

Gemeinsheft and Gesellschaft: Empowering Parks and Recreation Students to Engender Common-Unity in Place-Based and Nonplace Communities

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Abstract

This paper is about the experience of "common-unity" among people who are members of place and non-place communities. We review the concept of "community" and then propose a theory of constraints and affordances to "common-unity" among members of both types of communities. The theory stresses the central role of community value and self-efficacy beliefs about community. Based on the theory, we then propose methods that teachers may use to develop common-unity within a learning environment and within a locality (place) -based community.

Keywords: community, constraints, affordances, beliefs, self-efficacy, values

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A few years ago, my travels through the deep South generated a memorable experience about community. Dusk was approaching as I drove into a small southern town. The month was July and the day had been unbearably hot. I recall sweltering in the suffocating heat despite the very best efforts of the tired old air conditioner in the car I

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was driving. The promise of the coming evening was only slight respite from the heat, with any decrease in the oppression being offset by the emergence of swarms of hungry mosquitoes. Upon entering the town, in these unlikely circumstances I encountered a most inspiring set of surroundings. The neighborhood through which I was passing, despite its impoverished physical appearance, was a thriving metropolis of "social capital" (Putnam, 2000). In house after house, friends, neighbors, and family members sat together on front porches, where they conversed and shared food and drink. Young children played near at hand on patches of dirt and grass, further stressing well-used toys that appeared to have been handed down through the generations. Older children threw balls, wrestled, jumped rope, and engaged in games of chase. Adolescents were also in a paradise of opportunities. They flirted, teased, fought, and communed with friends of the same and opposite sex. That neighborhood, though impoverished by material standards, was very much alive and vital in terms of connections and a sense of common-unity.

A short distance down the road, I noticed that I had entered a much more well-to-do neighborhood. Houses were larger. Some were brick and all were neatly painted. Roofs retained all of their shingles. Lawns were freshly trimmed, fences were intact, and flowers stood proudly in gardens that had obviously been nurtured by gentle and caring hands. But, aside from these artifacts, I saw no sign of human habitation, other than a few lights being turned on, glowing dimly through closed windows. When I arrived at my friend's house, I asked about this contrast. "Why," I asked, "are people in the neighborhood down the road so active, alive, and connected, while people in your neighborhood seem to be keeping to themselves, locked away in their own homes?" "Well," my friend answered, "people in my neighborhood have air conditioning. It is more comfortable to be indoors."

Perhaps Kahlil Gibran (1923) was right about comforts, which today would follow from air conditioning, thermostats, microwave ovens, computers, and the like:

"[In your homes] have you only comfort, and the lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house a guest, and then becomes a host, and then master? Ay, and it becomes a tamer, and with hook and scourge makes puppets of your larger desires. Though its hands are silken, its heart is of iron..." (p. 32)

Is physical comfort, such as that which is provided by air conditioning, an insidious cancer that seduces us into believing that our lives are good, while taking from us opportunities to address the truly meaningful human needs, including our need for social contact and intimacy?

My experience with the contrast of those two neighborhoods spawned a question that I have often pondered during the years following: "What features of a neighborhood afford (and constrain) feelings of 'common-unity' among residents?" Following from that question is a second, which is based on my continuing fascination with my chosen profession as a park and recreation professional and as an educator: "what can the parks and recreation profession do to support development of common-unity among

people who live together?" In this paper, my colleagues (a health promotion professor and a social work professor) and I will explore these questions. It is our intent to review the meaning of community, to examine constraints and affordances to common-unity, and to suggest strategies through which students may be engaged in learning activities that help them to understand community. In the process, we propose a theory about how common-unity may be developed. That theory is based on notions of community constraints, community affordances, and common-unity.

What is Community?

The concept of community has been as enigmatic among social workers and sociologists as has been the concept of leisure among park, recreation, and tourism scholars. M. Scott Peck (1987) summarizes the complexity of defining community, using terms that may be meaningful to people who are neither sociologists or social workers:

We tend to speak of our hometowns as communities. Or of the churches in our towns as communities. Our hometowns may well be geographical collections of human beings with tax and political structures in common, but precious little else related them to each other. Towns are not, in any meaningful sense of the word, communities. And sight unseen, on the basis of my experience with many Christian churches in this country, I can be fairly confident that each of the churches in your hometown is not likely to be much of a community either (Peck, 1987).

