



Community Engagement

Theorizing Community and Social Identity

Objectives for today

- ▶ To gain an understanding of the concept of 'community'
- ▶ Evaluate differing theories of community and how it is constructed
- ▶ To consider the features of community groups
- ▶ Discuss the advantages and limitations of community 'belonging'

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Discuss in your groups

- ▶ What does the term 'community' mean to you?
- ▶ What community or communities do you belong to?
How do you know that you belong?
- ▶ What do you think defines a community?

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What is 'community'?

3 core elements

1. a particular way of organising social relationships
2. A general (and desirable) quality of sociability and mutual regard
3. A summons to undertake joint mutual action



(Day 2006)



1. A particular way of organising social relationships...

- ▶ The idea of 'networks'
- ▶ Different to other ways of organising social relationships e.g. market exchange
- ▶ Is it a fair description?



2. Quality of sociability and mutual regard

- ▶ What do we mean by sociability?
- ▶ Misztal (2000) one of three main styles of human interaction – involves a balance between informality and formality
- ▶ Networks of sociability



3. A summons to undertake joint mutual action

- ▶ Butcher (1993) Active meaning of community
- ▶ Community action



Community and the whole man

- ▶ Society built on inclusive ties
- ▶ Modern world has destroyed this, division of labour
- ▶ Community take man away from his own selfishness – concrete reality of fraternity



Wirth (1957)

'Characteristically urbanites meet one another in highly segmented roles. They are to be sure dependent upon more people for the satisfaction of their needs than rural people and are thus associated with a greater number of organised groups, but they are less dependent upon particular persons and their dependence upon others is confined to a highly fractionalised aspect of the others' activity.'



Poplin (1972)

Members of communities regard each other as 'whole' persons who are of intrinsic significance and worth.

Members of mass society regards each other as means to ends and assign no intrinsic worth and significance to the individual.



Community & social divisions

- ▶ Division of labour also led to social divisions based on identities of functional interest i.e. class
- ▶ Conflict and competition now commonplace within society
- ▶ The role of capitalism



Community and political involvement

- ▶ Bureaucratisation of life
- ▶ Centralisation of political, economic and social life
- ▶ Consequence? Man has become more estranged from, the social world which they are part of
- ▶ Can the state provide the sense of security an individual needs?



Yeo and Yeo (1988)

Community has the capacity to forge a union between the community as supplied from above with its basically unequal social structures and community created from inside with its supportive and more ethical human relations



Therefore...

- ▶ Community is *ideological*
- ▶ Althusser (1970) '*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects.*'
- ▶ Nations as imagined communities (Anderson 1983)
- ▶ Members can act collectively without being sociable



So what makes the connection?

- ▶ Habitus and field (Bourdieu 1990)
- ▶ Habitus – balance between formality and informality in everyday life
- ▶ Field – system of organised social relations and institutions
- ▶ Community is historically formed and dynamic and subject to continuous change.



- ▶ Durkheim – social solidarity

- ▶ Mechanical vs organic solidarity

- ▶ Connectedness as the core meaning of community – has purpose and is meaningful to the individuals involved



- ▶ Therefore community needs to be considered in their historical and social context.

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So...are we any closer to a definition?

- ▶ We do know that defining community is difficult

- ▶ Can be expressed in a variety of ways e.g. recognition and cooperation, a product of communicative action or through recognition systems.



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Dynamics and attributes of community

- ▶ Communities of place?

- ▶ Communities of interest?

- ▶ Communities of identity?

- ▶ Needs to be a strong connection between the individuals to consider it a community

- ▶ Key elements – experiences & resources

▶

Types of community

- ▶ *Homogenous or Monocultural* – members enjoy same statuses e.g. mining communities
- ▶ *Heterogeneous or Multicultural* – Varying practices and interests of the members within
- ▶ Question – what might be the benefits and limitations of these two types of community? Are they likely to be strong or weak communities for example?

Communities and Local Government (2008)

Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

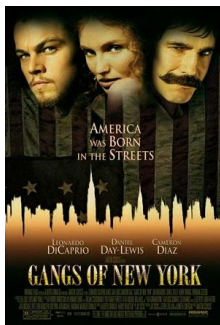
1. People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
2. People knowing their rights and responsibilities
3. People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly

And three key ways of living together:

1. A shared future vision and sense of belonging
2. A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
3. Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds

Territory

- ▶ Important concept within community
- ▶ Question: What are the positives and negatives associated with territory in a community sense?
- ▶ Encapsulation



British Communities

- ▶ 'Narratives of urban decline' (Watt 2006)
- ▶ Is it that simple?
- ▶ What can be done?



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