his or her occupation and professional training (a nonplace community), live in a neighborhood (a place community), and have close relationships scattered around the world (a personal network). Because each person will have a unique constellation of relationships, each person’s definition of *community* will be distinctive. Often viewed as networks (or webs) of formal and informal resources, it is important for the change agent to recognize, respect, and understand these relationships and what they mean to the person’s “sense of community.” Methods such as *network analysis, ecological mapping, and concept mapping* are intended to reveal how individuals perceive their communities and to use those perceptions to develop community interventions. For example, Ridings and his colleagues (2008) used concept mapping to develop a conceptual framework of problems faced by African American male youth in Chicago in order to develop new outcomes for change. Community, then, can be seen as those spaces, interactions, and identifications that people share with others in both place-specific and nonplace-specific locations. Table 5.2 provides a summary of the types discussed, their definitions, and examples of each. The planned change model presented in later chapters will be applicable to both place and nonplace communities.

COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS

Communities are structured to perform certain functions for their members. In Table 5.1 we summarized Warren’s (1978) identified five functions carried out by locality-relevant communities: (1) production, distribution, and consumption; (2) socialization; (3) social control; (4) social participation; and (5) mutual support.

Production, distribution, and consumption functions are community activities designed to meet people’s material needs, including the most basic

requirements, such as food, clothing, and shelter. In modern communities, families seldom produce most or all of what they consume. People are dependent on each other for these and other needs, including medical care, sanitation, employment, transportation, and recreation. The accepted medium of exchange for these goods and services is money, which becomes an important factor in defining the limits of consumption and comes into consideration in almost all community-change efforts.

A second function of community is *socialization* to the prevailing norms, traditions, and values of community members. Socialization guides attitudinal development, and these attitudes and perceptions influence how people view themselves, others, and their interpersonal rights and responsibilities. Attitudes and values also differ from community to community, and they vary across smaller communities that are nested within larger ones. To understand an individual or population, it is therefore critical to understand the norms, traditions, and values of the community or communities in which the person was socialized.

Social control is the process by which community members ensure compliance with norms and values. This is usually done by establishing laws, rules, and regulations, as well as systems for their enforcement. Social control is often performed by diverse institutions such as government, education, religion, and social services. Many social workers serve in practice settings in which they must constantly strive to balance their sometimes conflicting roles as helpers and agents of social control. Examples of such settings include schools, correctional institutions, probation and parole offices, and employment and training programs.

Communities may also exert subtle forms of social control through patterns of service distribution and eligibility criteria that regulate access to resources on the part of vulnerable groups. For example, case managers often find they must deny services due to limited resources. Concerns about these limitations may spur the practitioner to work toward change, only to discover that key policymakers have suppressed the demand for aid by keeping benefits low rather than providing the level of assistance needed to combat the presenting problem. Recognizing how social control can occur both overtly and covertly can be disillusioning, but is necessary for understanding both the impact of community values and the process of service delivery.

Social participation includes interaction with others in community groups, associations, and organizations. People are assumed to need some form of social outlet, and communities provide opportunities for people to express this need and to build natural helping and support networks. Some find their outlets in local religious groups, some in civic organizations, and some in informal neighborhood groups. Understanding the opportunities and patterns of social participation in a target population is helpful in assessing how well a community is meeting the needs of its members.

Mutual support is the function that families, friends, partners, neighbors, volunteers, and professionals carry out in communities when they care for the sick, the unemployed, and the distressed. As noted in Chapter 2, processes such as industrialization, urbanization, and increased mobility strained the capacity of traditional community units (e.g., families, faith groups, civic organizations) to meet the mutual-support needs of community members. This led to the growth of different community units, such as helping professionals and government-sponsored programs, that took over some of the roles previously left to informal and smaller-scale units.



Human Rights & Justice

Critical Thinking Question:

In which of these community functions do you think social work clients are least active? Why?

When Community Functions Fail

In Warren's model (1978), these five functions define the purpose of a community. If all functions were performed in a given community in a manner that met the needs of all its members (in other words, if all consumption, socialization, social control, social participation, and mutual support needs were met in a healthy, positive, and constructive manner), the community would be considered optimally structured.

However, such an "ideal" community probably does not exist. Some religious communities in rural areas have fulfilled many of these functions in ways that minimize the need for intervention and change, but these are clearly exceptions. It is far more common to find these functions falling short of meeting the needs of at least some community members. This may be due to inadequate resources for distribution and consumption or to uneven distribution. Socialization may be tied to values imposed by some community members on others but not mutually shared. The social control function may not operate in an evenhanded manner and may even be oppressive. Social participation opportunities may be severely limited or available to some but not others. Mutual support functions may be undermined by a dominant value system that assumes individuals should be able to fend for themselves. In short, communities can be considered *healthy* or *unhealthy*, *functional* or *dysfunctional*, and *competent* or *incompetent* based on their ability to meet community needs. This may be particularly true for oppressed target populations within their boundaries. We hasten to say that rarely do we find a community that can be labeled so easily one way or another. Most communities are somewhere along a continuum between these pairs of descriptors.

Building on Warren's work, Pantoja and Perry (1998) provided a working model of community development and restoration. Citing production, distribution, and consumption as the economic area on which all other functions are dependent, they identify the remaining community functions as socialization, social control, social placement (participation), mutual support, defense, and communication. Defense and communication are additions to Warren's original list.

Defense is the way in which the community takes care of and protects its members. This function becomes important in communities that are unsafe and dangerous. Some communities have been labeled *defended communities* when they have to focus unusual amounts of effort toward looking after their members. The defense function can also be relevant to nonplace communities. One example is that defense is often critical among gay or lesbian persons because there are groups within the larger society that may seek to do them harm. Similarly, people of color in various communities have had to support one another in defending themselves against the effects of racial hatred.

Communication includes the use of a common language and symbols to express ideas. Although communication may be assumed as part of all functions originally identified by Warren, its identification as a separate function in contemporary society is important. As one example, debate about whether and how forcefully English proficiency should be demanded of immigrants has been a prominent aspect of the broader controversy over immigration in the United States. Similarly, the ability to communicate easily across the country and around the world through email and other rapidly expanding features of the Internet has vastly expanded the definition of *community* while simultaneously blurring its boundaries.

Table 5.3 Pantoja and Perry's Functions of Community

Function	Definition	Example
Production, distribution, and consumption	The areas on which all other functions are dependent	Small businesses that provide jobs and goods to a community
Socialization	Learning the prevailing norms, traditions, and values	Understanding how community members perceive their roles vis-à-vis local government
Social control	Ensuring compliance with norms and values	How law enforcement is administered
Social placement	Participation in activities significant to the life of the community	The extent to which parents participate in school-related functions
Mutual Support	Functions carried out in support of each other	The ways in which a community cares for its homeless
Defense	The way a community takes care of and protects its members	Block watch programs
Communication	Use of a common language to express ideas	The extent to which English proficiency is demanded of immigrant families

The assumption underlying the identification of functions is that communities serve the needs of members by performing these functions well. Conversely, when communities are dysfunctional (Pantoja & Perry, 1998) or incompetent (Fellin, 1995), people suffer and change needs to occur. According to Pantoja and Perry's framework, without a stable economic base the other functions, which are supportive, deteriorate, or are impaired. Therefore, it is important for the social worker to carefully assess how communities are functioning and how the needs of people are or are not being addressed. Table 5.3 provides an overview of community functions.

Functional definitions and understandings of community can also be useful in communities that are not geographically specific. For example, some people may have their communication needs met by keeping in touch with persons in different geographical areas. It is not unusual to have adult children of elderly parents who live miles apart calling daily to check on how their parents are doing. In professional communities, long-distance communication is carried out via telephone, fax, email, or text messaging on a regular basis. However, communication in this form requires access to the technology. In many communities this access is uneven, leading to what has been called *information poverty*. These communities are taking steps such as wiring whole cities for wireless Internet (McNutt, Queiro-Tajalli, Boland, & Campbell, 2001).

Functionalism "regards social structures (definable social entities that exist in relationship to other structures) and social functions (the roles, purposes, and uses of the entities) in a given social system as inextricably intertwined" (Harrison, 1995, p. 556). What this means is that *structures*, such as schools, synagogues, or political entities, are intermeshed with *functions*, such as teaching, providing leadership, or advocating for change. Understanding community requires analysis of structures and function *together*—not as separate entities. This notion is also relevant to social systems theory, to which we now turn in a discussion of how communities can usefully be viewed as social systems.

Understanding community requires analysis of structures and function together—not as separate entities.

DISTINGUISHING COMMUNITY THEORIES AND MODELS

One of the earliest efforts to conceptualize communities was the work of Ferdinand Tönnies (1887/1957), who discussed the constructs of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft*, which roughly translates as "community," focuses on the mutual, intimate, and common bonds that pull people together in local units. These bonds are based on caring about one another and valuing the relationships in the group in and of themselves. The group is valued, regardless of whether its members are creating a product or achieving a goal. Examples are the domestic unit, the neighborhood, and groups of friends. The focus of *Gemeinschaft* is on intimacy and relationship.

In contrast, Tönnies *Gesellschaft* refers generally to society or association. Examples of this concept are a city or government. *Gesellschaft* is an ideal type representing formalized relationships that are task oriented. In *Gesellschaft*-type relationships, people organize in a more formal way to achieve a purpose, task, or goal. Although they may benefit from the relationships that are established, the purpose of these social interactions is more restricted to the accomplishment of a particular end, to create some production, or to complete some task.

