

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT, ORGANIZATIONAL TIES, AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By Gary Paul Green

ABSTRACT

Research on local economic development has taken a significant turn in recent years. Much of the previous work has focused on market factors that influence the adoption of economic development policies or the effects of policy adoption on employment and population change. There is a growing interest, however, in the role of social factors in local and regional economic development. In this paper, I examine how organizational networks and civic participation may affect employment growth in municipalities across the non-metropolitan United States. The organizational networks of local governments consistently influence the success of their economic development efforts, while civic participation has no effect on job growth. The benefits of organizational contacts are largely due to increased levels of information and potential sources of resources through organizational contacts rather than through increased levels of public participation or local government integrity.

Keywords: civic participation, local economic development, organizational networks

PROMISES AND DILEMMAS OF PARTICIPATION: ACTION RESEARCH, SEARCH CONFERENCE METHODOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

By Kai A. Schafft and Davydd J. Greenwood

ABSTRACT

Participatory approaches currently occupy a prominent position in community development practice. However, despite the claims made for the benefits of participation for community members and practitioners alike, critical reflections on how participatory approaches shape the longer-term processes of community development have been relatively few. This scarcity ultimately results in a shortage of knowledge about the best practices and potential pitfalls of these approaches. This paper attempts to fill this gap through a case study assessment of two socially and organizationally distinct communities and their use of Action Research (AR) strategies, including the Search Conference, as participatory-based approaches to community strategic planning and action. We find that while Search Conferences and AR strategies effectively identified important community issues and provided an initial catalyst for community action, each case also illustrates how organizational dilemmas and pre-existing local power structures challenge some of the basic assumptions of participation. The implications for community development practice are discussed.

Keywords: participation, community development, action research

NETWORKS AND FIELDS: CORPORATE BUSINESS LEADER INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS OF A LARGE NONMETROPOLITAN CITY

By Jeff S. Sharp, Jan L. Flora, and Jim Killacky

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the network structure of overlapping leadership between the corporate business sector and voluntary sector of a growing, non-metropolitan city in the Midwest. The data are from a study initially conducted in the early 1970s, and the analysis uncovers a pattern of selective, possibly strategic, involvement by corporate business leaders in the community's voluntary sector. An interactional field perspective is utilized to anticipate and interpret the findings. There are a number of community development implications of the findings and analytical approach, including support for expanded utilization of network analysis as a diagnostic tool for identifying strengths and limitations of community structures related to local capacity for community improvement activity.

Keywords: interactional fields, community power, network analysis

SO HAPPY TOGETHER OR BETTER OFF ALONE? WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, COOPERATIVE WORK, AND EMPOWERMENT IN RURAL PARAGUAY

By Patricia J. Cohn, Matthew S. Carroll, and Jo Ellen Force

ABSTRACT

Development organizations are emphasizing the use of women's groups to improve socioeconomic welfare and empower women at the household and community levels. This study looks at income-generating activities (IGAs) of women in a small rural community in eastern Paraguay, their contribution to family welfare, and women's involvement in community management. Economically active women in the study community had decision-making power within the household, but were not actively involved in community management. Further, the women preferred to work independently and not with others. There was a near universal preference for the use of particular IGAs, but personal and family circumstances affected production methods and yields. These preferences – along with negative experiences with previous group projects, a desire to work autonomously, socioeconomic differences, and attitudes of distrust among the women – affect women's willingness to participate in cooperative projects and community management. Recognition of differences in social stratification among women and their socioeconomic circumstances is crucial to developing projects that complement individual needs and capabilities as well as facilitate involvement and leadership of females in community affairs.

Keywords: income-generating activities (IGAs), cooperative work, community management

USING THEORY TO FRAME COMMUNITY AND PRACTICE

By Mary Domahidy

ABSTRACT

University-community partnerships stimulate reflection on the body of knowledge that informs professional practice in community settings, and they provide places to challenge assumptions about both theory and practice. This article calls attention to the multiple perspectives on community and considers how theory also shapes images for professional practice. It discusses the importance of becoming aware of such frames and suggests how safe places for conversation contribute to that awareness as well as to enhancing community. As such, it is also an example of praxis in that it is a reflection on experience.

Keywords: theory, practice, conversation

THE ECONOMIC AND FISCAL IMPACTS OF THE ELDERLY ON A SMALL RURAL REGION

By Martin Shields, Judith I. Stallmann, and Steven C. Deller

ABSTRACT

Recruiting retirees is a popular economic development strategy for rural communities. Previous research finds positive economic and fiscal impacts in communities, but it tends to assume that the elderly are homogeneous and to concentrate on planned retirement communities. At the same time, concerns are expressed that older and low-income retirees will be a burden for local government. Using a quasi-experimental design, the economic and fiscal impacts of various groups of retirees classified by age and income on a rural region in Wisconsin are simulated. All groups have positive economic benefits for the region. The impacts of the different groups of elderly vary by their income and the size of their households. Contrary to the expectations of some, all groups of retirees provide positive net fiscal impacts for local governments.

