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Family and Community Integrity

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Family and community are two of the most significant social institutions in the development and daily lives of individuals. This article offers a model to conceptualize the relationship between family and community derived from research conducted in Holyoke, Massachusetts between 1995 and 1997, and inspired by Erik Erikson's concept of individual integrity. A brief profile of the City of Holyoke is presented followed by a discussion about the relationship between family and community, including consideration of the relevance of group membership and social identity, and the importance of social cohesion and community efficacy. The research results are presented within a model framework of what constitutes family and community integrity.

Family and community are two of the most significant social institutions in the development and daily lives of individuals. Together they shape who we are, instill us with values, define what we consider to be normal and abnormal and teach us about what is possible and not possible. Our families and communities print the many inner maps that we carry to orient ourselves to the world.

Although family and community are often studied independently, they are inextricably and reciprocally related to one another. The viability of the family as a social institution has always relied on the support of the local community (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1991) while vibrant communities are characterized by active and engaged families. Communities are the context where families prosper and flourish or flounder and fail. Practitioners, policy makers and researchers benefit by having a better understanding of the complex, dynamic relationship between family and community.

This article describes a paradigm of family and community integrity. The model is inspired by Erik Erikson's (1963; 1982) concept of individual integrity and evolved from exploratory research conducted with families and professionals in Holyoke, Massachusetts between 1995 and 1997. The research involved interviews with members of families representing a cross-section of the city as well as an extensive document review of historical and contemporary demographic data. The interviews explored the experience and meaning of the intersection of family and community.

For the purposes of this research, I focussed on families with children and defined a family as having the following characteristics:

- At least two people live together
- At least two generations, with at least one person below the age of 18
- Members of the family view themselves as *family* and rely on one another economically, socially, psychologically, and emotionally.

As the community studied was a small city, in this paper *community* refers to an urban environment: either a city or a neighborhood in a city. My working definition of community was as a geographic and political entity but beyond that I let the research participants define what community meant to them.

In this article, after offering a brief profile of Holyoke, I review literature about families and community, considering the relationship between family and community, the importance of group membership and social identity, and relevant research about social cohesion and community efficacy. The research methodology and results are briefly described leading to a discussion of what constitutes family and community integrity.

A Brief Profile of Holyoke

Holyoke was founded as a planned mill city by a group of Boston investors in 1847 (Green, 1939; Hartford, 1990). The early mills manufactured textiles, but eventually paper became the dominant product in Holyoke which was at one time known

as the "Queen of Industrial Cities" and "The Paper Capital of the World" (Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce [GHCC], 1996). Holyoke's population peaked in 1920 at 60,203 and in 2000 is projected to be 43,310 (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission [PVPC], 1992).

Holyoke was a city of working class immigrants from the beginning (Green, 1939; Hartford, 1990). From its earliest days, the city experienced high rates of crime, domestic violence and social problems and by 1880 had the third highest rate of overcrowding in the nation (Green). The first major wave of factory workers were Irish but by the late 1850's factory owners had recruited French-Canadians, who were viewed as being more docile and less prone to unionization (Green; Hartford). The hostile response of the Irish to French Canadians resembles the reaction of today's white population to the migration of Puerto Ricans to the city since the 1950's. In 1990 Holyoke's population was 65.3% white, non-Hispanic and 31.1% Hispanic (PVPC, 1992).

Industry in Holyoke went through the same process as the rest of the country, shifting from civic to national capitalism beginning early this century (Cumbler, 1989) culminating in the mergers, consolidations, re-locations and eventually globalization and de-industrialization (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982). By the early 1990's, only 24% of workers were employed in the manufacturing sector, while 36% were employed in the service sector (Lewis & O'Connor, 1993).

In 1990 the statewide poverty rate for Massachusetts was 9% and 26% for Holyoke. Compared to the rest of the state, Holyoke has high rates of unemployment, illiteracy and school drop-out, single parent families, low birthweight infants, teenage pregnancy, HIV infection, and the highest rates of reported child abuse and neglect in the state (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1993; Department of Social Services, 1996; Lewis & O'Connor, 1993; Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 1996). Hispanics in Holyoke have much higher unemployment and poverty rates than do Anglo residents (Lewis & O'Connor). They tend to be younger, poorer, have lower levels of education and resources, and less access to job networks and political power. There are regular reports of police harassment of Hispanic residents (Vannah, 1997). Out of the 79 appointed officials listed in the Chamber

of Commerce's description of the city, only 3 have Hispanic surnames, 3.8% of the appointments (Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, 1996). There has never been a Hispanic mayor.