Sociologists in the late 1800s viewed *Gesellschaft* as representing all the negative forces pulling people away from traditional communities built on institutions such as the family and religion. It is important to recognize, however, that the contribution of Tönnies ideal types is to call attention to the differences between informal and formal systems and to the richness of their interactions. Social workers doing macro practice will find elements of both concepts in the communities with which they work. Tönnies work is considered a foundation from which community theory emerged in the 1990s.

Roland Warren's (1978) text on community synthesized the theories that existed up to the early 1970s and provided a valuable resource for identifying studies conducted up to that time. Warren characterized community as (1) *space*, (2) *people*, (3) *shared values and institutions*, (4) *interaction*, (5) *distribution of power*, and (6) *social system*. These themes will recur as we discuss community theory. Conceptualizations of community may be derived from each of these six themes.

Theories are sets of interrelated concepts that explain how and why something works or does not work for the purpose of enhancing our understanding. Sociological theories of community often describe how communities function. These *descriptive approaches* assist in analyzing what is happening within communities but do not provide the practitioner with methods to change a situation once it has been analyzed. Systems; human or population ecology; human behavior; and power, politics, and change theories will be discussed as sociological theories that assist in understanding how communities function. In contrast, a variety of community *practice perspectives and models* are intended to provide direction or guidance for persons wanting to change or intervene in a community arena. We will focus on strengths, empowerment, and resiliency perspectives, as well as capacity building and asset mapping as guides to practice.

Table 5.4 presents a general guide for distinguishing descriptive and prescriptive approaches, categorized by the use of these theories, perspectives, and models in place-based (geographical) and nonplace-based communities. Note that some approaches are helpful in analyzing both types of communities, whereas

Table 5.4 Types of Theories and Perspectives by Types of Communities

Types of Theories/Perspectives	Place-Based (Geographical) Communities	Nonplace-Based Communities
Descriptive (to understand communities)	Systems Theories Human or population ecology Human behavior Power, politics, and change	Systems Theories Human behavior Power, politics, and change
Prescriptive (to guide practice)	Strengths, empowerment, and resiliency perspectives Capacity building and asset mapping	Strengths, empowerment, and resiliency perspectives

others are more geographically based. In the remainder of the chapter, we will present an overview of community theories that are helpful in understanding the environments in which practitioners find themselves, followed by an identification of practice perspectives and models that have emerged from these efforts and that provide *prescriptive approaches* (how-to guides for taking action).

SYSTEMS THEORY

In Chapter 1 we introduced Warren's (1978) position that social systems theory holds great promise for understanding communities. We also indicated that the planned change model in this book is based predominately on systems theory, and our discussion of organizations in Chapter 7 will also include information on systems theory.

Building on the work of Talcott Parsons (1971) and others, Warren applied social systems theory to communities. His description shows how the functions identified earlier are typically performed by various groups and organizations within local communities. Factories and stores carry out production and distribution functions, school and churches work to socialize community members, and so forth. These internal, *horizontal relationships* are complemented by *vertical relationships* that connect outside the community's geographical boundaries. For example, factories obtain raw materials from elsewhere, schools get books from national publishers, and many churches affiliate with larger denominations.

This situation has a number of ramifications. First, from a systems perspective, it means that communities are open rather than closed systems, and they are dependent on their external environment for certain resources. Second, not only horizontal but also vertical affiliations and interactions are critical for the community to function properly, and both must be understood in order to have a clear grasp of how the community operates. Third, just as certain groups or organizations play specific roles in carrying out essential community tasks, the community must carve out a role for itself in its larger environment that allows it to provide resources needed by other communities in return for acquiring the resources it needs. To use the language of systems theory, the community must establish the boundaries that define both it and its function within the surrounding environment.

Boundary setting and maintenance are critical to any system's survival. As boundaries become blurred or indistinguishable, the community as a spatial

set of relationships weakens and becomes less able to fulfill its core functions. Boundaries are also important to systems within a community, and macro practitioners may often be able to witness diverse examples of the struggle for boundary maintenance in their work (Norlin & Chess, 1997). Youth gangs battling over neighborhood turf offer an obvious locality-based example of boundary conflicts, but others, such as efforts by gay and lesbian residents to secure legal recognition and benefits for their partners, may be less recognizable but are nonetheless boundary issues (Hash & Netting, 2007).

It is important, then, to recognize that there are multiple approaches to analyzing macro situations based on systems theory that can also be used for deeper understandings of how communities function. These include mechanical, organismic, morphogenic, factional, and catastrophic analogies (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Martin & O'Connor, 1989).

A *mechanical analogy* views a social system as a machine in which all the parts work closely together, are well coordinated, and integrate smoothly. When one part of the system changes, it is expected that other parts will adapt to reestablish equilibrium. In this analogy, order is emphasized over change and conflict. If the practitioner approaches a community using this analogy, his or her task will be seen primarily as one of reducing conflict and restoring a sense of order, connectedness, and mutual purpose. For example, a local community whose members are comfortable with their lifestyles would be disrupted by an influx of immigrants from other cultures who represent difference. Instead of welcoming immigrants, the community members may impose strict boundaries, not be welcoming to outsiders, and work toward maintaining the status quo.

The *organismic analogy* comes from comparing social systems to biological organisms. Communities are viewed much like the human body, with each organ having a different function. This may sound familiar, given our discussion of community functions earlier in this chapter. Assuming that each unit within the community performs its respective role, the organismic analogy predicts that community members will work toward a common good. Parson's work on structural-functionalism is primarily grounded in this analogy. It argues that structures arise to serve particular functions, and within the range of normal variability they should allow the community as a whole to function effectively and for community members to agree on what needs to happen. In practice, however, social workers often discover that consensus among diverse community members can be elusive. For example, immigrants coming into this type of community may find that they are cautiously welcomed, but only if they behave in ways that fully acculturate them into established community norms and maintain a sense of stability. As long as they agree to play by the established rules, conflict will be kept to a minimum (at least on the surface).

This leads to the question of what happens when there is conflict that cannot be overlooked, when there is seemingly no articulation of the parts or performance of the functions, or when harmony cannot be restored or perhaps never really existed. In this case, other analogies may need to be explored.

A *morphogenic analogy* is applicable when change is ongoing and the structure of the system is continually emerging. Fundamental change can occur in this type of situation because there may be no chance of returning to a former state of *homeostasis* (balance or equilibrium). This highly open approach to systems thinking means that change may be just as likely to be unpredictable as it is to be orderly. It is this unpredictability that requires the community practitioner to be open to clues about how things are changing and to be open to new possibilities. For example, immigrants arriving in this community can

expect some conflict as community members adjust to one another's differences. Expectations will be that the community will change in some ways, and that the acceptable way to incorporate new members into the community will be through open dialogue and recognizing that the community will be changed in the process.

Similar to the morphogenic analogy is the *factional analogy* in which contentiousness in a community system is open and obvious. Conflict may be so basic in some community systems that change is likely to remain disorderly and subject to instability. Approaching this type of system with assumptions that order can be reestablished may be a set-up for failure. On the other hand, for the practitioner who can face conflict head-on, this type of community can be a stimulating challenge. Immigrants relocating to a factional community will find local groups in disagreement over how to handle their integration. Conflict will be a normal part of this community's operation, and groups will be trying to convince one another about what approaches should be taken. There will be no attempt to deny that change can be disruptive and debates over the pros and cons of immigration will be ongoing, sometimes heated.

Last, a *catastrophic analogy* is defined by contentiousness and conflict taken to extremes. Such a community system will be characterized by deep fissures and distress. Without order or predictability, there will be a sense of chaos in which no one can determine future directions. Communication may have broken down in the process and subsystems are warring. Intervention in this type of community would look different than it would from mechanical or organismic analogies. In catastrophic communities, there will be protests about how to handle immigration and what course the country (and communities) should take with the volatile issues surrounding immigration. The volatility might even lead to violence.

Our point is that depending on one's assessment of the community system and the degree of conflict, interventions will vary greatly, and in the case of immigration there will be much variation—from wanting to keep immigrants from relocating to a community all the way to full-blown conflict over how immigration should be handled.

In addition, it is important to recognize that communities are larger systems and that different views may coexist. For example, groups, organizations, and associations within the same community may embrace different analogies. In post-Katrina New Orleans, community groups differed in how they viewed the recovery effort. Differences over how the community system was perceived and varying levels of trust and expectations made the relief process challenging (Pyles & Cross, 2008).

Strengths and Weaknesses

Warren's work (1978) synthesized early research on communities, brought a systems perspective to the sociology of the community in the United States, and provided a framework for analyzing ways in which communities can fail in fulfilling one or more of their key functions. There are lessons that systems theory offers to community practice. Hardina (2002) calls attention to four such lessons:

- ◆ Changes in one aspect of a system produce alterations in other parts of the community.
- ◆ Actions in community subunits not only influence what happens within the unit, but within the larger system.

- ◆ Being able to identify how well a community functions means being able to compare its effectiveness to other communities.
- ◆ The push to return to a steady state in which everyone can participate in community life becomes a driving force in systems theory. (pp. 49–50)

As with any approach, systems theory has its critics, and their concerns often focus on the use of mechanical and organismic analogies through which assumptions are made about parts of systems working together to the benefit of the whole. Assumptions about common purposes, it is argued, ignore the role of unexplained change, conflict, and situations in which community members not only disagree but are deeply divided. These mechanical and organismic analogies are viewed as focused on preservation of the status quo and incremental change, even in the case of unresponsive or oppressive community structures desperately in need of correction. Applying the analogies inappropriately in this way is seen as a refusal to recognize the role of conflict and struggles for power inherent in community life (Martin & O'Connor, 1989). However, as pointed out earlier, there are other analogies of systems theory that do recognize conflict and change.

