COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL DIVERSITY, AND THE NEW METROPOLIS

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Community development is a process in which people join together to improve conditions and create change at the community level, but what happens when community is viewed as multicultural rather than monocultural, or operates in metropolitan areas which are simultaneously becoming both more segregated and more diverse? If community development were designed to strengthen diversity and challenge discrimination, what would it be?

Racial and ethnic population redistribution is changing the social face of many metropolitan areas, from ones that are segregated to ones which are simultaneously segregated and diverse. But these changes have not been accompanied by discussion of the metropolis as a practice unit that is emerging anew. While discussion lags, however, segregation and diversity continue, and many choices are made for community development workers.

What are the implications of metropolitan racial and ethnic population redistribution for reconceiving community development as a field of practice and subject of study? In the new metropolis, what will, or should, become of community development?

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development is when people join together to improve conditions and create change at the community level. It can operate in indigenous initiatives or formal agencies; with diverse racial, ethnic, religious, or other groups; and in rural and urban communities in industrial and developing areas. Varieties of community development abound, and this journal offers opportunities for its voices to be heard.

Despite its variety, community development has some core concepts on which there is relative agreement, such as "starting with people," the idea that the process should originate in the experience of people; "strengthening community," that community is a unit of solution; "joining together," that individuals acting collectively can accomplish more than one person acting alone; and "creating change," that change is both desirable and possible (Checkoway 1997; DeFilippis & Saegert 2008).

Community development is one of several strategies to create change. For example, people can organize for social action, plan local programs, participate in government proceedings, advocate issues that concern them, raise critical consciousness, and provide community-based services. There is no single strategy to create change; there are many (Checkoway 1995; Hyde 1996; Rothman 1996; Weil 1996).

Community development has several steps in the process. People can negotiate their entry into the community, assess its strengths and needs, develop organizational capacity, make action plans, build support for implementation, and evaluate the process. Each step can have various methods of practice and various techniques for practicing them depending upon the purpose and population to be served. There is no single step or method; again, there are many.

Community development assumes that community is a unit of solution, but as the social characteristics of community members change, community itself can become a contested concept. This problematizes community development as a subject of study, something which challenges those who care about its future.

SOCIAL DIVERSITY

Community development is based on the notion that people share some sense of identity, such as the place in which community members reside, the social or cultural similarities among them, or the ideological or political cause about which they care. Social identity can vary according to ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, geography, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. The types and intersections of social identity are numerous, and

they can create quandaries for political representation (Forest 2004; Lum 1999;
Tatum 2000).

How will community development look different from a more multicultural
perspective? One way to address this question is by comparison of concepts of
community (Checkoway 2007). First, monocultural community can be
conceived as one whose people are similar in their social characteristics and
who, as they pursue their common purpose, gain strength in unity. They
conceive of a "community as a whole" whose members agree upon broad issues
of public policy that serve a singular "public interest" in which majorities
rather than minorities prevail.

Second, pluralist community can be conceived as one whose people comprise
distinct groups, each having its own social characteristics and interests in
education, economic development, housing, health care, or human services.
Because each group pursues its own ends, the public interest is served when
each group organizes on its own behalf, and influences the outcome of
decisions.

Third, multicultural community can be conceived as one which recognizes
differences in groups, and increases communication and collaboration across
them. It is neither monocultural nor pluralist, but rather combines "difference"
and "unity" in the same situation. Some cities have reputations for

multiculturalism – such as Sao Paulo, Toronto, and Rotterdam – as do some neighborhoods, marketplaces and malls, where people rub shoulders without necessarily touching (Sandercock 1998, 2003).

METROPOLITAN CHANGE

A metropolitan area is a population center comprising a central city or primary urban zone and its adjacent or outlying suburban, exurban, and rural areas, influenced by employment, transportation, commerce, and other activities. Definitions of metropolitan areas differ from one nation to another, but all have some common characteristics, one of which is that they change in population patterns over time (Rees & Butt 2004).

In the largest United States cities of the 18th century, for example, Western European immigrants with higher incomes concentrated in central residential areas bound by walking and horse-drawn transportation, while lower income workers resided outside central areas and their peripheries (Ward 1971).

In the 19th century, Eastern and Southern European immigrants concentrated in older affordable housing closer to central employment zones, while higher income people of Western European descent reconcentrated to newer streetcar suburbs, resulting in metropolitan areas divided into inside and outside zones distinguished by class, race, and ethnicity (Schuyler 1986).

In the 20th century, African-Americans migrated to the central areas of Northern cities, restricted by racial discrimination in lower-cost older housing of central residential ghettos, while new housing, highways, and automobiles fueled by economic institutions and government programs enabled European populations to move to segregated suburbs. African-Americans were followed by Latin American immigrants who took up residence in their own enclaves, causing the metropolis to emerge with central cities segregated into older housing for lower income residents of color, and suburbs with higher income white residents with newer housing and automobile access to areawide opportunities.

Twenty-first century metropolitan areas continue to change in their population patterns. New middle-class immigrants of Central Asian and South Asian descent are moving to urban and suburban residential areas that have higher levels of racial and ethnic diversity but not necessarily class diversity than do more homogenous areas. These areas are smaller in size than segregated areas, but both diverse and segregated areas are increasing, and patterns of diversity and segregation are also found worldwide (Iceland 2002; Reardon 2008).

