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Introduction

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Introduction

This volume of *Sociological Practice* is devoted to community development and other applications of sociology in the community. The community is a unit of analysis as well as a unit of development. If the term community development implies that it is the community that is being developed, then the purpose of practice is development *of* the community rather than development *in* the community. Much of what is labelled community development is actually organizational or group development in the sense that the community is not dealt with holistically. In other cases the individual is the unit of treatment within a community setting. In still other instances, the focus is on bricks and mortar rather than on human or sociological factors. This latter approach can be seen readily in the evaluation of projects that define success in terms of physical outputs such as the construction of roads, parks, or buildings. In these cases, the objectives are community buildings; not community building. In all of these instances, the community is an arena in which development takes place, but the unit of development is something other than the community itself.

The great majority of practitioners work in the community with individuals or with one or more organizations or groups; very few work with the community as a community. Thus, for example, community mental health practitioners work with individuals within a community setting as contrasted to an institutional setting. They do not actually treat the community as an entity that itself has a health dimension or as a sociological entity that contributes to the mental health or illness of individuals.

One of the reasons, perhaps, that most practitioners work at levels smaller than the community is the small number of graduate programs in community development. For interested readers, a list of graduate-level programs aimed at preparing community development professionals appears in Appendix I. While

there are no community development doctoral programs in the United States, some universities, such as the University of Maryland, offer community development as an area of concentration or specialization. On the other hand, at least one Third World country, namely the Philippines, offers a Ph.D. in community development. The Bradshaw article in this issue makes some intriguing suggestions about how we might learn from the Third World experience. The existence of this doctorate suggests a potential source of cross-cultural exploration. The articles in this volume exemplify the great diversity of community practice. They have been grouped into the following six sections: History/Background; Policy Issues; Examples/Cases/Models; Community Cooperation; Community Economic Development; and International Dimensions. Naturally, given the diversity of the field, a number of articles could easily fit into more than one category. The reader interested in material in any one category is advised to at least skim the abstracts of all the articles for possible items of interest.

History/Background

Bryan Phifer provides a brief historical account of the origins of community development in the United States. He chronicles the rise of the field as well as the origins of some of the literature and professional associations that have had community development as a major focus. Hyman provides a classification of different approaches to community development work ranging from the conflict school to the locality development approach. These two articles, with their references, provide a brief introduction to the field from which the interested reader may branch out for more in-depth treatment.

Policy Issues

Luloff and Wilkinson discuss the need for a renewed focus on the community as a unit of development. They show some recent trends related to public policy and briefly review some criticism of past approaches. It is well known that programs and policies for the amelioration of social and economic conditions at the local level tend to be faddish and subject to relatively rapid change. As facetiously suggested elsewhere (Lackey 1987:12-13), projects should all carry a prestamped label stating that the policy, funding, and personnel are subject to change without notice.

As Luloff and Wilkinson point out, the community is a sociological unit that is here to stay, and thus, we require a more sustained policy and financial effort to ensure community well-being. Their observation that community solidarity may be fostered through crises is supported by the Timmons and McCall case study. The issue of how to document and measure the results of

local participation that they identify is given lengthy treatment by Bamberger in the international section of this volume.

Bradshaw observes that there is much to be learned through a more creative integration of our experience in Third World settings with what we are attempting to do domestically. The idea of transfer has been, heretofore, largely limited to a one-way direction from Western, more developed societies to the lesser developed Third World nations.

Speight (1973) and Stone (1989) have raised some questions about the advisability of this approach in relationship to community development. In broader, cross-cultural terms a similar problem exists within different sub-cultures within the United States—the same approach doesn't work effectively with all communities. A review of successful community development experience in Third World situations might provide valuable suggestions for the improvement of domestic practice. For instance, the Nigerian example in Leighton and Stone's piece in the next section yields some useful insights.

Bradshaw (1989) has suggested that a major conference to explore these possibilities might be a good way to address some policy issues centering around the integration of international and domestic programs.