Netting, Kettner, and McMurtry (1998, p. 134) illustrate this complexity in a more comprehensive way, suggesting that a community may be represented by a symbol representing an individual at the point of intersection among series of overlapping circles. Each circle represents a significant group of people to which the individual is connected. These groups of people might include residents of the same neighborhood; citizens of a city, county, state, or country; students in an educational community; colleagues in a professional community; worshipers in a religious community; and concerned citizens in a political community. Each of us is potentially a member of many communities.

Despite its great heuristic value, this classification neatly avoids the special challenge of defining what types of groups are "significant." What set of overlapping circles ought to be included in the model? Efforts to understand community have thus involved classification of important characteristics. Dimensions that have proven to be particularly prominent in this contrast are distinctions between place and non-place communities and characterization of communities based on functions that communities serve. The distinction between place and non-place communities separates distinct, geographically definable areas from interpersonal connections that serve particular purposes. When park and recreation professionals speak of neighborhood parks serving the same geographical area as an elementary school and community parks serving the same geographical area as a high school, we are implying that the target market for these recre-

ation resources are specific and definable "place" communities. Also, each of us can probably readily visualize dwellings, structures, and perhaps people who comprise our physical (place) neighborhood.

But this way of viewing communities as places is deceptively complex. Fellen (1995) points out that communities of place vary according to the sustenance needs they meet, patterns of social interaction, and collective identity, as well as by size, density, and heterogeneity. Fellen stresses that these place-based (or, "locality-based" [p. 4]) communities overlap in complex ways. Neighborhood communities, for example, overlap with municipal communities and some residences may seem to belong to more than one neighborhood. As a result, any given individual may be part of a number of related place communities.

But non-place communities may also be considered and some people argue that, in postmodern society, non-place communities tend to play a much more visible role in people's lives than place-based communities. In addition to geographic locale (place communities), communities may be classified in terms of interests and personal networks (Fellen, 1995). As such, we may speak of the community of scholars and educators within our Society of Park and Recreation Educators, our community of professionals, and of our community of friendships. Similarly, Warren (1978) distinguishes between communities based on space, people, shared values and institutions, interaction, distribution of power, and social system.

In addition to the distinction between place and non-place communities, it is important to note that communities may be classified in terms of the purposes they serve. Netting, Kettner, and McMurty (1998, p. 106) stress that an essential point of departure in classifying communities by function is Tönnies's (1887) classical distinction between "Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft." Gemeinschaft "...focuses on the mutual, intimate, and common bonds that pull people together in local units. These bonds are based on caring about one another and valuing the relationships in the group in and of themselves" (Netting, Kettner, & McMurty, 1998, p. 107). Peck (1987, p. 26) captures the spirit of Gemeinschaft by reflecting on a sermon preached by John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony, shortly before the colonists arrived on the continent:

We must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body.

A community can thus be thought of as an entity that "...is for its own sake and is recognized as such by its participants" (Deutsch, 1991, p. 26). In short, intimacy and relationship are central to Gemeinschaft, entirely apart from the notion of a community serving any instrumental purpose.

Gesellschaft presents a very different perspective on community. The focus of that concept is on "...formalized relationships that are task-oriented" (p. 106) and lead to achievement of a particular goal or fulfillment of an important function for that group. Although people may benefit from relationships (as in the Gemeinschaft concept) the primary focus of Gesellschaft is on attainment of some other outcome. From the Gesellschaft perspective, when members of the Society of Park and Recreation Educators (a non-place community) come together to conduct their biennial teaching institute, their primary purpose is to improve teaching, not to establish intimate relationships with other members of the community. More generally, from a Gesellschaft perspective, a community is competent when "...the various component parts of the community are able to collaborate effectively in identifying the problems and needs of the community, [and members] can achieve a working consensus on goals and priorities; can agree on ways and means to implement the agreed-upon goals, [and] can collaborate effectively in the required actions" (Cottrell, 1983).