For example, Metropolitan Detroit is America's most segregated metropolitan area, within which there are areas of diversity. As some of its suburbs increase in Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American populations, others are

exclusively white European, and Detroit is largely African American. Many metropolitan Detroiters are painfully aware of segregation, and want to communicate with people who are different from themselves, but have few opportunities to do so, and there are no community development workers who focus on this phenomenon (Checkoway 2009).

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Metropolitan areas are a unit of identity but not necessarily a unit of practice. Residents might identify with their metropolitan area, such as the French aire urbaine or Japanese toshiken, but these are weak units of practice. Some metropolitan areas have authorities for transit systems, or commercial centers and cultural facilities which draw upon regional residents, but are fragmented rather than cohered by intergovernmental systems (Dunham & Feiock 2004; Phares 2004; Stevens & Wikstrom 2000).

Worldwide, there are no authorities which address both diversity and segregation at the metropolitan level. Some municipal leaders speak of strengthening diversity and others of challenging segregation, but there are no authorities for doing both, and many municipalities are fiercely resistant. Governments occasionally try to desegregate schools through special initiatives, but these cause administrative and fiscal problems, breach traditions of local control, and provoke resistance by local residents (Bobo 1983; Orfield 1997).

Even if metropolitan areas were stronger vehicles of practice, municipal leaders normally avoid diversity and segregation as political issues, and emphasize their own municipalities and their well-being rather than promote pluralism and multiculturalism at the metropolitan level. There is no professional field or academic discipline which systematically addresses the problem of diversity and segregation at the metropolitan level, although there are impressive starts (Holloway 2008; Smets 2006; Smets & Salman 2008).

Community development workers recognize community as a unit of identity for which there is a substantial field of practice. Metropolitan areas are also a unit of identity, albeit a weak one, for which there is no present field of practice. There is nothing a priori to prevent community development workers from placing their emphasis on metropolitan areas, and on issues of diversity and segregation within them, although there is little evidence of their doing so.

RECONCEIVING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

If community development were reconceived as a multicultural process for strengthening diversity and challenging segregation, what would it be? It is possible to imagine the following elements.

First, it would require an ability to reconceive community development as a process which represents diverse groups and increases communication and

collaboration among them. Instead of an uncontested conception of community development based upon a monocultural model, it would emphasize "difference and unity" as a central concept both within and across jurisdictions.

Each step in the process would require reconception. For example, "planning" would become an approach to setting goals that express what distinct population groups want to accomplish individually and together; generating action ideas that respond to small group and whole group priorities; making decisions in ways which give voice to all groups and result in relative agreement; and initiatives that demonstrate diversity in each phase of implementation. Some scholars have analyzed urban planning with a multicultural lens, but the work to date has emphasized "know about" rather than "know how" propositions (Burayidi 2000; Sandercock 1998, 2003).

Also, "evaluation" would become an approach in which a diverse team formulates an evaluation plan; gathers information using multiple rather than singular methods; analyzes findings in ways which involve diverse populations; and shares the results in languages that community members understand. If community members speak English, Spanish, and Arabic, then dissemination presumably will take this into account.

The process will require change agents. First are "leaders" who express commitment and motivate others to the cause. Although leadership is often

constructed as the work of exceptional individuals, multicultural leadership

will necessarily take various people who engage their respective constituencies.

Second are "professionals" who view this work as a field of practice. They are

already emerging in existing fields – such as business and psychology – with or

without formal training. Third are "bridging persons" who work easily across

cultural boundaries. These special persons have multiple social identities ,

communicate in more than one language, mediate among groups, and

negotiate outcomes which would not be possible without them.

Change agents will necessarily become facilitators of intergroup dialogue

among people who will become more knowledgeable about their own social

identities, about the social identities of groups who are different from

themselves, about the institutional structures that affect their intergroup

relationships, about the issues that they face in the society of which they are

part, and about the strategies needed to create change. Intergroup dialogue is

emerging as a new field of practice with a growing knowledge base (Gurin 2002;

Dessel & Rogge 2009; Nagda & Zuniga 2003; Schatz et al. 2003; Schoem &

Hurtado 2001; Thompson et al. 2004; Zuniga 2007).

Finally, representation will become a guiding principle, including "descriptive

representation" which recognizes the socially descriptive characteristics of the

population; "substantive representation" which emphasizes their willingness to

speak the interests of their group; "behavioral representation" which deals with

their ability to influence others to recognize their position; and "mechanisms of accountability" by which groups hold them to account, and rewards or removes them for their performance. If representation is about accountability, then group formation and community organization are key to effective representation (Morone & Marmor 1986; Morone & Kilbreth 2003; Pitkin 1967).

CONCLUSION

If community development were a multicultural process designed to strengthen diversity and challenge segregation at the metropolitan level, what would it be?

This question is significant, especially in metropolitan areas which are becoming more segregated and diverse, and whose changes will challenge communities to build their capacity for the future. Even areas which appear unaffected by segregation and diversity will recognize the relevance of discrimination and dialogue as phenomena to be addressed (Schweder et al 2002).

Community development workers are ideally positioned for work of this type. They are strategically situated in communities, and many of them have skills that might be adapted to multicultural practice, although they have not necessarily applied them as such (Reisch 2008). There is nothing a priori to

prevent them from stepping forward and playing instrumental roles in the

process, if only they viewed themselves in these ways.

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