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PART 1

The ethico-political context

Ethics, equity and community development: mapping the terrain

Sarah Banks

Introduction

Rationale for the book

This book is part of the *Rethinking Community Development* series. As such, it offers a range of critical perspectives, both cross-disciplinary and international, on the place and meaning of ethics and the nature of ethical practice in community development work. The first two books in the series, *Politics, power and community development* (Meade et al, 2016) and *Class, inequality and community development* (Shaw and Mayo, 2016), had a primary focus on the structural context in which community development operates. *Ethics, equity and community development* takes account of context, but its focal point is the ‘micro-ethics’ of daily practice, often neglected in the literature which focuses on the broader political climate and how to develop equitable social policy to tackle disadvantage and inequity. In this book we are concerned with the *ethical agency* of the people practising community development, and the *dilemmas and difficulties* they face in their *everyday work* as they strive towards ethical practice and equitable outcomes. We are also interested in how micro-level or ‘everyday ethics’ interacts with the macro-level ethics of social and institutional policies in the community development field (see Banks, 2016 for the concept of ‘everyday ethics’; Truong et al, 2015, for ‘micro- and macro-ethics’).

Example of everyday ethics

To illustrate what is meant by ‘everyday ethics’, I will give an example from Chapter Five of the book. Here we are given an account of an ethically challenging situation faced by practitioners working for an NGO in India with a focus on participatory practice. In evaluating the effectiveness of interventions aiming to empower sex worker

collectives, some of the sex workers felt the collective had made major achievements in ending false arrests and harassment by the police. They felt this indicated that the collective should be categorised as 'vibrant', which indicated sustainability and a high level of functioning. However, the NGO workers and some other members of the collective questioned this claim, as the reduction in false arrests had been achieved through threatening to inform the families of police officers who were clients of the sex workers. This was not regarded as a sustainable outcome (one of the criteria of 'vibrancy') by the NGO staff, nor was it ethically acceptable to use threats to achieve goals, according to mainstream standards of morality. This created a dilemma for the NGO workers: should they accept and value the coping mechanisms adopted by some members of the sex workers' collective, who are stigmatised and marginalised by wider society and find it hard to assert their rights, or should they stick with their own standards of sustainability and ethics?

The book is concerned with questions like this. Recognising the issues calls for a high degree of ethical sensitivity, as well as political awareness, on the part of community development practitioners, while making responses and taking action may require courage and compassion, alongside ethical reasoning. One of the aims of this book is make more visible the ethical dimensions of community development practice and hence enhance the ethical literacy and competence of practitioners.

Outline of this chapter

This chapter introduces the reader to ethics as a topic of study and considers the nature of the ethical issues and challenges inherent in community development work as a prelude to the following chapters, which focus on specific topics and themes. The chapter first discusses and problematises the key concepts of the book, 'ethics', 'equity' and 'community development', before considering the role of ethics in community development work, the relationship between ethics and politics and different theoretical approaches to ethics. The ambivalence of community development workers towards professionalisation is raised in the context of recent trends towards the development of national and international practice standards and several examples of codes of ethics. As a counterweight to a view of 'ethics as regulation', an argument is made for 'everyday ethics', an approach to the study and practice of ethics as relational, embedded and embodied in community development work, based on the 'ethics work' that practitioners do in

their day-to-day interactions and relationships. An argument is made for the importance of an ethics that is both politicised (rather than individualised) and embedded in (rather than abstracted from) practice. The chapter ends by drawing out a selection of themes from the book chapters relating to: practising ethically in an unethical world; working out roles and boundaries; negotiating community consent; and alternative relational paradigms for ethical being and action.

Key concepts in the book

Before proceeding further, I will offer a brief discussion of each of the key concepts in the title of the book.

Ethics

Our understanding of ethics is as a topic that covers questions relating to what actions are right and wrong, what qualities of character people should develop, what kinds of lives people should lead, what counts as a good society and what responsibilities humans have for each other and the ecosystem. On this view, ethical issues are ever-present in community development work. However, relatively little community development literature explicitly discusses ethical issues *per se*, identifying ‘ethics’ as a specific topic linked with ethical theories in philosophy or models of professionalism and professional ethics. This book is designed to go some way towards filling that gap.

Some philosophers and theorists distinguish ‘morality’ (as socially accepted norms) and ‘ethics’ (as the study of those norms, or people’s own personally considered norms; see Banks, 2012: 4–7). In everyday English language, however, these terms, along with the associated adjectives ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’, are generally used interchangeably. In this book we use the terms interchangeably, unless stated otherwise.

Equity

Equity is about finding a fair distribution of goods (such as power, health, social well-being or material resources) among individuals and social groups. While in ordinary language the terms ‘equity’ and ‘equality’ are often used interchangeably, they do have different meanings. ‘Equality’ entails each person having the same amount of a particular good (such as income or access to healthcare); equity is about people having the ‘right amount’ of certain goods to enable them to live decent lives according to norms of fairness and human

rights (however we may define these). Equity requires recognition of people's different life circumstances and needs, and ensuring they get the goods required, which will be different for each person. As Son (2011: 1) says: 'equity is about putting things right' – at least those things that can be remedied by human intervention, such as poverty-related ill health, poor educational outcomes or low salaries due to ethnic and/or gender bias. The World Health Organization offers a succinct description of equity as: 'the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people' (WHO, 2018).

In the community development literature 'equality' is often stated as a core value, and equity in the sense described here is subsumed within it as 'equality of outcome' (as distinct from other types of equality – 'equality of treatment' and 'equality of opportunity'). We have highlighted 'equity' in the title of the book as we believe it encapsulates a core purpose of community development, which is often subsumed within the more commonly espoused values of social justice, equality and human rights. It also provides a bridge between the traditional politics and ideological values of community development and the ethical challenges of everyday practice.

Community development

There are many definitions of community development available in textbooks and mission statements, which are usually fairly abstract and use slightly different forms of words. Given this book has a global reach, we will take as a starting point the definition agreed by the International Association for Community Development (IACD) in 2016:

Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings. (IACD, 2018: 8)

This definition, of course, is not uncontested, not least its characterisation of community development as a profession and academic discipline. However, it is perhaps an indicator of recent trends in some parts of the world towards professionalisation and a desire for greater recognition of community development work, which also bring matters of ethics and professional conduct to the fore.

