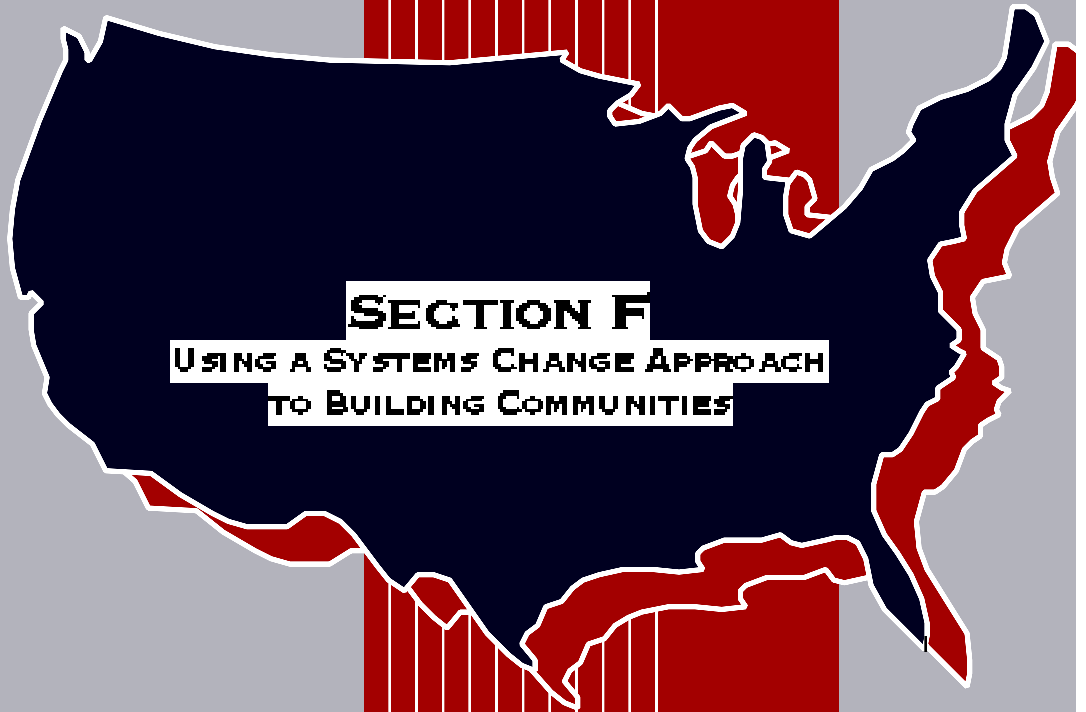

Section F

Using a Systems Change Approach to Building Communities

Using a Systems Change Approach to Building Communities

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Abstract

This paper was designed to help people who have become discouraged on their journeys toward changing social systems within communities. This paper provides leaders and facilitators of community-change efforts with both a model for change in social systems and a tool to work with others to analyze the status of their change efforts. The redesign of social systems is an essential part of building/rebuilding our communities to better support the well-being of children and families. Deep, and often invisible, fundamental principles support these systems, carrying assumptions so ingrained in us, we scarcely recognize their existence.

Three types of systems—bureaucratic, professional, and community—are intertwined in the social systems of a community. Currently, the balance tilts toward a combination of the bureaucratic and professional, creating an institutional focus. Given today's social conditions, this paper argues that the balance needs to shift toward a community-professional combination, grounded in the assets and desires of the community.

Three fundamental principles appear important in rebuilding communities. The first concerns systems thinking and learning, including looking at systems holistically, with changing, fluid relationships rather than unchanging entities. The second principle emphasizes attention to the purposes of our systems and the results they achieved. The third principle focuses on the rebuilding of community, grounded in the strengths, needs, hopes, and dreams of its residents.

This paper considers which community members should be involved in assessing the community's status and orientation toward systems change. Four groups of people are highlighted: community residents, nonresidents with special knowledge of the community, members of informal multipurpose social units (such as family units or organized city blocks), and representatives of systems established for a specific purpose such as education or health. This paper examines: (a) the stages of change that individuals and groups go through as they move from an institutionally centered system to a more community-based system and (b) the "levers" for systems change—the mechanisms by which people recreate systems.

The stages and levers of change serve as the bases for designing a *Continuum of Community-Building Systems Change*. The continuum is the tool a cross-role group uses to analyze the current status of systems change and to generate ideas about next steps.

Finally, this paper discusses how the continuum of change can be tailored to specific situations.

Introduction

Have you become discouraged on your journey toward changing social systems within communities to better meet the needs of today's society? This paper provides leaders and facilitators of community-change efforts with a way of thinking about the process of changing a social system. It also contains a tool to help them work with others to assess both the status of their change efforts and the next steps. It addresses the formal and informal systems affecting children and families within communities.

The primary purpose of designing or redesigning social systems in today's society is to help build communities that promote the well-being of children and families. These are the core elements of our society. Community building means strengthening the capacity of local residents, associations, and organizations to work individually and collectively toward sustained community improvement. Community building involves developing the capacity of neighborhood residents to identify and gain access to opportunities and effect change as well as developing leaders within the community.

Community building also focuses on the nature, strength, and scope of relationships between individuals in the community and in organizations, government entities, foundations, and other groups inside and outside the community. Through this kinship, community builders can exchange and use information, resources, and assistance. Organizationally, community-building initiatives can develop the capacity of formal and informal institutions within the community to provide goods and services effectively and can develop relationships between organizations within and beyond the community to maximize resources and coordinate strategies.[1]

Each level of community building—from individuals to organizations—requires capacity building and the acceptance of the role of ongoing learner. Building stakeholder capacities (both organizational and individual) and connecting these components is what community building is all about. Community building is as much about how transformations occur as creating product-oriented results. It is about increasing the capacities of individuals as well as neighborhoods to create systems which work with them, not at them or for them.

Considering Three Social Systems

Three competing types of social systems are evident—the bureaucratic, professional, and community models. Currently, our community systems are heavily based on bureaucratic and professional models. As a result, systems are growing more distant from the realities, assets, and hopes of a community's residents.

[1] For further information on comprehensive community initiatives, see the work of the Aspen Institute's Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families.

It is important to encourage greater consideration of the community model in combination with the professional model. This new balance would emphasize the assets of a community's residents and shift the role of professionals such as educators and human-service and medical professionals to one of building on the assets of the community rather than emphasizing needs.

Three Essential Principles

Basic principles or beliefs can reshape social systems within communities to better support children and families. Deep and often invisible fundamental principles support these systems—the interlocking and interdependent parts —of our society. Certain assumptions are typically so ingrained in us that we scarcely recognize their existence. If we want our systems to change in fundamental ways, it is necessary that these principles change.

Three fundamental principles are important in rebuilding communities. The first concerns systems thinking and learning. This includes looking at systems holistically—not only at the parts but also at the relationships between the parts—as well as seeing that systems are ever changing This requires that we see ourselves as ongoing learners and adjusters of systems. The second principle concerns the purposes of our systems (and the results expected from them). This purpose must be emphasized and, in many cases, redefined. The third principle concerns reshaping community, grounded in the strengths, needs, hopes, and dreams of its residents.

Defining the Community

In the change process, one must determine what constitutes a community and who needs to be involved in assessing the community's status and orientation toward systems change. We begin with an explanation of how to define the community and then identify four groups to consider when determining who will be involved in the analysis: community residents, nonresidents with special knowledge of the community, informal multipurpose social units such as neighborhood associations, and representatives of purpose-based systems that have a distinctive purpose such as education, social services, health, economic development, physical and environmental arenas, and social justice.[2]

The focal point of the paper is a continuum of community-based systems change. This continuum is a tool and a way of looking at (a) the stages of change that individuals and groups go through as they move from the current configuration of formal and informal systems to the desired systems configurations, and (b) the "levers" for systems change. By this we mean the mechanisms by which people can recreate systems (for example, changing the methods of governance, reallocating financial resources, investing in the training and development of people, and communications strategies).

This continuum of systems change helps people move forward to undertake the next phase of their community systems change initiative.

[2] Hereafter, these systems will be referred to as "purpose-based systems."

Resources

Throughout the paper, references to complementary materials are provided. These references represent only a few of the many fine materials available. The ones referenced tend to be key documents we used in developing this paper or short, easy-to-read articles that might be given to community members.

In addition to the specific materials referenced, you are encouraged to contact the following organizations to obtain their publication lists and talk with key staff. Materials from these groups are seldom listed in the "Further Readings" sections of the paper because the numbers of relevant materials are very extensive. Resources from these organizations and/or references they can provide to other groups will connect you to a full array of ideas for how to proceed with community-based systems change efforts.

Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy
310 Prospect Street
New Haven, CN 06510
203 432-9944 • FAX: 203 432-9949

Finance Project
1341 G Street, NW, Suite 820
Washington, DC 20005
202 628-4200 • FAX: 202 628-4205

Center for Collaboration for Children
California State University at Fullerton
Fullerton, CA 92834-6868
714 773-2166 • FAX: 714 449-5235

Healthcare Forum
425 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
415 356-4300 • FAX: 415 356-9300

Center for the Study of Social Policy
1250 Eye Street, NW, Suite 503
Washington, DC 20005
202 371-1565 • FAX: 202 371-1472

Institute for Educational Leadership
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
202 822-8405 • FAX 202-872-4050

Education Commission of the States
707 17th Street, Suite 2700
Denver, CO 80202-3427
303 299-3600 • FAX: 303 296-8332

National Civic League
1445 Market Street
Denver, CO 80202
303 571-4343 • FAX: 303 571-4404

Family Impact Seminar
1100 Seventeenth Street, NW, Suite 901
Washington, DC 20036
202 467-5114 • FAX: 202 223-2329

National Governors' Association
444 N. Capitol Street
Washington, DC 20001-1512
202 624-5300 • FAX: 202 624-5313

Family Resource Coalition
200 South Michigan Avenue, 16th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604
312 341-0900 • FAX: 312 341-9361

Roundtable on Comprehensive Community
Initiatives for Children and Families
The Aspen Institute
345 East 46th Street, Suite 700
New York, NY 10017-3562
212 697-1226 • FAX: 212 697-2258

When our efforts to create significant change in how people work and interact within a community lag, it is often because the changes have been focused on symptoms and superficial issues rather than fundamental characteristics that shape community life. For the growing number of community-based initiatives springing up around the country, we are learning that the needed changes lie much deeper and are more interconnected than many initially assumed.

As we peel back the layers of our social systems, we see that many of the systems we have were designed for a different set of conditions and circumstances than we find ourselves in today. The systems that worked in low-tech times with smaller populations are not able to handle the increasing complexities resulting from new technologies and a larger and more diverse population. Our ways of designing systems are closely tied to our history.

In a broad sense, three different systems (discussed below) are competing: the bureaucratic, professional, and community models. The challenge we face is understanding what these three system types are and determining when each is most useful. There is no perfect system. We need to keep adjusting our systems to fit our purposes. Much of the community-building struggle centers on the lack of clarity about these basic systems and how they can be integrated to support a strong, vibrant environment for children and families.

Community-Building System Choices

Consider these three system models:

- The **hierarchical, bureaucratic model** uses top-down decision making and has fixed rules and regulations. For many years, this model has been the predominant approach for most organizations in this country. While it is the appropriate approach in the case of policies that need to be consistent—hiring practices and payroll management, for example—it traditionally has covered a wide range of functions within a given system. When workers feel like "numbers," it is often because they are being treated from a bureaucratic model perspective.[3]
- The **professional model** evolved as a byproduct of the development of the service industry. The professional model relies on people with specialized knowledge and skills. It defines "clients" as those in need of a particular service or product and "professionals" as the experts who can provide what the clients need.

  For example, if the professional model is used in a school setting, educators are the professionals responsible for defining what students should learn and for providing the evidence that teaching and learning have been successful. In human services, social workers, psychologists, thera-

[3]The term "bureaucracy" was originally used to neutrally describe a certain type of organizational structure. However, over time, it has taken on a negative connotation because of frequent misapplication. For further information on this model as well as other variations of the professional model, see Mintzberg, H. (1979). *The Structuring of Organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

pists, and others are those responsible for “treating” a person with a “need.”

At the core of both the bureaucratic and professional models is a strong element of control outside the person served.

- The **community model**, by contrast, emphasizes consent. The clients/beneficiaries in the professional model become active participants in decision making.

  Applying this model to education, parents and students may take the lead in identifying needs, working through choices, coming up with solutions, and creating the conditions and environments they believe will work best in meeting the needs of all those involved. The professionals would support their direction. In the case of social services, families and communities define their needs, and professionals work in supportive roles to help them accomplish their goals and use their assets. This model emphasizes interconnectedness as well as meaningful and productive work for community residents.