The central downtown has declined and is considered by many residents, of all backgrounds, to be unsafe at night. Most local banks have either failed or become branches of national banks. In many ways Holyoke has gone from being an industrial city to a social service city. This is perhaps symbolized by the fate of the largest downtown building in Holyoke that went from being the home of Steiger's Department Store to the Steiger's Building, home of the State's Department of Social Services.

Family and Community Integrity

The concept of family and community integrity evolved by integrating Erikson's (1963; 1982) developmental concept of individual development with theoretical and research based literature on families and community, group identification and membership, and social cohesion and community efficacy.

The Relationship between Family and Community

The relationship between family and community is historically and materially situated while continually constructed and re-constructed. Some important influences are the family's life cycle stage, needs, resources and history with the community. McAuley and Nutty (1985) found that families with children often seek deep community ties and are influenced by their level of financial investment in the community (such as home ownership), involvement with political and social organizations and emotional and geographic closeness to relatives, friends and neighbors.

The internal models of community carried by the family also shape family/community relationships. Reiss (1981:224) found that families have a "family paradigm" that organizes their world views and meaning systems, and that part of this is a "community map" (284), a spacial rendering of community that orients family members to places of importance, investing value in different locations. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) also found that specific places in the community have symbolic meaning that reinforces a person's sense of self. Neighborhoods and buildings

can symbolize both the pleasure of the past as well as the pain of the present.

Group Membership

Families not only are constituent units of communities but also identify with ethnic and racial groups, social and economic classes, religious groups, etc., creating in-groups and out-groups. In Holyoke, religion has been an important aspect of social identity, particularly when Irish Catholics were working for Protestant Yankee mill owners in the 19th century (Green, 1939). However, ethnicity became the dominant group distinction, particularly between the Irish and French Canadians (Green, Hartford, 1990). Today there is severe ethnic tension between residents of European descent (Irish, French-Canadian, Polish, German, Yankee) and Hispanic residents (predominantly Puerto Ricans). In previous eras of ethnic migration, competition and tension there were factory jobs and a sense of hope and optimism; the city was growing with a promising economic future. But more recently, Puerto Ricans have arrived in large numbers at a time when many blue collar jobs have been lost, the city has become deindustrialized and is in serious economic decline (Hartford; Miller, 1999).

When there is severe ethnic conflict, which in Holyoke is often constructed as racial conflict, ethnic and racial group membership becomes a significant source of identity for many families. Other important facets of social identity are community longevity (an identity as a long-term resident or as a relative newcomer), religion and socio/economic class.

In summary, social identity is part of a family's self-generated story about who they are: what their position in the community is, whom they are close to or distant from, comfortable or uncomfortable with, and what it means for them to live in their community.

Social Cohesion and Community Efficacy

Why do some communities exhibit strong social cohesion, when others, despite having similar income levels and demographic composition, appear fragmented and characterized by alienation? Why do some families experience a sense of efficacy,

while others feel powerless, despite living in seemingly comparable neighborhoods? It may be helpful to define social cohesion and to explore how it is achieved.

Wilson (1995) defines the social cohesion of a community as being the degree to which residents can achieve communal objectives while maintaining effective social control. He believes that the two major factors that determine social cohesion are the ability to exert supervision over the community or neighborhood and the presence of richly cross-joined social networks.

It is likely that social capital contributes to social cohesion. Putnam (1993:1) defines social capital as "the features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." Brooks-Gunn (1995) believes communities have varying degrees of social capital—accessible community information, opportunities for economic advancement, stability of residence—all of which can contribute to social networks. Social capital can include agreed upon norms of parental supervision and acceptable child behavior leading to what Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls' (1997) have termed "collective efficacy:" trust in the community, common values shared by residents, and a willingness by parents to act on these values, including interventions in public places, such as parks and street corners. Their comparative longitudinal study of Chicago neighborhoods has found that communities with collective efficacy have lower rates of delinquency and violence.

