Definitions of Community

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Section A

Community
Definitions and change processes
What Is a Community?

- A group of people living in the same defined area sharing the same basic values, organization and interests (Rifkin et al, 1988)
- An informally organized social entity which is characterized by a sense of identity (White, 1982)
What Is a Community?

A population which is geographically focused but which also exists as a discrete social entity, with a local collective identity and corporate purpose (Manderson et al, 1992)
Community Components

Communities Are People Sharing Values and Institutions

- Locality
- An interdependent social group
- Interpersonal relationships
  - Expressed through social networks, and ...
- A culture that includes values, norms, and attachments to the community as a whole as well as to its parts
Community Diagnosis

* A Review of Systems *

**Social System**

- Basic units and roles
  - Associations
  - Institutions
  - Family structure, etc
The Social System
Communities Are Built on Social Capital

- Social networks have value—just like physical capital—reciprocity “pays off”
- Social capital refers to the connections among individuals
- Civic virtue becomes powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations

Continued
A community’s social and economic resources are embedded in social networks.

Social capital has “externalities” that go beyond individual members—affects wider community.
Community Diagnosis
*A Review of Systems*

**Political System**
- Power relations
- Leadership structure
- Subgroups
- Disenfranchised groups
- Formal and informal leadership
The Political System

- Formal and informal leadership
- Decision making processes
- Participation
- Constraints and controls
- Accountability

Source: The Basics
Community Diagnosis

A Review of Systems

- Cultural System
  - Basic beliefs and ways of life including technologies

- Economic
  - Resource base, ways of earning a living, distribution of resources

Continued
Community Diagnosis
A Review of Systems

Geographic

- Use of space, location of valued resources in that space
- Formal
  - Presence or absence of specific characteristics
Community Diagnosis

A Review of Systems

Geographic

- Functional
  - Flows and interactions of people, goods, information
- Administrative
  - Town, zone, or other boundaries
Maps Use the Geographic System to Help Diagnose the Community

- Location of resources
- Distribution of population
- Prevalence of health problems
Involve the community in drawing and interpreting maps
Framework for Studying Community

- Community typology framework
  - By Warren and Warren
  - Build on four characteristics
    - Identify
    - Integration
    - Group norms
    - External linkages
Community Typology Framework: Four Community Characteristics

1. Identity

- How much do people feel they belong to a community and share a common destiny with others?
- Is there a sense of consciousness about what their community is, where it is spatially?
Identity

When there is strong identity, people
- Generally do get along with each other
- Share the same values and interests
Identity

- When there is strong identity, people
  - Feel free to leave their children with neighbors when they go to market (trust)
  - Share a sense of place—assessment that their neighborhood is distinctive based on its unique characteristics
Sense of Communal History Enhances Identity

Indian temples have depicted a shared history for hundreds of years.
2. Integration
   - How often and with what number of neighbors do people visit and interact on the average during a period of one year?
Community Characteristics

2. Integration

– What brings people together?
  • Do they work on common causes?
  • Do they socialize together?
– Is there a sense of cohesion that brings people together for activities, help, projects?
Cohesion/Integration

- When there is cohesion, people …
  - Belong to an association or club inside this community
  - Relate/go talk with their neighbors at least once a week
  - Attend a ceremony organized by their neighbor
The Market

A Good Place to Observe Integration and Interaction

- Economic status
- Nutritional options
- Social interaction
- Communication networks
The market
A Cohesive Community Enjoys Festivals Together

Gelede Festival in Southwestern Nigeria
Tulalip Indians in Washington State celebrate the first salmon of the season
Community Characteristics

3. Group orientation

– How important is group, community welfare compared with the needs and rights of individuals?
– Are decisions made with community in mind?
– How strong are norms? Do they enhance *social control*?
If There Are Strong Norms, One May See …

- A neighbor challenging any children who are playing in the street instead of going to school
- A neighbor criticizing any child who shows disrespect for an elder
- A neighbor trying to settle a fight that broke out in front of his or her house

Continued
If There Are Strong Norms, One May See …

- A neighbor disciplining anyone who throws refuse in the street
- A neighbor complaining to the local government if it wanted to close down a local primary school
Community Characteristics

4. Linkages

– What channels exist for community members to contact outside groups and resources?
– What channels exist for outside groups and agencies to reach the community?