It is important to note that the term ‘community development’ is sometimes used in a narrow sense, with a focus on self-help and citizen participation, to refer to one approach to community work (see Thomas, 1983: 108–17; Banks, 2011a: 166–70). Other approaches include community service and planning (developing community-based services and policies) and community action and organising (issue-based campaigning). However, in much literature, including the IACD documentation, the term ‘community development work’ is used in a broader sense, to encompass a whole range of approaches to work in and with communities, and is often regarded as synonymous with ‘community work’. We are using the term in a broad sense in this book, noting that it encompasses various approaches, models and traditions, which are underpinned by a range of ideological positions from conservative and social conformist, through democratic consensual and reformist, to more radical and conflict oriented (see Gilchrist, 2004: 23–5; Westoby, 2014: 41–53; Popple, 2015: 57–72).

The contested nature of community development

The term ‘community development’ is used, rather confusingly, to refer to several different types of activity, which relate to people acting collectively in communities of place, interest or identity to achieve transformative social change. For now, let us take communities to be collectivities of people with some, but not necessarily all, characteristics in common, who may sometimes come together (perhaps for only a short time) for perceived, mutual benefit (Banks et al, 2018). In this context, the term ‘community development’ may be used in several different ways to refer to:

1. A *process* of community formation and movement towards change, regardless of whether the people involved consciously see themselves as engaged in community development.
2. A *practice* undertaken by people, paid or unpaid, who consciously engage in a purposeful process, which they recognise as community development and can locate within a tradition.
3. An *occupation*, that is, a field of work based on recognised sets of knowledge, skills and values, which may involve paid or unpaid work and may or may not be regarded as a profession.
4. An *academic discipline* or subject of study, which is based on a body of knowledge and literature.
5. A *social movement* (in addition to being a process, practice or occupation that underpins or supports social movements),

advocating for community development approaches at local, national and international level.

In this book the term ‘community development’ is used in all five senses, although the main focus of attention is on community development as a practice and an occupation, in effect what is often called ‘community development work’. Community development work supports the process of community development and is a major part of the subject matter of the academic discipline of community development. Community development workers and academics are also the driving force behind community development as a social movement, campaigning for greater community participation or respect for human rights through bodies such as the IACD (www.iacdglobal.org) or European Community Development Network (<http://eucdn.net>), for example.

If we return to the IACD’s definition of community development quoted in the introduction to this chapter, we see that it encompasses community development as a practice, occupation (‘profession’) and academic discipline, although not explicitly as a process or a social movement. It also boldly uses the term ‘profession’ (rather than ‘occupation’), although softening this by prefacing it with ‘practice-based’. The description ‘practice-based’ seems somewhat redundant (as all professions involve people practising their values, knowledge and skills). However, it was possibly added for political reasons, given the long-standing resistance of community development work to professionalisation.

As already outlined, the topic of ethics includes matters relating to respecting and promoting rights and responsibilities, distribution of harms and benefits and cultivation of virtues leading to human and ecological flourishing. If this is what ethics comprises, then clearly ethical issues are embedded in, and raised by, community development in all of the senses in the fivefold list outlined earlier. However, the ethical dimensions are most evident in community development as a practice and occupation. Here they are brought into being through self-reflection by practitioners, and critical analysis by observers, relating to the implicit or explicit norms, values, ethical principles and character traits relevant to community development.

Community development as ‘value-based’

While there may be a gap in the mainstream community development literature in the field of ‘ethics’, there is no shortage of accounts

of the values of community development work. ‘Values’ (beliefs about what is regarded as worthy or valuable) are regarded as vitally important in community development work and feature frequently in professional and academic literature. The occupation and practice are often characterised as ‘value-based’, with underpinning values listed as variations on human rights, social justice, democracy, equality and solidarity. There are many accounts of the values of community development work, all framed slightly differently, but with much in common. They often comprise very broad headings such as ‘social justice’ or ‘empowerment’, followed by brief descriptions of what these mean and sometimes examples of how they might be put into practice. Table 1.1 shows some examples of different configurations of values found in a small selection of the available literature, with the values listed in the order in which they appear in the source documents. These values are contested, overlapping and open to interpretation, but the lists are remarkably similar. It is noteworthy that ‘equity’ does not feature separately in any of the headings. This may be partly because its meaning is subsumed within ‘social justice’ and ‘equality’, or perhaps because it also implies a commitment that is quite radical for key stakeholders in community development (distribution of goods according to need to create equality of outcome).

These lists of values are both useful and problematic. They are useful because they offer a framework within which community development practitioners can conceptualise and justify their practice. They signify

Table 1.1: Community development values

International Association for Community Development (IACD, 2018)	European Community Development Network (EuCDN, 2014)	National Occupational Standards for Community Development, UK (NOS, 2015)	All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training (AIEB, 2016)
• rights • solidarity • democracy • equality • environmental and social justice	• collective learning • empowerment • meaningful participation • collective action for collective outcomes • equality	• social justice and equality • anti-discrimination • community empowerment • collective action • working and learning together	• collectivity • community empowerment • social justice and sustainable development • human rights, equality and anti-discrimination • participation

that community development is not just a set of techniques and skills that can be deployed for a range of ends in any way that is effective. Rather, community development requires a commitment on the part of its practitioners to work towards a world that is fairer and more participatory, and to practise in ways that are respectful of diversity, challenge unjust differences and encourage a culture of collective learning and action, for example. A statement of values helps generate a sense of identity among practitioners and encourages debate and discussion about the meaning of those values and how they can or should be put into practice. Given they are relatively generic and abstract, people from very diverse backgrounds can sign up to them.

However, the generic nature of these values is also one of their weaknesses. The list of values given by the IACD is probably the most generic of those in Table 1.1, and is unusual in that no further description or discussion is offered about each value. It reads like a list of values that might be espoused in any democratic society and, presented without any discussion, raises a number of critical questions. What does it mean to subscribe to the value of 'rights', for example? While eschewing the more specific 'human rights' in order to include environmental rights may mean more people buy into the value, this also makes it relatively meaningless. Whose rights are we talking about, what kinds of rights, in what circumstances are the rights to be respected and whose responsibility is it to honour them?