Collective efficacy appears to be related to families' sense of power in their community (Miller, 1994). There are many forms of power in the community: corporate, political, economic, law enforcement, the ability to influence and intimidate. But for families, a sense of power is a function of both the power structure of the community *and* their internal sense of efficacy, what they believe they can control, influence and accomplish (Miller). Every family has a narrative about themselves, a story that can have the power of a heroic myth or a saga of failure, hopelessness and despair. This sense of agency, or lack of, can effect how much a family believes in itself in relation to its community and ultimately its willingness and ability to participate in collective attempts to influence the community. If families perceive themselves as being without power, they are also less likely to maintain relationships

with neighbors, thus weakening their social ties to the community (Geis & Ross, 1998). This, in turn, threatens the integrity of both family and community.

Family and Community Integrity

Integrity means soundness, completeness, honesty, an unimpaired condition (Webster's Ninth, 1990). It implies being authentic, whole and undivided. The psychologist, Erik Erikson (1963, 1982) used the notion of integrity to depict the highest level of adult functioning. He described "integrity" as the final psychosocial achievement in adult development. While models derived from individual psychology are never completely applicable to other social units, such as family and community, they can, however, provide useful metaphors and analogies. There are three aspects of Erikson's notion of integrity that inform the discussion of family and community integrity. The first is that individual integrity, in his view, involves the capacity to move beyond narcissism and to genuinely love and care for others. The second is that integrity encompasses the ability to integrate the past with the present. The third is the ability to mesh one's inner self with the social world.

Erikson's construct of integrity can be adapted to both family and community and taken together describes a relationship where families actively participate in community life in a way that strengthens community and, in turn, communities offer families a supportive, nurturing environment. By family integrity I mean *the ability of the family consistently to provide its members with the emotional, psychological, social and economic foundations to support their engagement and involvement with the community*. By community integrity I mean *the capacity of a community to provide for its families a safe, economically viable and meaningful place to live, with equal justice for all*. (This could be expanded further to social, economic and political integrity, which communities need for their survival but that is beyond the scope of this paper).

For communities to receive support from families, it is important that families are able and available to look outward towards the community and are not exclusively concerned about their family life and survival. Communities are poorly served when families retreat into their home life to the exclusion of community

engagement. Vital communities need families to make collective, multi-faceted investments in them. However, in order for families to have the will and energy to do this, it is important that they have a belief in their own efficacy, that is, a certain level of collective self-esteem, and an ability to constructively effect their environment. When families feel under siege and there are not viable and legitimate economic and social opportunities available for them to meet their basic needs, it is difficult to expect them to contribute to their community.

Research Methodology

The research attempted to understand how participants viewed their families and communities from their own perspectives and in their own words. It consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with residents and health and social service workers in Holyoke between 1995 and 1997, and also creating a community profile by conducting an extensive document review. In all, twenty people were interviewed: thirteen members of eight different households and seven key informants (health and social service professionals working in Holyoke). A journalist and a local pediatrician served as consultants to the research. Families volunteered to participate in the research project and were mostly recruited through the major local pediatric practice in the city. Participants represented a range of socio-economic backgrounds, which reflected the demographic make-up of the city based on census data. This included middle class professionals, chief executives, blue-collar workers, para-professionals, unemployed single parents, and gang members. In two-parent families, parents were usually interviewed together. I was the principal researcher and compiled the data and conducted all interviews, with the exception of two families who were interviewed by family therapists under my supervision.

Semi-structured interviews with families were based on a phenomenological model (Seidman, 1991) and divided into three parts. The first part of the interview explored how the family arrived in Holyoke, the second their experience of living in the city and the third asked them to reflect on the meaning of living

in Holyoke. Key informants were asked a number of questions about their experience of working in Holyoke and perspectives on what living in Holyoke is like for families with whom they have contact.

Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, coded and sorted by themes. Profiles were made of the research participants. In addition to the principal researcher, a team of three family therapists read the transcripts and helped identify themes and patterns.

The community profile was compiled from a document review of local history books, oral history projects, census data, reports from state health and social service agencies, reports by local planning commissions, local newspapers, Chamber of Commerce publications, city planning reports, annual reports of local health and human service agencies, needs assessments conducted by the local United Way, and the guidebook to the annual St. Patrick's Day parade, the city's major cultural event.