Even in systems approaches that view disagreements and clashes of viewpoints and interests as parts of human communities, on the whole, systems theory does not focus on power and politics. It provides limited understanding for community practitioners who must face uncertain dynamics among diverse participants. It also fails to explain how to engage community members, how to communicate, or how to use systems concepts to bring about change. Therefore, practice models derived from this theory base must draw from other human behavior theories and perspectives in guiding practitioners about power and politics, group dynamics, and interpersonal communication.

Stanfield (1993) suggests that it is critical to revise sociological concepts that view communities through the lens of structural-functionalism and processes such as socialization. He contends that this orientation promotes a *monocultural system perspective* that treats conflict as though it were something deviant. This leads to a view in which communities, associations, and structures created by population groups that do not conform to these accepted standards are seen as underdeveloped, dysfunctional, and pathological rather than as novel, inventive, and understandable responses on the part of segments of a community that have not been well served by its institutions or other members. Box 5.1 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of systems theory.

Box 5.1 Systems Theory	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Changes in one aspect of community produce changes in others.	Assumptions about common purposes ignore many considerations, including disagreements and deep divisions.
Actions in subunits affect the larger community.	Mechanical and organismic analogies are often viewed as preserving of the status quo.
Assessing community functions involves comparisons to other communities.	Systems models provide limited understanding of power and politics.
A push to return to a steady state becomes a driving force (Hardina, 2002).	Structural-functionalism and socialization promote a monocultural system perspective that views newly created structures as deviant.

HUMAN OR POPULATION ECOLOGY THEORY

Closely aligned with systems theorists are *human ecology* theorists, who also examine structural patterns and relationships within place-based communities. In the mid-1930s, a group of sociologists under the leadership of Robert E. Park at the University of Chicago examined local community spatial relationships. Human ecology theory emerged from this work, and is based on plant and animal ecology, which in turn has roots in Darwin’s biological determinism. It was elaborated in the work of Hawley (1950, 1968).

Early human ecologists believed that if they studied one city well enough they could apply principles of what they learned to most other cities. Among these principles are three spatial concepts: the urban zone, the central city, and natural areas. Urban zones are large concentric circles surrounding a central city, whereas natural areas such as neighborhoods are smaller arenas in which social relationships develop. Both urban zones and natural areas are changing and dynamic. However, subsequent studies in other metropolitan areas revealed just how difficult it is to generalize. Other cities did not always show the same structural patterns.

Today, ecological theorists focus on the interaction of resident characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race), the use of physical space (e.g., housing, land use), and the social structures and technology within communities. An ecological approach views communities as highly interdependent, teeming with changing relationships among populations of people and organizations. For example, social workers have long studied issues of homelessness and inadequate housing in various communities, but research on home ownership possibilities for people with disabilities has been limited. Quinn (2004) reported on programs designed to offer home ownership possibilities for disabled community residents. From an ecological perspective, people with disabilities have often been confined to institutional or group home settings, whereas people without disabilities have had more freedom to choose their housing types. Social workers, however, can educate local communities about such possibilities as Home of Your Own Coalitions and work to change the relationship between resident characteristics, the use of physical space, and how the social structure of communities can integrate people who are disabled.

Human ecologists are particularly concerned about how place-based communities deal with the processes of competition, centralization, concentration, integration, and succession. Each of these processes can be viewed along a continuum (Fellin, 2001). For example, the degree of *competition* in a local community is about the acquisition or possession of land, jobs, votes, and other resources among competing groups, moving from low to intense (even contentious) depending on the power dynamics. The continuum of *centralization* to decentralization involves the degree to which groups and organizations cluster in a location close to what is considered the community’s center or disperse beyond the area. Closely related is *concentration*, a process in which persons enter communities, whether through immigration or migration, and go from great to small numbers depending on how many people or organizations stay within a particular locale. The continuum of *segregation* to *integration* of population groups occurs as diverse groups either maintain or reduce their separation by characteristics such as race, religion, or age. The degree of community change can be placed along a *succession* continuum determined by the rapidity with which one social group or set of organizations



Diversity in Practice

Critical Thinking Question: How might a human ecologist view disproportionate unemployment in minorities living in an inner-city area?

Table 5.5 Human Ecology Characteristics and Issues

Human Ecology	Characteristics	Issues
Individual units of a population are in competition, but also must cooperate to ensure that the community can support all its inhabitants (including plant, animal, and human life).	An organized population, rooted in the soil it occupies, and mutually interdependent on other inhabitants.	◆ Competition vs. cooperation ◆ Centralization vs. decentralization ◆ Concentration vs. dispersion ◆ Segregation vs. integration ◆ Succession vs. status quo

replaces another within the geographical area. For example, a social worker might need to know the history of a new immigrant group coming into a city. Initially, the group may concentrate in a particular area and compete for particular types of jobs in order to establish an economic foothold. At first, they may need to turn inward for mutual support and are isolated due to language barriers. They may also become highly segregated, unlikely to take advantage of existing services, and hard to engage even with diligent outreach efforts. Gradually—often only over generations—they integrate, and a new group moves in and starts a new cycle. For a summary of human ecology characteristics and issues see Table 5.5.

Advances in depicting these processes in geographical communities have paralleled the development of management information systems in organizations. *Geographic information systems (GIS)* use data to develop maps and graphics as tools to analyze local communities. Of particular relevance to social service providers, planners, and researchers is the ability to make thematic maps of their communities, geocode addresses, and perform spatial queries and analyses. Social workers can learn to extract and map census variables such as race, poverty, language, education, and health, as well as many other demographic variables, identifying concentrations of need in their communities (Coulton, 2003; Hillier, 2007). For example, a study of elders’ characteristics and needs in a South Carolina county was undertaken to guide decision making about capital development in the coming years. The GIS component of the study was used to provide baseline information about older residents; identified public, nonprofit, and private resources available to elders in the county; and revealed gaps between older populations and community resources. Users of GIS data can pose questions such as how many elders live in a low-income community, and over time can see how things change within that same community. This ability to longitudinally examine community statistics is very helpful in assessing the effectiveness of interventions (Hirshorn & Stewart, 2003). These identified unmet needs were then used as a starting point for planning aging-related services in the county. Recognizing how the use of physical space can enhance access or create barriers to community resources is important, especially in communities with diverse population groups such as older adults (Hirshorn & Stewart, 2003) or homeless populations (Wong & Hillier, 2001).

Strengths and Weaknesses

Human and population ecologists are cousins of systems theorists. They share the goal of finding ways in which systems can become more harmonious and work better together. However, unlike their systems counterparts, these theorists



Human Behavior

Critical Thinking Question: What are some strategies that practitioners could use to avoid unintentionally alienating members of a community?

Box 5.2 Human or Population Ecology Theory

Strengths	Weaknesses
Recognition that community groups are competing for limited resources.	No guidance for how to gain power for groups that do not have it.
Realization that groups without power must adapt.	Implication that physical environment essentially determines the social structure leaving little potential for change.
Recognition that the physical environment and social structures are interrelated (Hardina, 2002).	Considered by some as conservative and inherently somewhat fatalistic, assuming that there must be accommodation to existing environments.

recognize competition as an ongoing process for which conflict is an inevitable companion. Hardina (2002) identifies three community practice implications of ecological theory:

- ◆ Recognition that community groups are competing for limited resources, with survival of those with power
- ◆ Realization that groups without power must adapt
- ◆ Acknowledgment that social structures are heavily influenced by the physical environment, and changes in the physical can make a difference in the social

The recognition of relationships and their dynamics must be translated into guidelines for practice. Although competition is acknowledged and ecological theorists recognize power dynamics, they do not provide guidance for how to gain power for groups who do not currently have it. More important, assumptions that the physical environment influences social structures is somewhat deterministic, leaving the practitioner to wonder if an individual or even a group has the potential to make change within environments that are not conducive to the desired changes. Thus, like some systems theorists, human ecologists could be accused of being inherently conservative and somewhat fatalistic in assuming that populations and sets of organizations must find ways to adjust within resistant environments. Box 5.2 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of human population ecology theory.

HUMAN BEHAVIOR THEORIES

Parallel to the focus on space, structure, function, and relationships among systems are the issues of how people behave in communities—how they understand and find meaning in relationships, what values guide their actions, and how their needs are determined. There are many ways to examine these factors, and we will address only a few here: interactions and values, collective identity, and needs.

Human behavior theories help social workers better understand why people do what they do, and this understanding is important to skilled practice. Whether communities are place or nonplace based, they are composed of human beings with multiple ways of viewing the meaning of interactions. When social work practitioners interact with community members, they are engaged in direct practice at the macro level. Knowing how to interact with

individuals and groups within community arenas requires insight into why people act and respond as they do within context. Without this insight, actions may be misinterpreted, behaviors may hold little meaning, and practitioners may respond in ways that alienate the very community members they are trying to engage.