As our society has moved away from bureaucratic organizations over the last few decades, we have been moving toward professional organizations and services. There is growing recognition that professionalism has its shortcomings and can actually undermine community building.

Each of these three models can operate simultaneously in a community, separately in some areas and overlapping in others. In the best-case scenario, each model would be used when appropriate, with effective communication providing the necessary connections among all three within and among systems. A major community-building issue is finding the appropriate balance between professional services and community-based caring and action.

The professional and community models warrant further consideration, since the distinction between the two is crucial as groups develop their goals and strategies for systems change.

The Professional Model

The premise of this model is that well-trained professionals can help society ameliorate problems and challenges. Professionals become experts in certain disciplines or fields of study and, in medicine, human services, education, and other fields, provide services to clients or beneficiaries. Special training is a key definer of professional work. Professionals are typically also socialized into the norms of their formal organizations/institutions and professional societies in ways that benefit the profession and the organization. Professional institutions surrender considerable control over their choices of workers and ways of performing work to outside institutions (e.g., universities) that train and certify the professionals. Professional practices increase the quality of the services provided.

Society is moving toward “professionalization” of services because of efficiency and expected increase in quality. According to national statistics, in 1900,

approximately 10 percent of the workforce produced services while the remaining 90 percent produced goods. Current projections suggest that by the year 2000, the service workforce will represent 90 percent of the employed workforce.[4] In some ways, this indicates that society is facing previously unsatisfied need; in other ways, this indicates that professionals are assuming functions that previously were personal and community functions.

In his book, *The Careless Society*, author John McKnight expresses concern that caring within communities has been transformed into a technical process—a service—that professionals are trained to perform on clients.[5] He believes the evolution of bereavement counseling illustrates this point.

Before the advent of bereavement counseling, when a townsperson died, friends and relatives came together to mourn. They met grief together as a community, offering physical and emotional support to the bereaved family.

Then came bereavement counseling. The counselor offered a method for "processing" grief. A college diploma and professional license made the counselor "credible." Many—trained in the use of innovative tools and certified by universities and medical centers—seek this professional service out of habit.

Now, when a townsperson dies, family and friends hesitate to go to the bereaved family because these people believe that the bereavement counselor knows best how to process grief. Local clergy even seek technical assistance from the bereavement counselor to learn the correct form for dealing with grief. But as an unintended consequence, the grieving family misinterprets the absence of family and friends as signs of their lack of caring.

With this story, McKnight illustrates that new professional expertise or tools have frayed the social fabric of community and undermined neighborly obligations and community ways of coming together. As citizens see professionalized services assume more community functions, citizens are beginning to doubt their common capacity to care. As a result, citizens and communities have become partially dependent on "counterfeit caring"—human services—as a substitute for their own knowledge, wisdom, and humanity in solving problems within their communities.

According to McKnight, society in general has grown frustrated with the minor impact increasing numbers of professionals have on escalating social problems and rapidly deteriorating families and communities. Society criticizes the professional approach as inefficient, but the move toward professionalism was originally conceived as a more efficient way of dealing with social problems. Professionals are currently criticized for costing more money but producing inadequate results. Professionals also are criticized as elitist, arrogant, and dominant. Professionals may have the power to identify problems, create solutions, implement them, and evaluate the efficacy of the treatment. But clients have been stripped of personal opportunities to participate in this process because of assumed lack of expertise.

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[4] See McKnight, John. (1995). *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

[5] Many of the ideas in this chapter are based on the insights McKnight shared in *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits*.

A further criticism is that professionalism works to the detriment of society. Professional dominance exerts negative effects upon the problem-solving capacities of the primary social structures of society: families, neighborhoods, churches/synagogues, and ethnic groups. The ultimate tragedy is that professionals can create a cycle of dependence and impotence which may affect other social and economic problems for which further professional treatment only creates deeper dependence. To justify the continuation of professional services, professionals may define "need" as a deficiency within individuals and communities. In this case, human-service tools can place people at risk for low self-esteem and low self-worth, poverty, and disempowerment.

The Community Model

Unlike the professional model that focuses on eradicating the "need" in families and communities, the community model focuses on maximizing each person's existing capabilities. Individuals initiate capacity building and the pooling of resources and power among members, rather than relying on outside people or institutions.

In this model informal community associations and structures are powerful vehicles for community decision making, critical dialogue, and opinion formation that influences the problem-solving capacities of community members. "Community guides" act as counterpoints to credentialed, licensed professional service workers in communities. These guides are themselves members of a community and help other members navigate and make connections within the community.

Instead of the professionals, community members are seen as problem definers and problem solvers. The raw material of community is capacity, because community interactions are built on the importance of each person. It is the sum of community members' capacities that represents the power of the group, not deficiencies or needs.

The Professional and Community Collaboration Model

Currently, the most promising model for a community's social system is likely one that brings together professionals and community to rebuild communities and strengthen families, weaving in threads of bureaucracy or hierarchy to provide a dependable, but flexible structure. Central to this model is overcoming the inherent tension between communities and institutions. The associations of the community represent social tools that are unlike those of managed institutions.

For example, the structure of institutions is designed to control people. On the other hand, the less formal structure of associations is the result of people acting through consent. It is critical that people distinguish between these two motivating forces, because there are many goals that can be fulfilled only through consent, while in other cases controls preserve justice and fairness.

In working out a combined bureaucratic, professional, and community

model, it's important to recognize the differences between community associations and professional or other institutions.[6]

- Interdependence defines associations in communities. To weaken one association weakens them all. For example, if the local church closes, several self-help groups that meet in the church basement will lose their home. If the American Legion disbands, several community fund-raising events and the maintenance of the local ballpark will stop. Contrast these events with the individualistic perception of service delivery in human services, education, and medicine where institutions have separate facilities and operate independently of one another.
- In community environments, people acknowledge their tendencies to make mistakes. But most institutions are designed to adhere to a vision in which things can be done right and an orderly perfection can be achieved. Clients, too, must meet this standard.
- In community associations, there is room for many leaders and room for leadership capacity to develop. This democratic structure assumes that the best ideas come from the knowledge of the collected members of the community. Effective life in community associations incorporates all of those weaknesses and reveals a unique community intelligence. Contrast this with the hierarchical structure of institutions that reserves leadership roles for a few.
- Associations can respond more quickly. They are not constrained by institutional layers like planning committees, budget offices, administration, and so forth.
- Because they are so interconnected, associations within communities can often respond quickly and specifically to the needs of people who come to them for help. In institutions, people often inherit labels, while in associations, people are not defined by labels. Instead, their "shortcomings" are accepted and dealt with.
- The informality of community associations allows for spontaneous, creative solutions. Institutions often require those with creative ideas to follow channels and adhere to policy.
- Relationships in a community are individual and conducted face-to-face. Institutions, on the other hand, have great difficulty developing programs or activities that recognize the unique characteristics of each individual involved. An institution's high-level focus is not on building relationships, but on remaining detached.
- Associations (and the community they create) are forums that encourage citizenship. Institutions, by virtue of their managed structures, typically find it more difficult to act as forums for citizenship.
- If it is care that families or individuals need rather than service, institutions seldom satisfy that need. When care is needed, communities are much more likely to produce and deliver it.

[6] For more information on this, see McKnight (1995).

Professional organizations and institutions might take several actions to build a relationship with the community to potentially enhance community capacity. These actions include:

- reinvesting resources to strengthen the local community economy and income of individuals
- working with the community to create "community friendly" maps of capacities and assets within the community—drawing on the institution's analytic capacities and information sources
- educating community residents in the skills of their profession to allow residents to be more self-sufficient and less dependent on professional services

Further Readings on Community Building

Herzog, Mary Jean Ronan and Robert Pittman. (1995). "Home, Family, and Community: Ingredients in the Rural Education Equation." *Phi Delta KAPPAN*, November.

This article discusses a need to leverage the existing strengths of rural communities to create high-quality educational opportunities for all students. Sections of the article include: problems in rural education; trends affecting rural schools; selected demographic, economic, and educational factors—1960-1990; and the strengths of rural communities.

National Civic League. (1993). *The Civic Index.* New York, NY: National Civic League, Inc.

The Civic Index is a guide which provides useful information on engaging the public to improve the quality of life for the community as a whole. It discusses the changing roles of stakeholders, including a need for more volunteerism; how to build a respect for civic involvement into our school and community life; and how to work collaboratively toward common goals. The emphasis is on building the civic infrastructure of the community.

McKnight, John. (1995). *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

McKnight builds a case for focusing on the competence of communities and warns of the dangers of over "professionalization" of social services. Three chapters discuss community building in depth. *Community Organizing in the Eighties: Toward a Post-Alinsky Agenda*, (with John Kretzmann) discusses how the structure of neighborhoods has changed considerably since the 1940s when Saul Alinsky was organizing communities, yet the strategies for organizing communities have remained relatively constant. McKnight presents new approaches to building the capacity of individuals and organizations from within the community to develop the ability to meet their own needs.

Redefining Community defines communities as collective associations—formal and informal—and how to build community by developing relationships across community life. *Regenerating Community* discusses the evolving roles and characteristics of individual and institutional stakeholders within a community and the potential struggles these groups will encounter.

McKnight, John L. and John P. Kretzmann. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets.* Evanston, IL: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Neighborhood Innovations Network, Northwestern University.

This workbook is intended to help communities engage in the community building process. The workbook offers useful techniques for building capacity, mobilizing resources, developing supportive policies, and making connections/building relationships among stakeholders.

Sergiovanni, Thomas J. (1996). "Building Community in Schools." *Community Education Journal*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 1 & 2.

This article describes the collapse of community that has occurred in our society and offers suggestions for rebuilding productive communities.

As discussed in the previous chapter, no one system is good or bad in and of itself. The issue is how to design and combine systems to foster health at the level of community. In doing so, it is important to consider the operational principles or values embedded within and across systems. Three guiding prin-

ciples appear especially important to consider in today's social environment:

1) **Taking a "systems thinking" perspective.** This means looking at the relationships and connections among parts of systems and across systems. The current and past tendencies have been to focus on isolated systems and components of systems.
2) **Determining if systems are achieving results congruent with their intended purpose.** Many systems currently engage in activities that follow the rules based on what worked in the past, whether or not the systems produce desired results today or foster healthy relationships with the other systems that have grown up around them.
3) **Emphasizing system changes that are driven by the perspectives of community residents.** Currently, professional service providers usually determine changes based on what they determine is best for clients or for themselves.

In the remainder of this chapter we describe each of these principles in greater detail.

Systemic Approaches

A design that considers the whole picture rather than just parts of it is a desirable system characteristic that communities seek today. That is, the approach is systemic. This approach involves considering the interrelatedness of parts within a system. This approach also recognizes the structure within the structure and acknowledges that the parts must interconnect. In fact, the definition of a system is in the relationship of its parts.

While it may begin as a superficial assessment of parts interconnecting, comprehensive systems thinking goes well beyond this point and analyzes patterns of interrelationships and their dynamic movements — often "two steps forward and one step back" as decisions and changes are being made.[7]

Systemic thinking and action seek an holistic and sustainable improvement in the pattern of interrelationships between parts of a process or system—for instance, the neighborhood. Each part of a neighborhood is influenced by the actions and reactions of systems beyond it. Analyzing the patterns and building linkages among systems and within components of systems requires facilitation skills, flexibility, and an ability to move between all levels, instead of focusing on one. Analyzing and focusing also require an openness to change at all levels.

This is a dynamic, fluid, and ongoing process. This type of orientation is often antithetical to the fundamental characteristics of many of the existing social systems which are rigid and formally separated into isolated and discon-

[7] This approach is different from some comprehensive community initiatives that look broadly at all the components or separate systems of a community, but fail to focus on their interconnections and interactions.

nected components with an orientation toward addressing individual needs.

Systems thinking eventually leads to comprehensive change, but comprehensiveness is not the initial focus. Rather, the focus is on understanding the interconnections, dynamics, and fundamental principles of the system, and how to use these characteristics to lead to change across all community systems. One looks for patterns and natural dynamics to move desired changes from one system to another. There is an opportunistic quality to the process, instead of an emphasis on "forcing" change.

Systemic thinking begins with strategic consideration involving the nature of an undertaking and the central challenges or assumptions the undertaking poses. System thinking focuses on the patterns and cycles of interrelationships among the key components of a system. Just as cycles dominate nature, so too they dominate relationships among people and organizations.

People go through stages of change as systems are changing. To isolate one from another is unnatural. People create systems; systems are a reflection of people. Systems thinking accepts that, but because of the number of interactions and levels addressed, individuals, communities, and systems need considerable time to act, react, and interact through the change process.

