

# Washington University Journal of Law & Policy

---

Volume 20 *Poverty, Justice, and Community Lawyering: Interdisciplinary and Clinical Perspectives*

---

2006

## Looking for Justice on a Two-Way Street

Nancy L. Cook

Follow this and additional works at: [https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law\\_journal\\_law\\_policy](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_journal_law_policy)



Part of the [Law and Society Commons](#), and the [Legal Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Nancy L. Cook, *Looking for Justice on a Two-Way Street*, 20 WASH. U. J. L. & POL'Y 169 (2006),  
[https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law\\_journal\\_law\\_policy/vol20/iss1/7](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_journal_law_policy/vol20/iss1/7)

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Law School at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Washington University Journal of Law & Policy by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact [digital@wumail.wustl.edu](mailto:digital@wumail.wustl.edu).

# Looking for Justice on a Two-Way Street

Nancy Cook\*

## INTRODUCTION

The theory of community-based practice is that lawyers can better understand people's legal problems if they are closer to the place where the problems originate. Being on-site at a community organization makes lawyers more available to their client base, while simultaneously giving them a contextualized understanding of clients' lives. A common frame of reference in the field is an "access to justice" paradigm, the primary goal of which is to build a bridge between poor communities and institutions of power.<sup>1</sup> Conceptually, this bridging is accomplished by meeting clients on their home turf, and serving as their escorts from their home communities to the elite institutions where law rules and justice is dispensed. While lawyers in this model obtain the benefits of greater knowledge of their clients' situations, crossing into the community nevertheless is seen primarily as meeting *client* needs.

Over the fifteen years in which I have engaged in community-based work, my ideas have evolved. More and more, I have come to believe that "access to justice" is an overstated ideal, if not a cruel

---

\* Associate Professor of Law, Roger Williams University School of Law. I would like to thank my colleagues at the law school for their helpful support and feedback; Karen Tokarz and the organizers of the conferences that are pushing scholars and activists to address serious issues; and our community partners, especially Jim Gannaway and the Casey Family Services staff, for all they have taught us.

1. In fact, the name of the first such program with which I was associated as co-director was the University of New Mexico's Institute for Access to Justice. For descriptions of this program, see Nancy Cook, *Legal Fictions: Clinical Experiences, Lace Collars and Boundless Stories*, 1 CLINICAL L. REV. 41 (1994); Antoinette Sedillo López, *Learning Through Service in a Clinical Setting: The Effect of Specialization on Social Justice and Skills Training*, 7 CLINICAL L. REV. 307 (2001); J. Michael Norwood, *Requiring a Live Client, In-House Clinical Course: A Report on the University of New Mexico Law School Experience*, 19 N.M. L. REV. 265 (1989).

joke. Access to justice is not really achievable, at least not in ways most of us have been socialized to believe. What we do as lawyers when, together with clients, we cross into the judicial system, is help the clients stay out of harm's way while in that territory. Lawyers can be guides in negotiating the admittedly confusing and difficult terrain, and because the clients often *must* be there, having been summoned under threat of eviction, loss of parental rights, or incarceration, such assistance has value. Our clients are not getting "access," however; they are simply getting protection from what passes for justice. Access implies the potential for gain; what we see in most cases is, at best, the possibility for damage control. And the lawyers are not changing anything.

In recent years, notions of collaborative problem-solving have surfaced.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, collaborative models strip attorneys of their leadership roles; they are no longer, or not necessarily, enlightened guides. Rather, lawyers in this vision follow the lead of community members or clients, providing input and service as needed. The goal of meeting client needs has not changed; now, however, those needs are defined by the clients. Moreover, the belief in the desirability of "access"—to benefits, services, opportunities to be heard, and just decision-makers—remains deeply embedded.

While collaborations within community settings are an improvement over the paternalism of earlier traditions,<sup>3</sup> this model holds less hope for change than most of its proponents have imagined. The unstated truth about lawyer-community "collaborations" is that lawyers, by and large, do not intend to bridge the gap between the powerful (themselves included) and poor communities by giving up their apparent privileges and taking advantage of what communities would have to offer if they did. Access is therefore generally presumed to go in one direction. Lawyers seek to give client populations access to the halls of political and economic power, but they do not think in terms of providing judges and the economically privileged access to financially undersupported communities.

---

2. See the discussion of collaborative styles, *infra* Part I.B.

3. See the discussion of traditional lawyering, *infra* Part I.A.

This suggests a number of challenges and questions for lawyers working in poor communities: What do we assume about power in this context? What do community lawyers have to say about their own, and others', accountability to the communities with which they are connecting? What assumptions are made about the desirability of access to conventional power, and about the undesirability of accessing the power bases in the neighborhoods? Who really stands to benefit from the interactions between professional service providers and community residents?

In these pages, I look at the contemporary notions of "access to justice," particularly in relation to poverty lawyers' goal of "bridge building" between economically distressed communities and institutions of political and legal power. The article commences in Part I with a brief reference to a traditional or conventional model of lawyering and a short description of the criticisms that have been leveled against this model. It goes on to explain how these critiques have led to the development of a number of lawyering strategies that utilize collaborative methods and respect communities' autonomy. A description of one program built around these values, the Community Justice and Legal Assistance Clinic in Rhode Island, is provided by way of example. Part I then details a number of structural, strategic, and circumstantial problems inherent in collaborative lawyering models.

To begin the process of reevaluating activist lawyers' approaches to law in service of communities, a conceptual shift is needed. One thing that appears to be missing from "access to justice" theories is a recognition that access is a two-way street. The underlying goal of collaborative, as well as of traditional, lawyering strategies has been to enable disempowered and disenfranchised clients to reach the power brokers and distributors. Access *to* the communities from which such clients come is not perceived to be part of the imperative; however, implicitly, then, those ostensibly being enabled are also being devalued. This has been a blind spot in the thinking of many community law activists. Thus, Part II of this article proposes that lawyers explicitly recognize the value of gaining access to communities, not simply to enhance clients' and communities' standing in the halls of traditionally elite power institutions, but also

to further the interests of those very institutions—interests that, for the most part, have yet to be articulated or even identified.

Assuming that two-way access is a fundamental goal, the question arises of what strategies to employ. Existing foundations of critical thinking on the subject of community-based law practice suggest certain initial, and essential, elements to whatever strategies are seized upon. The basic ingredients can be summed up as: respect for the homeplace, cross-socialization, and strategic use of social capital. Processed together, these lead toward the goal of creating a mutually beneficial relationship.

Despite the apparent simplicity of this shift in thinking, it may, in fact, be quite an ambitious undertaking. For that reason, Part II concludes by suggesting a basic beginning methodology: the creation of hospitality space within the community where community insiders and outsider allies can interact with a goal toward developing new, as yet unimagined, thirdspaces. Again using the Community Justice Clinic as an example, the article describes how the clinic has happened upon hospitable space that has the potential for developing thirdspace and two-way access.

One thing that seems clear, despite shifts in theories of practice, is that presence in the community is essential. The hope for poor neighborhoods is in the neighborhoods. That is where lawyers need to be. But where precisely they go, how they get there, and what they do once they arrive are questions still begging for answers. Two-way access is one concept that may expand visions of attorney-client alliances.

## I. BRIDGE BUILDING AS ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### A. *The “Traditional” Lawyering Model and Its Critics*

For a number of years, there have been critiques of the traditional model of poverty law service. When I use the term “traditional model,” I refer to individual case or client representation, in which a client contacts a lawyer to get a problem fixed or to obtain access to the courts for the purpose of acquiring some right or property.<sup>4</sup> The

---

4. For a similar definition, see DAVID HALL, *THE SPIRITUAL REVITALIZATION OF THE*

lawyer is often seen as the actor in such a scenario, as the person who gets things done for the client. This vision of the attorney as the primary force behind the client's case is what Gerald López terms "regnant lawyering."<sup>5</sup> In this country, this has been the predominant style of attorney-client relationships for legal services as well as for the private bar.