Interactions and Values

Beginning with rural communities and then expanding to urban environments, early anthropologists and sociologists explored how people related to one another. The Lynds' 1929 study of Middletown and its 1937 follow-up provided a cultural anthropological view of a small U.S. city (Lynd & Lynd, 1929, 1937). A subsequent study by West (1945) of the fictitiously named Plainville, Illinois, was similar to the Lynds' effort. These works were based on the assumption that rural communities were able to maintain "traditional" community values whereas cities were moving closer to a mass-society orientation in which competing values made life more complex. Similar distinctions and concerns continue to be expressed today, although the great majority of Americans now live in or near cities. The anthropological approach to community favored by the Lynds and West attempted to understand the daily lives of people, their behavior patterns, and their belief systems. What emerged from these and other case studies was recognition of the deeply held values that are inherent in community life.

Cohen (1985) views the community as rich with values, ideologies, and symbols that people have in common with one another but that also distinguish them from those who hold different beliefs. For example, the colors worn by a youth may symbolize certain values not easily recognized by someone who is not part of a particular culture. But wearing those colors into another community in which the colors are viewed as hostile can incite gang violence.

This relational view of community implies boundaries that are not necessarily tied to place. Boundaries may be physical, but they may also be racial, ethnic, linguistic, or religious. Boundaries may be perceptual, and may even vary among those who are part of the same relational community, just as persons who are not part of that community will perceive boundaries differently. Cohen (1985) explains that it is not the clarity of boundaries that are important (for they are always changing), but it is what the boundary symbolizes that is most crucial. For example, even though people may move out of a local community, the key phrases and words that they used in communicating with others will remain as symbols of their close relationships. Similarly, when a person with disabilities moves into a long-term care facility, the ties that are maintained with persons outside the home become symbolic of returning home.

Collective Identity

Clark (1973) proposes stepping back from the structural approaches to community and looking at the psychological ties that bind people in community. He suggests that community may be thought of as a shared sense of solidarity based on psychological identification with others. Going beyond social interactions, community rests in a sense of *we-ness* that can be either place specific or can transcend place. This approach lends itself to evaluating a community by measuring the strength of its members' perceived solidarity. This can be done whether the community is locality based, as in a neighborhood, town, or

city, or whether it is affiliation based, as in a community formed by supporters of a political cause or members of an online chat group.

MacNair, Fowler, and Harris (2000) recognized psychological ties characteristic of communities in large social movements. Building on the work of Helms (1984), they developed a framework of diversity functions common to three movements by groups seeking greater equality in society: the African American Movement, the Women's Movement, and the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Movement. These six functions are assimilation, normative antidiscrimination, militant direct action, separatism, introspective self-help, and pluralistic integration (p. 73). They represent approaches to organized change that reveal how different people identify with nonplace communities for different purposes.

Assimilation occurs when identity is tied to mainstream culture and the purpose of joining a movement is to become a part of the culture to which one has previously been denied access. *Normative antidiscrimination* is a confrontational approach that stays within legal parameters and is used to gain access to community institutions that were previously inaccessible due to oppression. *Militant direct action* is used to catch people off guard through activism, still with the intent of gaining a place within the community for persons involved in the movement. *Separatism* is an approach in which parallel communities are established and the identity of participants becomes tied to the alternative community. Because interaction with the mainstream is painful, norms emerge in association among members of the oppressed community and may be hidden from the mainstream. *Introspective self-help* is used when separatism is too difficult to maintain; thus, community members focus on self-development and self-mastery. Last, *pluralistic integration* occurs when groups form communities that are confident in their own cultural identities and do not give up their distinctiveness. They participate among and with persons from other cultures, without losing who they are. Collective identity, then, can take many different forms.

Needs

Amid these community interactions and values, community members have needs. Abraham Maslow (1962) developed a hierarchical framework for understanding human needs and factors that motivate human behavior. His hierarchy positions the most basic survival or physiological needs (e.g., food and water) at the base of a pyramid-shaped figure. One level above these needs are safety and security needs, followed by social or belonging needs, esteem or ego needs, and then, self-actualization needs at the highest level.

In Maslow's model, lower-level needs must be addressed before an individual can move to the next level. Any time a lower-level need is not being met, the person regresses down the hierarchy to satisfy that unmet need. Lower-level needs usually require a more immediate response and thus have higher urgency. Maslow also reminds us that a satisfied need is not a motivator.

This framework can be useful in assessing the needs of a target population, which can then be used to determine the adequacy of services available to them. The assessment task is one of defining more specifically the problems faced by the target population at each level and identifying the extent of met and unmet need in relation to each problem.

In discussing a community development perspective, Pantoja and Perry (1998) offer a slightly different view of human needs and dimensions. The authors begin with basic biological needs and then they discuss the need for love and belonging

(which they consider a second level of *biological need*). After this comes the need for groups and relationships, particularly in times of emergency (*social*); for self-expression through symbols such as art and language (*cultural*); for learning from the past (*historical*); for the use of power (*political*); for viewing the past, present, and future through action, words, and movement (*creative/spiritual*); and for explanations that connect what happens in one's world through investigation and experimentation (*intellectual*). Their list of needs includes:

- ♦ *Basic biological needs* to have food, shelter, and clothing for survival and protection
- ♦ *Secondary biological needs* to have love, belonging and identity as a human being
- ♦ *Social needs* to engage in relationships, mutual aid, and support
- ♦ *Cultural needs* to use language, norms, values, and customs
- ♦ *Historical needs* to record the past and to use the past to explore the future
- ♦ *Political needs* to gain power, order, and control
- ♦ *Creative/spiritual needs* to use words, movements, and art to explain the unknown
- ♦ *Intellectual needs* to explore the nature of the environment, to investigate, and to experiment. (Pantoja & Perry, 1998, p. 227)

Theoretically, Pantoja and Perry provide a multidisciplinary typology that reveals the complexity of human needs within social context. Their original intent was to provide a sociological approach to analysis that would lead to deep understandings primarily of minority communities. But their ultimate intent was to build on this understanding so that these types of needs once understood could be addressed. Thus, their theoretical approach, which we have described, is designed to evolve one's understanding of diverse needs into a working model in which each human need is evaluated in light of how well community services and institutions function in meeting those needs.

In summary, Table 5.6 provides an overview of human behavior theories, their foci, and findings.

Table 5.6 Human Behavior Theories: Foci and Findings		
Human Behavior Theories	Focus	Findings
Interactions and values	The daily lives of people; behavior patterns and belief systems	Deeply held values are inherent in some communities
	Values bind people together but also distinguish them from those who hold different values	It is not the clarity of boundaries that is important; it is the symbolic aspect of the boundary created by common values.
Collective identity	The psychological ties that bind people within a community	People feel a <i>sense of community</i> and a <i>we-ness</i> when there are psychological ties.
Needs	Understanding needs in a hierarchy from lower-order needs to higher-order needs	Higher-order needs cannot be met until lower-order needs are satisfied

Box 5.3 Human Behavior Theories

Strengths	Weaknesses
Examine how communities are formed and shaped by factors that motivate human behavior	Fail to provide a contextual understanding necessary to interpreting behaviors
Help to move past the “big picture” orientation of other theories and pick up on critical factors in the human interrelationships within a community	Often ignore the critical person-in-environment perspective
	Sometimes overgeneralize from the individual to the collective



Practice Contexts

Critical Thinking Question:
What kinds of contextual factors may strongly shape an individual's actions within a community?

Strengths and Weaknesses

Human behavior theories examine how communities are formed and shaped by factors that motivate human behavior. These include the drive to meet basic needs, the drive to affiliate, and the need to be guided by shared values once interactions reach a sufficient level of complexity. Without insight into why people feel and act as they do, community practitioners may see only the big picture, missing critical clues that will make the difference in whether trust and relationship can be established.

Human behavior theories look at the individual or the actions of individuals with others. However, critics of these theories caution that human beings are not robots and actions are situational. Viewing needs, values, interactions, and relationships without a contextual understanding can lead to misunderstandings about what certain behaviors mean. Theories that focus on individuals must be used with an eye to context so that the person-in-environment is paramount. A related criticism concerns the unit of analysis. Human behavior theories take the position that, if one wants to understand the behavior of communities, one must understand what motivates the behavior of individuals. If one can accurately predict how one member will behave in a given circumstance, it is suggested that one can then predict the likely path to be taken by a collection of actors following the same rules. The argument is that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, so comparing whole community systems to one another and examining which differences between them predict which actions could be seen as a better approach than focusing on the individual's behavior. Box 5.3 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of human behavior theory.

THEORIES ABOUT POWER, POLITICS, AND CHANGE

Given the diversity within communities, the focus of much of the literature has been on the process by which communities create and build bonds among people. However, it is important to recognize political and social dynamics within communities as powerful forces that can be oppressive as well as supportive.

In her community practice work, Hardina (2002) reviews three theories related to the acquisition of power: power dependency theory, conflict theory,

and resource mobilization theory. Although *power dependency theory* has been primarily applied to organizational arenas in which organizations become dependent on donors (Blau, 1964), Hardina sees important implications for community practice:

- ◆ External forces may make demands that limit the abilities of local communities to initiate change.
- ◆ Consumers may be fearful to bite the hand that feeds them.
- ◆ Change occurs within the boundaries of an exchange relationship in which people feel obligated to support donors of resources. (p. 52)

In other words, local communities and units within local communities become “beholden” to external sources of resources. These sources include corporations that control whether to locate or keep a factory in a community. For example, in a town in the Plains states the largest employer was a meat packing plant. The plant depended heavily on migrant Latino workers who were often exploited because of language problems and their undocumented status. Civic leaders were highly resistant to efforts to initiate change on behalf of the workers, fearing a decision by the corporation to simply move elsewhere. Thus, one of the greatest sources of power in the economy of this small community was an external corporation.