Some of the values in the lists have a more radical edge to them – with headings like 'empowerment', 'anti-discrimination' and 'collective action'. Taken literally, they signal a belief in a radically different kind of society and world from the one we currently inhabit. However, while displaying fine ideals, are they any more than empty rhetoric that makes community development workers feel good about themselves? The extent to which community development can achieve these transformative ideals is a matter of debate, and certainly there are plenty of examples of community development work that is engaged in propping up the status quo, focusing attention on 'problem' people and places and being co-opted by the local or national state and private business, as many of the chapters in this book show (see especially Chapters Five and Seven on work with sex worker collectives and mining communities in India).

The first step to making these values meaningful and useful is, of course, to unravel what they might mean, how they might be implemented in practice and how workers can recognise and handle the inevitable conflicts and contradictions between them (achieving social justice outcomes versus democratic involvement of all parties,

for example). While there is no one definitive set of values, I offer here a selection that seems to encapsulate the sentiments of those listed in Table 1.1.

- *Respect and promote human rights and capabilities* – recognition that all human beings have dignity and worth qua humans, with rights to make choices, to cultivate their human capabilities and live decent lives in accordance with United Nations Declarations and Statements.
- *Promote social justice, equality and equity* – working for a fair distribution of material and social goods in society according to people's needs, acknowledging harmful differences that can be remedied, respecting diversity of cultures, religions and lifestyles, and challenging oppressive power structures and discriminatory treatment.
- *Work towards environmental justice and sustainable communities* – respecting the well-being and habitats of non-human creatures and promoting a flourishing ecosystem as a good in itself, as well as out of consideration for humans whose livelihoods depend on a well-functioning ecosystem.
- *Respect and encourage solidarity between people and groups* – encouraging people experiencing similar problems to stand together and support each other, as well as engaging other people to take a stand alongside them.
- *Promote and support collective action* – bringing diverse people and groups together to identify their common concerns and interests and take action for positive social change.
- *Promote individual, group and community empowerment* – supporting people to mobilise, create or draw out their own power to make decisions and take actions on issues that concern them.
- *Promote and support democratic participation* – ensuring that people who are often invisible or unheard take part in community activities, decision making and actions about matters affecting their lives.
- *Facilitate people in processes of learning together* – valuing mutual learning and growth among people engaging in community development and fostering critical knowledge, confidence and skills of individuals and groups.

These values may not always be shared or well understood by employers of community development workers or by many other people encountered in daily work. They may also conflict with each other, hence creating ethical problems and dilemmas for workers in deciding what actions to take – for example, which community

or group to support, whose rights have priority, how to respect diversity while also challenging racism, or how to balance multiple accountabilities (for a more detailed discussion see Banks, 2013). It is at this point that questions of ethics become relevant – when workers reflect on what kind of society they wish to live in and promote, what values they hold personally and as workers, how they prioritise their commitments, what kinds of people they want to be, how to develop good and trusting relationships and engage in fair tactics for achieving positive social change.

These kinds of issues are frequently raised in the community development literature, where we find no shortage of references to ‘contestation’, ‘contradictions’ and ‘complexity’, along with ‘dilemmas’, dialogue’ and ‘dialectic’ (see, for example, Hoggett, 1997; Kenny, 2002; Hoggett et al, 2008; DeFilippis et al, 2010; Westoby and Dowling, 2014; Shevellar et al, 2015; Cameron et al, 2016; Shevellar and Barringham, 2016). However, they are less often named as relating to ‘ethics’ and there are few texts that explore the topics of ethics in community development in any depth. Arguably, framing these contradictions and dilemmas in terms of ethics adds an extra and important dimension to the understanding and practice of community development work. It enables us to connect the personal and political and draw on a rich body of literature from moral philosophy.

The ‘ethics gap’ and the ‘ethics boom’

The ‘ethics gap’ in the community development literature is particularly surprising given the ‘ethics boom’ in many areas of public and academic life in recent decades (Davis, 1999; Banks, 2014). The growth of interest in, and concern about, ethics can be seen at the macro level in the arena of public debate and policy making, including increasing concern about the implications of human-engendered ecological damage, the use of new technologies (from social media to genetic engineering), or the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, for example. It is also apparent in the context of public and private corporations, with questions being raised over growing inequalities in pay, corporate greed and the personal conduct of politicians. In the professions (including academia and research) there is a growth of regulatory bodies, increasingly long codes of ethics and a concern with right conduct and professional integrity at a micro level.

These concerns are about the allocation of rights, responsibilities, harms and benefits; the nature of human and inter-species relationships; and what kind of society and planet we wish to inhabit and leave to

future generations. They are generating public and private deliberation and debate, policies and laws, and systems of regulation. They are also impacting on the everyday lives and practices of people, groups, communities, professional practitioners and other workers.

In many fields of study and occupations this has generated a growth in academic and professional literature, practice guides, rules and regulations under the guise of ethics. We can see this in the fields of science (biomedicine, for instance), as well as social work and youth work. In the field of community development, however, ethics as a topic is only just beginning to emerge. We see the beginnings of a concern about ethics in the creation of several codes of ethics (such as ACWA, 2017; CLDSCS, 2017), often linked to the professionalisation and/or regulation of community development as an occupation.

While there is little or no coverage of ethics per se in mainstream community development textbooks, ethics is featuring more in some of the philosophically inclined literature, especially that promoting alternative economic, ecological and feminist paradigms, as discussed in Part 3 of this book. For example, Pyles (Chapter Eight) advocates a feminist approach to community organising based on relational ethics and healing justice (see also Pyles, 2014, 2018), while Hill and Diprose (Chapter Nine) describe a Community Economies perspective for ethical community development drawing on Gibson-Graham et al (2013). Westoby (Chapter Ten) concludes with a holistic and ecological philosophy of community development construed as an ethical space of hospitality, dialogue and responsibility, drawing on the ethical philosophies of Levinas (1999) and Derrida (1997), among others. Indeed, being invited to write a chapter for this book has perhaps encouraged authors to view their work through an ethical lens.

