

IT TAKES A JUST AND CAPABLE VILLAGE: PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY JUSTICE¹

**by David M. Chavis, Ph.D.
Association for the Study and Development of Community**

This paper will present the prevention perspective in the context of considering community justice. The underlying theme of this paper is that we know from substantial scientific evidence that communities are essential for human well being and they must be capable of providing a healthy, just, and equitable environment. The prevention of crime and violence is a complex and long-term goal. A community development process can be used as a sustainable prevention strategy by building community capacities. Coalitions and other collaborative structures are presented as best suited for building community capacity for justice and a poor idea for providing more services.

Prevention

Prevention is more of a strategy than a perspective. While prevention strategies in communities originated in public health, it is now chosen as an approach in almost all areas of societal problem solving. A prevention strategy is designed to promote healthy human development and to stop undesirable conditions from happening. It combines other perspectives considered part of the discussion of community justice (i.e., ecological, normative, stratification, and situational). Prevention strategies attempt to change individuals and their ecology. As in other democratic processes, communities experience conflicts between individual and ecological or systems approaches when planning and implementing prevention strategies.

Current prevention strategies build the capacity of individuals, families, and their community institutions to manage and control changes both within them and around them. Healthy and nurturing environments need to be developed and sustained. It is equally important for prevention strategies to enable individuals and their institutions to be resilient to those negative forces which will inevitably plague us.

Community

Communities are our primary ecologies as humans. We thrive living in communities—not in a singular type of community, but in a society that nurtures a diversity of communities to meet the needs of its members. As we entered this century, social theorists (e.g., Durkheim,) predicted a transformation from “solidary” communities (e.g., town, neighborhood, and country) to “organic” communities (e.g., professional affiliations, self-help group, and unions). Communities are tied together in a complex subjective and practical web. Communities are often

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nested within each other. They are networked among themselves and almost all people make connections among different communities each day of their lives. They also create boundaries that need to be bridged.

Getting to the heart of the problem

Systems are also a key component of the ecological perspective and have been shown to produce the broadest reaching changes if they are activated to promote the conditions that foster human development. Social and environment systems link communities and they are essential targets for prevention strategies.

If there are any “facts” that exist in the social and medical sciences, then among the most established is that the three primary underlying causes of social, psychological, and physiological problems are: the degree to which one has a sense of *community* and support; a sense of individual and collective *control*; and a sense that one has enough resources such as *cash* (c.f. Albee, 19xx; Cassels, 1979; Chavis & Newbrough, 1986). Scientists may have developed multiple terms for these basic concepts (e.g., locus of control, empowerment, efficacy, or alienation, bonding, social support, and community) and by doing may have hindered attention to these potent factors. These factors have been so powerful and pervasive in research that we have to statistically and procedurally control for them in order to find other causes in most studies, especially on the subjects of crime and justice.

The scientific evidence, in fact, shows that the prevention of social problems requires health, economic equity, and social justice applied to and through communities. Dockeci (1983) has argued that the impact of all public policies on human and community development be assessed much in the same way that physical environment impact assessments are required.

There are proven incremental strategies available that can create these healthy communities and people. In recent years, community development and prevention strategies have been combined (c.f. Chavis & Florin, 1990). Community prevention strategies using a community development approach can promote greater community, control, and cash where it is needed. Community organizing, self-help groups, and genuine citizen or community member participation in decisionmaking and justice have been shown to increase the highly beneficial senses of community and control in people of all ages and other distinctions. (C.f. Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Levy, 1976). Community based development strategies also have been successful in the economic and physical revitalization of impoverished areas (Vidal, 1992; Pierce & Steinbach, 1987).

Several large national publicly and privately funded community building initiatives have been launched recently, including: the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention; the Rebuilding Neighborhoods Initiative (Anne E. Casey Foundation); the Community Building Initiative (a public-private funding collaborative through the Local Initiatives Support Corporation); Comprehensive Community Initiative (Surdna Foundation), the Community Prevention Partnerships and Prevention Coalitions Programs (Center for Substance Abuse

prevention); and the Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities sponsored by HUD and the Department of Agriculture.

Building Community Capacity

An infrastructure needs to be in place to appropriately replicate the numerous successful prevention and early intervention programs at a massive scale (Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, 1996). Communities are a system or network of institutions that have been developed to meet the needs and aspirations of their members (e.g. families, schools, religions, etc.). Knowledge, skills, relations, and resources can be disseminated through this network of institutions.

A community's well being depends on effective and pro-social community institutions. Community institutions such as families, schools, police, hospitals, government and those of faith are experiencing a widening gap between them and their constituencies in many places in our country. The most successful community-based prevention strategies use coalitions and other collaborative structures to build the capacity of institutions to better serve their functions in the community.

A community's ability to be just will depend on its capacity to develop healthy and capable people and institutions. Given the complexity and entrenchment of the causes of crime and impediments to community justice, a community needs the capacity to address negative conditions over a long time.

