1 Developing Communities

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BEHAVIOR OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter and completing the online learning activities, students should be able to

1. Understand the criticism of the concept of "community."

2. Define community of place.

3. Differentiate between community development and economic development.

4. Describe the social forces that led to the rise of the community development field.

5. Differentiate between development "of" community and development "in" community.

6. Identify issues that influence the interests of residents in specific localities.

7. Understand the role of participation in the community development process.

8. Distinguish between community service-learning and volunteering/community service.

Introduction

Much has been written in recent years about the loss of community and the implications for civil society (Putnam, 2000). Globalization has restructured economic, political, and social relationships at the local level. Technological and social changes have opened new paths for sharing collective interests, such as social networking sites on the Internet and mass media that link individuals to a common culture. Corporations and financial institutions shift capital around the globe to seek out more profitable locations for doing business. Workers increasingly move to places where they can find better job opportunities. All of these factors undermine the sense of community in places.

Although our social relationships and interests are no longer limited to local communities, the power of place remains. Local issues, such as education, housing, health, and jobs, are critical concerns for most residents. There continues to be interest in mobilizing local residents to build assets that improve their quality of life (Green & Haines, 2007; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Although communities are tightly integrated into the global economy and culture, local relationships and issues continue to play an essential role in the daily life of residents.

This idea that community is a valid concept today is often criticized by social analysts. Much of this analysis emphasizes the individualistic nature of many modern societies (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). Although it is true that many cultures today are more individualistic, there are many issues that encourage people to look for common interests and concerns at the local level. Other critics charge that the concept of community is laden with assumptions about a common set of values and norms. This assumption tends to ignore the divisions in a locality (such as race, gender, and class) that may produce different values and interests. Our use of the concept of community does not assume that residents hold the same values or adhere to the same norms. It does presuppose that there are issues that are imposed on or common to many people who live in a certain area. So, for example, factors influencing the value of homes in a neighborhood might be an issue that is a source of collective action. Residents may work together to fight crime or improve the quality of education in the area. Similarly, environmental problems (such as illegal dumping of trash or hazardous waste sites) may contribute to local responses by residents. This is not to say that all residents will act on some of these common interests. These issues, however, provide opportunities and incentives for residents to act on a local basis. This view of community, then, does not require consensus. And it does not imply that residing in a specific geographic location constitutes a community. Instead, community is constituted when residents in a specific geographic place are mobilized to act on locality-oriented collective interests. Kenneth Wilkinson (1991) adds a third criterion (in addition to territory and collective action) to the definition of community—local institutions. Local institutions are important because they produce regular social interactions.

This book examines the theory and practice of community development. Community development can be defined as networks of actors engaged in activities through associations in a place (Wilkinson, 1991). There are a couple of key points to emphasize in this definition. First, this definition is limited to "communities of place" rather than "communities of interest." It focuses on social relationships that are defined by territory rather than simply by interests. Examples of a "community of interest" would be a group of people who have common hobbies or interests. A community of place includes a group of residents who have common interest related to territory or place. An example would be factors that influence the local quality of life, such as education, environmental conditions, or jobs.

Second, community development is a social process involving residents in activities designed to improve their quality of life. An implicit value of

community development is that this involvement should be inclusive, with and by residents from all walks of life in the community, not to and for them. In many respects, the process of development is just as important as the outcomes.

Community development is often confused with economic development. What is the relationship between community and economic development? Most people view community development as a set of activities that must precede economic development. Communities need to provide a good social and physical infrastructure, including housing and schools, in order to generate jobs and income. Many community development activities, however, are more directly related to economic development, such as job training and business management. The concept of community development, then, is broader than economic development and may include many activities that are economic in nature.

Community development can be traced to the Progressive Era at the turn of the 20th century, when Progressives sought to address the major problems facing cities, such as rising crimes rates and juvenile delinquency. Their view was that these urban problems were caused by the social conditions in local neighborhoods. Progressives also emphasized the need to engage local citizens and experts in identifying strategies to address these problems. Their interventions to address these issues were at the community rather than the individual level.

The Progressives provided a rich conceptual framework for community development, but it was the social activists of the 1960s that broadened the basis of community intervention and institutionalized it in national policy. The War on Poverty directed several programs at the problems of concentrated poverty. These programs required the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in the design and implementation of programs.

Community development has evolved to include a much broader focus than just poverty. Affordable housing, job training, and social services continue to be the "meat and potatoes" of community development programs. Community development, however, has expanded to include local issues such as education, health care, and the environment. Thus, community development is a field composed of many disciplines. For example, individuals from any of the following disciplines may become involved in community development—anthropology, business, education, economics, geography, organizational behavior, sociology, or social work. The common thread that runs through various disciplines and issues is the continuing importance of place and the value (necessity) of public participation in decisions that affect local people.