Ethics and politics

In spite of this boom in ethical concerns happening around the field of community development, why is there as yet so little coverage in mainstream textbooks and the work of occupational networks and professional associations for community development? One of the answers, as already intimated, is that many community development workers self-identify as being engaged in a political practice and hence many of the ethical dilemmas and issues are named as political and ideological rather than ethical. The reluctance to name 'the ethical' may link to a view of ethics as pertaining to matters of personal conduct, individual responsibility and blame. Such versions of ethics can easily be co-opted by neo-liberal and new managerial agendas (see

Banks, 2014) and used to control community development workers and activists, emphasising their ethical agency and responsibility for what are essentially structural problems beyond their control.

Tony Taylor, writing in a UK youth and community work context from a radical standpoint, expresses precisely these fears (Taylor and Banks, 2015). His concern is that the growth of interest in ethics in youth work (with new textbooks and a code of ethics) marks a retreat from politics and ‘public issues’, towards a focus on the individual and ‘private troubles’. Here he echoes the distinction made by C. Wright Mills between troubles and issues. Mills (1970: 14–15) characterises troubles as occurring ‘within the character of the individual and within the range of his [or her] immediate relations with others ... A trouble is a private matter’. On the other hand, issues have to do with ‘matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his [or her] inner life... An issue is a public matter’.

These kinds of concerns can also be picked up in the community development field, and arise partly because of a particular view about the nature of ‘ethics’. First, ethics tends to focus attention on individuals, their choices and decisions, paying less attention to the bigger picture, including structural constraints and the location of power. Second, ‘ethics’ is often associated with ‘morality’ (indeed, in ordinary English language we tend to use the terms interchangeably), which in some contexts has a more specific meaning, referring to prevailing social norms. Those taking a more radical perspective may recall Karl Marx’s dismissal of morality as a ‘bourgeois illusion’ (Marx and Engels, 1848/1969: 60, 68) designed to encourage responsibility, conformity and an illusion of free choice. This version of ethics sits uneasily with radical practice, not only from a Marxist viewpoint, but also feminist, anti-oppressive and other progressive, transformative and liberatory approaches that are commonly espoused in community development work.

However, while this critique may apply to particular versions of ethics, does it provide grounds for dismissing ethics altogether? Are there versions of ethics that are not about individual conformity to social norms? The answer must surely be ‘yes’. In the next section I will discuss different approaches to ethics and the inextricable link between ethics and politics.

Approaches to ethics

I have already characterised ethics earlier as a topic covering a number of themes, which can be identified as follows (Banks, 2014: 5):

- *Conduct* – what actions are regarded as right and wrong? (promise-keeping and lying).
- *Character* – what moral qualities are regarded as good and bad? (trustworthiness and deceitfulness; altruism and selfishness).
- *Relationships* – what responsibilities attach to people's relationships with each other, individually and in groups? (the responsibility of a parent towards a child; responsibility of a community towards its vulnerable members).
- *The good society* – in what kind of society do we want to live? (a society in which all living beings flourish in harmony with the natural environment; a society in which all human beings are free to enjoy the fruits of their labour).

This is a deliberately broad characterisation of ethics, in contrast to some that focus largely on one area, or regard one as the starting point or foundation of ethics. I will now outline briefly some different theoretical approaches to ethics and their relationship to the themes listed here.

Principle-based ethics, with a focus on conduct

The dominant ethical theories in modern times in the global North tend to centre on conduct, with the aim of answering the question 'what should I do?'. These tend to be principle-based theories, taking as a starting point abstract, universal principles, valid for all people in all places and times, from which more specific action guidance can be deduced by a process of impartial, rational inquiry. The two most common ethical theories of this kind are Kantian and utilitarian ethics, which have very different starting points, but are both principle-based. In Kantian ethics (Kant, 1785/1964) the ultimate principle is 'respect for persons' as rational and self-determining beings. This leads to a moral philosophy that stresses the dignity and worth of individual human beings, their rights to make their own decisions and choices and an imperative that people should never be treated as means to the ends of other people. For a Kantian, lying, manipulation and cheating would always be wrong, regardless of the consequences. Utilitarianism, on the other hand, is a consequentialist theory, based on the premise that the right action is that which produces the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people (Mill, 1863/1972). In professional ethics, as conceived and practised in the global North, there tends to be a focus on conduct, with codes of ethics echoing Kantian principles predominantly (focusing on the rights of clients/

service users/participants) alongside some more utilitarian principles about promoting human welfare.

Character and relationship-based ethics, taking account of the 'good society'

Dissatisfaction with the impartial, principle-based approaches to ethics, which neglect the motives, intentions and character of the people whose conduct is being judged, has led to a revival of interest in character-based ethics, the most common version of which is known as 'virtue ethics', associated with the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle (350 BCE/1954). This is beginning to be influential in professional ethics, in which a concern with the development of practitioners of 'good character' (who are honest, reliable, compassionate, courageous) is felt to be as important as ensuring people simply do the right action by following the rules (Oakley and Cocking, 2001; Banks and Gallagher, 2009). This version of ethics could be described as 'situated', as it takes account not only of the character, motivations, intentions and emotions of the people who are moral actors, but also the particularities of each situation and the professional wisdom required for professionals to discern what to do in the particular circumstances they face (Banks, 2018).

Similarly, what might be called relationship-based or relational ethics is also situated (as opposed to abstracted from context) and has a focus on the relationships between people and the roles and responsibilities they have towards each other (which may be as loving parents, trusting colleagues, caring partners or professionals). One of the most well-known relationship-based approaches to ethics is the ethics of care, which stresses the importance of caring relationships between people. Often associated with feminist ethics, it has developed significantly in recent years from its early beginnings in the work of psychologist Gilligan (1982), educationalist Noddings (1984) and political theorist Tronto (1993, 2012) who developed a political ethics of care. The ethics of care also has resonances with the ethics of proximity, drawing on the work of Levinas (1989), Løgstrup (1997) and Buber (1937), for example, which takes as an ontological starting point the response we each have to make to the call or demand of the other person. Relationships are also at the heart of communitarian ethics, where the focus is less on the individual and more on the 'community', seeking solidarity, harmony and the common good (Kuczewski, 1997; Gyekye, 2010), some features of which are outlined in Chapter Ten of this volume.

