



Community Social Work Practice in an Urban Context: The Potential of a Capacity-Enhancement Perspective

Melvin Delgado

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The future of social work rests on how well it can address urban issues, particularly the needs of urban communities of color. Yet too many texts either focus exclusively on the problems these communities face or simply ignore their unique characteristics all together. *Community Social Work Practice in an Urban Context* aims to teach graduate students in social work how to create positive community environments in marginalized urban-based communities. Melvin Delgado's innovative and creative approach to urban social work practice shows students how to focus on the assets urban communities already have. Specifically, he suggests a capacity enhancement model approaching the adults and children of these communities through the arts and other positive community projects, such as community gardens, playgrounds, and murals. This model offers tremendous potential for unifying communities that consist of groups from very different cultural backgrounds. Social workers are in unique positions to use this model based upon their familiarity with communities and their exposure to issues related to oppression. This model also provides them with the opportunity to identify, engage, and plan services with communities. In turn, these projects are based upon a community's strengths and represent an effort to develop a community's capacity to help itself with assistance from professionals. Graduate students specializing in urban-focused social work will find this a fresh approach to a timely issue, particularly in community and macro practice courses. It not only shows students new and more positive ways to approach their urban clients, but it also provides them with a better way to address communities as a whole.

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