López and numerous others are highly critical of the "regnant" mode of lawyering. Nevertheless, many core principles of conventional practice survive intact in the models of law practice intended to replace regnant lawyering. In a community-based practice, for example, where lawyers are theoretically positioned both to utilize their law school training and to heed the voices of the community, the lawyer's role, at its simplest, is still to bring to bear legal proficiencies and knowledge in ways that will make a difference in people's lives. This is, quintessentially, "traditional" law practice. And lawyers, most would agree, do perform these basic functions in community settings. Most community lawyers believe that their expertise and skill, bought at considerable time and expense, is of particular worth to the communities with which they engage. Through the legal services provided, poverty-survivor clients obtain benefits or advantages they would not otherwise obtain.<sup>6</sup>

Even when residents' empowerment, rather than adversarial success, is the ultimate goal, conventional litigation methods have value. Non-litigation problem-solving methods are enhanced by legal hooks: "Litigation—or the threat of it—is still a powerful tool."<sup>7</sup> One community law advocate contends, in fact, that whatever the limits of litigation in engineering social change, the class action lawsuit, at least, remains *the* "most effective means of combatting many illegal policies and practices of government agencies."<sup>8</sup> In short, there is no

---

LEGAL PROFESSION 131 (2005).

5. GERALD P. LÓPEZ, *REBELLIOUS LAWYERING: ONE CHICANO'S VISION OF PROGRESSIVE LAW PRACTICE* (1992).

6. See Paul R. Tremblay, *Acting "A Very Moral Type of God": Triage Among Poor Clients*, 67 *FORDHAM L. REV.* 2475, 2509 (1999) (attesting to the benefits clients receive).

7. Susan D. Bennett, *On Long-Haul Lawyering*, 25 *FORDHAM URB. L.J.* 771, 773 (1998).

8. Matthew Diller, *Lawyering for Poor Communities in the Twenty-First Century*, 25 *FORDHAM URB. L.J.* 673, 679 (1998); see also Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 777–78 (noting that the "legal" mechanisms of class action and legislative advocacy have "undeniable power to address the structural injustices that repeated single inequities expose over time").

great movement afoot that would deny wholesale the value of conventional law practice methodologies. Powerful institutions make and implement decisions with real impact on peoples' lives, and lawyers are still generally seen as having advantages in obtaining access to and putting pressure on key decision-makers.

The critiques of the traditional model focus more on the lawyer's status and role than on the practicalities of case work. Seeing law as a "fix-it" profession breeds dependency on the part of clients and arrogance on the part of lawyers. Dependency comes both from the clients' lack of resources and from their assumed lack of expertise. Arrogance results from the lawyers' security in knowing the system and in having the inside information. One consequence of this situation is that lawyers—even well-intentioned ones—tend toward too much enthusiasm for their own ideas, and fail to listen. Ultimately, this leads to replication of social subordination.<sup>9</sup>

There may always be a threat to autonomy in the lawyer-client relationship because of the lawyer's technical expertise, and because she has access to and familiarity with the legal system. Lawyers are trained not only in procedural formalities, but also in the necessary detachment that courts demand.<sup>10</sup> But while this expertise may be an unavoidable barrier to client self-determination in the judicial system, it need not evolve into a particular problem-solving hierarchy. Community activist Ron Chisom, in a critique of activist lawyers, notes that too often lawyers do not understand that legal expertise is only one tool in the struggle for economic justice.<sup>11</sup> "Lawyers think in terms only of what will help or hurt the case, but they do not understand that 'the case' is not the point."<sup>12</sup> An unavoidable, but penetrable, barrier can thus become a permanent roadblock.

---

9. See Richard D. Marsico, *Working for Social Change and Preserving Client Autonomy: Is There a Role for "Facilitative" Lawyering?*, 1 CLINICAL L. REV. 639, 649–50 (1995) (discussing similar conclusions reached by, among others, Anthony Alfieri, Stacy Brustin, Clark Cunningham, Gerald López, and Lucie White).

10. *Id.* at 647–48.

11. William P. Quigley, *Reflections of Community Organizers: Lawyering for Empowerment of Community Organizations*, 21 OHIO N.U. L. REV. 455, 459 (1994).

12. *Id.*

Chisom blames attorneys for this situation.<sup>13</sup> Other activists, both lawyers and laypersons, agree. “Traditional practice hurts poor people” by centering the action in the attorney and isolating clients from each other.<sup>14</sup> Litigation, the default position of traditional practice, does not empower.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, lawyers are likely to leave clients exactly where they were found, except to have increased their dependency.<sup>16</sup>

Poor clients, even client organizations, rarely challenge the superiority of the lawyers offering services, however. The need for services is great and urgent. The paradox is that while it is the struggle for equality that generates the need for lawyers in the first place, in their attempt to meet the need for services, lawyers and clients recreate the clients’ dependency on outsiders.<sup>17</sup> The challenge for poor communities and lawyers in their midst is how to foster autonomy, if autonomy is contingent on outsiders’ willingness or ability to foster it.<sup>18</sup>

It is a challenge that most antipoverty activists insist must be met. In a frequently cited quote, Stephen Wexler observes that “[p]overty will not be stopped by people who are not poor.”<sup>19</sup> “Helping the poor with legal representation [simply] will not work if it does not enable . . . clients to produce and to contribute.”<sup>20</sup> The bulk of the work, as well as the impetus, critics say, must come from the people needing the assistance.

### B. “Collaborative” Responses to Traditional Lawyering

This dilemma has prompted a number of corrective responses. While there are multiple variations on the theme, the fundamental

---

13. *Id.* at 458 (“[L]awyers create dependency.”).

14. Virginia P. Coto, *LUCHA, The Struggle for Life: Legal Services for Battered Immigrant Women*, 53 U. MIAMI L. REV. 749, 753 (1999).

15. See generally William P. Quigley, *The Demise of Law Reform and the Triumph of Legal Aid: Congress and the Legal Services Corporation from the 1960s to the 1990s*, 17 ST. LOUIS U. PUB. L. REV. 241 (1998).

16. See Coto, *supra* note 14, at 753.

17. See Marsico, *supra* note 9, at 646; *infra* notes 22–23.

18. Marsico, *supra* note 9, at 647–48.

19. Stephen Wexler, *Practicing Law for Poor People*, 79 YALE L.J. 1049, 1053 (1970).

20. See Coto, *supra* note 14, at 758; see also Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 780 n.24.

proposition is that lawyers ought to be part of the community they want to serve. They should be looking for collaborative solutions.<sup>21</sup> Some characteristics of a collaborative response might include immersion in the community, the lawyers' reluctance to assume leadership positions, and the recognition that law is politics. Typically, lawyers who espouse collaboration also see legal work as coming out of intense involvement in local issues; it is understood to be only one tactic of a greater rectifying strategy.

While collaborative notions have been configured in different ways,<sup>22</sup> there is basic agreement on the starting premise: the first step is to break away from the position of regnant lawyer.<sup>23</sup> In Gerald López's vision of the non-regnant, or "rebellious," lawyer, the orientation toward advocacy must nurture the "appropriate sensibilities and skills that are 'compatible with a collective fight for social change.'"<sup>24</sup>

Lucie White has broken this down into three "ideal images" of change-oriented lawyering: (1) those in which official channels are assumed to work for all; (2) those characterized by dominant forces imposing systematic exclusion of certain interests from decision-makers' tables; and (3) those in which conditions of subordination force people to suppress their own interests and discount their own power.<sup>25</sup> If official channels appear to be open to all, litigation is the appropriate response. Where exclusion of some is assumed, public "conversation," or public happenings that "work," are in order. When conditions result in acquiescence to the loss of power, all work must

---

21. As used here, "collaborative" means joint planning and decision-making, but with a twist: legal professionals may have to earn the right to be on equal footing.

22. Variations include group representation in the economic development context or the non-profit agency context (e.g., Susan Jones; Susan Bennett); cross-professional collaborations (e.g. Louise Trubek); and community-situated law offices (e.g. Parkdale Legal Services, East Bay Community Law Center). For general descriptions, see Ingrid V. Eagly, *Community Education: Creating a New Vision of Legal Services Practice*, 4 CLINICAL L. REV. 433 (1998); Daniel S. Shah, *Lawyering for Empowerment: Community Development and Social Change*, 6 CLINICAL L. REV. 217, 232 (1999).

23. John O. Calmore, *A Call to Context: The Professional Challenges of Cause Lawyering at the Intersection of Race, Space, and Poverty*, 67 FORDHAM L. REV. 1927, 1936 (1999).

24. *Id.* at 1936 (quoting LÓPEZ, *supra* note 5, at 38).

25. Lucie E. White, *To Learn and Teach: Lessons from Driefontein on Lawyering and Power*, 1988 WIS. L. REV. 699, 764.

focus on the community's reclaiming of power, and lawyers and communities need to engage in legal strategies together.<sup>26</sup>

Community-focused collaboration has political overtones and implications. This is not new to poverty law practice, although, to some extent, political activism in baseline community legal services has been suppressed ever since federal funding of legal services exposed how "systemic representation is political and threatening."<sup>27</sup> But the political underpinnings of legal representation have resurfaced in collaborative models in the community. John Calmore, discussing "cause lawyering" as described by Austin Sarat and Stuart Scheingold, observes that the legal profession both needs and is threatened by such ideologically infused lawyering.<sup>28</sup> The threat from this type of law practice is that it can "destabiliz[e] the dominant understanding of . . . moral neutrality."<sup>29</sup> For many, of course, that is the point.

Politicization, while perhaps not an essential characteristic of collaborative practice from the lawyers' perspective,<sup>30</sup> is often seen by the community as such.<sup>31</sup> This may be because dominant society's—and the lawyers'—"de-politicization of the community client's agenda is a constant threat to the client's autonomy and to its ability to act in stewardship for its community's interest."<sup>32</sup> To the extent that community empowerment rather than access is the primary goal of service, it is generally assumed to have a greater

---

26. *Id.* at 754–64. White's orientation appears to favor the third conceptualization.

27. Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 775.

28. Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1932.

29. *Id.* Cause lawyering is one of many articulations of non-regnant lawyering. It is defined here as "various law-related activities, from rights assertion to legal counseling, that rel[y] on law-related means to achieve social justice for individuals and subordinated or disadvantaged groups." *Id.* at 1928.

30. Susan D. Bennett, *Embracing the Ill-Structured Problem in a Community Economic Development Clinic*, 9 CLINICAL L. REV. 45, 76 (2002) (noting that the lawyer and client, whether individual or group, can view a case as political or not, and strategize accordingly). *But see* Stephen Wizner, *Beyond Skills Training*, 7 CLINICAL L. REV. 327, 331 (2001) (advocating that law teachers profess social, moral and political agendas that inculcate in students a sense of moral responsibility for the redress of injustices).

31. Bennett, *supra* note 30, at 76.

32. *Id.*

likelihood of being realized through mobilization strategies, which are inherently political.<sup>33</sup>

In all collaborative models, whether politically driven or not, “[w]hat is critical is that the expansion or narrowing [of agendas] result from conscious choice.”<sup>34</sup> The bottom line of these critiques and proposals is that “[l]awyers must know how to work *with* the client and community, not just on its behalf.”<sup>35</sup> For some, this has meant placing lawyers in the role of facilitator;<sup>36</sup> others, like Bill Quigley, have advocated representation of groups, where the goal is to join rather than lead;<sup>37</sup> still others, like Louise Trubek, have noted the benefits of professional collaborations in the community context.<sup>38</sup> Many of the collaborative model theorists—such as White, López, and Alfieri—who see politicization as characteristic of the work, blur the distinctions between lawyer and lay person. They also partially define the lawyer’s role by the intensity of their community involvement, i.e., they advocate becoming insiders.<sup>39</sup>

---

33. Tremblay, *supra* note 6, at 2511.

34. Bennett, *supra* note 30, at 76.

35. Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1936; *see also* Marie A. Failing, *Face-ing the Other: An Ethics of Encounter and Solidarity in Legal Services Practice*, 67 *FORDHAM L. REV.* 2071, 2097–98 (1999) (advocating as “dialogic praxis,” “[t]hinking is in service of doing”—this is a version of partnering with clients); Shah, *supra* note 22, at 232 (describing how strategies of client empowerment and shortcomings of individual representation give way to self-empowerment strategies, collaboration, and process-based lawyering); Louise G. Trubek & Jennifer J. Farnham, *Social Justice Collaboratives: Multidisciplinary Practices for People*, 7 *CLINICAL L. REV.* 227 (2000) (describing programs in which lawyers collaborate with other professionals, agencies and clients, and also seek to maintain autonomy while providing essential services, belying the traditional law firm model).

36. *See* Shah, *supra* note 22, at 256–57. Shah sees lawyers as facilitators in a supportive role: “When community driven goals and practices are prioritized, the process of the collaboration with the client produces a realignment of legal and social relationships that strengthens communities.” *Id.* For other articulations of the facilitative role, *see* Ann Southworth, *Business Planning for the Destitute? Lawyers as Facilitators in Civil Rights and Poverty Practice*, 1996 *WIS. L. REV.* 1121; Susan P. Sturm, *From Gladiators to Problem-Solvers: Connecting Conversations About Women, the Academy, and the Legal Profession*, 4 *DUKE J. GENDER L. & POL’Y* 119, 128–44 (1997).

37. *See* Quigley, *supra* note 11.

38. *See* Louise G. Trubek, *Reinvigorating Poverty Law Practice: Sites, Skills and Collaborations*, 25 *FORDHAM URB. L.J.* 801, 807–09 (1998).

39. *See* Marsico, *supra* note 9, at 654.

*C. One Community-Based, Collaborative Experiment:  
The Community Justice Clinic*

The Community Justice and Legal Assistance Clinic (CJLA), created two years ago at Roger Williams University School of Law, represents an alternative, non-regnant response to the legal and related needs of the poor. CJLA operates more or less on the basis of partnerships with local service provider organizations. The foundational idea was that by connecting with the people who are connected to the poor, the clinic lawyers would be in a prime position to learn what the client's needs are, and be in a place where these needs could best be met, not by lawyers alone, but more holistically in cooperation with other service providers. The clinic is, in current terminology, community-based. It also strives to be collaborative.

In its short lifetime, CJLA has entered into three partnerships.<sup>40</sup> The partnering organizations are different in structure, staffing, administration and funding, but they have several basic features in common. Each has a highly dedicated staff, with backgrounds in social work, family services, and community building. All are working with populations that are connected in some way to state oversight. Their client populations, whether working or not, are living in poverty.

CJLA's work with Casey Family Services, the clinic's first partnership site, is illustrative of its community concentration.<sup>41</sup> Casey has two components: direct services and a neighborhood center.<sup>42</sup> Sharing space with the two family services programs is Making Connections, a grassroots organization with solid ties to the community and a strong outreach component. Direct Services, Casey's original focus, includes comprehensive services in adoption, post-adoption, foster care, and family support. The professional

---

40. The partnerships are with Casey Family Services ("Casey"), the John Hope Settlement House, and the Transitional Services Division of the Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institution.

41. See Casey Family Services, In Your Area—Rhode Island, [http://www.caseyfamily.org/area\\_rhode\\_island.html](http://www.caseyfamily.org/area_rhode_island.html) (last visited Feb. 1, 2006). I focus here primarily on Casey, because that was our first partnership, but much of what I say is relevant to other partnerships as well.

42. *Id.*

staff's work in these areas often generates legal work for the clinic in family court and, occasionally, in criminal court.

The Family Resource Center began operating very recently with particular attention to the needs of the working poor, a group constituting the largest portion of the urban population in the surrounding area. The Family Resource Center engages in organizational work and asset building with individuals and families. As with Casey's direct services branch, the philosophy of the Family Resource Center is on building safety, trust, and strong support systems. Some of the programs of the Family Resource Center include a School to Career program for youths, an structured savings account program for women<sup>43</sup> VITA low-income tax assistance<sup>44</sup> and a Youth Opportunity Initiative for youths aging out of foster care.<sup>45</sup>

Even before the Family Resource Center opened and the asset-building programs began, Casey anticipated certain barriers to success. Most families coming through its doors were likely to lack experience with banks, contracts, detailed record keeping, and financial planning. It was also predictable that family stresses, such as domestic violence, pregnancy, and children's behavioral issues, would at times surface. Other possible barriers might result from financial crises occasioned by the unexpected loss of a job, eviction, death or serious illness in the family, or involvement with the criminal justice system.

Such difficulties create a need for lawyers. The potential quandaries that could benefit from legal assistance include child support issues, consumer problems, traffic fines, neglect allegations, paternity petitions, and landlord-tenant disputes. Although the Casey staff is accustomed to working with other providers and, to some extent, with lawyers, Casey, like all of our partnership sites, has no staff attorneys.<sup>46</sup> When the partnerships began, therefore, it was

---

43. These savings accounts take the form of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), in which matching funds are available to participant investors.

44. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA) is a nationwide program of the Internal Revenue Service that serves low-income tax filers.

45. Fuller descriptions are available on the Casey web site. Casey Family Services, *supra* note 41.

46. Casey's Division Director, James Gannaway, has a law degree and is a member of the Rhode Island bar. While this enables him to engage in legal work for Casey's clients, he does so

expected that student-lawyers would be on site to do intakes and handle some of these legal needs.

CJLA students have also engaged in “project work”; that is, the student attorneys have responded to requests for community education or in-service staff workshops at Casey and at other sites. They have organized panels and put together pamphlets, made a video on child support issues, and collaborated on several other law-school supported programs, including a low-income tax assistance program, Street Law and a racial justice initiative.<sup>47</sup> These projects vary from highly collaborative to fairly simple group task allocation.

Like other similarly situated law clinics, the more time that student lawyers spend in these community settings, the more unsettled CJLA’s role becomes. Questions, not clearly articulated yet, relate to both our traditional lawyering and to our more collaborative, non-litigation approaches to community-based anti-poverty work. We find ourselves caught in a conflict between stressing empowerment and providing services, frustrated by the dearth of options and uncomfortable with our status as outsider experts. Something has been missing in the bridging paradigm, and the assumptions upon which bridges are built are eroding.

#### *D. Problems with Collaborative Lawyering*

It has not taken long for community activists—lawyers in particular—to see a huge dilemma in community-based practice. Community lawyers operate in neighborhoods where legal resources are scarce and where a large percentage of the population is likely to be involved in family, criminal, or housing court. At the same time, long-term relief for these neighborhoods will not be achieved without systemic change, initiated by and for the community. Consequently, poverty law practitioners are constantly faced with a conflict of “whether to stress power or service.”<sup>48</sup>

---

only on a very limited basis, and does not view law practice as a significant component of his work.

47. Street Law is an educational services program that engages law students and lawyers in the teaching of law-related topics to high school students and other laypersons. For more information, see <http://www.streetlaw.org>.

48. Tremblay, *supra* note 6, at 2509; *see also* Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 775 (noting that

Any inclination toward collaboration immediately comes up against the “undeniable externals” that pressure poverty lawyers into practicing law “by the case.”<sup>49</sup> Even the strongest proponents of more collaborative approaches to poverty law recognize this. “The regnant mode of lawyering,” notes John Calmore, “is cultivated under the pressing circumstances of practice.”<sup>50</sup> The “circumstances of practice” are direct products of socialization; characteristically, they include an emphasis on and privileging of litigation, a preference for formalities, problem-solving hierarchies with lawyers at the top, and a belief in *lawyers’* righteousness.<sup>51</sup> The choice to abandon case-by-case representation for larger-scale, longer-term strategies is risky. Community mobilization, as Paul Tremblay has observed, has an inherent disadvantage in that “it is enormously speculative.”<sup>52</sup>

Not all lawyers want to undertake the simmering, often slow-moving collaborative process, nor is every attorney in a position to do so.<sup>53</sup> Further, even when they want to be collaborative, lawyers and other professionals may be impeded by codes of conduct that dictate what can and cannot be discussed, or what decisions can and cannot be delegated.<sup>54</sup>

It is not only the lawyers who are conflicted about whether to advocate for the short-term efficiencies of individual cases or, alternatively, for strategies toward social change that may increase community involvement, but at the cost of more time and less certainty. Economically stressed communities are already stretched too thin. As Susan Bennett so aptly puts it: “For anyone with survival as a day job, doing the night meetings and the weekend work of ‘civil society’ is asking more than most of us usually ask of ourselves.”<sup>55</sup>

---

Legal Services offices have had “to choose between meeting the emergency need and building for the long term”); Marsico, *supra* note 9, at 639 (“Lawyers wishing to do social change work are placed in the difficult position of trying to provide the legal representation their clients seek while at the same time not undermining their clients’ autonomy.”).

49. Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 774.

50. Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1935.

51. *Id.* at 1934–35.

52. Tremblay, *supra* note 6, at 2512.

53. Marsico, *supra* note 9, at 658. Marsico suggests “facilitative lawyer[ing]” as an alternative. *Id.* at 659. In Marsico’s words, facilitative lawyering “is more like a corporate counsel, performing important, supportive tasks, but leaving the client intact.” *Id.*

54. See Trubek, *supra* note 38, at 808.

55. Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 778–79; see also Shah, *supra* note 22, at 253 n.112 (citing

Nor is it clear that attempts to be more collaborative actually result in more equitable distribution of decision-making power. Poor people's organizations often lack resources; consequently, despite everyone's best efforts, they can become dependent on elite assets and technical assistance, leading to disempowerment.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps an even greater hurdle to true collaboration lies in the sheer magnitude of the struggle. "[O]ppressions are systematically reproduced in major economic, political, and cultural institutions."<sup>57</sup> By and large, our legal system protects existing property rights and status, and was developed to preserve the wealth of the wealthy.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, those who already have the most riches also have the most access.<sup>59</sup> Poverty-class populations are not really meant to have the same access, as the most perfunctory view of the courts makes clear—a system that renders assistance one band-aid at a time is not looking for prevention or cure. The reality is that "[l]egal services cannot end poverty; nor are the courts going to redistribute wealth."<sup>60</sup> Exclusion of the poor is the intended, if unacknowledged, outcome of the legal system.

It follows that the procedural benefits of access to lawyers and courts are no assurance that justice will ensue. This is often recognized in the litigation context. Although in some cases lawyers do attempt to use legal procedures as a way to push for sweeping change promoting equality or justice, this is not the norm of everyday labor in the family, criminal and housing courts. Litigation usually does not further long-term goals. "One of the weaknesses of litigation," says William Quigley, "is the inherent limitation of the

---

Ayuda as an example of a proposed systemic solution falling on ears of already weary citizens).

56. Shah, *supra* note 22, at 249.

57. See Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1939 (quoting Iris Marion Young, *Five Faces of Oppression*, reprinted in POWER, PRIVILEGE AND LAW: A CIVIL RIGHTS READER 66 (Leslie Bender & Daan Braveman eds., 1995)).

58. See Jane E. Schukoske, *Teaching Law Reform in the 1990s*, 3 HASTINGS WOMEN'S L.J. 177, 186 n.38 (1992); see also Shah, *supra* note 22, at 256 ("Legal relationships have been designed to produce the formal social relationships that bind and protect elite society. . . .").

59. This is true even if access is defined narrowly in terms of ability to retain lawyers. Gary Blasi points out that, looked at in these terms, the "persons" with the greatest access are not actual persons at all, but artificial ones (i.e., corporations). Gary Blasi, *How Much Access? How Much Justice?*, 73 FORDHAM L. REV. 865, 879 (2004).