The community development literature is filled with contradictory notions about the field. The literature is often divided among those who promote "development-in-the-community" and those who advocate "development-of-the-community" (Shaffer & Summers, 1989). This distinction is often characterized as process versus outcomes. Is community development about increasing civic participation in local matters, or is it about generating tangible outcomes, such as jobs, businesses, and affordable homes? This is probably a false choice because most community development practitioners do both. But

the outcomes can be contradictory as practitioners may emphasize outcomes at the expense of the process of community engagement.

Inherent in this definition is another contradiction. Community development is often viewed as a normative science, advocating public participation and civic engagement. By normative science, we mean that it is not objective and value-free but is shaped by values and norms. It also may mean that community development is more of an "art" than a "science." There is no conceptual map for how to work with all communities. Community development, however, can be considered a positive science, focusing on identifying the most effective ways to promote development in communities. This view of community development sees the importance of basing local programs on empirical evidence and not just on the desires and preferences of local residents.

The Practice of Community Development

Community development practitioners are engaged in a variety of activities, including economic development, housing, job training, and others (Brophy & Shabecoff, 2001). To a large extent, the field has been shaped by community practice rather than guided by theory. Many of the institutional innovations that have become basic tools, such as community land trusts and community development financial institutions, were developed through local experiments. Methods of community organizing and facilitation have evolved as well through practice and social learning.

This is not to suggest that research has not made important contributions to community development. Several examples illustrate this link. There has been a plethora of recent research on the concept of social capital. This concept, which is discussed more fully in some of the later chapters, focuses on the role of social networks and relationships in generating or inhibiting collective action. Although the research has been widely debated, the empirical work on this topic has some immediate implications for community development. Strategies for establishing social ties across groups within the community and with outside organizations and institutions are essential to the development process.

Another example is the research on workforce development, which documents the role that community-based organizations can play in linking employers, workers, and training institutions (Melendez, 2004). Workforce development networks can be structured so as to provide employers with incentives to invest in training of low-wage workers (Green, 2007).

Although the context for community development varies widely, most practitioners would prefer to base their activities on research-based ideas and concepts. This book brings these disparate pieces (theory and practice) together in an integrative fashion that summarizes the current state of the field. The goal is to more fully integrate the insights from research and practice to advance both. One additional dimension—service-learning—is introduced. Recently, there has been increased interest in the concept of community service-learning.

Service-learning provides students with an opportunity to integrate the concepts and theories that are based in research with an actual community experience.

————— Service-Learning and Community Development

Service-learning has been widely acclaimed as an important pedagogical tool. The basic premise of this concept is that experiential learning enhances classroom knowledge. Service-learning can be defined as a teaching methodology that integrates the goals of academic learning with a community experience to produce a community service. Service-learning has several characteristics that distinguish it from traditional community service or volunteering. First, service-learning involves experiences that meet community needs. Rather than just fulfilling a course requirement, service-learning serves the needs of local residents and organizations. This element can be challenging because many service-learning activities are oriented toward students rather than the needs of communities (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

Second, it requires reflection and academic learning on the topic related to the service. Service-learning provides students with practical learning experiences that allow them to apply theories and concepts learned in the classroom. This community experience enriches the student's classroom knowledge as well by providing concrete activities that demonstrate the value (or weaknesses) of the conceptual material discussed in class.

Third, the experience contributes to the student's understanding of community life. Students gain an appreciation for how and why the local context matters. Much of what is taught in the classroom focuses on general principles and theories. Service-learning provides a more nuanced understanding of how these general principles and theories work in different community settings.

In the remaining chapters of this text, examples of community service-learning are provided. These case studies demonstrate the value of service-learning for enhancing understanding of community development. Additional material on service-learning is also available on the course Web site. Service-learning activities offer students an opportunity to take the concepts and theories discussed in this book and apply them in a real-world setting. Our goal is to introduce these concepts in the book and provide exercises and activities that will enhance the opportunities for students to use them in their community.

————— A Few Words on Pedagogy—Learning and Teaching

This book offers a unique approach to the study of community development. Rather than just summarizing and defining theories and concepts, the book provides exercises, most of which are online, that allow students and practitioners to apply the central ideas presented in each chapter. In addition, it

provides a series of community service-learning activities. Learning activities are conceptualized on three levels.

1. **LARK:** The first or most basic level of learning is cognitive, or "Learning And Repeating Knowledge." For each chapter, a series of online action learning or LARK activities is provided that students will complete to ensure that they grasp the full meaning and understanding of all fundamental and basic theoretical concepts presented in the chapter. Batteries of multiple-choice and short essay questions are included online for each chapter.

2. **SOAR:** The next basic level of learning is synthesis, which involves "Searching Out And Relating" knowledge. For each chapter, we offer a series of action learning and research exercises online, or SOAR activities. SOAR activities ensure that students grasp the full meaning of all fundamental concepts and basic skills presented in the chapter by relating their new knowledge to the practice of community development. SOAR activities include case studies, demonstration, role-plays, and action research projects. Thus, batteries of case studies, essay questions, team learning exercises, and action research projects are included for each chapter.

3. **LIFE:** The highest level of learning is creativity, which involves "Learning In Field Experiences," or the laboratory of life. Each chapter will have a series of LIFE activities that require students to (a) apply what they have learned to the practice of community development in real-world or on-the-job tasks; (b) analyze and interpret outcomes; and (c) suggest new, creative approaches for understanding and practicing community development. For example, exercises will be included that enable students to interpret situations that they encounter in real-world community development challenges for a practical and theoretical approach, and to provide suggestions to colleagues, instructors, and the authors of chapters in this book that will enrich the community development field. In addition, many chapters will provide instructors with information on community service-learning activities that can be integrated into the course.

Theory and Practice of Community Development ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

As we already have suggested, the field of community development has been shaped more by practice than by theory. Over the past 50 years, however, experience in the field has accumulated to the point where there are a growing number of general principles and theories about community intervention. In Chapter 2, Lorraine Garkovich provides a brief history of the community development field and identifies the major trends in theory and

practice. In this first section of the book, the history of the field is reviewed and basic theories of community development are outlined. These theories tend to be very general guidelines about how practitioners intervene in communities and the goals of social action.

Several different theoretical/methodological approaches are discussed. In Chapter 3, Barton and Selfa discuss the complex and multifaceted ways in which communities are linked to their landscape. They discuss strategies in which community development helps people to share meaningfully in the natural elements that surround their community. In Chapter 4, Robinson and Fear outline some of the premises and types of technical assistance provided to communities. In addition, they outline the basic contradictions involved in this approach. The self-help approach to community development (Chapter 5) is in many respects the polar opposite of the technical assistance approach. Rather than providing technical support, practitioners facilitate the process so as to build the capacity of communities to address future issues. In Chapter 6, Bridger, Brennan, and Luloff discuss the interactional approach to community development. Rather than focusing on the structure of communities, interactional theory stresses the central roles that local interaction and capacity play in the emergence of community among people who share a common territory. They emphasize that community is not taken as a given, but is a contingent phenomenon that develops through social interaction. Finally, in Chapter 7, Robinson and Smutko sketch out the basic elements of the conflict approach. Based on the work of Saul Alinsky, the conflict approach holds an important place in the field of community development.

Community Development Issues

In the second section, several common issues facing community development practitioners are discussed. The list of potential issues facing communities is endless, so we have chosen some of the most common issues that practitioners face in the field. Increasingly, community development practitioners are being asked to evaluate their efforts and demonstrate the impact of their programs. In Chapter 8, Green and Kleiner discuss some of the basic elements to conducting evaluation research in communities. A common issue and challenge for community development programs is leadership. In Chapter 9, Stovall and his colleagues identify strategies for building leadership skills in communities. Successful community development usually involves collaboration that brings together individuals who normally do not work together. Ayres and Silvis (Chapter 10) provide a discussion of the issues related to building partnerships across organizations, institutions, and communities.

Although rural and urban areas face some common issues, they also have some unique challenges. Distance and scale are two of the most obvious obstacles. Beaulieu and Israel (Chapter 11) describe some of the special obstacles and issues facing small, rural places and offer some strategies for community

development in these places. In Chapter 12, Lowe and Harris evaluate some of the obstacles that inner cities, especially concentrated poverty neighborhoods, face today.

The final section of the book focuses on several substantive issues facing communities. In Chapter 13, Wheeler and Thomas examine programs directed toward engaging youth in communities and provide examples of different approaches toward delivering youth programs. In Chapter 14, Morton and Glasgow explore how health has become a major community development issue. They also examine some of the models for implementing health programs in communities. Schafft and Harmon (Chapter 15) focus on the unique role that educational institutions can play in the community development process. They see schools as a significant resource that can provide the basis for collective action in communities. There is a growing recognition that sustainability is one of the major challenges that communities face today. Hembd and Silberstein (Chapter 16) provide an overview of different approaches that localities are taking toward developing more sustainable communities. In Chapter 17, Meikle and Green discuss some of the obstacles communities face through globalization. Globalization presents new obstacles to communities, especially in developing countries. Rather than completely constraining the efforts of local governments and organizations, globalization does offer some opportunities to relocalize the economy. And the last chapter (Chapter 18) presents some of the editors' opinions about the emerging issues in the field of community development.

Conclusion

This book is intended as an introduction to the field of community development for students and practitioners. The approach is somewhat different in that we explore the linkages between community theory, community development practice, and service-learning. Community development practitioners and students need a strong conceptual base for understanding local development issues. They need the ability and skills to understand the social, economic, and political dynamics at the local level, as well as a means of understanding how local communities are shaped and constrained by external forces. This text will help students develop the abilities and skills needed to be more effective as a community developer.

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