Findings and Model Construction

After coding and sorting the responses from the interviews, I created profiles of each participant family and categorized themes. Themes were organized according to what respondents said was and was not working for Holyoke and their families. I then combined these into the framework of family and community integrity, trying to state in the affirmative what families need from communities and vice-versa, based on the research participants' responses. The results are listed in Figure 1. As is often the case with exploratory, qualitative research, the model construction was an evolving process involving an interaction between data analysis and application of theory.

Every person interviewed for this research project identified racial/ethnic conflict between Anglos and Hispanics as a critical issue facing the city today. There were numerous instances of this and almost any conversation led to this topic. For example, a married couple that I interviewed had grown up in a working class neighborhood, "The Flats," that was a great source of pride for them. Now, the neighborhood that had been French-Canadian, Irish and Polish, when they were growing up was predominantly

Figure 1

Aspects of Family and Community Integrity

Family Integrity

1. A collective, multi-faceted engagement with the community.
2. An adaptable internalized community model.
3. A commitment to the community as well as to family—to look outward as well as inward.
4. A family's belief in their efficacy.

Community Integrity

1. Safe schools that educate all children.
 2. Distinct wards and neighborhoods and choice about where to live.
 3. Safety for all citizens.
 4. Vibrant civic associations and unifying rituals.
 5. Jobs and adequate public transportation to them.
 6. Valuing families from all ethnic and racial groups and equal access to power and resources.
 7. Social networks.
 8. A community sense of power and efficacy.
 9. An adaptable community identity—the ability of the community to reinvent itself so that there is an optimistic future as well as an honorable past.
-

Puerto Rican, and to them represented their community's decline. The husband described revisiting the apartment where he had been raised:

I knock on the door and this Spic [Sic.] opens it. I was gone for four years and knowing what the neighborhood was like when I left and seeing it when I come back was a shock. It looked like hell. When I left it wasn't bad—you didn't have to worry about walking up and down the streets and you could leave your car unlocked. But in four years, things really turned around.

As the quote illustrates, the perceived deterioration of the neighborhood is framed in derogatory ethnic terms (rather than focussing on socio-economic factors such as de-industrialization) and suggests that the respondent's sense of self is reinforced and bolstered at the expense of the other group that now occupies space that has personal, if not sacred meaning. All Hispanic respondents described pervasive white racism. (The dynamics of this conflict are described in greater detail in Miller, 1999).

This was a small sample of families and key informants commenting on their relationship to one community so any conclusions should be taken as speculative and may or may not be applicable to other communities and families.

Discussion

The two constructs, family and community integrity, are linked by the premise that there is a reciprocal relationship between them: family integrity contributes to community integrity and communities with integrity nurture and support families.

Family Integrity

1. Having a collective, multifaceted attachment to the community.

A collective, multi-faceted attachment to the community means that multiple members of the family are engaged with their community in a variety of ways. Such an attachment provides a foundation of individual and collective investment in community institutions and organizations. This can occur through work, attending local schools, civic and political involvement, recreational activities, commercial ventures, neighborhood associations, and a wide variety of informal networks, contacts and activities. Community attachment can be bolstered, vertically through intergenerational involvement with the community, or horizontally by multiple transactions by nuclear and/or extended family members.

Families interviewed who lacked multiple, intergenerational community attachments felt alienated from their community. For example, one white, upper-middle—class family had a four generation history with Holyoke on one side of the family and both parents were involved with community boards and charities. However, after sending their children to private schools outside of

the community, they felt less attachment and future commitment to the community.

2. *Having an Adaptable Internalized Community Model*

The family is the collective repository of its members' meaning-making systems and models and maps of community. Communities are continually evolving and changing but the model of the community, held by the family, is often outdated and frozen in time. Narratives sustain the family's image of community, stories about the community that family members tell themselves and share with one another. Often, these narratives are idealized portraits of the past, with the blemishes air-brushed out. Adhering to idealized, out-dated community models can create dissonance between the way that people remember the community or want it to be, and how it actually is. In Holyoke, the paradigm for the community carried by many of the white respondents, particularly those who had grown up there, was of a virtually all white, industrial city, devoid of serious urban problems. This has led to anger and blame for the perceived deterioration of the city, often expressed at Puerto Ricans, who are seen as the cause of the community's demise. A viable community model for families, one that can be adjusted and adapted to the inevitable changes that occur in all communities, enables families to maintain a vital connection with their community. This can connect them with other families and allow for constructive community engagement and participation, rather than fearful or angry withdrawal into the bunker of home life.

