APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY INTERVENTION

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THREE MODES OF INTERVENTION

• Modes:
  A. locality development
  B. social planning/policy
  C. social action.
Mode A, Locality Development

• This approach presupposes that community change should be pursued through broad participation by a wide spectrum of people at the local community level in determining goals and taking civic action.

• Its prototypic form will be found in the literature of a segment of the field commonly termed community development.
Mode A, Locality Development

• As stated by an early U.N. publication: "Community Development can be tentatively defined as a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance on the community's initiative" (United Nations, 1955).
Mode A, Locality Development

- It is a type of activity that has been initiated and sponsored by religious and service groups such as The Catholic Church and The American Friends Service Committee, and it reflects highly idealistic values.
- The style is humanistic and strongly people-oriented, with the aim of "helping people to help themselves."
- The process of educating participants and nurturing their personal development has high priority.
- "Enabling" techniques that are nondirective in character and foster self-direction are emphasized.
Mode A, Locality Development

Some examples of locality development:

- neighborhood work programs conducted by settlement houses and other community-based agencies;
- federal government programs such as Agricultural Extension and The National Service Corps; and village-level work in some overseas community development programs, including the Peace Corps and the Agency for International Development (AID).
- To these can be added community work in the fields of adult education and public health education, as well as self-help and informal helping network activities conducted through neighborhood councils, block clubs, consumer cooperatives, and civic associations (Burns and Taylor, 1998).
Mode A, Locality Development

• While locality development espouses highly respected ideals, it has been criticized for its performance record. Khinduka, characterizes it as a "soft strategy" for achieving change. He indicates that its preoccupation with process can lead to endless meetings that are frustrating for participants and conducive to a slow progress.

• Khinduka further argues a concern with modifying attitudes and values may divert attention from important structural issues that need more direct engagement. Also, many projects draw their participation largely from racial and ethnic minorities and the poor, when it is the attitudes of the affluent and well-placed that need rearranging.

• Embracing consensus as a basic modus operandi precludes arbitrary actions from occurring, but it puts those who stand to lose from needed reforms in a position to veto effective action.

• The heavy emphasis on the local community may be inappropriate at a time when the locality has lost much of its hold over people and patterns of life are influenced significantly by powerful national and regional forces. Khinduka admires locality development for playing a gentleman's game in the often sordid arena of community affairs, but he worries about whether it can win.
Mode B, Social Planning/Policy.

• This emphasizes a technical process of problem solving regarding substantive social problems, such as delinquency, housing, and mental health (Kettner, Monroney, and Marlin, 1999; Burch, 1996).

• This particular orientation to planning is data-driven and conceives of carefully calibrated change being rooted in social science thinking and empirical objectivity (unlike other existing forms of planning that are more political and emergent).

• The style is technocratic, and rationality is a dominant ideal.
Mode B, Social Planning/Policy.

- Community participation is not a core ingredient and may vary from much to little, depending on the problem and circumstances.

- The approach presupposes that change in a complex modern environment requires expert planners who, through the exercise of technical competencies-including the ability to gather and analyze quantitative data and to maneuver large bureaucratic organizations-are needed to improve social conditions.

- There is heavy reliance on needs assessment, decision analysis,
Mode B, Social Planning/Policy.

- The design of formal plans and policy frameworks is of central importance, as is their implementation in effective and cost efficient ways.
- By and large, the concern here is with task goals: conceptualizing, selecting, establishing, arranging, and delivering goods and services to people who need them. In addition, fostering coordination among agencies, avoiding duplication, and filling gaps in services are important concerns in achieving service ends (Austin, 1997; Mandell, 1999).
Mode B, Social Planning/Policy.

• Within the field of social work, educational programs in planning and policy typify the social planning/policy approach. It also finds expression in university departments of public administration, public health, urban affairs, city planning, and policy studies.
• It is practiced in numerous federal bureaus and departments, in United Ways and community welfare councils, and in city departments and voluntary agencies geared to planning for mental health, health, aging, housing, and child welfare.
• The National Association of Planning Councils has been formed to strengthen these local community planning efforts.
Mode B, Social Planning/Policy.