Conflict theory typically views the community as divided into haves and have-nots, all competing for limited resources. A neo-Marxist view of conflict theory is that social services fulfill a social control function, providing just enough resources to keep the voices of dissent from becoming louder and maintaining the status quo (Hasenfeld, 1983). This casts social workers in the role of social control agents. Alternately, a perspective arising from the work of Alinsky (1971, 1974) might place social workers in the role of organizers who use unexpected sources of power in the hands of the have-nots to upset those in decision-making positions. Hardina (2002, p. 55) identifies basic assumptions of conflict theory as: (1) there is competition for resources; (2) the haves hold power over the have-nots; (3) oppression comes largely from the isms (e.g., racism, classism); and (4) the government as well as other vehicles of decision making are controlled by the haves. Conflict theory accepts the view that communities may be usefully analyzed in terms of who holds power and how it is applied, but it goes further in stating that differences in power and access to resources between the haves and have-nots inevitably lead to conflict and require an understanding of how to manage conflict in order to effect change.

Resource mobilization theory draws from both conflict and power dependency theories to address social movements and the reasons they occur. In order to mobilize, a collective identity (noted earlier under human behavior theories) must develop. Nkomo and Taylor (1996) summarize several theories that describe collective identity, including embedded group theory, social identity theory, race/gender research, organization demography, and ethnology (p. 340). Identity group members have common characteristics, shared histories, and have even experienced some of the same environmental change. In communities and organizations, identity group membership precedes organizational group membership. Nkomo and Taylor contend that identity must be understood as a complicated concept since individuals have

multiple identities that may intersect into an amalgamated identity. Thus, when individuals come together as a community group, their identity (like all others) is constructed rather than something with which they were born. Collective identity then emerges and can change as context changes (Balser & Carmin, 2009; Mulucci, 1995).

Hardina (2002) identifies basic assumptions of resource mobilization as it relates to community practice:

- ◆ Social movements arise when groups are not represented in decision-making processes.
- ◆ Public recognition occurs when there is protest.
- ◆ Movements must develop an appropriate structure.
- ◆ Success is dependent upon establishing a collective identity.
- ◆ The better the organization's message, the more membership will increase.
- ◆ Fund raising is always a problem because members will have limited resources and accepting funds from others may lead to abandoning the radical nature of the cause. (p. 57)

Table 5.7 provides a quick overview of power dependency, conflict, and resource mobilization theory.

Table 5.7 Themes and Implications of Power, Politics, and Change Theories

Power, Politics, and Change Theories	Themes	Implications for Community Organizing
Power dependency theory	Organizations and communities are dependent on resources, often from outside sources.	◆ Consumers may limit change for fear of offending resource providers. ◆ Change may be limited to boundaries established within the relationship. ◆ Funding sources and providers of other resources external to the community may limit change.
Conflict theory	The community is divided into haves and have-nots.	◆ There is competition for resources. ◆ Haves have power over have-nots. ◆ People are usually oppressed because of prejudice and discrimination. ◆ Decision makers, including government, are controlled by haves.
Resource mobilization theory	Social movements need a collective identity.	◆ Groups not represented in decision making initiate social movements ◆ Public protests bring public recognition to an issue. ◆ Movements need a structure. ◆ Success depends on a collective identity for those involved in protest. ◆ Strength depends on the quality of the message. ◆ Funding without compromising the group's position is often a problem.

Understanding the Politics of Community Diversity

In Chapter 4, we discussed a framework called the dual perspective, which viewed the individual in a nurturing system that functions within the context of a larger sustaining system. The *nurturing system* is made up of those traditions and informal relationships in which the individual feels most familiar. The *sustaining system* is made up of traditions, beliefs, values, and practices of the dominant society. This framework is important in understanding how communities contain built-in conflicts. Persons who experience divergence between nurturing and sustaining systems will be aware of community politics, power, and change as part of their daily experience. Even when there is congruence between the nurturing and sustaining systems, it may engender a false perception that communities are benign or supportive of all their members. Because civic society is valued by dominant groups it reflects the values and norms of those in power; those same groups will resist the development of civil rights associations and other organizations that are dedicated to changing the status quo through political and economic empowerment.

To illustrate how norms of community are often taken for granted, Stanfield (1993, p. 137) points to the importance of civic responsibility and civic cultures in African American traditions. Historically, these traditions have been supported by institutions such as “civic associations, fraternal orders, and churches rather than businesses and finance institutions.” Although European American communities have prided themselves on a civic culture rooted in production, distribution, and consumption (the economic function of community), African American communities have long been excluded from full participation in the dominant institutions within local communities. In addition, Stanfield points out that these communities did not just form in response to oppression, but also reflected unique cultural attributes.

Understanding the politics of different communities is critical to social workers as they interact with diverse groups. For example, the meaning of volunteerism in traditional U.S. communities translates to a formalized process through which volunteers are organized and coordinated, but that is a politically dominant view held by the sustaining system. This type of volunteering has seen resurgence in the declining economies of 2009 and 2010, with states and cities attempting to get volunteers to help with functions that were formerly performed by paid staff. Many states and local communities are attempting to keep parks and libraries open, for example, and to supplement many staff functions through the use of volunteers.

Stanfield (1993) contends that volunteerism in African American communities is so much an integral part of the informal nature of caring that it becomes a way of life. Yet, there is no calculation of in-kind contributions or records of volunteer time in this latter definition of volunteerism. It is not captured in anyone's log or volunteer record book. Put simply, it does not exist because it cannot be defined as “volunteerism” in traditional U.S. communities.

Another example of communities that do not conform to dominant criteria is provided by Kayal (1991) in his study of the gay men's health crisis in New York City. Kayal analyzes how volunteerism among those in the gay community became necessary at a time when government support was not forthcoming. He explains how members of the gay community responded to the problem of

AIDS, representing the way in which groups become committed to sharing the burden when crises arise. There are many more examples of groups that have formed locally and have responded to problems, but whose work has often not been recognized or valued within traditional understandings of community (e.g., Finn, 2005; Holley, 2003; Rogge, David, Maddox, & Jackson, 2005). Because social workers advocate with and for these groups, conflict is inevitable when intervening through macro practice.

Politics cannot be ignored as a part of understanding community. Feminist writers have long declared that the personal is political, indicating that every action or inaction that one takes is a political statement (Bricker-Jenkins & Netting, 2008; Lazzari, Colarossi, & Collins, 2009). There are multiple examples of various interest groups, some more formalized than others, interacting within local communities. In order to fully contextualize their work, social workers recognize the interplay of interest groups competing for resources within the community.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Understanding power and politics as part of community dynamics is critical to macro intervention. Theorists who focus on power, politics, and change are typically appealing to social work because they recognize oppression and are aware that conflict cannot be ignored. Their language is compatible with social work values and ethical principles, such as autonomy and social justice, and it resonates with social workers who want to make a difference.

Limitations within these theories are that although they may lead to better understandings about power and politics, they do not offer guidance on how to achieve one's ends without radical initiatives or how to judge when to act and when not to act. The nuances of finessing change are overwhelmed by the push to make change happen. There is no guidance for how to develop and use professional judgment so that targets of change are not alienated, because the assumption is that alienation will inevitably occur. Hardina (2003) indicates that even though these theories provide some guidance for how to deal with power and competition, they do not provide strategies for community organizers to use. Box 5.4 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of theories of power, politics, and change.

Box 5.4 Theories of Power, Politics, and Change

Strengths	Weaknesses
Introduce important human factors into the understanding of communities and their dynamics.	Typically lack guidance on how to achieve ends without radical initiatives.
Help in understanding the role of power and politics as part of change.	Ignore details in favor of emphasizing the need to push to make changes happen.
Recognize oppression and make clear that conflict cannot be ignored.	Provide no guidance on how to avoid alienating targets of change.
	Do not present a full range of strategic options.

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

In the 1950s and 1960s, sociological interest in and research on communities suffered a decline. It was assumed that mass society had replaced the concept of community (Lyon, 1987). This was part of a broader concern expressed by many writers that community has been lost and that there must be a search to regain, revitalize, and reinforce community. Many political candidates have also issued calls for decentralizing government, returning control to local communities, and reestablishing family values. Finally, "community lost" became a theme in the popular media, where people use words such as *helplessness* and *disempowerment* to describe their feelings about what is happening to community life.

Putting this in perspective, however, these concerns have waxed and waned since the Industrial Revolution. Hunter (1993) points out that social analysts have talked about the demise of local communities for decades and social pundits have feared the social decay of cities. He goes on to say that a number of researchers have reminded practitioners of the resilience of the informal relationships and structures that maintained human relationships long before the advent of modern society. What is hopeful about Hunter's reminder is that he recognizes and validates what was once viewed as nonrational, short-lived, unimportant, and invisible. The relationships that women with children formed in local neighborhoods, the plethora of self-help groups that emerged in the last decades, the nurturing systems of racial and ethnic minorities, the voluntary associations to which people flocked, the efforts of natural helpers, and the human bonds that transcend time and space, all maintain the functions and roles of community even when the formal structures suffer crises in credibility, integrity, or financial viability. Essentially, Hunter declares that those linkages that are so carefully delineated as "micro" and "macro" are intricately interwoven so that if one works with individuals, one must, by definition, understand community.