3. *Commitment to the Community*

Although some respondents were involved in community activities—running for office, serving on boards and commissions, volunteering for social groups—others had withdrawn into their home life. Family members need to look outwards to the community as well as inwards to the home to contribute to vital communities. The important value of taking care of and nurturing family has, ironically, often been at the expense of community involvement (Bellah, et al., 1991). In its most extreme form, such intense family involvement and lack of community investment can be viewed as a form of narcissism, an ethos of valuing one's relations but caring less for one's neighbors and fellow citizens. Concretely this can be manifested by a withdrawal from public

life and institutions, such as sending children to private schools, a trend that Robert Reich (1991) has termed the “secession of the successful.” Lack of local community commitment has been exacerbated by many factors, such as the ability to commute so that work and residence are bifurcated. Also, technology that permits people to tune-in to national and international news, shopping, culture, and entertainment can diminish local investment by families. There are many ways to express community commitment—through volunteer and civic work, engagement in local political life, affiliation with religious and secular organizations, or simply by sending children to public schools.

4. A Family's Belief in their own Efficacy

A reason that most respondents offered as to why they are not more actively involved with their community was a sense of hopelessness and helplessness, of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the challenges. Holyoke was repeatedly described as being dangerous, racially divided and lacking an economic foundation for economic security and future prosperity. Larger social forces that emanate from outside of the community, such as deindustrialization and globalization exacerbate this feeling. An understandable sense of powerlessness can ensue.

Families need to believe in their ability to influence their local environment to justify the effort. They require adequate incomes, time, social relationships, accessible information networks and opportunities for economic success from the community while they also require human capital (skills, knowledge) and psychological capital (confidence in themselves) (Brooks-Gunn, 1995). A family's belief in their efficacy is a function of both the family's internal resources and what is provided by the community and is thus a fitting place to close the consideration of family integrity and open the discussion of community integrity.

Community Integrity

1. Safe schools that educate all children.

All families who participated in this research placed a high priority on their children receiving quality education. One middle class Puerto Rican family felt that the public school system had low expectations for their children because they were Puerto Rican, assuming that they required bi-lingual education even

though they had been born and raised in Holyoke by English speaking parents. An upper middle class family had placed their children in private schools, even though they had hoped that their children would attend local neighborhood schools because they did not believe they would be safe in these schools. Community integrity means that families of varied backgrounds can trust their children will receive safe, quality education, without prejudice, from their local school systems.

2. *Distinct Wards and Neighborhoods*

People who live in cities, even small cities like Holyoke, often identify with their local neighborhood or ward. Schweitzer (1999) has broken this down further, studying differential attachments and social capital that residents experience block by block within a neighborhood. Most of the respondents viewed themselves as "Holyokers." Many were identified with their wards and felt most comfortable in *their* section of the city. The diversity of urban life can cause tensions and strains between groups and individuals leading some with resources to move. Suburban flight hastens urban demise as tax bases shrink, properties decline and the city's civic infrastructure is weakened. Conversely, those cities which have retained a social and economic diversity of citizenry are more likely to be prosperous (Rusk, 1997). One way of maintaining community integrity is to create and maintain a variety of neighborhoods where families feel comfortable, safe, and willing to invest themselves. This can mean diverse and heterogeneous neighborhoods and also neighborhoods that are more socially and economically homogenous. There is a fine line that must be carefully observed between people seeking sameness and safety in a neighborhood versus segregation. Segregated neighborhoods are illegal and destabilize a community's integrity. A dynamic city needs a variety of options to attract and retain diverse families that foster choice rather than restrictions.

3. *Safety for All Citizens*

All of the research participants felt unsafe in Holyoke, although for different reasons. Latinos felt unsafe when visiting white neighborhoods. For example, a man running for City Councilor always wore t-shirts emblazoned with his name and campaign information, so that residents and police would not mistake his intentions when he was campaigning in predominantly white

neighborhoods. White residents and workers expressed concerns about driving through predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhoods and walking in the city after dark.

One white respondent expressed fears of Puerto Rican induced crime at a drug store located near his home, so he would always drive his children to the store. Ironically, a Puerto Rican respondent, who is a policeman in another city, complained that whenever he went to the same drugstore, he could hear the click of car locks, as he walked past white patrons waiting in their cars.