Time alone, however, is not the only consideration. Systems thinking, planning, and action require ways of looking at the underlying structures that create the cycles within relationships.[8] Systems thinking, planning, and action also imply being in a mode of continual learning. Systems are dynamic. What used to work may no longer today. As a result, we need ongoing ways to analyze systems.

Results-Oriented Approaches

As we consider many of today's social systems, we find that they often focus on carrying out activities and delivering sets of services with the assumption that certain results will be achieved, but with little attention to whether the results actually are produced. Two patterns account for much of this behavior.

First, when systems were originally established, they were well-connected to results. However, over time conditions have changed, but the systems have continued on without adequate adjustments to those changing conditions.

Second, people have assumed that if they took certain actions, results would automatically follow. The story of a man who got a new dog illustrates this.

> One day, while walking his new dog, Jim ran into his neighbor, Bill. Jim said, "Guess what? I taught my dog how to talk!" "Well, that is incredible," Bill said. "Have him say a few words." "Oh," replied Jim, "I just taught him. He didn't learn."

Similarly, many of our systems perpetuate activities with the hope, but not necessarily the evidence, that they are accomplishing desired results.

[8] For a detailed discussion of this, see Chapter 13 in Sense, P. M., et. al. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Given the marked changes in today's communities, it is essential to focus explicitly on what a system will accomplish. In doing so, it is important to get down to authentic purposes and call into question actions that have become habitual but are superficial. A purposeful, results-oriented system defines the outcomes or results expected, then works backwards to design actions that display these results. The actions may need to be different for different people and conditions. The commonality is around results, not the means of achieving those results.

As community systems move toward a results orientation, these systems often experience a tension regarding "processes" and "products." For some people, results are defined in terms of a "product" such as building a recreation center, providing housing for someone in need, reducing the amount of litter on the streets, or cleaning up a vacant lot. For others, the results they seek are defined in terms of "processes" such as building and strengthening relationships that serve as the basis for identifying and effectively carrying out tasks.

Within community initiatives, there are often strong advocates of a process orientation and strong advocates of a product orientation. One group sees the process of community building as the most significant aspect. The other group sees the product as the most valuable. There is typically an ongoing tug of war between the two.

Effective results-oriented systems focus on both processes and products. Products of a community project—a new park, a gym, a housing development—are important in creating a sense of achievement and legitimacy among participants, outsiders, and the community as a whole. These visible achievements can be key to future funding for other projects and building pride and inspiration based on achievement and ability. Products often are the measurable successes desired by residents as well as funders. Yet all too often, these products are of short-term value, because community members do not have a sense of ownership of them. It is crucial that these products grow out of relationships that have the potential to produce further products.

Such relationship-building processes are essential components of creating sustainable change. Process is essential to facilitating social networks and building capacity. Processes create the framework of regular interaction which helps develop and strengthen relationships. Neighbors working toward positive change in their communities build a learning process and an awareness of who lives and works within the streets they occupy. This knowledge can be critical to diagnosing and solving problems such as poverty, homelessness, crime, and gang issues, and establishing the links that operate among them.

This is like making a cake. One needs all the ingredients (the products), but one is not going to make a cake without certain processes—beating the sugar and butter together, folding in the flour, and baking the cake in the oven. Both products and processes are essential.

Perspectives on the importance of process or product often change within an initiative. Perspectives may shift because of feedback regarding implementation efforts, whether the initiative responds to critical community needs, which social assets and funding are available, or the value other community members

place on the efforts of their neighbors. As a result, when building a purposeful, results-oriented approach, participants must carefully discuss the balance between processes and products.

This balance is closely tied to the dynamic of short-term vs. long-term results. Results-oriented initiatives that also incorporate systemic thinking strive to achieve short-term results that inspire long-term change. Long-term change, in turn, ultimately deals with basic problems and issues rather than symptoms. Without systemic thinking, short-term results often are directed toward symptoms. It can be very valuable to address symptoms as long as that is not the end of the work. Too often, however, once the symptoms are gone, people lose interest in addressing the more fundamental problems.

Resident-Based Approaches

The third fundamental assumption concerning the redesign of formal and informal community systems is that the perspectives of residents shape the changes made. Too often, service providers drive system changes, and community residents are viewed as beneficiaries of services or as clients rather than the ones who are key to improving the quality of life in the community. A community-building orientation is about increasing the capacities of individuals as well as neighborhoods to create systems which work with them, not at them or for them. Eventually, through these individuals in a group or groups, accountability develops, as does a method for the community to work to regenerate itself.

Currently, most communities' formal systems are built around hierarchical, top-down structures. These systems are often crisis- and problem-oriented. They focus on deficits, create dependent relationships, and are characterized by competition. A community-building orientation promotes a sense of equal partnership between professionals and residents. This orientation focuses on the assets of all members of the community and on prevention of problems. It builds interdependent, responsible, accountable relationships.

On the whole, institutions typically don't look to the community until they need to gain support for their strategies. To achieve community-based systems change, fundamental changes must happen and be driven at the community level (e.g., neighborhood schools). To keep the focus at the community level, the broader levels of the system (e.g., state departments of education) need to support changes (desired by the community), lending expertise and perspective in the process, rather than determining what they think is best for the community.

The notion of resident-initiated capacity building is illustrated in the story[9] of a community on Chicago's west side:

> A community of 60,000 people was largely poor and African American—the majority dependent on welfare payments. Residents had formed a voluntary community organization that encompassed an area where there were two hospitals. These hospitals had not been

accessible to the black residents in this neighborhood.

The community organization began a political struggle to "capture" the two hospitals. They were successful in convincing the board of directors of the hospitals to accept more neighborhood people as patients and employ more community residents on their staffs. After several years, the community organization assessed the health status of the community. They found that although they had "captured" the hospitals, there was no significant evidence that residents' health had changed since the community had greater access to the medical facilities in their neighborhood.

To determine the residents' most common ailments, the community organization examined the hospital's medical records. Examiners were surprised to learn that the top reasons for seeking medical treatment had little to do with disease. Ailments included car accidents, interpersonal attacks, bronchial infections, dog bites, and drug/alcohol-related problems. "Disease" was not the main problem the hospitals addressed. Instead, the hospitals dealt with maladies related to social problems. The residents in the community organization recognized that there were social problems in their communities, and the hospitals were only treating the symptoms.

A group of concerned citizens from the community organization analyzed this information and used it to get to the root causes of these social problems. Then, they developed a strategy for addressing these problems in their communities. To reduce the number of car accidents, residents investigated their neighborhood to learn where these accidents were happening and why. With help from an outside city-planning group that provided detailed data on neighborhood traffic patterns, residents learned that most accidents occurred at the entrance to a department store parking lot.
The group then petitioned the store owner to make changes. This greatly reduced the number of accidents, and the number of people in the neighborhood seeking medical treatment for related injuries.

To reduce the number of bronchial problems, residents learned that good nutrition was a factor. Adequate fresh fruits and vegetables, especially in winter, were too expensive for many residents. So they sought solutions: growing their own fruits and vegetables. Since gardening space is limited in the city, residents built an experimental greenhouse on the flat roof of an apartment house. Citizens viewed the greenhouse as a tool to gain control of their own health, but quickly citizens also discovered that it was an economic-development tool. The greenhouse increased their income, because they now produced a commodity to use and sell. There was another use for the greenhouse, one that maximized the capacities of the community. The greenhouse trapped lost heat and turned it into an asset, becoming an energy-conservation tool.

The community organization that spearheaded the greenhouse

[9] This story is from McKnight, J. (1995).

project also owned a retirement home for elderly members of the community. The retirement home residents became regular plant caretakers. They became excited and rejuvenated. They were able to use some of the knowledge they had learned as children and young adults in rural areas, and the greenhouse became a tool to empower older people in the community.

This story illustrates the hidden capacities within communities to define and solve community-specific problems and maximize their skills and talents through a collective effort. It also illustrates how the community had a results-oriented approach—investigating whether the health of the people in the community improved. And finally, the expanded use of the greenhouse illustrates the systemic nature of the change process.

Composite Picture of Change

The previous perspectives present an overall picture of systems transitioning from primarily bureaucratic and professional (with a touch of the community model) to ones that are grounded in the community. These systems blend the professional and community models previously discussed with appropriate threads of the bureaucratic model. This shift involves moving from one set of underlying principles to another, as depicted in Figure 1, The Foundation of Changing from Institutional to Community-Based Systems, below.

The arrow between the two types of systems represent the strategies and initiatives that a community develops to move from one type of system to another. The strategies and initiatives are multiple, and the progress from one system type to another is in interconnected and overlapping stages.

Figure 1 — The Foundation of Changing from Institutional to Community-Based Systems

Further Readings on Systems Thinking and Learning

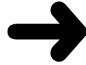
Gates, Christopher T. (1995/1996). "Making a Case for Collaborative Problem Solving." *Community Education Journal*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall/Winter.

Discusses how all over America, dedicated community problem solvers are finding new ways of bringing together the public, private, and nonprofit sectors in collaborative problem-solving efforts.

Sense, P.M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline*. New York, NY: Doubleday/Currency.

This book has become a classic. It describes and encourages systems thinking. The author considers systems thinking as the "fifth discipline" that organizations need to cultivate to become learning organizations. The other disciplines are personal mastery, shared vision, mental models, and team learning.

Strategies/Initiatives for Change

Bureaucratic/Professional Systems  **Community/Professional Systems**

Rules-Oriented

- Focused on short-term activities
- Focused on following rules
- Conflicting, disjointed rules

Piecemeal/Parts-Oriented

- Isolated, disjointed systems
- Separate parts
- Rigid
- Static
- Task-oriented projects

Service Delivery-Oriented

- Deficit focused
- Hierarchical
- Crisis- and problem-oriented
- Monocultural
- Competitive

Purpose/Results-Oriented

- Purpose/mission drive choices
- Process/product results are valued
- Long-term sustainable results are sought

Systemically-Oriented

- Interconnected systems
- Holistic orientation
- Flexible
- Dynamic
- Evolving, comprehensive initiatives

Community Building-Oriented

- Asset-focused
- Community/Professionals as equal partners
- Prevention-oriented
- Interdependent
- Accountable

Sommerfeld, Meg. (1995). "A Community of Learners." *Education Week* , 14, 25.

This article discusses the Community Learning Centers (CLC) project, a systemic school-change design in Minnesota. Examples from actual CLC schools will be helpful for communities that are interested in innovative ways to create a local hub of learning that engages multiple and diverse stakeholders.

Wheatley, M.J. (1992). *Leadership and the New Science*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Hoehler Publishers.

Wheatley looks at organizations through the eyes of new science. This includes discussing relationships and nonlinear connections as the sources of new knowledge. In this framework, roles and structures are created from need and interest which nurture individual and team creativity, the basis of learning organizations. An inventive and compelling book that looks at natural processes (such as "relational holism" in quantum physics) that maintain integrity and then asks central questions concerning organizational structure and processes in the same light.

Further Readings on Purpose and Results-Oriented Change

Dryfoos, Joy G. (1994). *Full-Service Schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

This book provides examples of how communities are redefining the purposes for their schools and creating new types of social centers that fit the conditions of the community. Integrated support services in schools which include health, mental health, and social service agencies are discussed as the "wave of the future," particularly in improving the social environment of disadvantaged communities. Projects/initiatives are included.

The Family Criteria Task Force. (1988). "A Strategy for Strengthening Families: Using Family Criteria in Policymaking and Program Evaluation." Washington, DC: AAMFT Research and Education Foundation.

This paper analyzes what can be done to ensure that policies are supportive of fami-

ly life. The paper underscores that the family is regularly affected by government programs and policies whether at the federal, state, or local levels. However, the family is seldom formally referred to beyond rhetoric in policymaking and analysis. Program evaluation and policy analysis regarding family programs are discussed by acknowledging the need for formal measurements of program outcomes and discussion of how these measurements can be created.

Raack, Lenaya. (1995). "An Effective School Model." *City Schools: A Research Magazine About Urban Schools and Communities*, Volume 1, Number 3.

If schools are to affect students positively, schools must believe in students and that all children can learn and flourish. There must be an unwavering commitment to the potential of students and to their academic needs and concerns. This article shows how communities have rethought the purposes of their schools.

Schaeffer, R.H. (1988). *The Breakthrough Strategy.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

This book provides an approach to defining small units of change to achieve early results and build momentum for long-term change.

Theobald, Paul and Paul Nachtigal. (1995). "Culture, Community, and the Promise of Rural Education." *Phi Delta KAPPAN*, November.