For our current purposes, we choose to focus on a Gemeinschaft perspective on community, while recognizing that development of "mutual, intimate, and common bonds that pull people together in local units" (Netting, Kettner, & McMurtry, 1998, p. 107) may also give rise to sets of actions that serve instrumental purpose among members of a community. This approach is analogous to the "for its own sake" perspective on leisure. Individuals who pursue leisure for its own sake may also derive a number of physical, psychological, and social benefits as a byproduct of their leisure behavior. We use the term, "common-unity" to refer to this "for its own sake" orientation and we will consider affordances and constraints to common-unity in both place-based and nonplace-based communities. We define common-unity as "A set of beliefs and actions that reflect shared purpose and meaning among a defined group of people." With this background, we now turn to consideration of constraints and affordances of common-unity.

Common-unity Constraints and Affordances

An objective of this paper is to propose some approaches that might prove to be useful in helping students to understand common-unity in place-based and nonplace-based communities. A framework is needed for identifying and understanding approaches that might prove useful. We have chosen the extensive and growing body of literature on leisure constraints (e.g., Jackson & Scott, 1999; Jackson, 2001; Jackson, 1997; Nadirova & Jackson, 2000; Parry, Shinew, & Arnold, 2001; Stodolska & Marcinkowski, 2001) as that framework. Leisure constraints have been defined as "...factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment of leisure" (Jackson, 1997, p. 461). Our intent is to generalize the concept of constraints to leisure to the concept of constraints to common-unity. We do, however, recognize a number of very significant limitations to the constraints concept. It is our intent to draw on the best of that body of knowledge in building our model.

Leisure Constraints and Affordances

The leisure constraints literature grew from earlier studies of "barriers to recreation participation" (Feriss, 1962; Jackson & Scott, 1999, p. 302). The focus of those studies was on identification of factors that intervene between individuals' recreation activity preferences and their actual participation. Illustrative of the studies of that era is an examination of variation in barriers across the family stage (Witt & Goodale, 1981). Based on data from eligible voters in Ontario, Witt and Goodale identified different types of barriers, in terms of their relationship to stage of family evolution. One set of barriers, for example, reflected a "U" shaped relationship with family stage. Typical of this set was the barrier, "just not sure what activities to get involved in." Young families with no children and families with adult children scored high on that barrier than families at intermediate points of evolution. In contrast, "feel too much daily stress" increased in a linear fashion over phases of family development. When interpreted from a family perspective, important insight was gained into the salience of different barriers for different types of families.

As research in this area evolved, scholars increasingly recognized that a broader perspective was needed. The term "barrier" tends to limit the focus of research on only one type of limiting factor: conditions that intervene between preferences and participation (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). In contrast, the more contemporary research on constraints acknowledges that important agents may exist that inhibit a myriad of outcomes related to recreation behavior. Included among these outcomes are enjoyment, development, frequency of participation, intensity of participation, choice of facilities, and formation of preferences (e.g., Jackson & Scott, 1999, p. 300; Nadirova & Jackson, 2000).

Further, contemporary research on constraints has been significantly influenced by development of models that classify constraints and propose relationships among categories of constraints. Prominent among these models is Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey's (1991) "Hierarchical Model of Leisure Constraints." That model recognizes three major types of constraints and argues that these may be arranged in a hierarchical sequence. Included are intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. Intrapersonal constraints provide the entry point of the model and are assumed to be necessary for the "behavioral inertia" (Jackson & Scott, 1999, p. 308) required to form preferences and ultimately to participate. Included in this category of constraints are "psychological states and attributes which interact with leisure preferences" in ways that influence participation. Examples of such constraints include stress, depression, anxiety, religiosity, perceived self-skills, prior socialization, and evaluations of appropriateness and availability of activities. In the next phase of the model, interpersonal constraints are assumed to interact with activity preferences to determine interpersonal compatibility and coordination. Interpersonal constraints are characteristic of relationships. Lack of partners for participation, strained marital relations, or incompatible social groups are examples of interpersonal constraints. Finally, the third phase of the hierarchy proposes that interpersonal compatibility and coordination interacts with structural con-

straints to determine participation or nonparticipation. Structural constraints "represent constraints as they are commonly conceptualized." Examples include family life cycle stage, family financial resources, season, climate, transportation and the scheduling of work time (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 124).

