



Engagement, Participation, and Community Efficacy: Insights Into Social Organization

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Background and Purpose

- Theory development project
 - Since 2000 concerned with building capacity of communities to reach desired results
 - Initiated with focus on observing military family communities
 - 2000 community capacity model
 - More recently expanded to community social organization
 - Community capacity, network structures, and social capital



Background and Purpose

- Hawaii conference presentation
 - Elaboration of social organization theory elements (efficacy, engagement, participation)
 - Particular attention to effects of group membership on how efficacy relates to engagement and participation
 - Research questions:
 - Does engagement and participation contribute to community efficacy? Are there unique contributions?
 - Are these relationships associated with individual and social characteristics?
 - Analysis of 2002 survey of 769 Virginians
 - Grounded in Community Connections Index
 - Focus on engagement, participation, and community efficacy
 - Effects of moderators: Gender, age, education, marital status, income, and location of residence



Families and Communities

- 2005 issue (December) of *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*
 - Contextual effects focus
 - Influence of communities on individuals and families
 - Strata, layers, and levels
 - Partial explanation of well-being
 - Community-level processes as independent variables
 - Inform prevention and intervention
- Social organization theory provides insight into leverage points



Social Organization Theory: Definition of Social Organization

- Values, norms, processes, and behavior patterns within a community that organize, facilitate, and constrain interactions among community members
- Process by which communities achieve desired results for individuals and families, including ability to demonstrate resiliency
- Includes networks of people, exchanges and reciprocity in relationships, accepted standards of social support, and social controls that regulate behavior and interaction



Social Organization Theory

- Our previous work (see resource slide): Mancini, Nelson, Bowen, & Martin (2006), Mancini, Bowen, & Martin (2005), Mancini, Martin, & Bowen (2003), Bowen, Mancini, Martin, Ware, & Nelson (2003), Bowen, Martin, Mancini, & Nelson (2000)
- Our work is informed by:
 - Cantillon, Davidson, & Schweitzer (2003)
 - Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal (2001)
 - Furstenberg & Hughes (1997)
 - Janowitz (1991)
 - Kornhauser (1978)
 - Putnam (2000)
 - Sampson (1992)
 - Small (2002)
 - Small & Supple (2001)



Social Organization Theory: The Model

- Our approach, however,
 - Moves social organization theory from focus on disorganization and delinquency to broader applications
 - Moves the theory toward a more layered approach to communities (individual, family, community)
 - Presents the theory as having a more fundamental role in explaining broader community system phenomena