Strengths, Empowerment, and Resiliency Perspectives

In the mid-1980s and into the 1990s, community scholars regained what we believe to be a more balanced set of perspectives, indicating that *both* mass society and community are still relevant concepts. Since the turn of the century, reactions to Putnam's (2000) bestselling book on *Bowling Alone* brought new attention to the importance of community. Eikenberry (2009) contends that the way in which people engage in their communities and in civic activity may have changed.

We now highlight three interrelated perspectives that are particularly relevant in understanding positive attributes of communities: strengths, empowerment, and resiliency. The *strengths perspective* focuses on identifying the possibilities within individuals and communities, recognizing their assets rather than focusing on their deficits. Building on strengths, there is the potential for empowerment. *Empowerment* comes from within the individual or community as a whole when there is an "aha" realization that there are inherent strengths on which to build and that using those strengths can result in desired change. *Resiliency* is the capacity to maintain a sense of empowerment over time, to continue to work toward community betterment, and to resist the temptation to give up when there are conflicts, struggles, and set-backs—to bounce back time and again.

The *strengths perspective* was originally presented by Saleebey (1997). Whereas communities may not appear to be as functional or competent as one would wish, social work practitioners must be careful to recognize and assess the strengths within the communities in which they work. When addressing terrible social problems such as homelessness and violence, it can become too easy to write off entire communities as pathological and beyond assistance. Saleebey reminds us of words such as *empowerment*, *resilience*, and *membership* that can lift and inspire. Empowerment means assisting communities in recognizing the resources they have. Resilience is the potential that comes from the energy and skill of ongoing problem solving. Membership is a reminder that being a member of a community carries with it civic and moral strength.

For example, a social worker was hired by the State Department on Aging. Her role was to survey all nursing homes in the state and to determine how many had family councils. She discovered that most did not have active councils, and those that did were largely controlled by staff and administration. She recognized that this was a problem because it is well known that a “community presence” will mean residents within a facility receive more attention from staff. Without that community presence, older residents can become increasingly isolated. She did not deny that this was a problem, but rather than focusing on the problems inherent in developing effective family councils (and there were many), she began to list the strengths that could come from having a family council in a nursing home. Family members who often felt isolated would be able to link with other family members, communication between nursing home staff and families would increase, combined efforts of multiple family members would lead to identification of common challenges, and family members would be able to support one another. From a strengths perspective, the possibility of organizing family councils could improve the quality of life of caregivers and even potentially impact the quality of residents’ care. Using this strengths perspective, she was able to convince family members and nursing home staff in facilities around the state that the strengths of added communication brought on by having active councils would benefit all parties and that it would better integrate facilities into their local communities.

Hardina (2003) traces the roots of the empowerment perspective to the concept of citizen participation and the War on Poverty. Having citizens engaged in community planning efforts was seen as a vehicle for social reform. Solomon (1976) refined the empowerment perspective when she acknowledged that empowerment emerged from recognizing the strengths and capabilities of individuals, groups, organizations, and communities in gaining control over actions to change repressive social structures that influenced their lives. Gutierrez and Lewis (1999, p. 11) contend that “empowerment practice must be focused at three levels: the personal, the interpersonal, and the political.” In other words, individuals have to feel empowered in order to link with others to engage in change, and together the synergy of their joint efforts can make a difference. Mondros and Wilson (1994) identified four sources in the professional knowledge base that have contributed to the understanding of community power and empowerment: (1) theoretical debates over social protest and discontent, when it arises and why; (2) a growing body of literature that attempts to classify types of community organizations; (3) a descriptive body of knowledge describing social protest movements; and (4) an extensive literature on community organizing skills providing practical guidance about how to go about organizing.

Hardina (2003) provides an example of how an empowerment perspective can be translated into empowerment practice through the Independent Living

Movement (ILM). The ILM began in the 1940s when researchers recognized that the major difficulties imposed on persons with disabilities “rested in the negative social construction of disability” (p. 19). Since that time, the ILM established centers throughout the United States, and central to their practice is that consumers must make up 51 percent of their boards of directors, administrative, and service staff. Not only has the disability community recognized the strengths of their members but they also are empowered to utilize those strengths through the Independent Living Centers (ILC) located throughout the United States. Communities, like people, have great *resilience* (Lyon, 1987), the ability to continue to be empowered even in the face of seemingly overwhelming challenges. Breton (2001, p. 22) focuses on resiliency in neighborhoods, noting that resilient neighborhoods have a number of characteristics, such as: (1) trusting neighborhood networks, (2) residents that spring to action through voluntary associations, (3) stable local organizational networks, and (4) a social infrastructure with needed services available. Of particular relevance is the rapidly increasing literature on the communal nature of people and the resiliency of “the commons” even in times of great change (see, for example, Lohmann, 1992). Since the 1990s the concept of social capital has become a means of exploring power, privilege, and oppression in community settings (Portes, 2000) and is seen as helpful for community practitioners interested in better understanding human behavior within an environmental context (Aguilar & Sen, 2009).

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) have studied resilient communities for years. They use a strengths perspective to develop a model of practice that focuses on community assets rather than limitations. They advocate for strengthening and empowering local community networks and provide detailed guidance for how to do what they call asset mapping. Green and Haines (2002) note that assets have always been available in local communities, but the focus has often been on problems. An assets approach is congruent with a strengths perspective and reframes community development as an empowering process rather than as a problem that needs to be fixed. Table 5.8 provides an overview of themes in strengths, empowerment, and resiliency perspectives.

An assets approach is congruent with a strengths perspective and reframes community development as an empowering process rather than as a problem that needs to be fixed.

Table 5.8 Contemporary Perspectives

Contemporary Perspectives	Themes	Characteristics
Strengths	Communities are assessed in terms of their strengths rather than their deficits.	- Community intervention may emerge around a problem or need. - Assessments identify community strengths (asset mapping). - Solutions come from within the community rather than from “services.”
Empowerment	Communities can gain control over decisions that affect them.	- People excluded from decisions gain their voice. - Resources go to the more powerful. - Leadership emerges and promotes an understanding of how decisions can be controlled locally.
Resiliency	Communities have great potential to rebound and to cope.	- Neighbor networks and trust are apparent. - Active voluntary associations participate in community life. - Stable organizational networks are maintained. - Adequate services are provided.

Capacity Building and Asset Mapping

Delgado (2000), Hardina (2003), Holley (2003), and others remind community practitioners that the strength of informal networks within ethnic communities is critical to capacity building efforts. *Informal units* are those that are not publicly incorporated as legal entities to deliver health and human services. Often, these units have not been recognized for their importance in the service delivery system, whereas they actually perform a vast assortment of mutual support tasks. They include the household unit, natural support systems and social networks, self-help groups, and voluntary or grassroots associations. We briefly examine each now.

Household Units

The household unit consists of those persons who share a common dwelling, whether they consider themselves families, significant others, friends, partners, or roommates. In the past, family was often seen as the same as household, but as more and more people live together without being related, the concept of household unit is a more helpful term (Smith, 1991). Service provision in this unit generally takes the form of caregiving and tends to fall heavily on women. For example, informal caregivers provide the vast majority of care for persons with disabilities and chronic conditions (Guberman, 2006). The potential for caregiver burden or strain suggests that mutual support provided by the informal system may require assistance from others within the community. Respite services are often needed in the interest of sustaining the physical and mental well-being of the caregiver.

In assessing the extent of service provided in household units within a given community, one should look for indicators of what is happening within private dwellings of members of the target population. For example, are identified caregivers within the community overburdened? Is there an identified need for respite services for caregivers of physically disabled, developmentally disabled and elderly persons, and/or young children? Are requests for live-ins and shared housing increasing?

Of particular concern is identifying the importance of the household unit for the target population. For example, if the target population is frail widows living alone, the household unit does not contain others who can assist. Not only are caregivers not available, but formerly active older women may suddenly find themselves alone after years of providing care to children and spouses. On the other hand, target populations such as inner-city children, who often live in crowded households where privacy is limited and tension is high, may draw support from siblings, peers, and parents. Respite for single mothers may be difficult to locate, and poverty may have reduced opportunities and life choices. Yet the household unit can be a critical source of support for these children, fragile as it may be. Recognizing the household unit as a source of community strength and developing services to support this unit can produce a double benefit in strengthening families and reducing the need for other support services.

Natural Support Systems and Social Networks

Often an unstructured, informal approach to mutual support will evolve as natural or social support systems develop. Most people are part of social networks, but this in itself does not constitute a natural support system. A natural

support system, according to McIntyre (1986), exists when resources have actually been exchanged. The existence of natural support systems has been recognized for years. Recent studies and an emphasis on informal support have prompted a more intense examination, particularly in communities with high poverty rates (Saegert, Thompson, & Warren, 2001).

Because networks do not have established boundaries and depend on interaction between informal individuals and groups, they are likely to extend beyond the local community. Mutual support tasks may be provided by geographically dispersed, as well as geographically close, network members. Dispersed networks will depend on linkages such as transportation systems and telephones, and may therefore be vulnerable in times of crisis. Balgopal (1988) explains the importance of social networks in which relatives, friends, and colleagues form a support system and respond when there are crises. Social networks are emotionally sustaining and often assist with child care or looking out for neighbors.

Within the local community there are indicators of the extent of informal neighborhood groups and support systems. Neighborhood associations, child-care exchanges, and neighbor-to-neighbor interaction are indicators of the extent of support available within this unit.