Among important subsequent developments is introduction of the concept of "negotiation" of constraints (Jackson, Crawford, & Godby, 1993). The negotiation proposition holds that participation is dependent not upon the existence of constraints themselves but rather on the extent to which individuals are able to negotiate those constraints. It follows that individuals who have greater skills at negotiating constraints will tend to be more frequent and perhaps more intense participants in recreation activities and leisure experiences. As such, negotiation serves not as a constraint on leisure, but rather as an agent of empowerment (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991) or affordance (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997) to leisure. Affordances are social and physical environmental conditions that are conducive to leisure behavior (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, p. 345). Examples of leisure affordances range from such in-home affordances as books, television, and computers to larger community affordances such as movie theaters, neighborhood parks, amusement parks, forests, mountains, lakes, and rivers. Mannell and Kleiber point out that "...recognizing and creating leisure affordance is almost always a partner to managing and negotiating leisure constraints" (p. 346).

Toward Common-Unity Constraints and Affordances

The literature on leisure constraints provides a foundation for our model of constraints and affordances to common-unity. In developing this model, however, we recognize the existence of fundamental limitations of the leisure constraints concept. First, the scope of behaviors and other outcomes that have been included among the constraints umbrella seems to be unmanageably broad (Goodale, 1992). As pointed out previously, the scope of outcomes that are considered to be relevant to the leisure constraints framework includes a myriad of actual behaviors as well as psychological constructs that could be housed within multiple theories. Included among those outcomes are participation/ nonparticipation, frequency of participation, intensity of participation, enjoyment, socialization, choice of setting, needs met, and others. In fact, some scholars are using empirical approaches to identify additional criterion variables in constraints research (e.g., Nadler & Jackson, 2000). The breadth of theoretical homes for constructs that are implied by this set of outcomes is enormous. Each theory gives life (and existence, in fact) to a construct and specifies what agents of change may impact on that construct. By ignoring these theoretically bound causal linkages, leisure constraints research is very much at risk of falling victim to a fundamental fallacy of reification; treating constructs as if they have universal definitions and real, tangible existence.

Closely related to this concern is the breadth of potential constraints. Considering both the enormous diversity of outcomes that are relevant to the constraints topic and a definition that constraints are "...factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived

or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment of leisure" (Jackson, 1997, p. 461), the scope of independent variables in an investigation of constraints also becomes unmanageable broad. "Factors," of course, might be conceptualized in a myriad of ways. They might be constructs, such as particular motives, reasons, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, knowledge, emotions, or activation levels. Or, "factors" might have to do with physical properties of the environment or physical characteristics of people. Few people who live in Florida can go alpine skiing each day and individuals in poor conditions of physical fitness cannot choose to complete a marathon on a given day. On both sides of the implied "constraints" equation, the scope of relevant variables is at best unmanageably broad and at worst a reification fallacy.

In addition, although it is common to refer to constraints "theory," the area of inquiry fails to qualify. By definition, any reason that some limitation exists to an enormous array of leisure-related outcomes is a constraint. Constraints "theory" is thus circular; it is true by definition. As such, studies that seek to relate select variables (possible constraints) to particular outcomes do not serve to confirm or disconfirm a "theory" but, at best, they serve only to identify factors that are, by definition, constraints.

Finally, constraints "theory" has evolved with limited attention to development of formal definitions of related concepts and propositions about relationships between variables. Both of these are essential elements of formal deductive theory. In fact, rather than specifying what outcomes are relevant to the "theory," empirical investigation is proceeding to identify criterion variables that might be relevant to consideration of constraints. In formal deductive theory, these outcomes are conceptual, a-priori phenomena that the theorist wishes to explain and understand. Apart from "grounded theory," which has not characterized constraints research to date, outcomes to be explained are not to be empirically derived. In brief, constraints research may have provided some limited degree of description of a vast array of phenomena, but substantially greater focus is needed in order to make needed advancements toward prediction.

Our intent with this paper is to use what we consider to be the "best" elements of leisure constraints "theory" to explain the concept of common-unity. In accomplishing this task, we choose to focus on intrapersonal constraints and affordances to common unity. Our focus on these constraints is consistent with Crawford and Godbey's (1987) position that intrapersonal constraints are the most powerful factor in determining outcomes. In addition, we choose to delimit the range of relevant intrapersonal constraints and affordances to particular beliefs that people hold about communities of which they are a part. This delimitation maintains focus on a single construct and avoids the extreme eclectic nature of the leisure constraints literature. Finally, our decision to focus on beliefs is consistent with social psychological approaches that have been shown to be effective in predicting behavior (e.g., Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Bandura, 1997; Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988).