- Planning and policy are grouped together in this discussion because both involve assembling and analyzing data to prescribe means for solving social problems.
- They overlap in some measure, but they also probably have distinct features. Frequently, in scholarly and practice writings, the two are treated as though they are mutually exclusive.
Mode B, Social Planning/Policy.

• The data-driven form of planning and policy practice has a certain currency and appeal, with its coherent intellectual structure and ostensible ease of implementation.

• Urban planning schools and policy studies programs place a great deal of emphasis on providing students with ever more complex and elegant statistical procedures and computer modeling methods.
Mode B, Social Planning/Policy.

- Two important factors place constraints on the prototypical rationalistic mode.
  - The first is the intensification of constituency politics, a contemporary development that makes planning highly contentious and interactive. Interest groups of various kinds feel they should have a say and have acquired a voice, and they place themselves vigorously into the pluralistic process through which decisions are made. Many planners and policy professionals believe that interests of various kinds rightfully should go into the defining of goals and setting the community agenda, because these are socially constructed phenomena and involve value choices that extend far beyond the purview of the expert or bureaucrat.
Mode B, Social Planning/Policy.

• Another factor confounding prototypical rationalistic intervention is the impact of fiscal constraint.
  – There is public aversion to taxation and to governmental spending for social programs.
  – Concrete economic conditions involving industrial decline and recessionary trends also place objective limits on social program options.
  – These public attitudes and economic strictures have shifted planning from an optimizing stance to what Herbert Simon refers to as "satisficing."
  – The dual effects of contentious community politics and a public leaning toward a "get by" level of social programming place into question the utility of elaborate, data-driven planning modalities.
Mode C, Social Action

• This approach presupposes the existence of an aggrieved or disadvantaged segment of the population that needs to be organized in order to make demands on the larger community for increased resources or equal treatment.
Mode C, Social Action

• The particular approach we are describing has a militant orientation to advocacy, with respect to goals and tactics (although not all advocacy is militant).

• It aims at making fundamental changes in the community, including the redistribution of power and resources and gaining access to decision making for marginal groups.
Mode C, Social Action

• Social action intervention seeks to change legislative mandates of political entities such as a city council, or the policies and practices of institutions such as a welfare department or housing authority.

• Practitioners in the social action arena generally aim to empower and benefit the poor, the disenfranchised, the oppressed.

• The style is highly adversarial, and social justice is a dominant ideal (Karp, 1998).
Mode C, Social Action

- Classically, stemming from the high point of social action in the 1960s, confrontational tactics have been emphasized, including use of demonstrations, picketing, strikes, marches, boycotts, teach-ins, civil disobedience, and other disruptive or attention gaining moves.

- Disadvantaged and aggrieved groups frequently do not have at hand the funds, connections, and expertise available to others, and consequently they rely heavily on the resources of "people power," which has the potential to pressure and disrupt.
Mode C, Social Action

- The social action approach has been used widely by AIDS activists, feminist organizing groups, gay and lesbian organizations, consumer and environmental protection organizations, civil rights and black power groups, and La Raza and victim rights groups.
- It has been embraced by Industrial Areas Foundation and ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) projects, labor unions, including the United Farm workers, and radical political action movements.
Mode C, Social Action

• In recent years, social action movements have expanded their strategy bent beyond the confrontational style, and "new wave" organizing now employs a wider range of adversarial tactics.
• Political and electoral maneuvers that are more fine tuned and diversified are being used in considerable measure.
• This is because the groups have become more sophisticated over time, there is less public tolerance for disruptive methods, and power elites have become skillful in counteracting confrontations.
Mode C, Social Action

• However, there is a great deal of fragmentation among groups engaged in social action.
• Advocacy has taken on a particularistic caste, with each aggrieved constituency advancing its own special goals and interests in a "politics of identity" (Byrd, 1999; Gitlin, 1996).
Mode C, Social Action

• Even among people of color, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans go their own ways, independently and often competitively.

• Thus, coalition building has become a central concern in social action, since groups are typically not strong enough to achieve significant results on their own.
Mode C, Social Action

• Fragmentation is especially handicapping because of the growing concentration of political and economic power locally, nationally, and even globally (see the discussion by Fisher on Political Economy).