While some may categorise character- and relationship-based approaches as ethical theories, generally their proponents do not wish to build systematic, large-scale theories to rival Kantianism and utilitarianism, hence it might be more accurate to call them theoretical approaches. Virtue ethics, the ethics of care and communitarian ethics do not attempt to articulate universal abstract principles that apply to all people in all places, at all times. Rather they adopt a more situated (contextual) approach to ethics, starting from the realities of everyday life, as opposed to applying abstract principles. They regard emotions as an important feature of ethics, arguing that empathy and compassion, for example, are essential to ethical being and acting. These relational approaches, particularly communitarian ethics, are much closer to those commonly found in the global South and Indigenous communities in the global North, where the individual is defined in relationship with others, as outlined in Chapter Six of this book (see also Li, 1994; Gbadegesin, 2005; Keown, 2005; Chuwa, 2014).

There are many other approaches to ethics, including existential ethics (focusing on action in the here and now of each unique situation), case-based ethics (or ‘casuistry’, which works by comparing particular cases) and narrative ethics (based on stories and accounts of what matters to people). All of these take a more situated, particularistic approach to considering ethical questions and may be regarded as much as methodologies for tackling ethical problems and issues as theories or theoretical approaches.

Ethico-politics

While Kantianism and utilitarianism focus more on the form of ethical judgements and are criticised for not giving a substantive account of the ‘good society’, virtue, care and communitarian ethics are premised on a vision of what counts as human flourishing – a society in which the virtues are practised or one in which caring and communal relationships are valued and promoted. As already stated, some might argue that questions about the nature of the good society are questions of politics, rather than ethics. However, arguably this is the point where ethics and politics meet, and questions about the nature of human and ecological flourishing might be regarded as ‘ethico-political’. While a distinction is often made between political matters (how to organise government) and ethical matters (how people should conduct their lives), there is clearly a large degree of overlap, as recognised by ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, who maintain that personal

morality, good citizenship and the best way to organise a state, all fit together (Hughes, 2001: 13). As Critchley (2007: 132) comments: 'Politics is an ethical practice that is driven by a response to situated injustices and wrongs'. Indeed, Critchley suggests that ethics is needed to decide how to act in a political situation (120), concluding that 'if ethics without politics is empty, then politics without ethics is blind' (148).

It is in this domain of ethics (or ethico-politics) that arguably community development as an academic discipline, occupation and practice has much to say, at least in its more radical incarnation. For the values of community development are firmly located in a social justice and participatory paradigm and demand that practitioners take both a political and ethical stance.

The political element of the work, and the call for workers to align themselves on the side of those who are powerless, marginalised and impoverished, is one reason why community development as an occupation has been reluctant to professionalise. Another related reason is that professionalisation tends to demarcate between employed and volunteer community workers and activists, hence creating divisions within the field of work. Yet, the closeness and commitment of community development workers to the people with whom they work, and the lack of clear boundaries between employed worker and activist, also bring challenges of over-involvement, 'boundary violations' and misuse of power (see Chapter Three in this volume). These are used as arguments for creating forms of professional organisation, codes of ethics and standards for competent and ethical practice. In the next section I discuss the implications of moves towards professionalisation in community development work.

Professionalisation and codes of ethics

Community development workers have traditionally had an uneasy relationship with the idea of professionalisation, tending to associate professions with elitism, exclusivity and the creation of distance from the people with whom they work (Banks, 2004: 32–3; Ife, 2016: 360–2). While there is no one model of what counts as a 'profession', and the concept and practice of professionalism has changed over time and varies between countries, usually a process of professionalisation is linked with all or some of: the development of a specialised body of knowledge and skills; the introduction of qualifying education; the development of codes of ethics; and creation of systems of licensing and regulation of practitioners (Banks, 2004: 17–46). At

various times in different countries, the ‘professionalisation debate’ has come to the fore, as moves have been made to raise the profile of community development work by developing more formal associations or institutes, qualifying educational programmes and national or international standards for practice.

While professional associations have existed for many years (for example, the IACD was founded in 1953; Association of Community Workers in the UK in 1968; Australian Community Workers Association in 1969), it is only in recent years that some of these bodies have begun to introduce ‘standards’ for community development practice or have supported other bodies to do so. In 2018, IACD published international standards (IACD, 2018), building on the work done in other countries to create national occupational standards (for example, AIEB, 2016; NOS, 2015). The extent to which the production of standards is viewed as part of the professionalisation project depends on how professionalism is regarded, the reasons standards are produced and what kinds of bodies validate, monitor and use the standards. In the UK, where the first national occupational standards for community work (now called community development) were produced in 1995 (FCWTG and Mainframe, 1995), the instigator was the then Federation of Community Work Training Groups (a national grassroots body that no longer exists). The aim was to create a means to give national recognition to community activists and people who could not access higher education, by validating their learning from experience (Banks, 1990). However, this was achieved as part of a government-led initiative to standardise vocational qualifications in the UK. Hence, community work in effect bought into a state-sponsored system, albeit one that engaged the field in the development and periodic revision of the standards. The standards are used in the validation of university-level courses, as well as serving as benchmarks for employers.

Building on the development of occupational standards, recently we have seen the emergence of several codes of ethics for community development work. The Community Learning and Development Standards Council Scotland (described as the ‘professional body’ for community learning and development (CLD), funded by the Scottish government) adopted a code in 2011, now in a revised edition (CLDSCS, 2017). The Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA), a membership organisation that promotes and supports community work and accredits higher education programmes in Human Services (which includes community development) has also created a code of ethics (ACWA, 2017). The stated purpose of these

codes is to guide and regulate the conduct of community development workers as ‘professional’ practitioners, ensuring accountable practice within clear boundaries of the professional role and respectful and fair treatment of the people with whom they work (called ‘constituents’ in the CLD code and ‘clients’ in the ACWA code). The codes of ethics fit within a framework of professional values and standards (or ‘competences’) expected of qualified workers. According to the CLD Standards Council, the code provides a clear statement about standards of professional behaviour expected of qualified workers, wherever they practise, and a means of ‘systematically relating the values and principles to practice’ (CLDSCS, 2015: 5). The CLD document is a fairly short set of 12 statements, including some value statements (‘equity’ and ‘empowerment’) alongside statements about the nature of relationships with ‘constituents’ (‘duty of care’, ‘transparency’, ‘confidentiality’ and ‘boundaries’) and ways of working with colleagues and looking after oneself (‘cooperation’, ‘professional learning’ and ‘self-care’). The ACWA code (2017: 3–4) follows a more traditional format with the following headings:

- Principles underlying the code of ethics
- Responsibility to clients
- Responsibility to employers
- Responsibility to colleagues
- Protecting the reputation of the profession

While codes of ethics are certainly designed to protect the people with whom community development practitioners work, and may provide useful guidance for practitioners, they also serve to reinforce professional status and credibility and foster a sense of identity in the occupational group. Furthermore, they exemplify a particular notion of ethics in professional life as being about rule-following and compliance, and can play a role in professional regulation through use by employers in disciplinary hearings.