Examples/Cases/Models

The five articles in this section furnish a rich and diversified sampling of examples, case studies and models for professional community practice. The importance of working with the community as a unit is exemplified by Leighton and Stone. They hypothesize and show evidence that mental health and behavior are partly the function of community organization and the manner in which individuals are treated within their own and the larger community. When people find a positive place within their community that builds self-image, mental health improves; when social organization deteriorates, so does mental health. This article suggests important avenues for the prevention and control of substance abuse that is undermining American community life. It also raises some important issues concerning what citizens—versus highly trained professionals—can do for themselves when appropriately stimulated.

The article by Cumming and Cumming demonstrates the necessity for following sound principles of practice. When these are violated the development effort not only fails but community development as a field of practice can also suffer.

The Hamilton case study by Timmons and McCall reports on successful rejuvenation efforts in a community seriously affected by the midwest farm crises. The authors show that with the help of a trained professional, community members can take effective action to organize and transform a deteriorating economic situation and revitalize an otherwise dying community.

Hickman discusses primary health care and examines the application of selected sociological principles to community health development practice. She emphasizes the contributions of sociological concepts to both practice and research, particularly those concepts applicable to social systems analysis.

Practitioners struck by the contrasting levels of cooperation among different communities may wish to consider Anderson's phenomenological approach. He identifies a number of variables for explaining when and under what circumstances cooperative behavior within the community can be expected to be given or withheld. A model illustrates how to achieve community involvement and the steps necessary to gain effective community action. In the section that follows, Baker also elaborates on some ground rules of application and the circumstances that foster cooperation.

Community Cooperation

Community development has sometimes been criticized for its local, somewhat parochial focus. It is argued that individual communities, especially small rural communities, are not viable units of development. The Baker article shows that a concern for working with units larger than the single community is now gaining renewed attention after about a decade of relative neglect. His article and the one by Wells provide useful insights into the ways and means whereby communities can join forces. By creating a larger unit, agreed upon objectives may be achieved in a more effective and efficient manner than either one could achieve alone. The benefits of communities working together appear to be obvious. Overcoming such factors as community independence and historically-supported, intercommunity differences, however, may require special attention. Concepts such as Sharif's superordinate goals might well be suitable in resolving some of these problems. The articles dealing with community economic development have a direct bearing on the advantages of intercommunity cooperation.

Community Economic Development

The three articles in this section take a look at how sociology and the community development approach can be used in fostering economic improvements. Finsterbusch and his three co-authors present findings from a study of job generating activities in fifteen rural counties in three different states. Explanatory variables are presented suggesting why some counties are successful in creating jobs while others are not. Lenzi's analysis of coal producing counties directs attention to possible areas of revenue generation for the benefit of local communities. The piece by Flora and Flora on entrepreneurial communities provides valuable insights into the characteristics of communities that are successful in overcoming economic adversity.

The variables involved that distinguish successful from unsuccessful communities are those which community practitioners might wish to consider in working toward community change and development.

International Dimensions

The two articles in this section have a Third World focus. However, what the authors have to say is highly relevant to the domestic scene. Bamberger raises some fundamental dilemmas concerning the value of citizen participation and how to measure its contribution to the development process. Speaking from an agency perspective, he provides insights for practitioners and researchers alike into the problems of convincing benefit/cost oriented administrators of the value of citizen participation. He discusses gender issues in evaluation and makes interesting suggestions for reconciling the qualitative/quantitative approaches to evaluation.

Miller raises some disturbing questions pertaining to the role and functions served by private voluntary organizations providing development services. Questions such as who is actually being served—the agency or the community—are pertinent internationally and domestically for both private and public agencies. The Cumming and Cumming article is a good example of a project where the professionals want the citizens to want something more than they want to want it.

Appendices

The appendices furnish some basic information for students, practitioners, and academics. Appendix I is a list of institutions that provide a graduate degree in community development. Appendix II provides a brief history of sociological practice with definitions of clinical sociology and applied sociology. Appendix III is a compilation of suggested readings in clinical and applied sociology.

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