This article focuses on the need for the rural school to stop emulating the urban or suburban school, and attend to its own place. Article sections include: industrialization: the name of the old game; ecology: the name of the new game; the promise of rural education; and the task before rural educators. This article shows how the rural context is key to shaping the purpose and consequently the nature of the education system.

United Way of America. (1996). ***Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach.*** Alexandria, VA: United Way.

This guide explains how to measure outcomes of United Way programs.

Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development. (1995). ***Work Group Evaluation Handbook: Evaluating and Supporting Community Initiatives for Health and Development.*** Lawrence, Kansas: The Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies.

This handbook outlines a system to support and evaluate nearly 20 different community initiatives.

Further Readings on Resident-Based Change

Chrislip, David, Carl Larsen. (1995/1996). "Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference." *Community Education Journal,* Vol. XXII, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall /Winter.

This book discusses and demonstrates how citizens and civic leaders can make a difference by serving as catalysts for collaboration.

Cortes, Ernesto, Jr. (1995/1996). "Engaging the Community in Education Reform." *Community Education Journal*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall/Winter.

The author argues that the community needs to be included at the core of every effort to improve public education.

Heckman, Paul E. and Jean M. Peacock. (1995). "Joining Schools and Families in Community Change: A Context for Student Learning and Development." *New*

Schools, New Communities, Vol. 12, No 1, Fall.

As an overview of the Educational and Community Change (ECC) Project in Tucson, AZ, the authors describe several ideas and concepts that merge school and community; give examples of activities that teachers, parents, and project staff have created and implemented; and identify challenges and lessons learned.

Mathews, David. (1995/1996). "Why We Need to Change Our Concept of Community Leadership." *Community Education Journal*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 1 & 2, Fall/Winter.

For fundamental change to occur, community citizens have to act, says the author. Large groups of people need to be engaged fully in the process. Ultimately, when citizens talk about leadership within their communities, these citizens are talking about themselves.

Thompson, Scott. (1995). "Creating Community Alliances: A Guide to Improving Project Advocacy and Dissemination." *New Schools, New Communities,* Vol. 12 No. 1, Fall.

The author provides practical guidance for community initiatives interested in establishing local advocacy groups to support the progress and visibility of their efforts.

Weiss, Abby R. (1995). "The School-Community Connection." *New Schools, New Communities,* Vol. 12, No. 1, Fall.

Weirs shares the history of the School-Community Connection project, an effort designed to make real differences in the lives of children and families by strengthening relationships with their communities. The author also provides descriptions of the six schools that participated in the project and shares lessons learned in the implementation of these designs.

Who should analyze a community's social systems to determine the next steps in moving the whole set of community systems—formal and informal? How can the principles discussed in the previous chapter become the normal modes of operation in the community? The choices seem endless.

In this chapter, we first define "community" for purposes of this analysis. Next, we focus on identifying people to analyze the status of system change in the community.

What Is the "Community"?

Communities are often considered collections of friendships related to each other by proximity. In actuality, a community is more than a place and more than a series of friendships. Instead, it comprises various groups of people who work together, face-to-face, in public and private life. The key feature of

community is its tendency toward associations. The driving force behind the formation and maintenance of community is not just the continuation and expansion of familial ties, but the coming together of common citizens to form both formal and informal associations that solve problems.

Communities are comprised of individuals, associations, and institutions —all of which have assets for community building.

The associations that express and create "community" take several forms. These associations can be relatively formal, with official names and officers elected by the members—like the American Legion, the local church bowling league, or the local peace fellowship.

A second type is not so formal. It usually has no officers or official name. Nonetheless, it represents a gathering of citizens who solve problems, celebrate together, and enjoy a social compact. These associations include poker clubs, coffee klatches, or neighborhood gatherings. Though they may not have a formal name and structure, they are often sites of critical dialogue, opinion formation, information sharing, and decision making. These interactions influence the values and problem-solving capacities of citizens.

A third form of association is less obvious, because it typically occurs as an enterprise or business. However, much of this kind of association activity also takes place in local restaurants, beauty parlors, barbershops, bars, hardware stores, and other places of business. People gather in these places for interaction as well as transaction.

Often, institutions have viewed communities and these three types of associations as a collection of parochial, inexpert, unschooled, uniformed people. Those accustomed to managed experiences and relationships can see communities as disordered and inefficient. Yet, there is often a hidden order to communities and their associations created along six dimensions:[10]

- **Capacity** — We build community associations on the strengths of each community member. The sum of each person's capacities represents the power of the group. This contrasts with the dominant professional model, focusing on the deficits or needs of communities and their members.
- **Collective Effort** — The essence of community is people working together. One of the characteristics of community work is shared responsibility requiring many talents. Thus, a person labeled deficient by institutions can often find support in the collective capacities of a community that can shape itself to the unique character of each person.
- **Informality** — Community associations are critical elements of the informal economy that keeps communities going. These associations also

are key to authentic relationships. When authentic relationships develop, a strong sense of caring also develops in communities. This informality allows for more flexibility in the community's ability to incorporate both the capacities and weaknesses of members.

- **Stories** — In universities, people gather knowledge through studies. In institutions, people gather knowledge through reports. In communities, people gather knowledge through stories. These community stories allow people to reach back into their common histories and their individual experiences for knowledge about defining problems and solving them. Successful community associations resist efforts to impose the foreign language of studies and reports, because that language ignores their own capacities and insights.
- **Celebration** — Community groups constantly incorporate celebration, parties, and social events into their activities. The line between work and play is blurred, and the human nature of everyday life becomes part of the way of work.
- **Tragedy —** One of the surest, most consistent strands of community life is the explicit common knowledge of tragedy, death, and suffering. Professionals and institutions have traditionally left little space for these and have ignored them in their understanding of individual capacities and deficiencies. Tragedy helps humans acknowledge their mortality, but also helps them recognize their capacities to survive and thrive.

The institutions within a community range from private businesses to public institutions such as schools, libraries, hospitals, social service agencies, police and fire stations, and recreational facilities. Such institutions are often the most visible and formal aspect of a community's structure.

To analyze the status of a community's systems, we have used the term "community" to refer to a group of people who are geographically located close to each other and bound together in ways described above. This group is also bound together by other types of public governmental systems, transportation systems, and economic conditions.

A community constitutes a collection of people who are in the process of creating a collective value—improving their well-being. For purposes of both analysis and change, the most useful unit, that is a "community," is a subset of a city or, in a rural area, a geographical area that encompasses several small towns, for example, a county. A unit of 10,000 people seems to be a reasonable size.[11]

Who Should Do the Analysis?

Once you have identified your "community," generate a list of the people potentially involved in the analysis. In our experience, the group size can vary considerably—from 12 to 15 people to 100 people. If a large group is involved, small groups would handle portions of the analysis.

[10] These dimensions are drawn from McKnight (1995).

When selecting people for the analysis, consider two purposes for the analysis: product and process. The **product purpose** is to obtain the information that comes from the analysis. The **process purpose** is to create a dialogue and shared understanding of change within a key group of people whose commitment to change undertaken in the community is necessary.

By having this key group involved in the analysis, the facilitator can become acquainted with key people and gain insights into the identification of the people who may be important to involve in future phases of community change. The facilitator can bring together people for this analysis without making a long-term or specific commitment to their future involvement.

We will consider people with several different connections with the community: community residents, nonresidents with special knowledge, representatives of social units within the community, and representatives of purpose-based public systems. Although it is difficult to determine all the types of people and interactions of importance in the community, having a full range of stakeholders and partners involved in the analysis is important for generating meaningful information and developing the broad base of knowledge and understanding needed for fundamental systems change. Collectively, the group will see how one sector affects another in terms of underlying system structures in the community.

Community Residents

At the core of the analysis and subsequent action are the residents of the community or neighborhood to be analyzed. You need a broad range of residents — representatives of the full age range, from youth to senior citizens, as well as residents involved with the full range of social systems that operate within the community. When selecting residents to be involved in the analysis, look for people who are informal opinion leaders within the community. For this task, it may be valuable to select people who have some familiarity with the language of systems. The other option is to spend time with the residents, familiarizing them with the concepts to help them deflect intimidation from professionals in the group.

Nonresidents with Special Knowledge

The community may have been the focus of community-change efforts in the past or have been involved in studies. A researcher or facilitator involved in such an effort may have gained a special familiarity with the community that would be valuable in the analysis.

Informal Multipurpose Social Units

"Informal multipurpose social units"are groups of individuals, such as family members, neighbors who have organized themselves, or informal groups of volunteers who have banded together. Each of these "units"can be a key focus for building strength and social capital.[12]

[11] We hope to learn more about the appropriate size unit of analysis from your experiences. Using the catchment area of the high schools appears to be a useful way to subdivide larger cities.

Representatives of Purpose-Based Systems

Another way to view the community is to divide it into the purposes (e.g., education, governance, and health) that often serve as the basis for defining systems—linking to ways of solving problems and realizing hopes and dreams. Each purpose-based unit tends to have different (possibly overlapping) special-interest groups involved, and also different priorities and different professionals.

When considering these groups, distinguish between organizations that have originated in the community and those that are an extension of a system external to the community. For example, a social service agency that is an extension of state government operates and is viewed very differently from a local nonprofit service agency affiliated with a local church, yet both may be focused on the same purpose, e.g., mental health.

Many purpose-based systems are formal bodies such as county, district, state, and federal agencies that work within a structured public sector system such as health, education, or human services. These systems are often highly specialized, with professionals and some nonprofessionals working within the constraints of the system and offering services to the community, although the service providers may frequently live outside the neighborhood. Others are local associations, religious institutions, cultural organizations, and libraries that may have many more volunteers and nonprofessionals.[13]

Tasks and product outcomes are typically defined around these units. And within each unit, several different formal and informal systems may be operating. For our purposes, we have categorized the purpose-based systems into seven categories, recognizing that some of these categories overlap:

- **Social services and personal well-being —** The systems in this category may be governmental human services agencies as well as churches and community-based organizations. The types of services provided encompass spiritual well-being as well as social and emotional conditions.
- **Education —** Communities may have a wide range of educational institutions, but, minimally, each one has connections to the public school system for K-12 education. Nearly all communities also encompass or have links to community colleges, technical colleges, and/or universities.
- **Health —** The public health systems, hospitals, medical doctors, clinics, complementary health practitioners (e.g., chiropractors, acupuncturists, massage therapists, psychologists), and other private health-care providers may be relevant groups to include.
- **Economic development —** A wide variety of groups involved in economic development may be considered: community development corporations, chambers of commerce, large and small businesses and their

[12] For more information on building social capital, see the National Civic League (1993). *The Civic Index.* New York, NY: National Civic League, Inc.

[13] For excellent information on identifying the variety of associations, organizations, and institutions within a community, see Kretzmann, J. P. and McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University.

associations, banks, venture capitalists, and others.

- **Physical and environmental maintenance/revitalization** — Some communities may have groups that emphasize maintaining or revitalizing the visible assets of the community by building gyms, parks, and housing; cleaning up vacant lots; or addressing air pollution and other aspects of the environment. A local Community Development Corporation, a public housing agency, or private sector investors may be functioning within the community.
- **Social justice** — Police departments and the court systems may be key players in the community.
- **Governance** — Although all of the above categories encompass governmental agencies, it is important to consider the overall governance structure, particularly emphasizing elected officials (the mayor, city council members, county commissioners, and the town clerk).

Readiness for Change

When selecting people within and across these and other categories, consider that there may be distinct categories of people in terms of how they respond to innovations and new ideas.[14] (The following numbers in parentheses indicate the typical percentage of people who fall in each category relative to an innovation.):

Innovators — Innovators tend to be adventurous, eager to try new ideas, and untroubled by setbacks and incompleteness of ideas or methods. They network quickly outside their local circles. (About 3 percent)

Early Adopters — Early adopters are a part of the local social system and include local opinion leaders. Early adopters are not as far ahead of the average individual as innovators and are more trusted locally. (About 13 percent)

Early Majority — Members of the early majority adopt new ideas just before the average person and seldom hold leadership positions. They tend to deliberate at length before adopting an innovation and decide to adopt an innovation later than innovators and early adopters. (About 34 percent)

Late Majority — Members of the late majority adopt new ideas just after the average person. They often don't adopt until it is an economic necessity and/or there is growing peer pressure. They tend to have few resources and are therefore more reluctant to take risks. (About 34 percent)

Late Minority — Members of the late minority are the last to adopt an innovation or may never adopt it. They are not opinion leaders. They tend to be isolated and their points of reference are in the past. (About 16 percent)

When it comes to any given community, the proportion of people in the various categories may be different than the figures given above. This is espe-

[14] Everett Rogers has been accumulating this information for the last 30 years. For more information, see Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co.

cially true in poor communities when change involves some type of economic risk. More people are unable to take such risks and are more likely to be in the late majority category. If a system is going to change on a large scale, large proportions of nearly all of these categories of people must be functioning under the mode of the new system.