A sense of safety is a literal and constructed notion. People feel unsafe because they have actually had frightening experiences and encounters or subjectively assume a lack of safety based on social indicators, such as the ethnic or racial composition of a neighborhood, or from community stories and narratives about danger. Whatever the source, feeling unsafe inhibits families from participating in community life which, ironically, leads to a less safe community (Geis & Ross, 1998).

4. Vibrant Civic Associations and Unifying Rituals

Another aspect of community integrity is the presence of civic and public institutions that braid families to the community and public events that weave them together. Public institutions in many cities, such as libraries, parks, schools, swimming pools, and playgrounds, have been neglected and under-funded, particularly when middle class families move from the city or opt for using private services (Reich, 1991). Many civic associations in a city such as Holyoke descend from prior eras, when the city was an industrial powerhouse and generated wealth and resources. Organizations such as the Elks, Knights of Columbus and the Junior League have gender, class and ethnic biases that exclude many citizens from participation. One middle-class Puerto Rican woman respondent declared that she would not join the Elks or Knights of Columbus because she believed that she would need to accommodate to an Anglo culture and compromise her ethnic identity. Many respondents expressed a desire to participate in community life if two requirements were met: 1. They felt welcomed and respected. 2. They believed that their involvement was relevant and had meaning. Without meaningful community roles, people felt marginalized, redundant, estranged from the community.

What are needed are civic associations that foster community engagement, commitment, pride and leadership and that are open to and inclusive of the diverse families that inhabit the community. Family members of all ages are more likely to become involved with successful community projects when there are clear tasks and a commitment to develop local leadership in all phases of the project: planning, researching, networking and implementing (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1998).

Public events and rituals are also important for a community because they are opportunities for people to celebrate and interact together and they create a public narrative about the community. In Holyoke, the major public celebration is the St. Patrick's Day parade. Although originally an Irish celebration, today the event has meaning for other European descended ethnic groups—French-Canadians, Poles, Italians—but leaves many Puerto Ricans feeling excluded or pressured to leave their culture at the parade grounds. Communities can reinvent holidays and celebrations to include the traditions of all of the disparate ethnic and racial groups that constitute a community. Even a traditional historical commemoration, such as July 4, can be a relevant and unifying event for all families if it is conducted to acknowledge the unique heritages of the diverse groups that constitute a community (Etzioni, 1997).

5. Jobs and Adequate Public Transportation to Them

A productive economy that produces jobs and access to these jobs is an essential component of a viable community. Younger Puerto Rican respondents either could not obtain jobs or had to surmount considerable barriers ranging from lack of opportunity to blatant prejudice and discrimination. All of the European-descended participants of adult age were employed but many expressed fears for their economic security. It is difficult for a community to be efficacious and prosperous if significant numbers of its citizens cannot earn a decent living through working. If family members are unable to earn a living through legitimate means, they may turn to illegitimate means to survive, such as crime or gang membership, as happened with some of the respondents in Holyoke. Access to jobs means not only the creation of jobs but the ability to commute to them, the skills to manage them,

the ability to apply for them without encountering racial/ethnic discrimination, and support services that enable people to leave their families to work, such as day care.

There have been examples of communities that have understood this aspect of community integrity. For example, in San Antonio, Project Quest offers community college degrees, child-care, transportation, supplies, uniforms, food stamps, subsidized housing, weekly motivational meetings and counseling, as part of federal, state, local government and business collaborative (Walljasper, 1997). This exemplifies a holistic and comprehensive community project that contributes to community integrity.

6. *Valuing Families from all Racial and Ethnic Groups and Equal Access to Power and Resources*

Racism runs deep in communities, in institutions, political and economic structures, neighborhoods, culture, police and fire departments, and in the murals and billboards that surround a community. In 1987, a campaign poster for the successful Holyoke mayoral candidate depicted a Hispanic young male smoking a cigarette; it read "The people who really should read this can't. We have a problem. Our community isn't working together: In fact a whole lot of us aren't working at all" (Kraft, 1995:5). In the late 1990's, a group of school children painted a public mural depicting the confluence of Puerto Rican and United States traditions. A "white" city community leader threatened to paint over the mural because she was insulted by the fact that the Puerto Rican flag appeared to be higher than the United States flag. Not only did Hispanic participants describe many instances where they had personally experienced racism but Anglo residents shared instances of their own overt and covert racism in interviews.