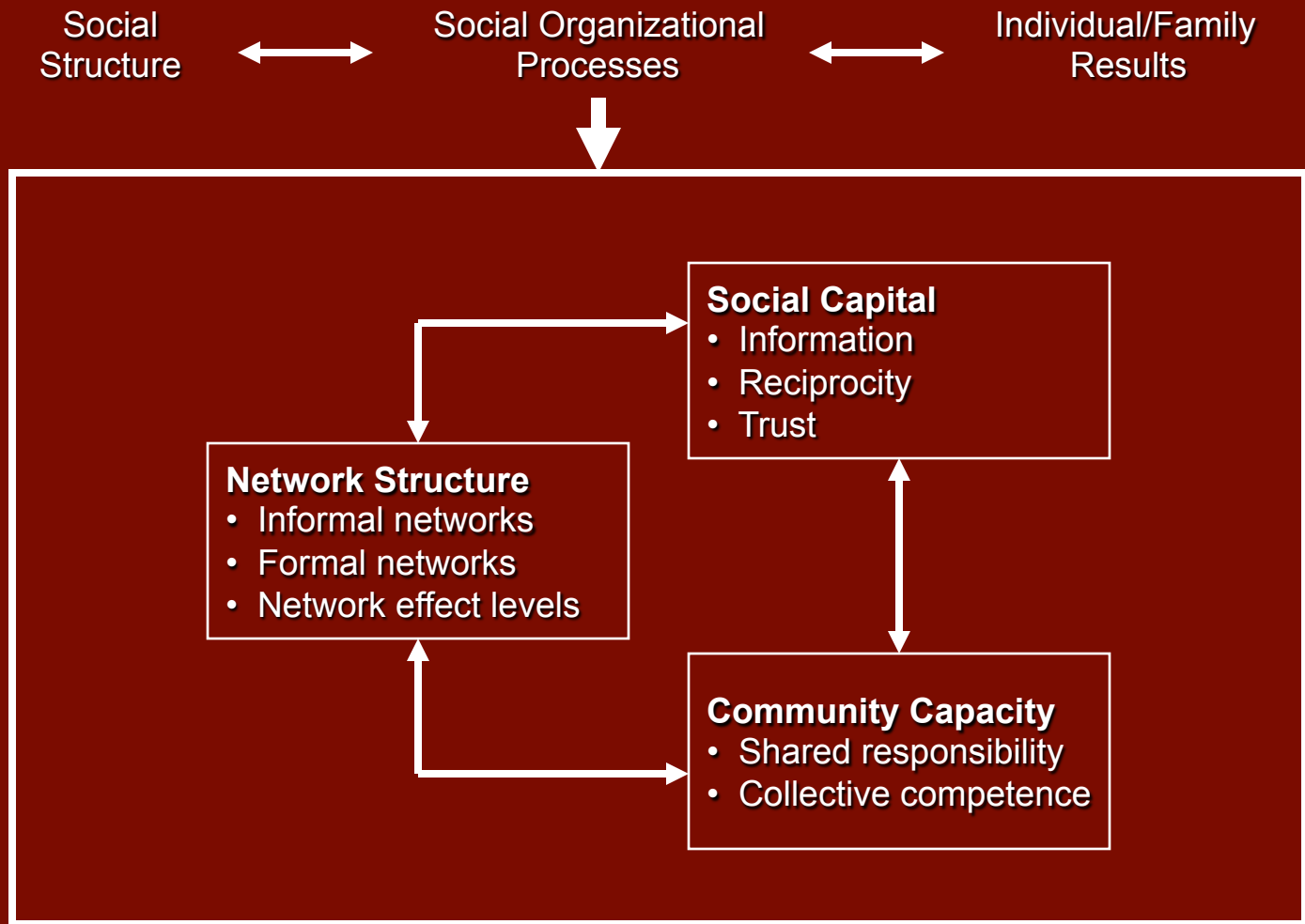


Figure 1. Social Organizational Processes, Social Structure, and Individual/Family Results

Social Organization Theory: Structure and Process

- Differentiation of structure from process
 - Former pertains to configuration and composition
 - Latter involves operations, interactions, and transactions
 - Process occurs within structural frameworks
 - Processes provide linkage between social structure and effects on individuals and families



Social Organization Theory: Focus on Processes

- Main focus is on processes
 - Networks
 - Social Capital
 - Community Capacity
- Relationships between them
 - Networks provide context for the development of social capital, and for building community capacity



Social Organization Theory: Networks

- Primary ways through which community life is enacted
- Informal networks comprise web of relationships with friends, neighbors, work associates
- Formal networks associated with agencies and organizations
- Voluntary and obligatory relationships



Social Organization Theory: Networks

- Networks effects levels
 - Action element of our framework
 - Nexus of informal and formal networks
 - First level-within a network
 - Second level-between like networks
 - Third level-between dissimilar networks
- Network configurations provide leverage for achieving results through generation of social capital and production of community capacity



Social Organization Theory: Social Capital

- Information, reciprocity, and trust
 - Aggregate of resources (information, opportunities, and instrumental support)
- Arise from reciprocal social relationships
- Results from participation in formal and informal settings
- Social capital observed in actions of civic groups, faith communities, and any number of community-based groups
- Increases odds of achieving results otherwise not attained



Social Organization Theory: Community Capacity

- Shared responsibility
 - For general welfare of the community and its individual members
 - Sentiments
- Collective competence
 - Taking collective action, confronting situations
- Assumptions
 - Concern directed at community as a whole and at particular elements, action is beyond expression of positive sentiments, action is proactive and reactive, action targeted at threats and at normative situations



Social Organization Theory: Community Results

- Consequences of effective social organization
- Desired results (examples, safety, health and well-being, family resilience)
- Results not owned by any particular group but valued across community
- Identified results assist to determine leverage points for change
- Moves theory from interesting framework to theory of action



Social Organization: Summary

- Need for theorizing that connects families and communities
- Social organization provides linkage framework
- Theory focused on action and community change
- There are leverage points that can be mobilized to support families and communities
- Consequent set of considerations for professionals
 - Program developers
 - Program and community researchers



From Theory to Research

- Current study focuses on slice of social organization
- “Located” in social network and community capacity parts of social organization model
- Effort to explore interplay of related elements of how people are connected to individuals and to collectives in their communities
- Particular focus on how individual and social characteristics moderate how efficacy is related to engagement and participation
 - Who is more “connected”? Role of gender, age, residence, economic resources, education, and marital status.