60. Tremblay, *supra* note 6, at 2513 n.155 (quoting Alan W. Houseman, *Political Lessons: Legal Services for the Poor—A Commentary*, 83 GEO. L.J. 1669, 1705 (1995)).

judicial system when called upon to produce social reform.”<sup>61</sup> Nor is it only judges who back away from aggressive transformation; the advocates themselves also may not be invested in substantive justice issues.<sup>62</sup> In the end, even major law reform successes, it seems, do not play out in real life.<sup>63</sup>

This state of affairs is not limited to litigation, but is true in the transactional context as well. In the best of circumstances, the poor may not be in a position to claim power. “I am constantly sobered by the realization that my clients have no legal hooks,” says Susan Bennett of her low-income neighborhood association clients.<sup>64</sup> She reports that even though “examples abound of processes which seem to invite participation,” ultimately those processes either “deliberately or mindlessly” eliminate any real opportunity for clients to affect outcomes.<sup>65</sup> Too frequently, poverty creates an optionless world.<sup>66</sup>

Poverty also makes people vulnerable. Often, in fact, the poor receive less than nothing from the legal system. They are constantly at risk of being noticed, and thereby penalized. For many people living in poverty—already under the watchful eye of the state because they are receiving public assistance, are on parole or probation, have responsibilities under a child support order, live in Section 8 housing, have been identified by social services as providing questionable care to their children, have acquired one too many parking tickets, or are in the country on a temporary visa—the court system represents a threat to a fragile balance of continuity and survival. Those seeking the “assistance” of the state have little better chance of forward movement. Many who seek help with mental

---

61. Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 468.

62. See Blasi, *supra* note 59, at 876–88 (discussing lawyers’ views toward procedural rights *vis-à-vis* their views toward the underlying issues of equality and justice).

63. See Schukoske, *supra* note 58, at 189; see also Lucie E. White, *Facing South: Lawyering for Poor Communities in the Twenty-First Century*, 25 *FORDHAM URB. L.J.* 813, 827 (1998) (positing that “moments of community” experienced at the local level may have no impact at all, particularly on a global scale).

64. Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 788.

65. Susan D. Bennett, *Little Engines that Could: Community Clients, Their Lawyers, and Training in the Arts of Democracy*, 2002 *WIS. L. REV.* 469, 470. Bennett goes on to say that she is troubled when her presence as a lawyer for a neighborhood-based group is “paraded as proof of access to a process of participation, when, in fact, that access has been foreclosed from the beginning.” *Id.*

66. See Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1938.

illness, children's behavioral issues, domestic violence, or other problems put themselves at risk of being exposed or misidentified as offenders themselves; an already bad situation can suddenly take a turn for the worse.

The picture does not inspire optimism. In an "exploding universe of need,"<sup>67</sup> advocates may have to confront the impossibility of meeting that need. Lawyers may have to concede that a "right solution," or even an acceptable one, is not likely to be found in the existing system. More sobering, lawyers advocating on behalf of poor people in the courts may find that they are there primarily to protect them against additional abuses, or to shift systemic abuse from one affected population to another.<sup>68</sup> In day-to-day legal matters, a client's choice may be limited to selecting the least drastic of available penalties. The lawyer's job in this scenario is simply to prevent more harm or greater disaster from befalling that individual. In such a world, the notion of collaboration can seem strangely out of place.

Client concerns must be viewed, therefore, not just as "personal troubles," but as "antagonisms," as public issues of social structure.<sup>69</sup> Among the identifiable forms of structural oppression are "exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence."<sup>70</sup> As a whole, these various forms of oppression "constitute the packaged opportunity-denying circumstances that must be redressed."<sup>71</sup>

As John Calmore describes it, social problems are demographically linked to form a cage.<sup>72</sup> The hardships of poverty are concentrated by racial group, so that the experience of poverty, within racially segregated, socially isolated, and geographically

---

67. Lucie White, *Specially Tailored Legal Services for Low-Income Persons in the Age of Wealth Inequality: Pragmatism or Capitulation?*, 67 *FORDHAM L. REV.* 2573, 2578 (1999).

68. See Tremblay, *supra* note 6, at 2513 n.158 (noting that courts, at best, oversee "horizontal or intraclass transfer of resources without altering class differences" (quoting Richard L. Abel, *Law Without Politics: Legal Aid Under Advanced Capitalism*, 32 *UCLA L. REV.* 474, 521–22 (1985))).

69. Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1937.

70. *Id.*

71. *Id.* at 1937–38.

72. *Id.* at 1938–39.

constrained places, is more intense.<sup>73</sup> Civil institutions and the social order create “harsh and interlocking” systems,<sup>74</sup> from which other consequences flow. Perhaps most significantly, researchers have documented the co-option of the oppressed. In this way, law becomes ““a major vehicle for the maintenance of existing social and power relations by the consent or acquiescence of the lower and middle classes.””<sup>75</sup>

Community-based lawyering does have the benefit of forcing attorneys to see the public issue aspect of their clients’ circumstances.<sup>76</sup> In fact, the ideal situation for establishing client-attorney collaborations may well be, as Gerald López has suggested, that in which the lawyer lives in the community, as a member of the community.<sup>77</sup> This allows the lawyer to get a better “feel” for the community’s issues and its goals.<sup>78</sup>

Most lawyers are not going to move into poor neighborhoods, however.<sup>79</sup> Established residency in a community, moreover, will not magically transform lawyers from outsiders to community insiders. Looking at the big picture, it is clear that however intent they are on achieving integrative, client-centered collaboration, most lawyers will not blend; even the best intentioned have difficulty fitting in.<sup>80</sup> To be fair, in all likelihood, lawyers do not “get it” because they cannot.

---

73. *Id.* at 1943.

74. *Id.*

75. *Id.* at 1933 (quoting *THE POLITICS OF LAW: A PROGRESSIVE CRITIQUE* 5 (David Kairys ed., 1st ed. 1982)).

76. *Id.* at 1937.

77. LÓPEZ, *supra* note 5, at 31–37.

78. *Id.* López uses the experiences of three fictional lawyers working with local communities to develop his points. One of the lawyers, Sophie, lives in the community, and has the greatest success. Another, Amos, lost his original insiderness by moving away for a number of years.

79. At the May, 2005, Clinical Law Teaching Conference, hosted by the Association of American Law Schools, I was part of a working group made up entirely of professional educators working in community-based settings and/or in collaborative, interdisciplinary relationships. A common base of experience was teaching one or more classes based on Gerald López’s hypothetical community practice situations, *see supra* note 78. Several law teachers in our group reported almost identical student reactions to López’s fictional Sophie taking up residence in the community where many of her poverty clients resided. Having somehow missed this crucial point, these students asked incredulously, “She lives there?”

80. “Lawyers have killed off more groups by helping them than ever would have died if the lawyers had never showed up,” says activist Ron Chisom. Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 457.

Many—probably most—come into client communities from wholly different experiential places economically, geographically, educationally, racially, and in multiple other ways. To the extent that life experience separates outsiders from insiders in the community, becoming a true insider is impossible for many lawyers. Regardless of their goals, beliefs, and orientations, many allies of the poor are “joined on the side of oppression.”<sup>81</sup> Paradoxically, it may be their connection to sources of oppression that makes these lawyers valuable to the client communities they aim to serve or be part of.

## II. WHAT IS MISSING IN ACCESS THEORIES

### *A. Access Is a Two-Way Street*

Poverty lawyers face a situation of too many cases and too little time. Lawyers and clients operate in a system in which the class-based structure insures that there are no real solutions. Since the lawyers are, by and large, members of the protected class, what power they have is assumed to flow from their connections to that class. They are thus system insiders and community outsiders.