In the community development field the occupation is generally not regulated by the national or local state, as is the case in other ‘professional’ occupations in some countries where state-sponsored regulatory bodies can strike people off a professional register. However, recent debates in South Africa about professionalisation do relate to proposals involving state regulation (see Chile, 2012; Westoby and Shevellar, 2014), adding a further dimension to the professionalisation debate, namely the advantages of (apparently) increased professional status and credibility versus reticence about state control. This goes

beyond the fears of self-serving exclusivity that were current in the last century when professions were regarded as self-governing elites, exemplifying how the nature of professionalism (and the debates associated with it) changes over time.

The model of professionalism most suited to community development work would be that of the ‘new’ or ‘democratic professionalism’ (Dzur, 2008; Banks, 2012: 106). This entails less emphasis on professional expertise and distance and more on power-sharing – seeing the people with whom professionals work as fellow citizens (rather than ‘participants’/‘service users’/‘clients’) and working from and valuing their experiences, expertise and interests. However, with deprofessionalising trends at work and increasing emphasis on state regulation of occupations, the scope for this more progressive model of professionalism seems narrower now than when it was first mooted in social work in the 1970s/1980s (Jordan, 1975; BASW, 1980). Cribb and Gerwitz (2015: 40), in their overview of professionalism in health and social care, address two concerns about professionalism in the current climate: first that ‘constructions of professionalism evolve’ and many views people hold about professionalism may no longer be relevant (for example, that professions are self-governing, trust-based occupations); and second, the environments required to support meaningful professionalism (including democratic professionalism) are not available for many workers. This is very apparent in the accounts from Australian practitioners in Chapter Three, which present a picture of an organisational climate that often treats community development workers as technicians.

Everyday ethics and ethics work

While it is important that people practising community development work engage in ethical conduct, and it is the case that codes, rules and regulations may assist in this, it is equally important that ethical conduct and rules are not seen as the whole of what ethics in community development is about. We need to be aware of the dangers of ‘new managerial ethics’ (Banks, 2011b, 2018), which works to instrumental utilitarian principles and reduces the scope for independent ethical agency, discretion and meaningful human interaction in the context of particular relationships and situations. The concept of ‘everyday ethics’, which I have developed in relation to social work and the social professions (see Banks, 2016, 2018), is an alternative way of looking at ethics in professional (or work) life that is situated in practice, as opposed to derived from abstract principles, and draws on

character- and relationship-based approaches to ethics (virtue, care and communitarian ethics). It stresses the fact that ‘ethics’ is ever-present in all aspects of life, not just when people face dilemmas or difficult decisions have to be made or rules in the code of ethics are infringed. Ethics is also about how people comport themselves and look at each other, for example. It involves emotions as well as reason; our bodies as well as our minds; and stories as well as rulebooks.

Everyday ethics is about developing a particular type of ethical and political sensitivity; cultivating qualities such as care, courage and trustworthiness; and a willingness to be flexible, cope with complexity, contradictions and dilemmas. In short it requires a certain kind of moral labour, or what I call ‘ethics work’, which refers to: ‘the effort people put into seeing ethically salient aspects of situations, developing themselves as good practitioners, working out the right course of action and justifying who they are and what they have done’ (Banks, 2016: 35). It requires an ability to reflect on the ethical stances and attitudes of oneself and others, recognise responsibilities, see possible and actual actions, and exercise a high degree of reflexivity – seeing oneself and situations in a larger political context, in the light of power relations and inequities.

Drawing on accounts of ethical challenges from social welfare practitioners, I have developed an account of ethics work in terms of several different, but interrelated, elements or dimensions as follows (taken from Banks, 2016: 37):

1. *Framing work* – identifying and focusing on the ethically salient features of a situation; placing oneself and the situations encountered in political and social contexts; negotiating/co-constructing frames with others (including service users and colleagues).
2. *Role work* – playing a role in relation to others (advocate, carer, critic); taking a position (partial/impartial; close/distant); negotiating roles; responding to role expectations.
3. *Emotion work* – being caring, compassionate and empathic; managing emotions; building trust; responding to emotions of others.
4. *Identity work* – working on one’s ethical self; creating an identity as an ethically good professional; negotiating professional identity; maintaining professional integrity.
5. *Reason work* – making and justifying moral judgements and decisions; deliberation with others on ethical

evaluations and tactics; working out strategies for ethical action.

6. *Relationship work* – engaging in dialogue with others; working on relationships through emotion, identity and reason work (dialogue work).
7. *Performance work* – making visible aspects of this work to others; demonstrating oneself at work (accountability work).

Many of the chapters in the book include case studies from practice or extracts from interviews with practitioners. Some of these include reflections from practitioners about what they felt, what they did and reasons for their feelings and actions in particular situations. It is here that we can see some aspects of ethics work in action. In the next section I explore just some of the themes raised by the book chapters, with the concept of ethics work in mind.

Ethics at work: exploring key themes in the book

Practising ethically in an unethical world?