Beliefs are central to Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy and to Ajzen and Fishbein's Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen & Driver, 1992; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The Health Beliefs Model (Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988) has significantly influenced health promotion for decades and has been demonstrated to be even more predictive following its integration with self-efficacy theory. These approaches specify how beliefs about valued conditions lead to specific behaviors. It should be noted that self-efficacy beliefs, which are derived from social cognitive theory, are the most predictive and have been added to increase predictive power of both the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Driver, 1992) and the Health Belief Model (Strecher, DeVillis, Becker, & Rosenstock, 1986; Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1988). Self-efficacy beliefs about valued behaviors are beliefs an individual holds about her or his ability to perform a

TABLE 1

Outline of Common-Unity Theory

Definitions

Common-unity: A set of beliefs and actions that reflect shared purpose and meaning among a defined group of people.

Community Value: Beliefs about the extent to which community has inherent and instrumental worth and is a desired condition.

Community Constraints: Dominant beliefs among members of a place or nonplace community that they lack personal abilities needed to engage in intimate interactions and collaboration with other members of that community.

Community Affordances: Dominant beliefs among members of a place or nonplace community that they possess personal abilities needed to engage in intimate interactions and collaboration with other members of that community.

Assumptions

A1: People hold beliefs, which represent their perceptions of the probability of some condition, characteristic, or proposition being true or extant.

A2: Beliefs influence behaviors.

A3: People hold values, which are beliefs about the worth and desirability of specific conditions.

A4: Place communities exist.

A5: Nonplace communities exist.

A6: Community constraints and affordances exist in both place and nonplace communities.

Propositions

P1: When community value is high, as community affordances increase, common-unity increases.

P2: When community value is high, as community constraints increase, common-unity decreases.

P3: Relationships specified in P1 and P2 hold true for both place and nonplace communities.

P4: Community affordances and constraints are influenced by the same mechanisms that affect self-efficacy judgements: enactive attainments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and situational arousal.

P5: As place-based common-unity increases, nonplace-based common unity among the same members increases.

P6: As beliefs about availability of recreation resources (affordances) in a place community increase, both community value and common-unity increase

P7: As shared experiences (including recreation experiences) increase among members of a defined group, community value and common-unity increase.

P8: As individuals in a defined group come together to address pressing common needs, shared experiences increase community value and common-unity.

behavior that has worth to her or him (Bandura, 1997). In our theory, we consider self-efficacy beliefs about behaviors that lead to valued outcomes to be of central importance. These self-efficacy beliefs provide an essential foundation for common-unity. When common-unity is valued among members or potential members of a community, increases in individuals' beliefs about their ability to function in a community serve to increase their likelihood of engaging with others in the community and working toward both common-unity (*Gemeinschaft*) and instrumental outcomes (*Gesellschaft*).

Consistent with the tenants of formal deductive theory, we state our fundamental assumptions and advance propositions from which testable hypotheses may be deduced. We also provide Aristotelian definitions of our constructs. These components of our theory are outlined in Table 1.

As can be seen from review of Table 1, the target outcome of our theory is common-unity. Common-unity is a complex, though coherent, construct that includes both psychological and physical conditions (meaning and action). Our theory proposes that this construct is relevant to both place and non-place communities and that common-unity may be influenced by specific intrapersonal constraints and affordances. Each of these constraints and affordances is a self-efficacy belief and it is notable that each self-efficacy belief may or may not be influenced by tangible environmental conditions. Existence of a highway between two neighborhoods, for example, may or may not create a belief among neighbors on opposite sides of the highway that they cannot engage with the opposite neighborhood because the people who live there are not "like me." In addition, it is notable that beliefs represent the probability of existence of a certain condition or circumstance. As such, a belief about members' ability to negotiate interracial tensions or power structures in a given community will reduce common-unity regardless of whether that belief is founded in truth, in an objective sense. We propose that self-efficacy beliefs about individuals' abilities to engage in potential communities are the essential agents that determine common-unity.