John Calmore asks, given the current conditions of urban poverty, “what access to the mainstream ‘opportunity structure’ means, in practical terms.”<sup>82</sup> As if in response, Lucie White asks whether we would be “better off endorsing the idea that the social needs of disfranchised groups should be addressed *sui generis*, in ways that reflect *their own* experiences of need, their embedded historical and cultural realities, the societal power landscapes from their perspectives, their capacities, and their normative aspirations,” than following our inclinations to flex our own power muscles.<sup>83</sup> Calmore and White’s questions suggest one answer, that access can work in two directions. Rather than pulling clients to the doors of powerful

---

81. Failing, *supra* note 35, at 2100.

82. Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1947 (quoting George C. Galster, *Polarization, Place, and Race*, in *RACE, POVERTY, AND AMERICAN CITIES* 186, 215 (John Charles Boger & Judith Welch Wegner eds., 1996)).

83. White, *supra* note 67, at 2578. Communities may acquire unexpected advantages from this perspective. See Shah, *supra* note 22, at 252–53 (identifying the Ayuda project as an example of how educating impoverished communities about the vulnerability of the powerful can head off acceptance of exploitation).

institutions, we might instead ask how to encourage—perhaps seduce—the privileged to seek access to the community. The reason for this is, first, simple consciousness-raising. If one sees, one can know. There are no guarantees, of course, but exposure increases the chances of enlightenment.

When a community is approached in this way, the lawyers do not enter as residents. They do not enter as collaborators either, although collaboration may be a consequence for which to hope. They come, rather, as guests. Although their outsider status will likely persist, lawyers will be welcomed if they come in saying “I, too, have something to gain.”<sup>84</sup>

### *B. The Goal: Relationship Building*

The essence of two-way access is the relationship between lawyers and the community. While this may be implicit in collaborative lawyering, it has not been explicit, and the nature of the relationship has not been well defined. Thus, establishing and nurturing a relationship must be a primary goal. As in any relationship, that between the lawyer and the community requires an ethic of care, some level of commitment, recognition of the evolving nature of attachments, and a practicable approach to communication. Each of these merits examination and definition.

Elements of the ethic of care include deliberate connection, empathy, and responsiveness to needs.<sup>85</sup> This is a perspective that can be consistent with, but differs from, a “justice perspective.”<sup>86</sup> It begins, quite simply, with people meeting each other, with listening, and with seeking the empathic connection.<sup>87</sup> It goes beyond active listening, however, because the connection is not only about personal troubles, but also about public issues. Because individual clients’ “problem trees”<sup>88</sup> are part of flawed social structures, where violence,

---

84. Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 463 (quoting activist Barbara Major).

85. *See* Failinger, *supra* note 35, at 2090–91.

86. *See id.* at 2127.

87. *See* Bennett, *supra* note 30, at 77 (“Meeting the clients is often a powerful antidote to assumptions about the intrinsic helplessness of poor people in poor communities.”).

88. This term was coined by the first class of students in the Community Justice Clinic. It was their way of describing how each case they had taken on for the purpose of providing a

powerlessness and marginalization are localized and intrinsic, community residents' substantive goals as they relate to notions of justice expanding beyond mere procedural access must be part of the conversation.<sup>89</sup>

The importance of this relationship cannot be overstated. For social action groups, inattention to relationship-building at the inception can spell failure for developing organization and leadership later on.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the ongoing exchange between the client population and the lawyer has implications for attorney accountability.<sup>91</sup> Without the understanding of potential personal impact, and without recognition of one's responsibility as part of a union, neither lawyers nor community residents can hope for sustainability. This seems simple enough, but, as Ron Chisom points out, "[m]ost lawyers . . . have a low degree of tolerance with people problems, and will walk away from the effort of community building" with residents.<sup>92</sup>

Commitment is not generally part of an attorney's lexicon, but commitment is essential in this context. "[S]tories of relationship occur over time. . . .; they do not occur in a moment."<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, theories of lawyers' accountability stress a process—even if an unconscious one—of mutual evolution.<sup>94</sup> Interactions over time—the relationship's history—give meaning to the work for all involved.<sup>95</sup> As community activist Barbara Major says, it is about "becoming a part of that human family."<sup>96</sup> Community-based practice, in other words, is not about going to work *in* a community; rather, "lawyers have to learn how, with all of their skills, to journey *with* the

---

client with a particular type of service—obtaining benefits, applying for a name change, defending against an allegation of unpaid support, or enforcing an open adoption agreement—seemed to grow from a single legal issue to a vast array of related, but frequently not legal, problems that needed attention.

89. See Blasi, *supra* note 59, at 922.

90. See Bennett, *supra* note 65, at 499.

91. *Id.* at 495 (discussing William Simon's work).

92. Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 458. As Susan Bennett reflects, "[t]he notion of 'clients for life' is sobering." Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 774.

93. Failing, *supra* note 35, at 2072 (emphasis omitted).

94. See Bennett, *supra* note 65, at 495.

95. See Failing, *supra* note 35, at 2072.

96. Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 463.

community.”<sup>97</sup> The skill and art of the community practitioner is, therefore, that of “long-haul lawyering.”<sup>98</sup>

### *C. Ingredients: Place, Socialization, and Social Capital*

#### 1. Place

To achieve two-way access, there must first be a sense of place. The social order of law, courts and political process is only one side of the bridge; on the other is “community,” vaguely defined and often only vaguely understood. But community, Calmore reminds us, is not a remote abstraction. While it may be “the site of material deprivation and relations that are formed to cope with oppressive circumstances,” it is also a “homeplace.”<sup>99</sup> In the nation’s poorest neighborhoods in particular, “place and identity are tied together and bonded by culture.”<sup>100</sup> For that reason, Calmore advises, “non-regnant cause lawyering” must be physically and emotionally grounded in poor communities.<sup>101</sup> According to Susan Bennett, lawyers, in fact, “need[] to be community-based in order to be collaborative.”<sup>102</sup> “Presence,” she says, “a moral and geographical presence, is an imperative.”<sup>103</sup>

Community belongs to those who reside there. Therefore, “presence” has, at least in the beginning, more of a symbolic meaning than any measurable impact. Those who live outside the community, however great their expertise and however pure their intentions, need the support of residents to put their skills to use. Thus, a grounding in community space, with increasing familiarity over time, is essential to a community-centered approach. Calmore offers this advice to outsiders who want to help: “Search for invitation, opportunity, and

---

97. *Id.* at 462 (emphasis added) (quoting activist Barbara Major).

98. *See generally* Conference on the Delivery of Legal Services to Low-income Persons: Professional and Ethical Issues, 67 *FORDHAM L. REV.* (SPECIAL ISSUE) 1713 (1999).

99. Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1937.

100. *Id.* at 1948; *see also* Bennett, *supra* note 65, at 471 (“When we talk about community groups, whether sentimentally or historically or practically, we are talking, first, about groups rooted in neighborhoods bounded by the shared experience of place.”).

101. *See* Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1936–37.

102. Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 773.

103. *Id.*

connection.”<sup>104</sup> Enter with an open mind, and be prepared to learn as you go.<sup>105</sup> While providing needed assistance, recognize not only the limits of what conventional lawyering can do, but also the ultimate goal of reclamation of community space by, as well as for, the community.<sup>106</sup>

## 2. Socialization

Within any environment, socialization—the process by which knowledge and understanding is absorbed—occurs. If one grows up on farm, she is more apt than her urban peers to be comfortable interfacing with the land, weather, and domestic animals. Someone born into a restaurant-owning family learns about food, the mixture of ingredients, and cooking temperatures. Raised on the water, a person is more likely to be able to read the tides or the clouds. It is the same with storytelling, singing, praying, swinging a bat, changing a tire or changing a diaper. And the same is true with money: If you live among the rich and powerful, you will absorb their ways; if you live among those who have nothing, you learn how to survive.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz tells us that “culture” is a context, an interworked system of signs.<sup>107</sup> In effect, we learn by osmosis. Recently, the New York Times, in a series on *Class in America*, reported that “[p]arents with money, education and connections cultivate in their children the habits that meritocracy rewards.”<sup>108</sup> The converse, presumably, is also true. In communities characterized by isolation, lack of political participation, and poverty, residents do not absorb the norms and practices that are characteristic of wealthy society. The experience of material deprivation, too, however, is part

---

104. Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1956.