Self-Help Groups

Self-help groups are one of the fastest-growing elements of community support. They have been formed to deal with a variety of personal and social problems and needs, including substance abuse, bereavement and loss, depression, parenting, and many other issues. A number of self-help groups (of which Alcoholics Anonymous is probably the best known) have formed national and international chapters and are recognized vehicles of service delivery.

Hutcheson and Dominguez (1986) acknowledge the importance of ethnic self-help groups in their research on Latino clients. Han (2003) reports a case study on domestic violence in a Korean community in California and the importance of using support groups as part of the prevention program. Because language and cultural barriers can arise in these and other ethnic populations, self-help groups assist in maintaining community identity and involvement.

Self-help groups are often viewed as being compatible with a feminist perspective as well. Such groups are directed at widows, women who have been exploited or abused, and caregivers. Mutual support provided through self-help groups may assist in protecting the mental and physical health of caregivers.

Depending on the target population identified, self-help groups may be of critical or only modest importance. For example, populations that already have access to the service system and its resources may find such groups less necessary, whereas populations struggling to have their needs recognized may find them extremely helpful.

Voluntary Associations

Smith (2000) identifies what he calls *grassroots associations* that form an interface between informal support groups and more structured service organizations. These associations are typically local in nature, autonomous, and

composed of volunteers. Voluntary associations serve as a bridge between informal and formal components of a human service system and have been described as very closely tied to the values held by their members and to the causes about which they are concerned (Wollebaek, 2009). A *voluntary association* is defined as “a structured group whose members have united for the purpose of advancing an interest or achieving some social purpose. Theirs is a clear aim toward a chosen form of ‘social betterment’” (Van Til, 1988, p. 8). Community groups such as neighborhood associations or local congregations fall within this category. Similar to self-help groups, voluntary associations vary in their degree of formalization. Because they are membership groups, a dues structure will often be in place. Therefore, their boundaries become more clearly defined than informal groups because there is a formal process for joining and providing financial support.

Voluntary associations have several characteristics. Members share a sense of community, which provides a collective identity. Social status may be enhanced by membership and social control may be exercised over members. A function of the association may be to enhance the well-being of its members in a supportive manner. If the association is strong, it may have a prominent profile from the perspective of nonmembers, though its influence may be positive or negative (Williams & Williams, 1984). For example, associations such as white supremacist groups can be powerful yet destructive forces within certain communities.

Voluntary associations are a study in both inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Williams and Williams (1984) discuss the importance of the black church in the development and growth of mutual aid societies. Historically, many mainstream activities beyond the church were closed to blacks who migrated to urban centers. “Blacks organized voluntary associations in the church in such forms as sick and burial societies, economic self-help groups, mission societies, and various secret and fraternal orders” (p. 21). Ethnic groups, lesbians and gays, and other oppressed people may use informal and mediating units to a larger degree than other populations. Neighborhood groups, self-help groups, and voluntary associations serve as a means of mutual support, as a place for clarifying perspectives, and as a focal point for action. In some cases these activities lead to recognition and wider support and to improved access to the existing formal units of human service delivery in a community. An interesting development in 2010 was the so-called Tea Party, an informal group of citizens who wished to express their displeasure with what they considered to be excessive spending and indebtedness at the federal level. Many local chapters have held rallies, and a national conference was held in early 2010. In assessing available services for a target population, it is important that the macro practitioner identify voluntary associations. Churches, unions, and professional groups are all potential sources of support for the target population. They may not be listed in human service directories, yet they may be the first source to which some people turn when in need (Wineberg, 1992). Trends in the development of what are called *giving circles* illustrate how community members form associations for the purpose of pooling their money and other resources for important causes. These types of fundraising ventures are particularly growing in communities of color and among women (Eikenberry, 2009).

Table 5.9 provides an overview of informal community units. Household units, natural support systems and social networks, self-help groups, and voluntary associations are all community units that interact in informal and sometimes more formalized ways. Capacity building and asset mapping are

Table 5.9 Overview of Informal Community Units

Informal Community Units	Composition	Examples of Support Provided
Household units	Persons who reside within the same dwelling	Informal caregivers of older adults and small children
Natural support systems and social networks	People within a community who exchange resources	People (natural helpers) who provide for a neighbor's need during a crisis
Self-help groups	People who come together to help each other with a problem or need that they share	Parents whose children have been killed by drunk drivers who provide mutual support to one another
Voluntary associations	People who unite for the purpose of advancing an interest	Neighborhood associations and resident councils

theoretical concepts that recognize the importance of understanding how these informal units are constructed, the ways in which they are viewed by community members, and the strengths they can bring to community interventions (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001; Hannah, 2006; Nye & Glickman, 2000). Communities rich in informal units have strong capacity, sometimes not previously recognized by community members. Macro practitioners are often engaged in pointing out just how many assets and strengths a community has so that mobilization efforts can occur.

COMMUNITY PRACTICE MODELS

Whereas theories of community provide an understanding for why communities do what they do, community action and community development writers seek to prescribe how change can occur in communities. Numerous community practice models have been and are being used by social workers to effect community change. These models are heavily grounded in the concepts and language of systems and ecological theories. A summary of the theories that influence many of the community practice models appear in Table 5.10.

There are many ways to approach community and social work practice models. As a beginning, Mondros and Wilson (1994) identify components typically found in practice models: (1) a change goal; (2) roles for staff, leaders, and members; (3) a process for selecting issues; (4) the target of the change effort; (5) an assessment of how cooperative or adversarial the target will be; (6) a change strategy; (7) an understanding of resources needed to produce change; and (8) an understanding of the role of an organization in the change process (p. 240). In this book we present a comprehensive practice model that includes all eight of these elements. This planned change model is elaborated in Chapters 9, 10, and 11 and is somewhat unique in that it can be used in both community and organizational arenas. Most well-known among community practice models are those by Rothman (2008), who proposes a multimodal approach that builds on the three intervention approaches he originally developed in 1968. These are (1) planning and policy,

Whereas theories of community provide an understanding for why communities do what they do, community action and community development writers seek to prescribe how change can occur in communities.

Table 5.10 **Summary of Contributions of Theories to Community Practice**

Theories	Contributions to Community Practice
Social systems	◆ Reveals that changes in one community unit will impact other units. ◆ Indicates that changes in subunits also influence the larger community. ◆ Allows comparisons between how different communities function. ◆ Recognizes that the push to return to a steady state will depend on the analogy used.
Human or population ecology	◆ Is particularly helpful with geographic communities intent on understanding relationships among units. ◆ Recognizes that community groups are competing for limited resources, with survival of those in power. ◆ Recognizes that groups without power have to adapt to community norms. ◆ Acknowledges the influences of the interconnections and mutual shaping of physical and social structures.
Human behavior	◆ Focuses on the individual within the context of community as the unit of analysis. ◆ Provides insight into relationships, interactions, values, and needs of individuals. ◆ Provides community practitioners with critical clues about the difference trust and relationship can make in community interaction.
Power, change, and politics	◆ Reveals the influence of external sources of resources on local communities. ◆ Views the community as divided into haves and have-nots. ◆ Focuses heavily on the isms. ◆ Recognizes the dynamics of social movements and their influence on community change. ◆ Acknowledges the role of power in all interpersonal transactions.

(2) community capacity development, and (3) social advocacy. Each type has three modes. Policy/planning includes rationalistic planning, participatory planning, and policy advocacy. Capacity development's three modes are capacity-centered development, planned capacity development, and identity activism. Social advocacy's three modes are social action, social reform, and solidarity organizing (p. 14).

The *planning and policy* approach is task oriented, a data driven approach in which persuasion with the “facts” prevail. It seeks to address and resolve substantive community problems through careful study of those problems and the applications of rational planning techniques. This approach also seeks to engage community members in the process, by hearing their needs and limiting the role of social planners to that of assisting the change process rather than imposing independently determined directives. In its purest form, the model assumes that logic will prevail over political bias. However, planners do not have to be politically naïve, and modifications can be made in the rational planning approach to include political considerations and advocacy.

The goal of *capacity development* is to develop the community's ability to become more integrated and cohesive through self-help, based on the assumption that broad cross-sections of the community need to engage in problem solving. Empowerment in this mode occurs through collaborative efforts and informed decision making by community residents. The focus is on process, building relationships, and solving problems so that groups can work together.

Capacity development fits well with approaches such as assets mapping, capacity building, strengths, resiliency, and empowerment. Its limitations are its time-consuming nature and its assumption that change can occur through consensus rather than confrontation. Thus, theoretical roots fit well with mechanical and organismic analogies of social systems.

The goal of *social advocacy* is both process and task oriented in that participants seek to shift power relationships and resources in order to effect institutional change. In this approach pressure is applied and conflict is expected. Beneficiaries of this type of intervention are often perceived to be victims of an oppressive power structure. Empowerment is achieved when beneficiaries feel a sense of mastery in influencing community decision making. Although the language of social action is often espoused by social workers, it is important to realize that this approach to community practice is based in conflict, power dependency, and resource mobilization theories of power and politics. The confrontation required in this model is energy draining and time consuming, and sometimes the focus on task becomes so important that process is forgotten. Because the outcome usually involves a win-or-lose scenario, social advocacy is difficult to complete without creating some enemies. We recommend that it be used when other approaches have failed to be effective.

Rothman is quick to point out that there are multiple ways in which these three modes can interrelate and overlap. Other writers have expanded on Rothman's work. For example, Mondros and Wilson (1994) identify three practice approaches that come under the rubric of the social action model: grassroots practice, lobbying practice, and a mobilizing approach. Political practice is added by Haynes and Mickelson (2006).