Continued
Community Characteristics

4. Linkages

– Do community members belong to outside groups?
– Do they bring news about the larger community back into the neighborhood?
When communities have strong external links, members:

- Seek help from a local government agency for solving a community problem
Linkages—Resources

- When communities have strong external links, members:
  - Raise funds to carry out a community project
    - Including seeking outside supporters
  - Belong to national or regional organizations, voluntary or professional associations
Community generated funds and links to external technical assistance address water supply needs
When There Are Few Linkages to Outside Agencies, Including Government

- Community resources such as clinics are not maintained
- Drug supplies are irregular
By belonging to branches of national associations, community members learn new ideas.
Hometown Associations

Social Capital with Linkages

- Help rural migrants to the big city
- Raise funds for hometown projects
- Intercede with state or national agencies and politicians on behalf of community
Typology: Different Combinations of Characteristics

- An integral community
  - Strong identity, integration, linkages
  - A cosmopolitan as well as a local center; individuals are in close contact; they share many concerns; they participate in activities of the larger community

Continued
Typology

**A parochial community**

- Strong identity, integration, weak linkages
- A community having a strong ethnic identity or homogeneous character; self-contained, independent of the larger community; has ways to screen out what does not conform with its own norms
Typology

A diffuse community

- Strong identity only
- Often homogeneous setting ranging from a new subdivision (GRA) to a new inner-city housing estate or project
Typology

 Diffuse

- Many things in common
- No active internal life
- Little local involvement with neighbors
Typology

❖ A stepping-stone community
  – Weak identity, strong interaction, links
  – An active neighborhood
  – People participate in neighborhood activities not because they identify with the neighborhood but often to “get ahead”
Typology

- **A transitory community**
  - Strong linkages only
  - A neighborhood where population change has been or is occurring

Continued
Typology

Transitory

- Often breaks up into little clusters of people—frequently "old timers" and newcomers are separated
- Little collective action or organization takes place
Typology

- Anomic
  - Weak on all counts
  - Really a non-neighborhood
  - Highly atomized, no cohesion
Typology

- **Anomic**
  - Great social distance between people
  - Lack in the capacity to mobilize for common action from within
Communities can be rural
Communities can be spread across the mountains
Communities can be urban: weak identity
Urban communities can have active street life
Section B

A Second Perspective and Framework:
Offensive, Defensive, and Hidden Communities
Another Perspective

*Community on the Offensive*

- Has actively identified problems
  - Environmental concerns
  - Lack of public services
- Highly visible through community-wide cultural festivals
  - Has media access to get its needs known more widely

*Continued*
Another Perspective

*Community on the Offensive*

- Intervention takes the form of collective action by the people themselves
- Class
  - There is an active middle class with time, resources, and contacts to enable community action
Defensive Community

- Problems/issues of concern mainly local neighborhood
  - More reactive, not proactive
- Best reached through neighborhood groups
Defensive Community

- Intervention
  - Often waiting for solution from above

- Class
  - Conscientious working-class neighborhood
  - Strong group norms, don’t rock the boat
An Ancient Walled City May Be “Defensive”
Hidden Community

Hard to Reach

- Poverty is a pervasive problem such that other issues are not well articulated
- Few group or community activities/occasions
  - Mostly personal contact to meet members

Continued
Hidden Community

Hard to Reach

- Intervention
  - Mostly on an individual casework basis

- Class
  - Economically underprivileged
Slums Lie Hidden behind Modern Urban High Rise Buildings
As a Unit of Identity

*Communities Define Themselves*

- Boarders are determined by insiders
- Membership is mutually decided and recognized
- May be compact
- May be spread widely over several miles
- Does not necessarily conform to lines on a map
Community Identity
Is Part of Local Culture—For Example, The Maasai

- All natural resources and living things have traditional names, special uses (plants), and special cultural roles for cultural ceremonies
- All spirituality of human living is believed by the Maasai to be derived from the Mother Earth
Myths, legends, and tales about land and the environment are narrated in a sanctified manner.

Aridity of the land and environment is seen by the Maasai as a severe punishment by the Creator:
- A sign of annoyance for the destruction of the environment.
Help preparing the roof
The Maasai
A Community May Be Mobile

- Pastoralism is part of creation
  - Maasai believe the tilling of land is a curse, an abuse to Mother Earth
- Marsh swamps and wells are sacred, no settlements allowed to be created at a radius of 5 km² from these sources
The Maasai

A Community May Be Mobile

- The ecosystem can be destroyed when the aforesaid traditional but complementary, threads
- The new concept of land ownership is alien