105. *See id.*

106. *See id.* at 1950.

107. Andrea M. Seielstad, *Unwritten Laws and Customs, Local Legal Cultures, and Clinical Legal Education*, 6 CLINICAL L. REV. 127, 136 n.19 (1999).

108. *See* Janny Scott & David Leonhardt, *Class in America: Shadowy Lines that Still Divide*, N.Y. TIMES, May 15, 2005, at A16. What follows is that “[w]hen their children then succeed, their success is seen as earned.” *Id.* The authors quote Eric Wanner, president of the Russell Sage Foundation, a New York City based social science research group that conducted studies on the subject, as saying that the former system of inherited privilege is being replaced by these “new ways of transmitting advantage[s].” *Id.*; *see also* Jane Harris Aiken, *Striving to Teach “Justice, Fairness, and Morality,”* 4 CLINICAL L. REV. 1, 17 (1997).

of the culture-making phenomenon. Moreover, commonalities of experience as racial and ethnic minorities, as poverty survivors, or as marginalized subgroups provide the coherence that helps define culture.<sup>109</sup> Whatever the situation, behaviors deemed problematic or socially desirable are not necessarily manifestations of cultural traits or cultural aberrations, but of circumstances.<sup>110</sup>

Law itself is culture. Law school is a socialization process, albeit one that is often a continuation of earlier experience. It is a setting that provides specialized knowledge and training, as well as experiential opportunities. In this environment, social codes are absorbed. The existence of a legal culture means that the profession has a shared mental model of what the institution of justice looks like.<sup>111</sup>

Regnant lawyering is tied directly to this socialization process. As a consequence of socialization, most law practice is steeped in formalities, and most lawyers are positioned in the role of primary problem solver. Lawyers, even in group settings and law firms, tend to work independently, and not often with connection to other structural networks or institutions.<sup>112</sup> This socialization is not, for the most part, involuntary; lawyers generally want to be part of the system. By and large, they believe in it.<sup>113</sup>

A change in circumstances can bring about a change in culture, however. Moreover, from all environments come important knowledge and useful skills. In a shared environment, even one that is artificially created, people can learn from each other.

### 3. Social Capital

A third ingredient in developing two-way access is social capital. Social capital is shorthand for the idea that within the community are

---

109. See White, *supra* note 63, at 825.

110. See Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1952. The process of labeling the behavior is also part of the cultural transmission.

111. Seielstad, *supra* note 107, at 136 n.21; see also Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 459 (“Lawyers, particularly white lawyers, are trained to understand and be comfortable with the system even when they criticize it.”).

112. See Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1934.

113. See Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 475.

“stocks” of social trust, communication and relationship networks, and operating norms that people can draw upon to solve problems.

In the post-Reagan era, poverty law clients are often described as oppressed, silenced, and disempowered.<sup>114</sup> As a consequence, lawyers too frequently overlook strengths in the community.<sup>115</sup> But “[t]he essence of community lawyering is localism,” and this means relying on the communities’ assets.<sup>116</sup> Whatever wisdom or knowledge lawyers carry into the community “does not outweigh the wisdom and knowledge of the community, about itself, especially.”<sup>117</sup> Lawyers ignore these assets at risk of doing harm to the causes they espouse. While it does no good to romanticize clients, “there is something undeniably compelling about seeing first-hand the evidence that gives the lie to the causal story that inner city poverty arises from a complete absence of human capital.”<sup>118</sup>

Several studies comparing the efficacy of lawyers with that of non-lawyers demonstrate the measurable value of life experience, contacts, informal communication strategies, and skills, not only with respect to clients’ subjective satisfaction, but in obtaining concrete results.<sup>119</sup> Studies also show that, in terms of progress, the physical neighborhood is less significant than the intangible social networks available within any given neighborhood.<sup>120</sup> According to Calmore, “social capital” both provides the glue within a community and serves a social bridging function.<sup>121</sup> The “glue” element supports residents and helps them cope; the “bridging” element helps residents get ahead and obtain access to those with clout.<sup>122</sup> In their quest to

---

114. See Failinger, *supra* note 35, at 2072.

115. Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 462 (noting that lawyers do not know enough about the power of the community) (quoting activist Barbara Major).

116. See Diller, *supra* note 8, at 678.

117. Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 462 (quoting activist Barbara Major). Moreover, it is helpful for client populations to see the vulnerability of the powerful. Such realizations can help ward off the risk of exploitation. See, e.g., Shah, *supra* note 22, at 253.

118. Bennett, *supra* note 30, at 78.

119. See Blasi, *supra* note 59, at 887–89 (discussing HERBERT M. KRITZER, *LEGAL ADVOCACY: LAWYERS AND NON-LAWYERS AT WORK* (1998), and Richard Moorhead et al., *Contesting Professionalism: Legal Aid and Non-lawyers in England and Wales*, 37 *LAW & SOC’Y REV.* 765 (2003)).

120. See Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1954.

121. *Id.* at 1953.

122. *Id.*

help communities, lawyers tend to seize on the possibilities that “bridge” capital provides; however, lawyers are well advised to also value the “glue” capital, which is essential to both making the bridge capital work and, equally importantly, to preserving the homeplace.<sup>123</sup>

#### *D. Methodology: Creating Thirdspace Hospitality Zones*

To maximize opportunities for cross socialization and social capital utilization, there must be a place where relationships can develop. While presence in the community is necessary, locating a particular space requires some consideration. One possibility is to create a temporary gathering place, a hospitality zone, to capture or encourage “thirdspace.” Thirdspace, as used here, is a fluid conceptualization of integrative space.<sup>124</sup> It begins with community homespace, but allows for the presence of and contribution from allies in the struggle to redefine political reality and reclaim identity rights.<sup>125</sup>

Although thirdspace exists without clearly delineated geographical or physical boundaries, interactions must take place within a framework of time and space. Thus, the idea of a temporary hospitality zone is to bracket a space within the community homespace where circles of culture can overlap, at least for a time. Rather than providing access to lawyers by bringing people out of their home community, this prototype creates a safe space inside the community. The bracketed space is not lawyer space, nor, conceptually, are outsiders given “ownership” of the space by virtue of its being dedicated to their purposes or use. Rather, the space is more like receptive or orienting space. Because hospitality zones are inside the geographical bounds of a neighborhood, the community is better protected from outsider domination. At the same time, outsider guests obtain the benefits of access to community life.

---

123. *Id.* at 1953–54.

124. *Id.* at 1949.

125. *Id.* at 1949–51. Calmore discusses the term as developed by, among others, bell hooks and Edward Soja.

Such bracketed community-centered spaces are consistent with notions of contextual law practice. As Peter Margulies has suggested, they allow lawyers to work with factors, interacting in contingent and unpredictable ways, rather than with problem-solving categories.<sup>126</sup> Hospitality space, by reducing some of the awkwardness associated with lawyers and laypersons entering each other's provinces, means greater opportunity to focus on "changing the processes of everyday life as lived by those within the client community."<sup>127</sup> It also creates a safe environment in which lawyers can begin to unbundle their own comfort (or lack thereof) in confronting power issues.<sup>128</sup> Thus, and perhaps most importantly, it encourages adoption of the indeterminate "thirdspace" mentality that helps lawyers "avoid harming the client community with [their] friendly fire."<sup>129</sup>

#### *E. An Experiment in Hospitality Space and Two-Way Access*

Partnership relationships, such as those developed by the CJLA, provide one means by which notions of hospitality space and two-way access might be tested. The CJLA's partnerships provide lawyers with opportunities to network with service providers, and, in the space made available by the service providers, to interact with community residents. In the first eighteen months of operation, for example, student attorneys were invited to various gatherings that included staff meetings, lay-person board or council meetings, family forums, educational workshops, and resource fairs. The lawyers' presence at these gatherings served the articulated purposes of providing information about legal services, identifying possible clients, and learning about the communities and their needs. The learning and service opportunities were greater than anticipated,

---

126. Peter Margulies, *Multiple Communities or Monolithic Clients: Positional Conflicts of Interest and the Mission of the Legal Services Lawyer*, 67 *FORDHAM L. REV.* 2339, 2349 (1999). Margulies notes that in order for such a concept to be operational, there must be appropriate spaces for people to organize and speak.