Community capacity is defined in this paper as the *sustained ability to effectively develop, mobilize, and use resources to manage change*. The most important resources are knowledge, skills relations, and money. Community coalitions can improve the capacity of local leaders, organizations, and community institutions to develop communities and prevent crime and violence. Institutions need to serve their primary functions: schools need to educate, police need to provide security, hospitals need to promote health, communities of faith need to develop the community's moral fiber; businesses need to develop jobs, government needs to govern; and citizens need to keep their institutions accountable. Community capacity building's main objective is to enable community institutions to serve their primary functions. If all institutions were able to do their respective jobs, community justice would occur. New challenges require institutions to develop new capacities.

One of the most important and achievable goals of a community coalition is to develop a learning community (Senge, 1990; Knowles, 1970). A learning community can be seen as a system where organizations and ...

"... (P) eople continually expand their capacities to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations are set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together."(Senge, 1990: p.3)

Capable communities are learning communities. The following capacities are proposed as necessary for communities to prevent social problems such as crime and violence:

Resource acquisition and mobilization:

- Increased resources for prevention and community development
- Recruitment and use of volunteers and other non-monetary resources
- Fundraising strategies, structures, and resources

Learning/intellectual:

- Knowledge and skills for successful prevention
- Enabling system (workshops, seminars, consultations and TA, information and referral networks) to disseminate knowledge, skills and relations
- Evaluation and research

Political:

- Inter-institutional linkages and practices that promote prevention and community development
- Goal setting and planning
- Goal attainment
- Development of process and structures that foster responsiveness and accountability
- Leadership development and support

Psycho-social:

- Mobilization and management of social relations
- Fostering of a sense of community and caring
- Support for the development and maintenance of community organizations and more local communities
- Promotion of appropriate and effective help seeking
- Effective management of organizations
- Responsive institutions

Community Coalitions and other Collaborative Structures

Coalitions and other forms of community collaboration are being formed as mechanisms for developing community capacity for prevention. Coalitions, partnerships, and other collaborative efforts bring together community leaders and representatives of community institutions in order to combine resources to address threats to the community, such as violence and crime. One of the biggest misconceptions of coalitions and collaborative efforts is that they can develop and manage services and activities in the community. Another misconception is that substantial duplication and poor coordination of services are causing a major impediment to the ability of community's to solve their problems and that coalitions need to address that first.

Coalitions are voluntary relations among people and institutions. In most cases participants are feeling overextended before they joined the coalition, and then they are expected

to contribute more to the collaboration. Funders expect agency directors and civic leaders to spend hours planning and implementing initiatives for the collaboration. Relatively little can get done in a collaboration when members can only spend four to eight hours per month (Join Together, 1996) and therefore coalitions most focus on conducting business that will have the greatest impact on their communities without burning out its membership.

Coalitions and other collaborative structures are ideal for community capacity building because coalitions are driven by relationships. They have been shown to build capacity of the community through strengthening the organizations and institutions that participate in it (Butterfoos, Goodman, & Wandersman; 1993; Chavis, Speer, Resnick, & Zippay, 1993.) Too often the “group think” of a coalition is to more frequently ask what members can do for coalition, than what the coalition can do for its members. Coalitions can build institutional capacity by sharing management, programming, and resource strategies. They also develop relations across sectors and among otherwise alienated agencies, professionals, and community leaders. Often coalition members report that the major benefits of their participation in the coalitions were the things that happened outside of meetings through connections they made participating in the coalition.

There has been growing theory and research on the centrality that the transformation of conflicts or paradoxes plays in the success of a coalition to build community capacity (Smith & Berg, 1987; Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 1993; Chavis, 1996). Conflict transformation is the process whereby the resolution of a conflict builds the overall capacity of the coalition and actually makes it stronger. A study of 86 substance abuse prevention coalitions (Chavis, 1996) showed that conflict transformation was the major contributing internal factor that lead to a coalition’s ability to attain its goals. Over time coalitions are able to transform these "conflicts" or paradoxes within coalitions into a process of positive change (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 1993). These conflicts reflect larger paradoxes at the community level referred to in the discussion paper. The following are the conflicts that coalitions often face and reconcile (Chavis et al, 1993; Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 1993):

- Mixed loyalties: Coalition members have a dual commitment--to the coalition and to their own organization.
- Autonomy versus accountability: The coalition must have enough autonomy to take independent action and accountability to several levels within the coalition (i.e. member organizations);
- Means versus model: A coalition can be viewed as means to accomplish a specific social change goal for the community as well as a mode; "end" in itself by funders in order to meet their need for demonstration projects and model (i.e., a sustained model of inter-organizational coordination);
- Unity and diversity coalition members share compatible, but not identical interests. Members struggle to accommodate each other’s “self-interests” within the coalition;

- Scarce resources: Coalitions require people and organizations with limited time and resources to commit them to another organization. Member organizations are asked to contribute more than they receive.
- Dependence-Independence: The symbiotic relationship between the coalition and the lead agency.