The Study

- 2002 survey of 769 Virginia residents ages 18 to 99
- Fielded in spring and early summer
- Participants randomly selected and included people who had listed and unlisted telephone numbers
- Response rate of 60%
- Respondents interviewed by telephone
- Margin of error at the 95% confidence level is $\pm 3.6\%$
- Research conducted by the Survey Research Center at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Alan Bayer and Susan Willis-Walton, Principal Investigators)



Sample Characteristics

- Sixty-five percent are 40 years of age and older
- Fifty-two percent are women
- Forty-three percent reside outside of Virginia's heavily populated urban crescent (eastern side of the state spanning from Northern Virginia to Richmond and Hampton Roads)
- Forty percent graduated from college
- Seventy-two percent are white; 28% minorities
- Fifty-eight percent are married



Community Connections Index (CCI)

- Fifteen-item measure grounded in social capital and community capacity theories
- Items originally organized into two dimensions of community connections
 - Community engagement (8 items)
 - Sense of community (7 items)
- For this presentation items organized conceptually into:
 - Efficacy, engagement, and participation
 - Efficacy: shared responsibility and collective competence (community capacity)
 - Engagement: interpersonal closeness
 - Participation: activity in civic affairs
- The interviewer stated: *Now I would like to know about your relationships with people in your community, other than family members. How often in the past year (“often, sometimes, rarely, or never”) have you:*



Efficacy, Engagement, and Participation Items (CCI)

● Efficacy

- Joined with people in your community to solve community problems
- Felt like you could make a positive difference in your community
- Looked after or showed concern for other people in your community

● Engagement

- Felt close to other people in your community
- Felt like you belonged in your community
- Spent time with people in your community when you needed a little company
- Made new friends with someone in your community

- Felt like your own circumstances were similar to others in your community
- Talked with people in your community about your problems or difficulties

● Participation

- Attended informational meeting about an issues affecting your community
- Attended club or organizational meetings in your community
- Attended a local government or political meeting
- Volunteered in your community
- Participated in community events or activities
- Attended religious services



Correlations between Efficacy, Engagement, and Participation

- Efficacy and engagement ($r=.592$, $p<.001$)
- Efficacy and participation ($r=.655$, $p<.001$)
- Engagement and participation ($r=.522$, $p<.001$)
- Engagement and participation explain 51.5% of variance in efficacy ($F(2,756)=400.89$, $p<.001$)
- Unique contributions: Engagement contributes an increase in RSQ of .086 beyond Participation; Participation contributes increase in RSQ of .165 above and beyond Engagement. Either explains 26.4% of variation in Efficacy (common variance)



Moderation Analysis

- Comparison of levels of individual and social characteristics: Gender (M/F), age (up to 40/40 plus), education (less than college/college graduate plus), marital status (married or living with someone/single), income (less than \$60K/\$60K or more), and location of residence (urban crescent/all others)
- Six hierarchical multiple regressions, one for each moderator variable
 - Step 1: community efficacy as criterion, with engagement and participation as independent
 - Step 2: moderator variable entered
 - Step 3: interactions (product variables) between moderator and independent variables
 - RSQ change used as decision criterion



Moderation Analysis (continued)

- With regard to gender (.0025) and income (.0032) was there an increase in RSQ due to the moderator effect, albeit modest
- Overall, moderators make no difference in primary relationships between the three social organization elements (efficacy, engagement, and participation); relationships independent of individual and social condition factors



Summary of Results

- Substantial intercorrelations between Efficacy, Engagement, and Participation
- Engagement and Participation make independent contribution to Efficacy, particularly Participation
- Relationships between Efficacy, Engagement, and Participation independent of moderators



Conclusions and Next Steps

- Potential for social organization theory to provide bridges between community processes, community programs, and families
- Theory provides umbrella for program development and for research
- Analysis suggests that social organization elements cross-cutting and independent of individual and social factors, at least those expressed demographically



Conclusions and Next Steps

- Provide greater precision to community concepts
- Improve measures of community concepts
- Clarify linkages between concepts
- Move focus to collective, contextual effects level: How do group level phenomena affect individual sentiments and behaviors?
- Develop clearer sense of change leverage points, their importance, and their likelihood of change
- Discern layers and levels in community structure and process
 - Twists and turns
 - To and Fro processes



Resources

- Bowen, G.L., Mancini, J.A., Martin, J.A., & Nelson, J.P. (2003). Promoting the adaptation of military families: An empirical test of a community practice model. *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, 52, 33-44.
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