127. See Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1939. There is some precedent for this. A Settlement House project, for example, described by Susan Bennett, began with "some loosely connected participants, and 'grew' its problem out of their developing relationship." Bennett, *supra* note 65, at 499.

128. Quigley, *supra* note 11, at 475.

129. Calmore, *supra* note 23, at 1950.

however, and, with increased awareness, could have expanded considerably. A look at the Casey partnership illustrates how such expansion might occur.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is one of a small group of foundations that, in the 1990s, funded comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) whose purpose was to revitalize poor neighborhoods through well-financed strategies to generate community development, increase employment, stabilize families and achieve other, related goals. While sometimes faulted for the “inherent tension in a research design that imposes participatory democracy from the top down,”<sup>130</sup> the CCIs nevertheless were recognized as a much-needed boost in a time of acutely decreased funding and compromised legal and social services.<sup>131</sup>

In Rhode Island, the criticisms of top-down strategies and “outsiderness” were taken seriously, and, in 2002, the Casey Family Services Center relocated from suburban Warwick to the urban Washington Park neighborhood in a southern sector of Providence. The explicit purpose of the move was to make greater connections with Casey’s client base and to eliminate some of the distancing factors that prevented families in financial need from participating in planning and problem solving strategies meant to benefit them. The move was consistent with Casey’s direct services philosophy of holistic service and lifetime commitment, and, simultaneously, its goal of aiding clients in self-determination and self-sufficiency.<sup>132</sup>

When Casey Family Services moved to Washington Park, the staff and management adopted as their first rule “do no harm.”<sup>133</sup> The Foundation provided the support to renovate an old buckle factory, and in the process of design, construction, and staffing, Casey hired locally for all needs, both blue and white collar. As the abandoned factory underwent renovation, a team of four family service workers rented space in a nearby building. For months before the full

---

130. Bennett, *supra* note 65, at 489.

131. *See id.* at 487–90.

132. *See generally* The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Initiatives & Projects, [http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/learn\\_more.html](http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/learn_more.html) (last visited Feb. 2, 2006).

133. *See* Douglas W. Nelson, *Welfare Reform: The Next Generation*, ADVOCASEY, Summer 2002, at 2, 2 (explaining the philosophy of community programs, by the President of the Annie E. Casey Foundation).

complement of service providers came on site, this small troupe made personal visits to neighborhood homes and businesses to introduce themselves. They also met with faith ministries and neighborhood organizations. Even after the center officially opened, the staff basically asked questions and listened for the first two years. During this time, Casey continued to provide direct services to clients, engaged in normal professional development services, and opened the facility to neighborhood use.

Lawyers first entered the picture in 2003. For three months, there were talks and casual interactions. In January, 2004, a pilot program with students was launched, through which students conducted a limited number of case intakes and were involved in a staff in-service presentation and an on-site housing fair. The relationship developed, in other words, one step at a time. Within a year, the partnership had some measurable outcomes: numbers of intakes, short service clients, and court proceedings could be counted; cooperative efforts involving staff and students could be identified; and a pilot tax assistance program involving forty-two volunteer students, six Casey staff members, about the same number of outside resource providers, and more than fifty residents was established.

In many ways, however, it was the intangibles that provided the greatest possibilities for making a difference in the community. Students reflecting on their experiences did not highlight the “practical experience” of client representation or case successes. Nor did they find great meaning in the numbers of clients served or reached through community education workshops. Although they felt these experiences were valuable, they often found more meaning in unexpected encounters. At one level, such encounters were with the professionals they met at the partnership sites. For example, students were impressed by the Division Director’s interest in their work, and they learned a great deal by collaborating with one of Casey’s social workers on a simulation exercise for class. Conferences with non-lawyer professionals focusing on client goals shaped students’ perspectives on practice. Occasional encounters at the court house or other off-site locations became memorable learning opportunities.

At another, perhaps more intense, level, student attorneys valued the opportunities to see clients and community members in comfortable settings. They had casual conversations with clients who

were working at Casey, and joined in interactions between clients and members of the Casey staff with whom the clients had developed long-term relationships. They met clients' families, shared meals, and asked and answered questions. In these ways, the students unconsciously imitated the social workers and other service providers at Casey who have created, tentatively at first, a presence in a neighborhood with economic needs. The student lawyers absorbed important lessons: be there, listen, share stories, and make it safe.

In retrospect, more than what numbers and program descriptions can reflect, what Casey has given us as partners in their community-grounded work is a safe space where relationship building can begin. It is both within the community and friendly to us, the outsiders. From their experience, we have learned to begin with place, and to find a corner to settle in. We are also learning to recognize social capital, to use it wisely, and to contribute to it. The process for this is to engage in the slow building of trust, and to be open to new relationships. Thus, having set an example by opening their doors to us, Casey has made it possible for us, the lawyers, to begin to engage with the community as well.

Searching out a hospitality space between elitist culture and the economically threatened homeplace in no way guarantees a resolution of tensions between resource-rich service provision and community-driven agendas, but it narrows the breach. While the Annie E. Casey Foundation, with its business orientation, subscribes to the discipline of measurable outcomes, the staff, many of whom are experienced in counseling arts and have community roots, provide the intangibles of consistent listening, outreach and openness to transformation that may constitute the real engine fuel for success. Together, these open up two-way access and may prove to be key elements in the creation of thirdspaces where lawyers can join in the real struggle for justice.

#### CONCLUSION

All community-oriented lawyers discover, sooner or later, that representation in the community is “unbounded, in both nature and

duration.”<sup>134</sup> This unboundedness results in a kind of fluidity, a sharing of tasks, and a blurring of demarcation of roles.<sup>135</sup> Outside the confines of the law office, community lawyers work without a blueprint, and must come to grips with contingency and unpredictability. They must be willing to respond as needs arise.<sup>136</sup> This may well mean abandoning current notions of creating bridges solely, or even primarily, to increase the flow of access to institutionalized halls of justice.

Lawyers have perhaps been too intent on identifying aims, and have gotten stuck looking in one direction for the targeted end place. Letting go of the normative goal of providing equal representation—a common synonym for access—to all is particularly challenging for lawyers, who are socialized to be in charge and to control the turf. But it helps to recognize that people are looking to validate their lives—to improve them, yes, but also to preserve them. And most people want to share, not just to take. When lawyers start as community guests, when they see the community as the place to *be*, not as a place to start from, the relationships they build over time will determine their roles and what their place in the community will be.

In the end, “[w]e come back to presence.”<sup>137</sup> Presence requires more than just being there; however, it is contingent on space, space that is within the community, yet, at least for a time, is corralled. Within hospitality spaces are opportunities to simply hang out with each other, sometimes with an active agenda and sometimes passively.<sup>138</sup> There is discomfort in this approach. In addition to feeling like outsiders and giving up well-ingulcated beliefs in the superiority of their expertise, lawyers feel the pressure of time “wasted” and have to ignore urgent calls to conform to traditional

---

134. Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 773.

135. *Id.*

136. See Margulies, *supra* note 126, at 2349.

137. Bennett, *supra* note 7, at 777 (“Being able to stay put and to dedicate resources over time, is the greatest contribution that a program can make to the practice of long-haul lawyering.”).

138. CJLA students have come to call the lawyers’ silent presence in community space “face time”; they refer to the non-business interactive opportunities as “talking story.”

norms of practice. What is lost by letting go of the notion of “access to justice” in favor of a notion of “access to communities,” however, may hasten both lawyers’ and communities’ access to other forms of problem-solving resources.