How Coalitions Can Enable Community Capacity Building

Coalition can provide the system that can enable communities to prevent crime and provide community justice. An enabling system is a coordinated network of organizations, which nurtures the development and maintenance of a grassroots community development process through the provision of resources, incentives and education (Chavis, Florin & Felix; 1993). Coalitions can manage sponsor, network or broker the components of this system in order to build community capacity. Coalitions need to make available a variety of types of assistance to individuals and institutions in order to build community capacity.

Training and Consultation: Team, staff and leadership training. Consultation on community, organizational and programmatic issues and strategies. Training of local trainers.

Information and Referral: Coalitions can disseminate information on model programs, provide data on community conditions, research information, and resources (e.g. funding, training, conferences, consultants, and volunteers).

Networking and Coalition Development Assistance can be provided in order to form networks and coalitions at more local levels (e.g. neighborhood) or among institutions and people with common interests and needs (e.g. grassroots organizations, youth workers). Networks consist of organizations and individuals interested in common problems, issues, and strategies that meet to exchange information, common training and technical assistance needs. Coalitions are made up of organizations and institutions working together through communication, coordination, and collaboration in order to solve community problems).

Communications: Coalitions can be most effective in capacity building only if they foster communications among members, the public and larger systems. Coalitions can promote communication through newsletters, television and radio programs (e.g. community access cable stations) conferences, and electronic bulletin boards.

Incentive Grants And Recognition: Coalitions can encourage innovation, experimentation and diffusion of successful local programs by developing funds to incubate new strategies; and provide public recognition and awards to successful local collective efforts.

Public Information And Social Marketing: Coalitions can use the media (electronic and print) to promote public involvement and ownership of initiatives. They can also assist in the identification of public priorities, concerns and resource usage. Coalitions can facilitate the fit between public needs, preferred methods of service delivery, and agency responses. Coalitions

have even increased public access to resources by publishing printed or electronic resource directories.

Research and Evaluation: Coalitions can facilitate their communities' learning process through research and evaluation services. It is critical for communities to have the ability to generate information for decisionmaking and self-awareness. These research services are generally too expensive and involved for any one agency to provide to the community alone. To differing degrees, all community institutions need to be able to generate and use such information. Coalitions can sponsor or conduct action research projects; provide evaluation technical assistance; evaluate services and products; facilitate the evaluation of other local programs; train local evaluators to work more effectively and appropriately with community leadership; provide feedback on research findings; develop research-based action principles to guide prevention strategy development.

The discussion paper underestimates the strength of the connection between community justice practice and research with regard to evaluation and generalization in the area of prevention. Several national community justice prevention initiatives incorporate sizeable commitments to evaluation for decisionmaking and capacity building at the national and local levels. The Community Prevention Partnerships and Prevention Coalitions programs sponsored by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) made proportionately large commitment to their national cross-site evaluations. CSAP also required grantees to allocate between 10 and 20 percent of their local budgets on evaluation. Local evaluators are accountable to the local coalition drug and alcohol abuse prevention coalition (and the lead agency). CSAP provides training and consultation assistance to local evaluators on research methods and methods for increasing local use of the information. Partnerships and coalitions reported increasing use of evaluation information for planning and decision making over the five years of the program. The cross-site evaluation teams work collaboratively with local evaluators and also provide technical assistance to them.

The National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention (NFCVP) has developed similar expectations and commitments. NFCVP has more linked its cross-site evaluation and technical assistance providers. The national cross-site and local evaluators have carefully developed an interdependent relationship for data collection and feedback. The cross-site evaluation team has provided workshops for both evaluators and program staff on evaluation and program issues. These programs, the community building programs mentioned earlier, and other initiatives related to community justice have led in the development of new perspectives and methods for useful evaluation, such as cluster evaluation (Jenness and Barley, 1995) and empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1995) and drawn upon longer practices in participatory evaluation (Whyte, 1991).

Conclusions

If there is going to be community justice, there must be healthy, just, and capable communities. Coalitions and other collaborative can be strategically used to develop community capacities and resilience in order to prevent and resist the threats to community justice. The most

important component – an active citizenry – is a monumental challenge and is frequently abandoned in frustration. The driving force for a healthy, just, and capable community is citizens that hold their institutions accountable to them. Active citizens insure that institutions meet their needs through community organization, participation in the political process, and participation in other governance structures. Community organization and development methods have been able to mobilize the most destitute communities into action. Community justice programs have to make a genuine investment in independent widespread citizen organizing and participation methods. Genuine community mobilization methods will bring greater accountability and responsiveness, it will also bring greater conflicts to be transformed. To paraphrase Saul Alinsky: It's a law of nature, if there is going to be change there is going to be friction, if there is friction, there will be heat. The heat will bring us justice if we recognize it is as part of the process for building community.

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