In communities such as Holyoke, invidious comparisons are frequently made between poor, recently arrived immigrants and older, more affluent and settled residents, usually contrasting *decent* with *decadent* values. This fosters *us and them* thinking, reinforced by an unequal social structure, where difference is viewed as a threat. This, in turn, leads to alienation, isolation, discrimination, and oppression and exacerbated inter-group tensions. Racism serves to undermine community integrity and maims families and individuals.

7. *Social Networks*

Social networks are a major component of social capital (Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Putnam, 1993). One upper-middle class, Anglo couple described their decision to remain in Holyoke like living on a "shrinking island." A young Puerto Rican woman stated that she did not trust anyone in Holyoke except for her parents and kept to herself as much as possible. Social networks, such as friends, extended families, churches, and working associations form the net that connects families with one another and their community. Without social networks, it is difficult for families to direct their dynamic energy outside of the family system: there are no pathways or connecting cables. Dickinson (1995) has argued that the inexorable loss of informal networks, formerly dependent upon the unpaid work of many women, has led to social disintegration in modern urban America. Many families in this study described a diminishing latticework of social networks and an increasing tendency to fortify the family boundary against the community, as if the family was an independent entity

8. *A Community Sense of Power and Efficacy*

When families feel a diminished sense of power and efficacy in their community, their tendency is to withdraw and turn inward, and this diminishes family integrity. It is particularly difficult for families to maintain a sense of efficacy if the community lacks a sense of power. The de-localization of communities has exacerbated this. Many small cities like Holyoke have become branch towns, as banks, businesses and companies become sub-units of larger corporations. Local government is increasingly dependent upon state and federal aid to run many of their services and institutions and must adhere to regulations that accompany such assistance. Communities such as Holyoke are dependent on their credit ratings from bond firms to be able to raise and attract capital, much like poor countries depend on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Local branches of companies can be closed down by decision-makers in other parts of the country or the world. When this happens, volunteerism, community pride and civic spirit decline (Rimer, 1996). No community stands on its own, nor should it, but if a community has lost its economic viability and sense of independence and agency, then the consequent loss of pride and efficacy will also dis-empower families.

Community integrity requires that a local community has some ability to act autonomously and effectively on behalf of its families. State and national social welfare policies must foster this capacity. It is also important for a community to be able to define itself positively. Research participants were aware that the image of Holyoke is one of an unsafe, deindustrialized community with serious racial tensions. This was a source of consternation, embarrassment and even shame, lowering community morale. Many respondents sought symbols and indicators about Holyoke, drawn from its history as an industrial powerhouse and its cultural and geographical landmarks, to engender a sense of pride in their community. The community narrative needs to inspire hope and honor for its families.

9. An Adaptable Community Identity

A community identity is based on history and tradition and gives meaning to its institutions and culture, plans and activities. It enables communities to respond to questions raised by the lives of its families. Community identity is both shaped by a community's historical and social circumstances and its collective narrative. Examples of identities are a 'thriving industrial city', 'a decaying and declining neighborhood', 'the inner city', 'a wealthy suburb', 'a college town', 'a bedroom community'. Such collective self-definitions give meaning to the lives of citizens within the context of the community.

Unfortunately, as communities change, which they inevitably do, they can be saddled with identities that evolved from earlier eras and are no longer appropriate to make sense of current dilemmas or provide solutions to vexing social and economic problems. Such is the case with Holyoke, which is no longer a thriving mill town while a viable and meaningful community identity has not yet evolved. There are many questions that the old paradigm of Holyoke can no longer answer: Can it reform its public education system to be accessible to all families? Can it reform its political system so that all families within the city are fairly represented? Can it rebuild its local economy and participate in a global economy so that all of its able-bodied citizens can work for a living wage? Can it become a community where Hispanic families feel respected and accepted and Anglo families want to reside? Therefore, a task for Holyoke and other communities is

the capacity to reinvent themselves to provide an identity and framework for confronting the new challenges and tasks that they face, so that the community can foresee an optimistic future built on its honorable past.

Conclusion

In this article I have presented a model, a framework derived from Erik Erikson's concept of individual integrity and based on exploratory qualitative research conducted in the City of Holyoke to conceptualize how, ideally, families and communities interact and sustain each other. The concepts of family and community integrity illustrate the reciprocal relationship between a community and its families and may be useful when designing future research, policy and service planning.

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