Keywords: economic and fiscal impacts, models, elderly migration, retirement

REBUILDING AFTER NATURAL DISASTER: A TARGETED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

By LaDee Homm, Mike D. Woods, and Suzette Barta

ABSTRACT

Many rural communities, such as Stroud, Oklahoma, in Lincoln County, are struggling for survival. Leaders in Lincoln County asked economists at the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service at Oklahoma State University to assist them with a targeted economic development strategy. One part of that process was a target industry analysis during which a list of key industries was created using the regional input-output modeling software IMPLAN. On the list were industries with a moderate-to-strong likelihood of containing companies that might be interested in locating or expanding in Lincoln County. When community leaders work with volunteer economic development groups, one common challenge they face is the perception that “the list” is the final product. However, to obtain the maximum community benefit from the list of target industries, leaders in Lincoln County should use the list to develop focused recruitment strategies and retention/expansion programs. This article documents the efforts of the Lincoln County Industrial Development Authority to undertake targeted economic development through the use of target industry analysis. Both successes and challenges are presented.

Keywords: community economic development, industry clusters, Oklahoma, target industry analysis, targeted economic development

THEORIZING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

By Jnanabrata Bhattacharyya

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts a parsimonious definition of community development. It proposes that the purpose of community development is the pursuit of solidarity and agency by adhering to the principles of self-help, felt needs and participation. The erosion of solidarity and agency has been a historic process, connected particularly to the rise of industrial capitalism, the nation-state, and instrumental reason. Examples of community development practice as a positive response to the erosion are given from the fields of public health, violence, micro-economic development, and food. It also argues that “place” as a proxy for community has become conceptually as well as practically inadequate, and that effective community development calls for micro-macro coordination.

Keywords: community development theory, self-help, felt needs, participation, solidarity, agency

INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES: SOCIAL CAPITAL'S ROLE IN KEEPING YOUTH IN SCHOOL

By Glenn D. Israel and Lionel J. Beaulieu

ABSTRACT

Many community leaders view economic development as the primary strategy for improving social well-being. One approach to economic development is enhancing the local labor force's human capital through formal education. In this article, we use a social capital framework to analyze how local institutions, specifically families and schools, affect educational achievement among public school students. We explore how social capital in the broader community context mediates the effects of family and school social capital on keeping students in school. Using hierarchical linear models to estimate these contributions, the results reaffirm the vital role of family social capital. They also show that attributes of school and community social capital make important contributions to staying in school. Our results suggest strategies that community development practitioners and local leaders can use to enhance educational outcomes and, in turn, the economic vitality of communities.

Keywords: staying in school, education, social capital, human capital, National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), School District Data Book (SDDB), the Common Core of Data (CCD), the National Center for Education Statistics

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN NONPROFIT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

By Daniel Monroe Sullivan

ABSTRACT

Citizen participation in community development, including economic development, is vital for a viable democratic society to flourish. As more U.S. cities shift some or all of their economic development efforts from the city government to nonprofit economic development organizations (NEDOs) – which use resources from both the public and business sector to promote local economic growth – it is important to examine what implications this shift has on citizen participation. Some researchers highlight the advantages of NEDOs, portraying them as high-performing organizations that facilitate cooperation between city government and the local business community. But are there any disadvantages to promoting development via NEDOs in terms of citizen participation? Using survey data from nearly 500 NEDOs, this study finds that the local business community and city government are heavily involved in NEDOs, including founding them and contributing board members, money, and policy advice. However, in most NEDOs, citizens who are not part of local business organizations do not participate directly, but they participate indirectly through their public officials. Community development practitioners should work towards increasing direct citizen participation in NEDOs, especially when NEDOs use significant public resources.

Keywords: Nonprofit economic development organizations (NEDOs), citizen participation, economic development strategies, democratic society

CONCERNS OF NEWCOMER AND LONGTIME RESIDENTS IN NONMETROPOLITAN IDAHO COMMUNITIES: DOES THE “GANGPLANK” THEORY APPLY TO OLDER POPULATIONS?

By Virginia W. Junk, Tammy L. Seefeld, Cynthia J. Schmiede,
and Paul G. Windley

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of concern indicated by older people regarding issues of growth and change, based on whether they were newcomers to their community or longtime residents. Participants consisted of 443 residents over the age of 50 who lived in one of three high resource-amenity, nonmetropolitan Idaho communities. These are communities developed around natural or manufactured environmental or geographic amenities, such as water, mountains, or forests. A mail survey was used to test the gangplank theory, which posits that newcomers see change as negatively affecting the environment that initially attracted them to the community. They move into an area of their choice and then pull up the gangplank in order to restrict community change. Rather than failure to support growth, as one would expect from the gangplank theory, instead newcomers were concerned about community leadership, and were significantly more concerned than longtime residents about how growth was being handled. Interestingly, newcomers were significantly less satisfied with restaurant choices than longtime residents were, while longtime residents were significantly less satisfied with housing costs than newcomers were.

Keywords: aging, retirees, gangplank theory, longtime resident, newcomer, resource-amenity

RESIDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD A PROPOSED LIMESTONE QUARRY

By Sezer Göncüolu-Eser, A.E. Luloff,
and Rex H. Warland

ABSTRACT

A limestone quarry proposal in a small Pennsylvania community triggered disagreements among residents. Some actively opposed the quarry while a small group supported it. The majority of residents did not become involved in the issue. This research examines why residents responded differently to the operation of this quarry in their community. First, key and action informant interviews were conducted. Next, a content analysis of these interviews was used to develop a survey questionnaire. The survey was administered through a drop-off/pick-up method, eliciting a return rate of 69.7 percent. The strongest predictor of quarry attitude was attitude toward private property rights. Respondents who supported private property rights had favorable attitudes toward the quarry. Other significant predictors included environmental behavior, proportion of friends in the community, length of residence, level of involvement in community activities, and participation in a local festival. Implications of these findings for community development are discussed.

Keywords: Newcomers, oldtimers, natural resource use