• Relatively weak local entities that are disunited find themselves contending with powerful extra community entities that are functionally consolidated.
Mode C, Social Action

- Human service professionals have not been prominent in the social action area, but there has been continuing participation on a small-scale basis over the years. Major national organizations such as ACORN and the United Farm Workers Union have been headed by social workers.

- Modest salaries and the absence of professional perquisites are a deterrent to long term involvement. But new graduates with an interest in basic social change are in a position to take this on as a communal responsibility for a limited time at the beginning of their career. The
## The Three Community Intervention Approaches with Practice Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mode A (Locality Development)</th>
<th>Mode B (Social Planning/Policy)</th>
<th>Mode C (Social Action)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Goal categories of community action</td>
<td>Community capacity and integration; self-help (process goals)</td>
<td>Problem solving with regard to substantive community problems (task goals)</td>
<td>Shifting of power relationships and resources; basic institutional change (task or process goals)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Assumptions concerning community structure and problem conditions</td>
<td>Community eclipsed, anomie; lack of relationships and democratic problem-solving capacities; static traditional community</td>
<td>Substantive social problems, mental and physical health, housing, recreation, etc.</td>
<td>Aggrieved populations, social injustice, deprivation, inequality</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Basic change strategy</td>
<td>Involving a broad cross section of people in determining and solving their own problems</td>
<td>Gathering data about problems and making decisions on the most logical course-of-action</td>
<td>Crystallizing issues and mobilizing people to take action against enemy targets</td>
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<td>4. Characteristic change tactics and</td>
<td>Consensus: communication among community groups and interests; group discussion</td>
<td>Consensus or conflict</td>
<td>Conflict confrontation, direct action, negotiation techniques</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Salient practitioner roles</td>
<td>Enabler-catalyst, coordinator; teacher of problem-solving skills</td>
<td>Fact gatherer and analyst, program implementer, expeditor</td>
<td>Activist advocate: agitator, broker, negotiator, partisan and ethical values</td>
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<td>6. Medium of change</td>
<td>Guiding small, task-oriented groups</td>
<td>Guiding formal organizations and treating data</td>
<td>Guiding mass organizations and political processes</td>
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<td>7. Orientation toward power structure(s)</td>
<td>Members of power structure as collaborators in a common venture</td>
<td>Power structure as employers and sponsors</td>
<td>Power structure as external target of action: oppressors to be coerced or overturned</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Boundary definition of the beneficiary</td>
<td>Total geographic community</td>
<td>Total community or community segment system</td>
<td>Community segment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Assumptions regarding interests of community subparts</td>
<td>Common interests or reconcilable differences</td>
<td>Interests reconcilable or in conflict</td>
<td>Conflicting interests which are not easily reconcilable, scarce resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Conception of beneficiaries</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>Victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Conception of beneficiary role.</td>
<td>Participants in an interactional problem-solving process</td>
<td>Consumers or recipients</td>
<td>Employers, constituents, members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Use of empowerment</td>
<td>Building the capacity of a community to make collaborative and informed decisions; promoting feeling of personal mastery by residents</td>
<td>Finding out from consumers about their needs for service; informing consumers of their service choices</td>
<td>Achieving objective power for beneficiary system-the right and means to impact community decisions; promoting a feeling of mastery by participants</td>
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</table>
The Three Community Intervention Approaches with Practice Variables

- The table, in aggregate, provides a repertoire of practice options, for flexible application. Each of the thirty-six cells describes an analytical or behavioral intervention initiative.
- (This is not a complete enumeration of the possibilities by any means, but it is a suggestive one.)
- The practice options, when used critically and selectively, can provide vital components to interweave creatively into the design of strategy.
The Three Community Intervention Approaches with Practice Variables

- This moves us toward a contingency formulation where practitioners of any stripe have greater range in selecting, then mixing and phasing, components of intervention.
- An important next step is to identify a set of situational criteria to inform such tactical packaging.
- A number of social parameters of the situation readily come to mind, among them the type of change goal and its scope, the quality of constituency leadership, availability of knowledge regarding relevant problems and solutions, the extent and character of resistance, the degree of financial and other resource support at hand, and stage of development of the action system.