When selecting people to be part of the analysis team, many will come from the early adopter category. However, it may be useful to consider people from the other categories to be sure that knowledge of the full spectrum of the community is present among the group.

Using the ideas above, we suggest that the facilitator work with key groups and individuals to generate a list of possible people to involve. It may be useful to establish an informal advisory committee that chooses the selection criteria and helps make the choices among possible participants.

Further Readings on Analyzing Community Systems

Education Commission of the States. (1991). *Restructuring the Education System: Communication.* Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

This was written specifically to help schools develop communication plans, however, the information provided will be helpful for any community and/or institution interested in learning how to effectively communicate with the public.

Mathews, Forrest David. (1994). *Politics for People: Finding a Responsible Public Voice.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

This book discusses why communication, inclusiveness, and listening are critical to building effective democracies.

Moore, G.A. (1991). *Crossing the Chasm.* New York, NY: Harper Business.

Moore develops a continuum entitled the "Technology Adoption Life Cycle" which contends that technology is absorbed into any given community in stages corresponding to the psychological and social profiles of various segments within the community. The thinking is similar to that of Rogers. This psychographic profile —combining psychology and demographics—is used to market high-tech products by following the users and/or nonusers identified as: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. The patterns provide ideas of what one might expect in other fields such as community work.

Rogers, E.M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations.* New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co.

Diffusion is the process of disseminating new ideas through channels (formal and informal) in society. Diffusion can be seen as an act of social change. When new ideas are

diffused and are adopted or rejected, the process creates a change in the social environment. New ideas can be spread in a planned or spontaneous way. In this book, Rogers synthesizes important findings from past research, criticizes the work (which includes his own), and charts new directions in diffusion research and analysis.

Weisbord, Marvin R. (1995). *Future Search: An Action Program Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

This book encourages the use of a technique called "Future Search Conferences" for bringing people together to achieve shared vision, breakthrough innovation, empowerment, and collaborative action.

This chapter lays the groundwork for use of a tool that determines the extent and progress of systemic change within a community. This kind of information can be used to structure a new initiative or the next phase of an initiative for continual progress toward the new types of systems desired for the community. A matrix relates the stages of the change process to various "levers" for change that appear to be particularly important in keeping the change process moving.

This matrix or "Continuum of Community-Based Systems Change" presented in Figure 2 (p. F–62) is designed as a tool for a community-change facilitator to use with a cross-role group of people to assess the status of the community's change initiatives to date. Chapter VI explains how to modify the continuum for your situation.

Change is an ever-evolving process whose stages often have ambiguous edges. There is no one correct place to begin. Choices depend on the personalities of those interacting, the conditions people seek to change or create, and, of course, the context. The starting point for structuring an initiative may be focused on individuals (e.g., leadership development), neighborhoods (e.g., developing trust among residents), or within a formal system (e.g., reducing duplication and making human service agencies more accessible). Participants may be building upon existing assets, responding to community needs, mobilizing residents or professionals, targeting selected social systems, or leveraging other types of change.

Regardless of the starting point, these pockets of change must be gradu-

ally intertwined if long-term and comprehensive change is ultimately to result. The stages and levers of change presented in this chapter help groups find ways to weave together actions that lead to long-term comprehensive change.

To simplify use, the continuum is presented in rows and columns. In reality, the stages and levers of change are much more cyclical and intertwined. First, we describe the stages of change in the continuum, then the levers of change. Each stage or lever includes an example.

Stages of Change

It takes considerable time to fundamentally change a system. Many people must think and act differently. People and systems cannot be separated. As systems go through changes, so do the people involved in making the systems work. Although the process is complex and varies from community to community, there are six recognizable stages of the change process that communities and individuals go through as they recreate their social systems:[15]

- Maintenance of Institution-Oriented Systems
- Awareness (of the need for change)
- Exploration (of new outcomes and ways of operating)
- Transitioning (from the old to the new system)
- Emerging New Fundamentals (of the new system)
- Predominance of Community-Based Systems

Within the description of each stage of change is a community example (in italics) that illustrates what might be happening at this stage. The examples are drawn from actual situations (or a composite of more than one situation).

Maintenance of Institution-Oriented Systems

In this stage, people expect to overcome problems and challenges by improving the approaches already in use rather than trying a new approach. The power dynamics of dominant cultures and organizations are firmly held in place. Eventually a few key people realize that if they continue to do what they have always done, they will continue to get the same (unsatisfactory) results, no matter how hard they try.

Example: *The local paper is criticizing the county social service agency for being inefficient and not addressing the needs of clients. The agency*

head decides that all staff members should have time-management and stress-management training. How staff members work with other agencies remains the same.

There may be a few small projects or efforts (probably led by people with little power) that are attempting to change the systems. However, it is likely that there are no initiatives in the community to address the interconnections among systems (e.g., education, health, and human services).

Awareness

Key people in the community become increasingly aware that the efforts made to improve services and their ideas about what works have made little or no difference in the life of the community. They begin to wonder whether there might be some better approach, but they don't know what to do next. There is fear of letting go of the familiar even though key players may recognize it as essential.

Often in this stage, people feel guilty or unhappy about their performances and begin to blame others. The emphasis is on what has gone wrong or is being done poorly rather than on new possibilities. Getting past this blaming period is critical to the development of new initiatives and alternative practices. However, it is not until the Transitioning stage that people begin to band together and let go of the blame and anger.

During the Awareness stage, people in power often exhibit tokenism. They make efforts to include those they realize have been excluded, but their efforts (conscious or unconscious) still ensure that the locus of power remains the same. During this stage, people discuss small projects and begin to talk about collaboration, but there is still great distrust and lack of commitment to new ways. People are just beginning to break free from their old paradigms of how the systems should work. They are only beginning to see other possibilities.

Example: *The chamber of commerce has just published a report that criticizes the administration of the schools and local social service agencies. According to the report, too much money is going into administration and not enough is reaching clients and students. The report identifies five other cities that are decentralizing their bureaucracies. The chamber of commerce challenges the local schools and agencies to follow example of these five cities. Key people begin to take notice of the ineffectiveness.*

As people move through the Awareness stage and hear of new ways of doing things and as tensions increase, people open to the possibility that change is needed. This leads to the Exploration stage.

[15] The stages presented here are congruent with other models of the stages of change, e.g., see Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change.* New York, NY: Addison-Wesley; and Land, G. and Jarman, B. (1992). Breakpoint and Beyond. New York, NY: Harper Business. However, the stages presented here are divided into more parts and have an emphasis on groups of people changing the systems that shape their lives. These characteristics are based on our experiences and study of the stages related to changing systems.

Exploration

During Exploration, communities pick up new ideas from many sources. It is critical for people to see the change in action and hear about it from their peers. For example, they visit communities experiencing success in their areas of interest, have one-on-one conversations with various stakeholders, participate in Internet discussion groups, attend conferences, establish study groups, watch video tapes, etc. Community groups and organizations begin to talk about banding together as they explore, but there are lots of turf issues and power struggles that occur as people begin to try these new roles and responsibilities and to change their mental images of how they should be operating. For example, a manager may feel useless and inferior as she realizes she needs to be a supporter rather than a director of people.

At the Awareness and the Exploration stages, conversations are extremely important. It is through these interactions that people learn and begin to change their mental images of what is the "right" way to do things. The ground rules of effective dialogue become particularly important to make these conversations productive.[16]

Another key activity at the Exploration stage is for people at all parts of the system to actually try out new approaches in as many arenas of the community as possible based on personal interests and commitments which are key to motivating change. It is also essential that all parts of the formal and informal systems of the community start to shake loose from their habitual and often unconscious ways of operating. Unless change starts to happen at all levels of a system (e.g., governance, leadership, management, workers), it is unlikely that the work will lead to fundamental change in how any given system operates. Instead, the foundations of the old systems will remain, and only a few interesting projects will model the new assumptions without significantly challenging the dominant community systems.

> **Example:** *Nonprofit and governmental social service agencies and schools wrote a proposal and were awarded funding from a national foundation to develop a single-entry intake form for clients in the county. These agencies and schools established a restructuring committee with representation from each agency that would work together to develop the form and process. Once this effort was underway, the agencies and schools moved on to a literature review of case-management models and concepts focusing on community and client assets rather than deficits.*
>
> *Other initiatives focused on assets began to network with the agencies and schools, and they identified others who shared a common vision and philosophy. They are now ready to talk with county commissioners about needed policy changes. Unfortunately, their external funding is about to expire, and the members of the group are very concerned that the top administrators of some key agencies got involved just to get the external money without a commitment to continue the support.*

At the Exploration stage, people begin to understand new practices and

[16] For more information on effective dialogue, see Senge, P. M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline.* New York, NY: Doubleday/Currency.

philosophies at a deeper more personal level. They recognize the connection between assumptions, beliefs, and daily practice. They recognize incongruities between current practice and the new beliefs and assumptions that they want to drive their operations.

A couple of precautions during this stage: Often, certain stakeholders will latch onto one technique, thinking it is going to solve all of the problems of the system. They may become strong advocates for the chosen approach and criticize others for not using it. This undermines the environment of trust and encouragement essential to move forward. Also, people may try too many new approaches at a very superficial level.

For example, a school may try to institute cooperative learning, but teachers do not have time to train students in how to do it well. They make feeble attempts and then declare it an ineffective approach, rather than realizing that they have taken just one of many steps needed to use this method as it is intended.

This phenomenon links closely to the problem of people trying to use new practices without challenging their fundamental beliefs about how systems need to operate or how they view other people. For example, people in power attempt to reach out to community members but still maintain their position of superiority. Community members view these attempts as tokenism and can become hostile.

As people leave the Exploration stage and move toward Transition, they are often overwhelmed with all the choices and issues, yet they begin to see themes, patterns, and connections among parts of the system. They are able to look more deeply at the commonalties among promising practices and recognize their potential to make some of these practices a reality. They also come face-to-face with issues of power, equity, trust, and respect.

The move from the Exploration stage to the Transition stage is typically the biggest leap from one stage to another. One writer refers to this type of move as "crossing the chasm."[17] This is where deep commitment to a new set of underlying principles is required. Without this commitment, people will either get caught in an endless loop of explorations or will revert back to the old ways of doing business.

Transition

It is in the Transition stage that initiatives coalesce and new structures are put in place that could begin to define the new connections. For example, existing associations and organizations might agree jointly to fund a coordinator who works across associations/organizations to accomplish a particular purpose such as coordinated services for children's health and social needs. Such a position may have been funded during the Exploration stage, but in the Exploration stage, special funding—from a foundation—was used. In the Transitioning stage people are, at least in part, using their own funds.

Problems inevitably occur when people make the switch to the new system.

Typically, they will hang on to some aspects of the old system until they are comfortable with the new ways of doing things. Those who succeed realize they don't have the resources to do both and they need to make a choice between the old and the new.

Recognizing when one has to give up the old way and cling to the new is tricky. It involves balancing what worked in the old way (rather than throwing everything out from the past or trying to keep all of both old and new) with what is needed in the new context and deciding how to allocate resources to support the change. Those tough decisions must be based on a deliberate commitment to the new underlying assumptions that will anchor their systems—for example, a commitment to shared and community-driven decision making around the priorities of a system rather than hierarchically based decisions.

> **Example:** *The school superintendent and the director of the county social service agency have known each other awhile, but have not talked about the changes that each was making to decentralize decision making to teachers and social workers respectively. The superintendent and director discovered the commonalties in their approaches during a conversation at a chamber of commerce panel with business leaders. The superintendent will soon be taking a job with a larger district and has asked for the support of business leaders and the social services director when she goes to the school board to make some policy changes that will establish the new approaches for the long term. The business leaders also talked about how the chamber and other influential people in the community might work with the school board to help ensure that the hiring process for the new superintendent includes criteria that results in the hiring of someone who supports this same philosophy.*

During this stage, outside sources typically supply some funding, however, increasingly large amounts will be reallocated from within the existing formal and informal systems. For example, a community decides that sports uniforms will no longer be paid for out of the school budget, instead those dollars will be used for professional development and training for teachers and community volunteers engaged in school activities.

The Transition stage is fragile. Often external funders pull out at the Exploration stage, leaving people too vulnerable to weather the assaults of those still holding on to their old power positions and perspectives. The Transitioning stage represents the dying of the old—letting go of past priorities and frameworks.