Gamble and Weil (2010) provide a larger range of community practice models (eight in all) that incorporate finer distinctions in methods and assumptions. These eight approaches are:

- ◆ Neighborhood and community organizing
- ◆ Organizing functional communities
- ◆ Social, economic, and sustainable development
- ◆ Inclusive program development
- ◆ Social planning
- ◆ Coalitions
- ◆ Political and social action
- ◆ Movements for progressive change

Gamble and Weil (2010) describe each of these models and place them in a matrix according to the following comparative characteristics: desired outcome, systems targeted for change, primary constituency, scope of concern, and social work/community practice roles (pp. 26–27).

These models reflect the many different ways in which social workers engage in community work. They range from locality-based grassroots community organizing in which social workers participate with indigenous groups to make change, to social movements that occur across geographical boundaries. Social movements, such as the Disability Movement (O'Brien & Leneave, 2008) or the Gay and Lesbian Movement (Adam, 1995), are usually broad based and include a wide range of people and perspectives (Meyer, 2010). Social movements remind practitioners of Warren's distinction between vertical and horizontal relationships because they often connect people from multiple communities (vertical) as well as develop local chapters (horizontal).

Our major caution is that readers recognize the absence of any “right” way to categorize community practice models, strategies, and tactics. Planned community change is a mixture of various approaches, based on a careful assessment of the situation to be changed. It is critical also to recognize that because situations and problems are constantly evolving, social workers must be flexible in altering their direction as new information emerges and reassessment occurs. Table 5.11 provides an overview of community practice models (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Kettner, Moroney, & Martin, 2009; Rothman, 2008).

Keep in mind that we have quickly introduced numerous models that are well developed in the professional knowledge base and can easily be accessed by the reader. You will be reminded of these community practice models and the concepts briefly introduced here when you get to chapters 9, 10, and 11 and are asked to focus on planned change interventions.

Table 5.11 Overview of Community Practice Models

Model	Basic Premise	Reference
Capacity development or neighborhood and community organizing	Focuses on development of community capacity and integration through self-help; very process oriented. Assets mapping and capacity building are used.	Rothman (2008)
Organizing functional communities	Brings together people focused on a particular cause to change people's behaviors and attitudes; not necessarily place based; focus designed to facilitate empowerment.	Gamble & Weil (2010)
Social, economic, and sustainable development	Prepares citizens at the grassroots level to focus on economic and social development that will last; uses intensive asset mapping, particularly in the economic arena, and builds capacity.	Gamble & Weil (2010)
Planning/policy	Engages participants in an interaction designed to address substantive social problems; uses skills of expert planners to guide process.	Rothman (2008)
Program development	Uses organizational base in which programs are designed to address community needs; uses skills of professionals in program design and intervention.	Kettner, Moroney, & Martin (2008)
Political and social action	Attempts to shift power relationships and resources in order to effect institutional change; strengths and empowerment perspectives dominate here.	Rothman (2008)
Coalitions	Joins multiple community units (e.g., organizations, groups) to build a power base from which change can occur.	Gamble & Weil (2010)
Movements for progressive change	Works outside existing structures toward social justice goals that will change existing societal structures; oriented toward broad-scale, structural (even radical) change.	Gamble & Weil (2010)

SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of community theory, perspectives, and practice models used by social workers. There are multiple definitions and types of communities. Three dimensions that were briefly examined are (1) geographical, spatial, or territorial communities; (2) communities of identification and interest; and (3) personal networks or an individual membership in multiple communities. Geographical communities are obviously place based, but communities of identification as well as personal networks may be both place and nonplace based. The planned change model presented in later chapters will be applicable to both place and nonplace communities.

One feature common to many community theories is their attention to structure and function. Five community functions were identified by Warren (1978): (1) production, distribution, and consumption; (2) socialization; (3) social control; (4) social participation; and (5) mutual support. Pantoja and Perry (1998) added two additional functions: (6) defense and (7) communication. Communities are seen as dysfunctional or incompetent when these functions are not adequately performed, especially the economic function. Approaches to community that employ systems theory also have their roots in the analysis of community structure and function.

Human ecology theories, originating with the work of Robert E. Park, view communities as highly interdependent and changing. People, their values, and their interactions were elements of the ecology of communities studied by early anthropologists and sociologists. This work also showed that communities reflect a collective identity rich with symbols, values, and ideologies that people hold in common.

Theories of community that focus on power, politics, and change as important variables are important for social work practice. The person-in-environment perspective tends to lead social workers to view communities as political arenas in which the power of dominant groups necessitates a change so that underserved population needs can be addressed. Understanding the politics of different communities is critical to social workers seeking to assist underserved groups.

Last, contemporary community theory and practice reveal a new interest in rethinking the value of community as an arena for future study. Strengths, empowerment, and resiliency perspectives were followed by capacity building and assets mapping approaches to community practice. A brief overview of community practice models was presented as a way to introduce the reader to the multiple strategies used to foster community change and to prepare the reader for thinking about the planned change model in this book.

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1. Read MySocialWorkLibrary case study: Volunteer Experiences with the Neighbors Helping Neighbors Program. Using Mondros and Wilson's approach to

practice models, try to articulate the eight components in the NHN program.

2. Read MySocialWorkLibrary case study: Chelsea Green Space and the Power Plant. Pay particular attention to the section entitled, "The Campaign Against the Power Plant." What kind of community practice model do you think Green Space embodies? (There may be more than one.)

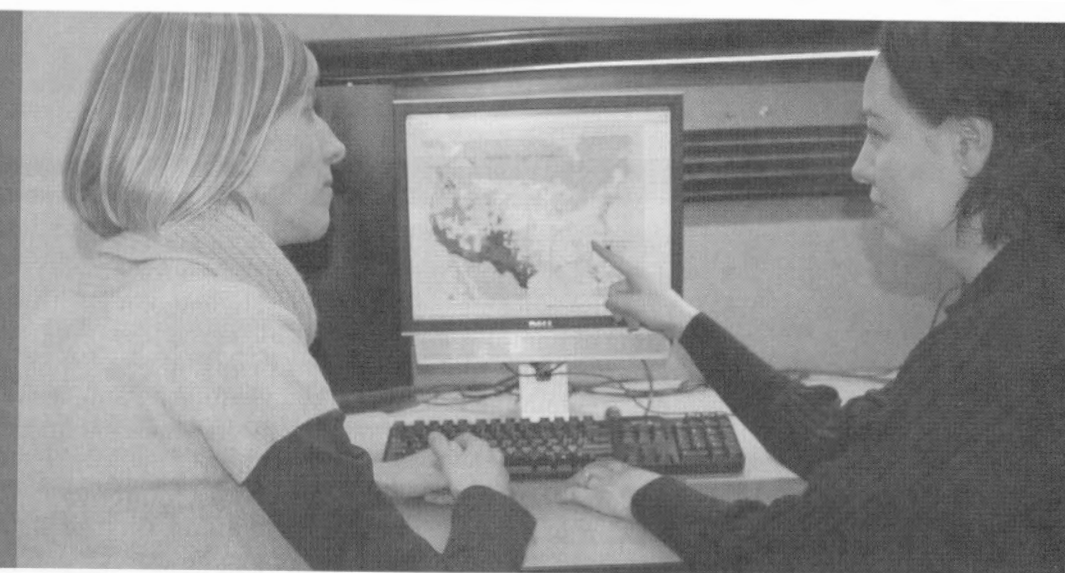
PRACTICE TEST The following questions will test your knowledge of the content found within this chapter. For additional assessment, including licensing-exam-type questions on applying chapter content to practice, visit **MySocialWorkLab**.

- An adult protective services worker warns a family that they may be liable for prosecution for elder abuse. This is:
 - socialization
 - social control
 - social participation
 - mutual support
- Communities generally have both horizontal and vertical linkages. This means that they are usually ____ systems.
 - open
 - closed
 - permeable
 - differentiated
- A social worker finds that residents in a community need protection from violence. Which Maslow needs category is this?
 - esteem
 - social
 - safety
 - survival
- Which practice modality most likely connects vertical and horizontal community connections?
 - social planning
 - program development
 - grassroots action
 - social movements
- Roland Warren (1978) states that a community is "that combination of social units and systems that perform the major social functions" relevant to meet people's needs on a local level. Does it help a macro social worker to understand community? Does it encompass all types of communities? Why or why not?

ASSESS YOUR COMPETENCE Use the scale below to rate your current level of achievement on the following concepts or skills associated with each competency presented in the chapter:

1	2	3
I can accurately describe the concept or skill.	I can consistently identify the concept or skill when observing and analyzing practice activities.	I can competently implement the concept or skill in my own practice.

- _____ Can apply community theories and models to problems regarding how individuals living in heterogeneous communities experience diversity.
- _____ Can articulate how different social functions of a community may be strengths or sources of oppression for community residents lacking power.
- _____ Can understand how individuals and groups behave and can engage members of a community without alienating or offending individuals.
- _____ Can anticipate external contexts that may influence the behavior of a community member.



Assessing Communities

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Core Competencies in this Chapter (Check marks indicate which competencies are covered in depth)

☐ Professional Identity	☒ Ethical Practice	☐ Critical Thinking	☐ Diversity in Practice	☐ Human Rights & Justice
☐ Research-Based Practice	☒ Human Behavior	☒ Policy Practice	☒ Practice Contexts	☐ Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate