PART I

COMMUNITY PRACTICE: PURPOSE AND KNOWLEDGE BASE

Our goal in writing this book is to provide community practice workers with a comprehensive guide to skills for practice and with a knowledge base drawn from the values, purposes, and theories that form the foundation for work with communities. To help workers understand and differentiate among a range of intervention methods and skills for effective practice, we have developed a framework of eight different models illustrating approaches focused on specific goals. Our discussion for each model includes guidance for effective engagement and ethical practice, with examples drawn from both the United States and international contexts. This material will be useful not only to social workers but also to a wide range of community workers, including those involved with public health, city and regional planning, community sustainable development, and community capacity building.

We write from extensive experience in community practice with grassroots groups, community-based organizations, and the education of social workers in both the United States and international settings. Our primary interest is in expanding the work of anyone involved in building the capacities of community members and community institutions to improve the quality of life for people in community—whether that community is local or part of an extended regional, national, or global group.

We begin with a discussion of communities and community practice in the local to global continuum. In chapter 1, we discuss the meaning of community, processes associated with community practice, and social justice and human rights as the values that are the central focus of community practice.
Chapter 2 presents the table of eight models of community practice, the rationale for their development, a discussion of the “lenses” we believe will significantly influence the context of community practice in this century, and the roles associated with the different models of practice. Chapter 3 presents a broader discussion of guiding values and the evolution of the purposes and approaches to community practice. Building from that discussion, chapter 4 provides an overview of the concepts, theories, knowledge, and perspectives that guide community practice. Part II of the book, encompassing chapters 5–12, focuses on the scope of concern, basic processes, conceptual understandings, and roles and skills important for practice in each model. The companion volume, *Community Practice Skills Workbook* (Weil, Gamble, and MacGuire 2010; hereafter cited as the *CPS Workbook*), provides additional opportunities to engage in skill development with each model.

Issues of human rights and social justice are explored in each of the eight models of community practice analyzed in this volume. We are committed to building competencies and skills for social justice among future community social workers in all parts of the world. This commitment stems in part from the historical and heroic role of so many people who came before us and who showed the way to a more just society. We have learned lessons from Sojourner Truth, a courageous abolitionist born into slavery in New York in 1797, sold from her family at age 11, and yet spent the rest of her life working tirelessly for the freedom of slaves and the rights of women; from Jane Addams and her early work with families and organizations in Chicago’s industrial slums; from Rosika Schwimmer, the Hungarian social worker and suffragist who worked with Jane Addams toward mediation to end the World War I hostilities and later fled to the United States when Jews were purged from Hungary, only to be denied U.S. citizenship because she was a pacifist; from Eleanor Roosevelt, who was instrumental in developing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; from Mohandas Gandhi, who led the people of India in mass civil disobedience to a peaceful revolution, bringing them freedom and independence from Great Britain; from Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, who built an organization to protect the rights of farm laborers throughout the United States; from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose message of freedom and peace still guides all people working against oppressive policies; from Nelson Mandela, who, even after spending twenty-eight
years in prison, led his country on a path toward truth and reconciliation when South Africans at last overthrew apartheid and elected him to be their president; and from Wangari Maathai and Vandana Shiva, who connected our understanding of environmental restoration with women’s rights and social justice in Kenya and India, respectively. There are so many more whose names may not be as well known, but whose deeds and words provide the guidance and wisdom to move human rights and social justice forward (Bruegge- mann 2006; Carlton-LaNey 2001; Maathai 2004; Mandela 1995; Shiva 2005).

These beacons of hope from both the past and today can be added to the list of people from your own life who have inspired you to work for social justice and human rights. Reflecting on such legends and inspirational models helps us get through the difficult times and keep our focus on the long term as we work to build democratic processes and empowered communities. Reflecting on the work of those who embody practice excellence can also help each of us develop our own essential skills that will be grounded in empowerment practice, human rights, and social justice.