Emerging New Fundamentals

During this stage, players begin building the new in a consistent and committed fashion. It is like going beyond the periodic diet to a long-term new set of eating habits and patterns. It is the time when those who may not have been

[17] For more information, see Moore, G.A. (1991). *Crossing the Chasm.* New York, NY: Harper Business.

willing to commit up until now are convinced that this is the better way of doing things or at least it is the one that will be rewarded and expected.

About one-fourth or one-third of the people in any stakeholder group will be quite comfortable with the new way of doing things and regularly use new language and practices (e.g., shared decision making) at this stage. There will be pockets where efforts remain piecemeal. For example, in neighborhoods there are likely to be stakeholders whose assets have not been tapped (e.g., families with multiple needs). This is the stage, however, where leaders within nearly all stakeholder groups are confident in their abilities to build their communities from within and to leverage outside resources to further their goals.

For example, in a school, funding to support community-based change comes from its regular budget, showing it is committed and able to sustain this effort.

> **Example:** *Six community agencies and organizations have been working as a collaborative for five years. Funding for a single-entry intake process and for a liaison within each organization (a person who as part of his/her regular job description works collaboratively with the community and other agencies) is a regular part of the budgeting process of each agency. Recently, the steering committee—comprised of primarily agency representative—was changed. It is now comprised of 60 percent community residents served or affected by the agencies and 40 percent agency staff. The steering committee is now considering how agency and organization services can better build the assets of the community. Last year, two agency leaders were new. Both support the collaborative work and have continued funding even though they had some budgetary cutbacks. Hospital liaisons are now talking to the collaborative about how they might work together. People throughout the state (and even beyond state lines) who want to learn more about the collaborative's processes are now visiting the collaborative.*

Predominance of Community-Based Systems

At this stage, key systems that shape the character of the community are generally operating according to the fundamental assumptions (results-oriented, resident-based, systemic) that were sought as the basis for the community's systems. This stage is called "Predominance of Community-Based Systems," because communities seldom, if ever, have the new systems fully in place.

As communities approach their desired systems, they typically see something beyond that is even more desirable.

It is like the story of the city man who went to the country looking for Joe Jones' house. He stopped at a farmhouse and asked the woman who answered the door if she knew where Joe Jones lived. "Oh yes," she said. "Just go three C's down the road and turn left." "Three C's?" the city man asked. "What do you mean?" "Well," she said, "go as far as you can see, then do it again, then again, and then you turn left." Frequently, we get a vision as far as we can see based on

what our current knowledge is. Then, as we get closer and closer, we see something over the horizon that is even more intriguing and seems more appropriate. As the systems of a community reach this stage, the systems are most likely ready to recycle through the whole continuum again, having learned a considerable amount about the process of change.

At this point, systems are also more flexible and better able to incorporate small changes with less dramatic shifts in thinking and action than the first time designers worked through the process of fundamental redesign. At this point, key people have shifted to a learning mode and have created what some refer to as a “learning organization” or “learning community.”

Because system change is a dynamic process, movement is constant— forward and backward—along the continuum. People gradually develop a different perspective of the world they work in or the community they are trying to build. They recognize the patterns of change and gain confidence that once they have worked through one set of issues or problems, they will be better prepared to face the inevitable next set. They don’t expect things to ever be perfect but are increasingly prepared to deal with the cycles of life.

> **Example:** *Most agencies and community organizations view collaborative working relationships as essential, and community residents are regularly involved on the boards of many of the agencies. Major issues are now surfacing about how to rebuild businesses within low- income neighborhoods and what approaches to use for improving housing conditions. Community leaders are realizing that long-standing racial and economic issues are still not adequately resolved, and new approaches are needed. However, these leaders feel that they have a strong cadre of citizens connected with key organizations that have worked through changes before and are positioned to address these tough issues.*

Levers of Change

The process of changing multiple systems and the fundamental norms and principles of a community is a daunting and often overwhelming task. How can a community approach the task in a manageable way?

There are certain “levers” for change that seem to be present in nearly all system-change efforts. One dictionary defines a “lever” as “a bar used to pry something loose.” These levers for changing systems are entry points into systems that help to dislodge the systems from the principles and practices that may have worked well in the past but no longer are adequate or appropriate for new community conditions. Once systems are pried loose—“unfrozen,” as some might say—they are pliable and easily reshaped.

These levers, however, are integral parts of systems themselves. Thus, the metamorphosis of these levers creates the new systems. The levers of change look different and are used differently at each of the stages of change discussed previously. The eight levers addressed here are:

- Shared Principles and Norms

- Vision and Goals
- Stakeholder Roles
- Projects, Programs, and Initiatives
- Human Capacity Building
- Governance/Leadership
- Communications/Networking
- Financial Resources

The levers are not mutually exclusive; they overlap, but each provides a different way of looking at the system. It is analogous to a kaleidoscope where each turn gives a different view, and yet each is recognizable as a different view of a common collection.

The transformation of each of these features of the community's systems results in systems that have the desired new characteristics. Review the following descriptions of these levers, contrasting how they look within the old systems versus the new systems.

When considering these levers, one can apply them to individual systems within a community or to a collection of systems. Typically people need to be going back and forth, from thinking and working on particular systems (e.g., the dynamics among families in a neighborhood or a church, the human services department, the public health department, or the education system) to thinking and working on the interconnections and interfaces among formal and informal systems.

Shared Principles and Norms

In institution-oriented systems, common community norms may be those of confrontational style, short-term results, single-issue focus, top-down social/organizational hierarchy, one-way communication, dependency, and competition for scarce resources. The basic principle is that systems are organized around activities, isolated from one another and hierarchically structured, and focused on problems, needs, and deficits to work in an orderly and efficient fashion to improve the community. (These characteristics may have been appropriate for the industrial age, for which they were designed, but no longer are.)

The new community-based systems create common norms that are respectful of other ideas rather than confrontational. And these norms display shared leadership, a focus on long-term capacity building rather than short-term crisis interventions, and an expanded view of stakeholders.

These norms grow out of a new set of principles that serve as the foundation for social systems: (a) a purpose and results-orientation both in terms of products and processes that contribute to the well-being of children and families as well as the community at large (b) a focus on interconnectedness and dynamic relationships (a systemic approach) and (c) an orientation to community building, recognizing assets of all citizens and the importance of developing shared responsibility and leadership with a sense of equality among all par-

ties.

Example: *The director of the Community Development Corporation and the chair of the Interfaith Council in Summitville met during a conference on substance abuse prevention sponsored by the governor. They had not recognized how focused they were on deficits of the community and its residents. The concept of focusing on assets was revolutionary for them. They agreed to start talking with a few key people about this change in perspective and what it might mean for their work. Soon the conversation expanded to many others. They began observing interactions among their staffs and others, and began taking note of the subtle ways in which deficit thinking tended to shape behavior. They noted examples of behaviors that were based on a focus on assets. These served as the basis for educational sessions held within the community. Over the course of three years, even outsiders began to notice something different about interactions in the community and the amount of ownership building around the new housing project on the west side of town.*

Vision & Goals

Typical community systems, formal or informal, focus on and perpetuate activities that have proven to work in the past. Key people pay little attention to changing conditions and contexts. Short-term strategies and successes are rewarded, without consideration of their long-term impact. Thinking is inward rather than outward, with priority given to benefiting the organization or group itself rather than those it is intended to serve. In many cases this is done almost unconsciously, since people in the system have little or no discussion of their visions, purposes, and goals.

As systems move into new modes of operating, these systems focus on creating or recreating a vision of their roles and purposes in the community, on who should be involved in determining this, and how to connect their daily activities to this vision. System leaders focus on moving people toward critical analysis of problems and issues to understanding and addressing root causes. They work toward challenging the root causes head-on.

As a result, the goals that derive from the vision involve flexibility, analysis of prevailing conditions/contexts, and relevant interventions based upon controllable factors. Since these conditions/contexts affect many services and people, the move is toward a cross-sector approach that is both client- and community-focused. As people work through the stages of change, clients and other stakeholders become increasingly involved in the creation of the vision and all other levers as they are the keys to real change. Personal commitment is high because of involvement and respect for ideas of all groups and because the focus is on the assets of clients and the community.

Example: *An agency partnership began among a group of health, education, and social services agencies serving 12 rural counties. A couple of the agency heads wrote a grant that was funded to support the effort.*

When the funds actually arrived, the newly hired director of the partnership wanted to have all of the agency heads get together for a one-day visioning session to be sure everyone shared the goals in the proposal. Most of the agency heads were not interested in such a gathering. Finally the partnership director began surveying the community on her own, with minimal interest from the partners, to determine what seemed to be the major issues the partnership should address.

After a year of meetings of the partnership, usually with poor attendance and low interest, the partnership members began talking about mission and vision statements. Several worked with people in their own agencies to create an agency-level mission and vision statement. Two years later, the partnership members agreed to a retreat to rethink their direction and create a vision statement and goals for the next phase of the partnership. After three years, they realized that citizens had to be involved in the yearly retreats they were now having. The agencies were also gradually involving clients in the development of their vision statements, and a new level of energy and commitment was emerging within and across agencies as well as among those receiving assistance from the agencies.

Stakeholder Roles

In institutional systems (both formal and informal), people with power— professional staff (instead of beneficiaries), administrators (instead of frontline workers), parents (instead of children)—are traditionally viewed as the key stakeholders and the ones primarily involved in decision making. Citizens, clients, and workers who are at lower levels of the system hierarchies have little or no involvement in the decision-making process. Decisions are "delivered" to the community and others, and support for the decision is taken for granted.

When community systems arise and reach the Predominance of Community-Based Systems stage, citizens, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders become equal partners in decision making. They are empowered through involvement. Authority within systems is more distributed, and systems are more interconnected through the overlap of stakeholder involvement across systems. A mutual respect evolves, with each seeing the other as making a valuable contribution.

Example: *Ansbury is an urban neighborhood that has experienced continual deterioration since the steel industry economy collapsed more than 20 years ago. More and more people have become dependent on welfare, housing has deteriorated, and illegal dumping has filled vacant lots with garbage. Ten years ago, a group of concerned citizens began to mobilize citizens to take action. They formed a neighborhood association that obtained help from the city to take over vacant lots and remove the garbage. It has been a painstakingly long process, but now agencies whose boards had been largely comprised of people from outside the neighborhood have begun to bring residents on as board members. The agencies are forming a collaborative to develop communication, conflict*

resolution, community organization, and other skills among resident board members to give them greater control over their community. Residents, outsiders, and agency personnel are developing mutual trust and respect and are seeing that each has an important perspective.

Projects, Programs, and Initiatives

Within institutional systems, projects and programs typically have a narrow focus. They build upon old norms and assumptions and are isolated from other programs despite similar goals or other related features.

Within community-based systems, projects, programs, and initiatives are key levers during the change process. They keep the focus on desired results. They look for linkages—cross-agency and/or cross-community—and are likely to have multiple purposes. They are designed for both short- and long-term results and emphasize building human assets at the same time they are accomplishing visible community improvements (i.e., processes and products). They use the assets of persons within the community as well as those outside. Evaluations look at a full range of results (in terms of process and product) and help evolve the theory of change guiding the initiative.

Projects are likely to be embedded within broader initiatives that are defined primarily by community-building assumptions—purpose and results-oriented, systemic, and resident-based. Smaller units within the community create specific projects that put these principles into practice.

Example: *Many of the Ansbury agencies were started as specially funded projects. Some were related to housing, some to youth development, some to substance abuse, etc. Each was focused on a segment of the community: youth, senior citizens, people with substance-abuse problems. Often these agencies competed with one another for foundation funding. Turf protecting was the norm. A special funding opportunity arose that required that organizations form collaboratives to apply. The agencies began to look at how they could address bigger challenges by working together. These agencies also began to look at longer-term goals and ways to be flexible in their approaches both in making immediate changes in their neighborhoods and also in positioning themselves for other challenges.*

As a result, they have mobilized residents to reclaim two parks from drug dealers, and now agencies are working on building economic opportunities for neighborhood youth. These agencies refer to their collective work as the Ansbury Neighborhood Initiative, with smaller projects coming and going as needed.

Human Capacity Building

In predominantly institutional systems, there is a narrow view of resources within the community. People look outside for community support and invest primarily in programs and facilities rather than training and development of people. Volunteerism is limited and unfocused. Job training programs are narrow-

ly focused or outdated, and there is little encouragement toward lifelong learning.

In the new systems, building social capital is stressed.[18] Leadership is developed through training and support. Volunteerism is used as a way to incorporate stakeholders and keep systems flexible and dynamic. Technical skills used in community building are taught and practiced in the community-development process. Communities organize their own community-building activities. This strengthens the capacity of local people individually and collectively to nurture and sustain positive community change.

> **Example:** *The university's school of social work has been providing in-service training for community agency personnel for many years. However, the movement was toward professionals with increasing specializations and service categories. Churches and nonprofit organizations were having more and more difficulty recruiting volunteers. Job training programs were preparing people for nonexistent jobs.*
>
> *Spurred by external funding that required a university-community-agency partnership, a collaborative was formed to revamp social work preparation programs within the university, in-service for agency personnel, and new training programs for community residents. The university faculty involved in developing the proposal were heavily focused on a community-driven approach and worked out a balanced distribution of the funds among the partners.*
>
> *The partnership began its plan for developing human capacity building in the neighborhoods. They developed small collectives of agency, university, and resident members who did surveys of their particular areas to find out what kinds of training and technical support the residents wanted. Working back from these areas, they developed a plan that reshaped the role of the agency personnel in the community and the type of education offered through the university. Agency personnel are learning how to work in support of building on resident assets to meet resident-determined needs. University students now spend time in the community learning to build relationships, rather than delivering "services" to clients.*

Governance/Leadership

In the institutional approach, systems are defined hierarchically, with those at the top of the hierarchy defining boundaries and making key policy decisions. Individual community members are expected to implement but not be involved in making policy decisions. There is little or no cross-sector involvement. Governance is defined separately for each formal system, and informal systems go either unrecognized or undervalued. The purpose or mission of one system shows little connection to other systems in the community. Efficiency is valued far more than participation. The focus is largely on the internal management of each system. Learning is defined as something you did in school. Personal com-

[18] For more information on building social capital, see the National Civic League (1993). *The Civic Index.* New York, NY: National Civic League, Inc.

mitment is low. Governance is defined within formal systems with few, if any, governance structures that cross systems. Little evaluation of the work of the system is done, or it is done in a judgmental way that does little to promote new thinking. Rather, evaluation is oriented toward ensuring that people are "following the rules" and/or it is focused on individual projects.

In community-based systems, distributed/shared decision making is valued both within systems and across systems. Community residents and clients participate in the decision-making process. Cross-sector involvement is advocated. A redistribution of power, authority, and accountability occurs with governing groups established with representation across formal and informal systems. These governing groups create a web of connections that results in all community stakeholders being involved in significant decision making and policy making.

Governance and leadership are viewed as keeping the system responsive to, and in tune with, the needs and vision of the community, rather than micromanagement of the system. Evaluation is done with an emphasis on learning and improvement and using data to make decisions. Evaluations are also focused on looking at benchmarks of progress toward long-term goals and providing information that helps governing bodies recognize adjustments they need to make within and across systems to achieve their ultimate goals. Rewards flow from community strength and creativity.

> **Example:** *Nine agencies that serve a rural 15-county area decided to work together to support a training center for child care workers, because providing quality child care is crucial to the economic development of the region. The heads of the agencies started out as the governing body for the center. Over the first two years, the director of the center became involved in a leadership program sponsored by the local chamber of commerce. She is now getting small family child-care providers involved in the leadership program and in the governance of the center. Training programs also are being developed to help people be more effective board members. Community forums are being held to generate more involvement of the residents in the operation of the training center as well as in the agencies in the collaborative. The leadership program, initially focused on business leaders, is now expanded to include nonprofits, public agencies, and individuals who are seen as having leadership potential within the community, although they are not affiliated with a particular organization.*

Communications/Networking

In an institution-oriented system, the public is informed after decisions have been made or a project has begun. One-way communication through press releases and speeches is the main method of communication. Dissemination of information has little or no focus on how it benefits individuals or organizations, and is seen as a way of directing acceptance of policies rather than encouraging dialogue and coming to general agreement.

In a community-based approach, communication is seen as a two-way street involving listening and understanding. There is an immediate or direct information flow. The public is a part of the decision-making process as well as the dissemination effort. The public is clear on opportunities for participation in decision making. Written materials are tailored to the audience. Two-way interactions are preferred. Formal and informal networking is a key part of the new infrastructure. Regular community forums are offered where people can express points of view and brainstorm ideas, where professionals can offer appropriate expertise—that is, where they can act as resources rather than superintendents of resources.

> **Example:** *Until about five years ago, the local schools provided little student performance information to the community. Because of a state mandate, the schools began providing a report on student performance, but the report contained the minimum information required by the state. Press releases tended to focus mainly on the few positive areas of performance and ignored the less-than-satisfactory situations. Soon, the newspaper encouraged by a group of unhappy parents began to push for more information. Tensions mounted. Finally, an outside facilitator was brought in.*
>
> *Guided by outside facilitators, a series of community forums was convened. Residents were asked to define the skills and knowledge they wanted their students to have by the time they left high school. Gradually, the emphasis shifted from what was wrong to what was desired. A committee that included community members, teachers, parents, administrators, and business people began developing a communication plan for the schools. This plan facilitates ongoing dialogue and exchange of views. Networks among the neighborhoods served by each of the four elementary schools are beginning to form.*

Financial Resources

In an institution-oriented system, categorical funding is typical, and the categories are defined at locations outside the community. There is emphasis on bringing in outside resources and maintaining past resource-allocation categories and patterns. In a community-based system, budgeting and funding is driven by the results sought. "Budgeting for results" becomes the watchphrase. Desired results are defined, and then budgets are designated to achieve each of the results. Some funds may be allocated specifically in ways that help to build linkages across systems, providing better support to communities.

> **Example:** *A Midwestern state legislature passed a bill that allowed pooling of funds for child welfare. This action was driven by a 40 percent increase in children requiring foster care in the previous five years. "Decategorizing" funds was seen as the best method to serve families and children. Counties go through a process to be designated as a "decat" county. A key feature of decategorization is that counties can carry money over from year to year, making decat a major incentive for counties. This approach moves money into long-term planning and helps to*

move to early intervention and investment in the future. Within decat counties, results-oriented performance measures are being established within programs followed by budgeting based on these desired results. The state is also working on a way to calculate a Return On Investment (ROI) for publicly funded programs. The benchmarks and results-oriented program performance measures are being implemented in selected agencies this year.

Each of these levers for change becomes a means by which an initiative or project can help to move systems forward from one stage of change to another.

Further Readings on Stages and Strategies of Change

Anderson (Parsons), B.L. (1993). "The Stages of Systemic Change." *Educational Leadership*, 51, 1.

This article presents an easy-to-read discussion of the stages and levers of change in the education field. It presents a continuum of change similar to that presented in this paper, but focused only on education. A fuller discussion of the topic is presented in Anderson (Parsons) B.L. (1993). *A Framework for Understanding and Assessing Systemic Change.* Fort Collins, CO: InSites.

Anderson (Parsons), B.L. and Cox, P.L. (1988). *Configuring the Education System for a Shared Future: Collaborative Vision, Action, Reflection.* Andover, MA: Regional Laboratory for the Northeast and the Islands.

This paper describes the importance of collaborative groups developing vision and action plans followed by time to reflect on the consequences of their actions.

Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change.* New York, NY: Addison-Wesley.

Bridges describes what change does to employees and what employees in transition do to an organization. He describes how to minimize the distress and disruptions that occur during times of change.

Flower, Joe and Norris, Tyler. (1994). "Sustaining the Effort: Building a Learning Community." *The Healthcare Forum's Healthy Communities Action Kits,* Module 4.

This article touches on many aspects of the continuum for community-based systems change presented in this paper and provides helpful examples and advice for communities engaged in a change process. This article discusses: governance, structure, and leadership; process; maintaining participation; resources; transferring knowledge and capacity; measurement; and celebration.

Fullan, Michael. (1993). *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform.* Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Change Forces focuses on educational reform and tackles the nonlinear and chaotic nature of the forces of change at all levels of society. It shows why we need a new mindset for contending with the real complexity of dynamic and continuous change. *Change Forces* debunks many of the current myths about roles of vision and strategic planning, site-based management, strong leadership, consensus, and accountability.

Fullan, M. and Steigelbauer, S. (1991). *The New Meaning of Educational Change.* New York,

NY: Teachers College Press: Columbia University.

Building on the previous work, *The Meaning of Educational Change*, this book analyzes the problem of finding meaning in change. It stipulates that if reforms are to be successful, both individuals and groups must find meaning concerning what should change as well as how to go about change. This book distills, from 30 years of planned educational change, those experiences which provide lessons on how to cope with and influence the change process.

Gardner, John W. (1996). "School and Community." *Community Education Journal,* Vol. XXII, Nos. 1 & 2.

The article discusses the four main resources necessary for creating a sense of community: city government, the media, the schools, and the civic infrastructure.

InSites. (1995). *Analysis of System Change in Education and Human Services: A Facilitator's Guide.* Ft. Collins, CO: InSites.

This is a team guide providing background readings, a detailed continuum, transparencies, and handouts for use in explaining system change in state-level activities.

Katzenbach, J.R., Smith, D.K. (1993). *The Wisdom of Teams.* New York, NY: Harper Business.

The authors believe that teams and performance are inextricably linked. Teams can have many purposes and forms. Characteristics of a "committed team" are identified as a common purpose, a set of related performance goals, and an approach for which they are mutually accountable. The focal point of the book is the section on team stories. These can be a stimulus for managers to use teams to their most fruitful advantage.

Land, G. and Jarman, B. (1992). *Breakpoint and Beyond.* New York, NY: Harper Business.

Change itself has changed. Old rules mandated change of degree. Today we see changes of kind. At breakpoint, the old rules no longer apply and can even create barriers to success. *Breakpoint and Beyond* discusses how understanding the change process in nature and applying it to our lives and organizations can help us unravel many seemingly irreconcilable problems.

Lipnack, Jessica and Jeffrey Stamps. (1993). *The TeamNet Factor.* Essex Junction, VT: Oliver Wight Publications.

A TeamNet involves people working in small groups across boundaries that separate functional expertise and command chains. *The TeamNet Factor* presents five principles in achieving a TeamNet: unifying purpose, independent members, voluntary links, multiple leaders, and interactive levels.

Moore, Linda R. (1995). "A Lesson from the Field: Leadership Matters." *New Schools, New Communities,* Vol. 12, No. 1.

The author shares her insights on why projects that connect schools and communities require skills in collaborative leadership.

Price Waterhouse Change Integration Team. (1995). *Better Change.* New York, NY: Irwin Professional Publishing.

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A practical "tool kit" for managers working from the first stage of envisioning change to implementing inclusive change efforts. This guide provides case studies as well as checklists to give support and encouragement to those entering the change process.

Rees, Fran. (1991). *How To Lead Work Teams.* San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer.

Rees discusses power and the changing role of the manager (from over-responsibility to shared responsibility, and from controlling to facilitating), myths about facilitation, what is a leader-facilitator, and balancing managing with facilitating.

Richards, Ronald W. (1996). *Building Partnerships.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

As a report on developments in the Community Partnerships with Health Professions Education initiative, this book illuminates new approaches to educating primary care practitioners by linking universities and communities. Illustrations of various approaches to this partnership are identified in Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Georgia, among others. The premise of this initiative is that, if given appropriate tools, individuals, institutions, and communities can work together to make changes in bridging the gap between the culture of communities and the academic culture of health education to create better multidisciplinary education in primary care.

Customizing the Analysis

Once the appropriate parties have been identified for the analysis, the next step is to determine the method for actually conducting the analysis. It's often effective to convene the group for a one-day work session. The session typically begins with the group discussing the concept of systems change and the principles that they believe should guide the changes they make (as discussed in Chapters II and III).

Next they discuss the types of systems and results that they believe are desirable. In education, for example, the results for the beneficiary (student) could be defined in terms of what students should learn and which skills they should be able to use. In human services, customer results may be defined in terms of changed conditions and skills for children, youth, individuals, and families. These definitions are likely to be similar to the column of the continuum labeled "Predominance of Community-Based Systems."

Next, participants use the continuum in small mixed-role groups. Each group is given an enlarged version of Figure 2. Each group determines at what stage(s) of change they think their systems are in regard to the element being analyzed. There are many ways to do this. It may be useful to have small groups analyze each of the purpose-based systems (as defined in Chapter IV) within the community. In other cases, the groups may attempt to look more holistically at the community's systems. Another approach is to have different small groups work on each row of the continuum. The group may use sticky notes or simply write on the continuum to indicate its assessment of the com-

continued on next page…

munity's status.

Once the groups have completed their analyses, the group members use sticky notes to indicate their analyses on a very large (e.g., 4' x 6') version of the continuum—a continuum outline—that is posted on the wall in the front of the room. The analyses give a visual picture of the full situation. This is, of course, a very rough approximation since the continuum may not fully fit the group members' situations. We have found, however, that it is usually close enough, or people can make impromptu changes to make the analyses more meaningful and provide many ideas about likely next steps in their community-change efforts.

A separate document, *Analysis of State-Level System Change in Education and Human Services,* which InSites prepared in 1995 for the Danforth Foundation Policymakers' Program, gives a detailed example of a one-day seminar that uses a state-level continuum of change in education and human

services. The guide includes sample handouts and transparencies that can be modified to fit this new community-based continuum.

The basic idea is for the group to discuss each row of the continuum and identify at which stage(s) of change they think their community as a whole or particular systems within the community are. Once the group members have completed each row, they can see a pattern across the matrix. This pattern will show which leverage points within the systems have been most transformed and which are lagging behind. This information is intended to generate creative ideas about how to redesign current initiatives to better take advantage of the full range of levers.

The general principle in analyzing the community using the continuum is that, within and across the rows of the continuum, the groups cannot get too spread out, otherwise, things start to disintegrate. Imagine that rubber bands connect the various locations which the group members marked on the continuum. If the rubber bands are stretched too far, they can break.

On the other hand, there must be pioneers within and across groups to help propel the whole system forward (e.g., Innovators) in an ongoing dynamic through the system. However, there is no one right way to move institution-oriented systems toward new community-based configurations. In some cases, policies may lead. In other cases, schools and human service administrators may lead, and in yet others, churches or individual community residents may lead. The key lies in deepening the dialogue and building relationships within and among groups to improve the quality of implementation of desired changes and to clarify the basic principles upon which the new systems rest.

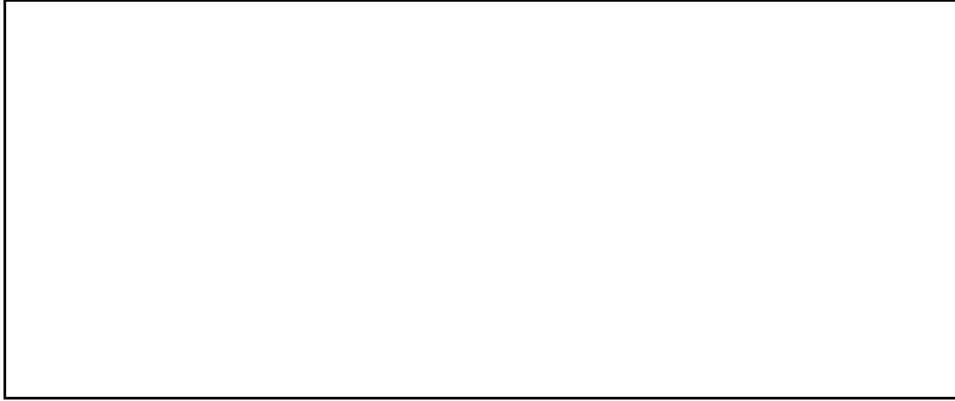
Once a group members have worked through the continuum described in Chapter V, it is likely that they will find that their situations are not quite reflected in the stages and/or the defined goal of their change processes as presented in the final column of the continuum. If the group expects to use the continuum for regular monitoring of their progress, they may wish to develop their own continuum that more accurately reflects their situations.

One process for modifying the continuum is to convene a mixed stakeholder-and-partner group to define what the community systems would be like when functioning as desired in a certain number of years. The group will need to achieve a reasonable balance of idealism and realism in defining the desired system, aware that this is an evolutionary process. They can define the best version of the system to date. After a few years, as they understand more of the dynamics of change in context, they can redo the continuum or develop another one as the sequel to the one they are working on.

For more information on tailoring a continuum to fit your specific needs, contact InSites, 1460 Quince Avenue, S101, Boulder, CO, 80304.

Senge, P.M., et. al. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

This nearly 600-page pragmatic guide shows how people are developing learning organizations based on the concepts in *The Fifth Discipline.* This guide is filled with practical suggestions and stories of how formal and informal organizations are recreating themselves. In developing the strategies to use as discussed above, teams are encouraged to refer to Chapter 13 of *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* for a deeper understanding of patterns of behavior that are common within and across systems, and how best to adjust these patterns to keep moving the process forward.



Stages of Change

Levers of Change	Maintenance of Institution-Oriented Systems ➜	Awareness ➜	Exploration ➜
Shared Principles/ Norms	Assumptions: • Activity-oriented • Isolated, rigid systems • Service delivery-oriented • Hierarchical Norms: • Confrontational, judgmental • Competition • Top-down style • Problem/crisis-oriented • Separation of systems/services	Pockets of stakeholders: • Recognize broader social / economic issues impacting community • Recognize need for cooperation • See new connections among people, ideas, issues, problems • Become conscious of dysfunctional norms • Token steps toward new norms/assumptions	• New norms consciously used in designing and reviewing projects or programs • Extensive dialogue about norms and underlying assumptions among people developing action plans
vision & Goals	• Little attention to local, state, or national context of problem • Focus on short-term successes and strategies • Vision, goals more focused on benefiting organizations than citizens • Limited personal commitment	• Recognition of need for a vision and goals within organizations • Strategic planning discussed • Notion of shared vision and goals across entities discussed • Attention to development of mission statements with citizen focus	• Separate entities establish vision and goals with limited stakeholder involvement • Short-term/immediate results used to keep interest and motivation toward vision • Initial efforts to build shared vision among compatible groups • Vision/goals becoming citizen-focused
Stakeholder Roles	• Leaders, professional staff primarily involved in decision making • Decisions "delivered" to community rather than community engaged in decision making • Public support taken for granted by associations and organizations	• National or state reports on need for broader stakeholder involvement discussed by leaders • Controlled citizen input discussed • Beginning recognition of the diversity of stakeholder involvement	• Structured efforts (e.g., surveys) to gather citizen and other stakeholder input • Dominant stakeholders begin involving previously neglected stake-holders • Stakeholder groups become more vocal
Projects, Programs, Initiatives	• Built on narrowly focused organiza-tional norms • Isolated within separate associations/ organizations • Projects seen as ends in themselves and focus on short-term result	• Discussion of cross-agency projects with similar visions • Beginning discussions of how to design projects to reflect new assumptions or norms	• Projects begin connecting short-term results with long-term visions • Developing human capacity becomes focus of many projects • Collaborative projects and initiatives emerge
Human Capacity Building	• Invest in the development of facilities/ programs rather than people • Limited or unfocused volunteerism/philanthropy • Job training programs narrowly focused and/or outdated	• Realize that relying on external resources is not building community or internal capacity but instead dependency on others • Realize importance of developing human resources and capacity and evaluating what assets already exist within community	• Research and pilot methods for assessing the interests, skills, and capacity of individuals and organiza-tions within the community (e.g., community resources audit) • Networking within/across current systems and groups encouraged as a way to build capacity
Governance/ Leadership	• Leaders and managers define bound-aries and make key policy decisions (top-down) • Individual community members expected to implement but not make key policy decisions • No cross-group or system governance • Predominant orientation is to systems efficiency	• Leaders recognize a need to involve more stakeholders in decision-making • Informal community leadership recognized • Collaborative initiatives discussed, issues of their governance explored • Collaborative initiatives designed with little shift in power	• More people from community invited to participate in key policy meetings and give input • Growing attention to policymaking process, not just final policy • Importance of systemic thinking recognized • New reform initiatives require greater community governance • Initiatives struggle with power issues
communica-tions/ Networking	• Inform public after decisions are made and/or effort is moving forward • One-way communication (e.g., press releases, speeches) • Information disseminated with little regard for recipients' interests or applicability of topic	• Recognize that early communication with stakeholders is critical • See need for targeted material	• Pilot new ways of soliciting information and feedback from community (e.g., community forums) • Monitor successes and problems in new communications, networking methods • Networks of peers emerging
Financial Resources	• Emphasis on bringing in outside resources (dependent) • Resources used to support what has been done in past • Allocation categories determined external to the community, activity—rather than outcome-focused	• Recognize that dependency cycle exists • Need seen for new (internal) methods for generating funding	• Looking at social assets of community for resources (traditional/non-traditional assets and funding groups) • Special funds support new ways of operating

Figure 2—Continuum of Community-Building System Change

Stages of Change

➜ Transition	➜ Emerging New Fundamentals	➜ Predominance of New Community-Based Systems	Levers of Change
• Leaders make explicit existing norms and their contrasts with desired norms • Explicit, hard choices are made for community-based norms/assumptions rather than institutionally-oriented ones • Spotty application of new norms within entities	• Key associations and organizations consciously operate on some of the new norms/assumptions • Leaders attend to congruence of actions with new norms/assumptions	Predominant assumptions: • Results (process and product) oriented • Systemic thinking, action • Resident-based, community-building, assets Predominant norms: • Shared leadership & responsibility • Coordinated service/support • Flexible • Multicultural • Long-term capacity building • Collaboration/equality	Shared Principles/ Norms
• Broad-based stakeholder involvement in vision and goal-setting initiates • Continuing focus on citizen input in stating vision, goals • Vision links activities of associations and organizations more closely to desired results for citizens	• Continual shared vision development seen as a major force for change • Vision and goals include attention to full range of community conditions and formal and informal systems • Movement beyond initial issues to encompass more community needs	• Extensive personal commitment • Established process for developing and refining shared community vision that includes all stakeholders • Vision/goals of separate entities complement one another and support a shared vision • Vision/goals more focused on well-being of children and families than that of organization	Vision & Goals
• Community residents becoming very vocal and involved in shaping vision, making decisions • Increasing number of opportunities for citizen involvement across associa-tions/organizations • Organizational structures changing to regularly incorporate broad range of stakeholders in decision making and action	• Emerging comfort with each other as equal partners • Rewards and incentives for participation in collaboratives are infused into formal and informal systems • Key associations and organizations have new policies about who their stakeholders are and how they are to be involved	• All stakeholders (not just profession-als) are actively involved in critical decision making and action roles • Continual attention to public involve-ment in dynamic systems • Formal and informal systems net-worked together through diverse stakeholders	Stakeholder Roles
• Projects seen as vehicles for develop-ing new norms, human capacity • Projects comfortably link short- and long-term results • Assumption-based initiatives develop from projects	• Expanding pattern of cross-agency initiatives • Mechanisms to develop human capacity are basic to projects and initiatives • Projects become a way to change standard operating mode of agencies	• Projects seen as vehicles for develop-ing new norms, human capacity • Projects comfortably link short- and long-term results • Assumption-based initiatives develop from projects	Projects, Programs, Initiatives
• Aresource map used to identify and connect human and organizational capacities and interests with potential community issues and/or projects • More community-based ways of learn-ing and doing becoming evident • Emphasis on reflection, improvement	• Committed corps of volunteers emerges • Human resources increasingly utilized on a regular basis • Individual and group learning seen as an ongoing and essential process	• Use of resources of community are broadly evident • Investment in the development of people as important as facilities and programs • Volunteerism and philanthropy are leveraged to keep formal and infor-mal systems flexible, dynamic	Human Capacity Building
• New stakeholders invited to give input and make decisions • Group recognizes a need for a facilita-tor/coordinator to encourage open dia-logue prior to decision making • Shared responsibility and accountabili-ty discussed • Decisions made about new roles and responsibilities	• Emerging comfort with new roles and responsibilities • All stakeholders represented in making important policy decisions • Decisions made about how to hold each other accountable • Governance of collaborative initiatives operating more smoothly; grounded in community-based norms and assumptions	• Collective decision making about key policy issues (e.g., personnel, budget, curriculum, service delivery, etc.) • Residents in leadership and governing positions • Redistribution of power and account-ability across and within formal and informal systems • Participation, efficiency, and production are balanced concerns for the systems	Governance/ Leadership
• Communication patterns begin to develop that broaden dialogue and support community-based ideas • On-going refinement of methods • Public debate on specific changes earn mixed support • Greater recognition of community diversity and need for different involvement strategies	• Information regularly reviewed for quality and applicability before dissemination • Two-way communication strategy is in place with active participation from diverse stakeholders • Networks recognized as valuable communication vehicles	• Public aware of the wide range of options for community participation • Communication begins well before decisions are made and continues through implementation and review • Written materials tailored to audience • Two-way communication is the norm • Formal and informal networking is key part of infrastructure	Communica-tions/ Networking
• Collaborative decisions about resource allocations across formal and informal systems • Basic resources beginning to be allocated to new ways of operating • Special funds strategically used to solidify new ways of operating	• Developing internal capacity for generating assets and external supporting collaborations • Resources increasingly allocated based on results, systems thinking, and community building	• Collaborative funding mechanisms in place so systems jointly support shared vision and goals • Resources regularly being allocated based on results, systems thinking, and community building	Financial Resources

Figure 2—Continuum of Community-Building System Change