The theme of how community development workers can practise ethically in a profoundly inequitable world is one that recurs in many chapters. In Chapter Two, Popple outlines the current context for community development work in many parts of the world, within a neo-liberal global economy, with increasingly tight resources and growing inequalities of wealth and power. While the challenges of working ‘in and against the state’ are well rehearsed in community development work, new forms of governance and governmentality of workers and citizen-activists are co-opting and controlling the work, based on managerial agendas and economic values. Popple offers the example of an action group campaigning to save trees in Sheffield, UK, placing this in the context of global economic interests, paralleling the environmental destruction taking place in many other parts of the world. Although Popple does not give details of the activists’ motivations and reasonings, we can envisage that one of their key tasks will be to work on the framing of the issue as one of social and environmental justice, with both political and ethical import – seeing it in terms of power structures in local government, the interests of private corporations and the marginalisation of the interests and needs of local citizens. While Popple talks in terms of ‘inequalities’, his broad use of the term is very much focused on ‘inequities’ (avoidable

or remediable differences among groups of people) and the role of community development in identifying and challenging these.

This theme of economic imperatives and environmental destruction is taken further by Ranta-Tyrkkö and Jojo in Chapter Seven. They offer a case study from a mining region in India, which demonstrates how the power of private companies rides roughshod over the local ecosystem and livelihoods of its inhabitants (many of whom are Indigenous Adivasis), offering token recompense in the form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. These programmes seem to provide piecemeal welfare and health services, with no overall planning for a sustainable future nor meaningful engagement of local people. While CSR programmes may be regarded as community development initiatives, and sometimes employ community development workers (see Owen and Kemp, 2012; Martínez Domínguez and Scandrett, 2016), in this case community development values and approaches were absent. Ranta-Tyrkkö and Jojo advocate for meaningful community development involving local people, while noting pessimistically that the dependence of the inhabitants on mining jobs compromises their willingness to organise and engage in making demands for better working conditions. Any community development workers practising in this area will be faced with myriad ethical dilemmas at both macro and micro level in dealing with the power of large corporations and well as intra-community tensions and the extreme marginalisation of the Indigenous people. The creative and courageous ethics work called for might include some of the approaches outlined in Chapter Six on working with Indigenous communities in Australia.

Working out roles and boundaries: ethics work in action

In Chapter Three, Shevellar and Barringham directly address many of the micro challenges facing community workers in their daily work, drawing on a focus group discussion and interviews with community workers practising in Brisbane, Australia. They discuss participants' views about the impossibility and undesirability of drawing clear boundaries between the roles of paid workers, volunteers and citizen-activists. In community development work, which often takes place in public and informal settings, 'dual relationships' (involving workers being friends or family of those with whom they work, for example) are commonplace, and apparently are handled with reference to personal ethics rather than codes or regulations. Workers discuss the challenges of working within layers of accountability (to self, profession, organisation and community members) and the blurred

boundaries between personal and professional life in a practice that may be regarded more as a vocation than a career. Quotations from some workers show them giving accounts of themselves as doing many aspects of ethics work. We hear about them working on their identities as people as much as professionals and employees, and engaging in relationship work through 'sitting with people' and 'discovering what it is they are yearning for'. Through their framing work, they see themselves and their practice against the backdrop of larger political, policy and organisational contexts and a world that is in many respects unjust.

Chapter Five, about community development and participatory research with sex workers in India,^a is written with a similar sensitivity to political and social context, as Narayanan and Bharadwaj give an account of the many dilemmas faced by themselves and their organisation. One of the challenging issues with which they struggled ethically relates to the question of whose values and norms should be used to judge the pathways to positive development of sex worker collectives. As a group facing serious stigmatisation in wider Indian society, their demands for rights to safe working conditions are in opposition to some of the hidden, or not so hidden, agendas of government and NGOs, which often regard quitting sex work and prevention of the spread of HIV as positive outcomes of community development interventions. This tension between the values and norms of sex worker communities and societal norms (also echoed in the values and norms of some NGOs) is reflected in the chapter title: 'Whose ethics count?' This is a challenging question for community development workers on the ground to consider. While they do not wish further to stigmatise or blame sex workers for freely choosing their livelihoods, neither do they wish to regard sex workers merely as victims of sexual exploitation.

Community consent: a constant process of renegotiation

How community workers obtain consent to work on particular issues in communities is an issue directly raised in both Chapter Four on neighbourhood-based work (Gradener and de Kreek) and Chapter Five. According to Gradener and de Kreek in Chapter Four, gaining consent in a community work context entails recognition of communities as sources of diversity, made up of people and interest groups holding different opinions and priorities, which may also clash with those of community workers or community leaders. They give two examples (from the US and the Netherlands) of occasions when consent was not initially obtained by community workers. They argue

that working towards consent is a slow and delicate process, requiring practical wisdom (*phronesis*) on the part of all involved. They emphasise the importance of community workers' involvement being regarded as legitimate, suggesting signs of legitimacy that can guide them through the phases of gaining consent. These include an inconspicuous but deliberate presence on the part of community workers, leading to community engagement with the issues at stake and finally the future embeddedness of the community workers in local structures and community visions. Gradener and de Kreek recommend humility, and the use of generative questions in the 'subjunctive voice' (as in, 'might we consider this?') as ways of proceeding.

The examples and arguments in Chapter Four demonstrate the sensitive ethics work required in the practice of community development – including the capacity to undertake relationship work through recognising and valuing different interests and opinions, while also being prepared to challenge received ideas and vested interests (through the work of reframing). Gradener and de Kreek briefly mention the work of Paulo Freire in connection with the idea of 'generative themes'. Clearly the critical pedagogy approach for which Freire (1972, 1993, 2001) advocates provides an important way of starting with the concerns and themes of members of a community, while developing a critical consciousness of sources of power, oppression and vested interests. In this sense, building on the analysis of Gradener and de Kreek, community development could be regarded as a constant process of negotiating and *renegotiating* consent – with workers, activists, leaders and community members being prepared to reframe their work, seeing new issues and changing views and tactics as they go along.

The idea of renegotiating is also implicit in Chapter Five, where consent emerges explicitly towards the end. 'Consent letters' were presented to members of a sex worker collective by an NGO in India planning to undertake monitoring and evaluation research on the community development programmes with which it had been involved. These letters, explaining the purpose of the research and asking individual sex workers to agree to participate, were part of the recognised requirements for conducting 'ethical' research and are commonly asked for by research ethics committees or institutional review boards. However, the sex workers dismissed these letters, turning the tables on the NGO workers (Narayanan and Bharadwaj, the chapter authors) by demanding that they, the sex workers, should set the terms of reference. Narayanan and Bharadwaj note their own discomfort as power shifted from themselves towards members of the

sex worker collective. They were called on to undertake the ethics work of reframing the situation to foreground community rights rather than worker responsibilities, along with handling emotions and renegotiating their identities as co-researchers.

This example in Chapter Five shows how the situation moved from a case of the community workers/researchers *obtaining consent* from community members to undertake work defined by the NGO, to community members setting the terms of reference for the work that could be done and *making demands* of the community workers/researchers and NGO. Arguably this was a positive outcome, showing how the earlier community development work undertaken by the NGO, Praxis, was effective in enabling the sex workers to take power and organise themselves as collectives. Meanwhile, Praxis has now developed processes for community-led ethical review. In writing this chapter, Narayanan and Bharadwaj show themselves doing reason work, and performing as ethically reflexive and sensitive practitioners.

Alternative paradigms for ethical being and action: relational approaches

Chapter Six, on working with Indigenous Australian communities, takes a very different form (a conversation between three people, Buchanan, Collard and Palmer) and uses different language from the previous two chapters. However, the questions it considers are similar: how do community development workers, as outsiders, enter a community, understand its culture and norms, and engage respectfully? Nevertheless, the difference between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ is probably greater in the case of Indigenous communities than in the examples given in Chapters Four and Five. In Chapter Six we find references not just to distinctive experiences and knowledges, but ‘ontologies’ (what exists). This chapter, which focuses on the *Noongar* people and country of south-western Australia, gives two related messages. The first concerns how non-Indigenous people should approach community development work in this area, by respecting Indigenous beliefs, customs and ways of being. The second message is about what community development practitioners can learn from indigenous ways of working that makes for good community development practice in general.

With regard to the second message, this chapter is, in effect, offering an alternative paradigm for community development practice, based on a deep connection with place, people, ancestors and the natural world. Its use of *Noongar* language is particularly evocative, providing

many metaphors for the careful, sensitive and relational ‘ethics work’ of the community development worker. The section on *birniny* (digging and scratching) affirms the embodied nature of the work, emphasising the way we hold ourselves and how we move, ‘constantly looking out for prickly things’, ‘always on the lookout, attentive to what might lie just out of the corner of the eye, and always prepared to adjust to what we see and do’. As Len Collard comments here (p 128): ‘*Birniny* is a philosophical way of being. A way of doing things and holding yourself. And I think an approach to community development too.’

The final three chapters of the book (Eight, Nine and Ten) also engage more philosophically with practices and visions that offer alternatives to the prevailing neo-liberal paradigm outlined by Popple in Chapter Two. Pyles sets Chapter Eight in ‘the neo-liberal US context’, where she critically explores different models of community organising. She argues for a re-evaluation of the traditional conflict-oriented approach pioneered by Saul Alinsky (1969, 1989), with its utilitarian focus on instrumental tactics for achieving desired ends. Pyles presents a model of transformative organising, which pays as much attention to processes as outcomes, based on a relational ethics, stressing the importance of self-care and healing justice. She is nevertheless aware of the need for community organisers to have constantly in mind the balance between engaging with healing work and action for social change. She calls for community organisers to do both the inner and outer work of transformation, giving the example of Hunter’s (2015) work around promoting a movement to end racialised mass incarceration, which combines organisation and movement building with provision of material and social support to incarcerated people and families of victims. She also stresses the value of transnational work, intergenerationality and intersectionality (the interrelationships between ethnicity, gender and so on in exacerbating oppression), drawing on immigrant labour organising in the US. Pyles challenges the traditional model of professionalism, which imposes boundaries between personal and work life and between community organisers and people with whom they work, suggesting they need to be aware of, and use, their own identities as people of colour, immigrants and so on, which are shared with the people living in the communities where they work.

Diprose and Hill in Chapter Nine also advocate an alternative paradigm. They take a Community Economies (CE) perspective as developed by Gibson-Graham (2013) and others, in which ‘ethical questions around care and “economic being-in-common” are central’, with a focus on the everyday work people do to care for each other

and the ‘more-than-human’. Following Negri (2003) they describe ethics as ‘responsibility for the common’ and focus their chapter on the question: ‘How do we encounter others as we seek to survive well?’ A CE approach challenges the dominant assumptions that the economy has to be both capitalist and separate from the ecosystem. They offer case examples of CE approaches in a post-industrial neighbourhood in Canada and a storm-devastated area in the Philippines, showing how the history of places is important and how the creation of cultural capital maps and pooling of individual funding for collective social enterprises can enable community survival and flourishing. Here the work of ethically framing and reimagining economic futures in community terms is very important.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, Westoby draws together the philosophical insights of earlier chapters, along with his own theorising of community development practice (Westoby, 2014, 2016; Westoby and Dowling, 2014), arguing for community as an ethical space – of hospitality, dialogue, solidarity and ecological sensibility – where people come together and may act collectively. He insists, however, that our vision of community should be non-essentialist in its understanding of commonality, and that community development workers see themselves not as making interventions or achieving prescribed outcomes, but rather as part of the fabric of community – nudging, inviting, responding, holding and sometimes simply ‘being with’ or ‘walking alongside’ people and groups in solidarity. He highlights the importance of the ethics work undertaken by practitioners as part of the dialogical process of community development work.

Concluding comments: “laden with the sweat of community workers”

Community development work is not easy. In Chapter Six (p 126), Dave Palmer asks his *Noongar* co-author a question: “Len, could we then conclude that an ethical practice with *Noongar* community would have to be laden with the sweat of community workers?” Len replies: “Both literally and metaphorically.” Sweat has a special significance for *Noongar*, as it reveals who people are, what they have been doing and their intentions. It ‘speaks’. In all cultures sweat also signifies hard work and effort. This metaphor seems relevant for community development in all contexts, not just with *Noongar*. For community development work requires not just knowledge and skills, but also commitment to a set of idealistic values, an ability to handle inevitable contradictions and dilemmas, to be creative and empathic and engage in the constant,

but often hidden, labour of ethics work in highly politicised contexts in which inequities are endemic and entrenched. We, the editors and authors, hope this book may prove both stimulating and inspiring for practitioners, students and academics as they sweat on their own community development journeys.

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