In Figure 1, we provide examples of self-efficacy beliefs and affordances that might constrain or afford common-unity in a place community (a neighborhood). Consistent with the definitions that we provide in Table 1, we propose that constraints and affordances lie at opposing ends of individual continua. As such, the belief that "I cannot make friends with my neighbors" is a constraint while "I can make friends with my neighbors" is an affordance." In Figure 1 we also distinguish between intracommunity constraints and intercommunity constraints and affordances. Intracommunity constraints and affordances are more proximal and, in the case of a place community, might be represented by a neighborhood. An example of an intercommunity constraint is "I cannot engage with people from community X because people from that community are not like me." An inter-community affordance might be, "I can engage with people from community X because people from that community are like me."

How Teachers can Build a Community of Learners

People by nature are social creatures compelled to make connections with others. How this is done makes all the difference in our ability to form communities. We bring certain characteristics to these interactions which help to determine success or failure. These characteristics include being open to other people and trusting in the nature of the process; having a certain humility, an honesty and frankness; being empathetic and respectful to other people and their circumstances; and being fully present and aware. These four characteristics set the stage, predisposing the individual towards a successful encounter. Those characteristics also provide a foundation that teachers can use in their efforts to create an effective learning environment.

<u>Community Constraints</u> ←-----→ <u>Community Affordances</u>	
<u>Intracommunity</u>	
<u>I'm sure that I cannot...</u>	<u>I'm sure that I can...</u>
be safe in interacting with my neighbors	safely interact with my neighbors
find ways that I am like my neighbors	help my neighbors see how I am like them
meet needs that I have by interacting with neighbors	meet needs that I have by interacting with my neighbors
keep my neighbors from taking advantage of me	interact with neighbors in ways that are equitable
find neighbors who would help me if needed	find neighbors who help me when I need them
make friends with my neighbors	make friends with my neighbors
do things to enjoy interacting with my neighbors	do things to enjoy interacting with my neighbors
find facilities for neighborhood gatherings	find facilities for neighborhood gatherings
find neighbors who will improve our neighborhood	find neighbors who will improve our neighborhood
effectively negotiate power structures in my neighborhood	effectively negotiate power structures in my neighborhood
be a member of existing social groups in my neighborhood	be a member of existing social groups in my neighborhood
<u>Intercommunity: I am confident in my ability to...</u>	
<u>I'm sure that I cannot...</u>	<u>I'm sure that I can...</u>
engage with people from community X because they are not like me	engage with community X because they are like me
keep people from community X from taking advantage of me	work with people from community X in an equitable way
do things that would help me like people from Community X	do things that would help me like people from Community X
maintain good relationships with people from Community X	maintain good relationships with people from Community X
easily travel to Community X	easily travel to Community X
find good facilities for inter-community activities	find good facilities for inter-community activities
effectively negotiate power structures in Community X	effectively negotiate power structures in Community X
be a member of existing social groups in Community X	be a member of existing social groups in Community X

Figure 1: Examples of Constraints and Affordances to Community

It is at these places of contact, these intersections, where the formation of community is most likely. It is here that sets of community self-efficacy beliefs are modified, that is beliefs about common-unity are attained, beliefs about constraints are diminished, and beliefs about affordances are accentuated. These self-efficacy beliefs are modified using Bandura's (1997) approach which includes the use of four modalities: enactive attainment, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Behaviors associated with the common-unity, constraints, and affordances are targeted to effect change in their corresponding self-efficacy beliefs. These self-efficacy beliefs to form community are the mainstay beliefs in the ability of the individual participants to form, maintain and enhance via a dynamic process of communication that continually broadens and deepens. The objective of this endeavor is to readily transfer meaning, derive purpose, and determine function through the processes of narrative, dialogue, and dialectic.

The narrative process entails the co-creation, telling and re-telling of story through the interaction between two or more people who have an experience in common. We have recently seen this process in action with the tragic September 11 disaster, when as a Nation we came together, weaving story out of a commonly shared event, creating an experience together in our collective psyche. The story grows more powerful and gains more meaning, purpose and function upon each recall and telling.

In a similar vein, a cohort of students who share in common certain events can co-create their story by transforming events into experiences, by sharing meaning, deriving purpose and choosing function, thereby creating common-unity. A sense of cohesion is created through story and its narration. This process happens spontaneously in uncommon or difficult circumstances like war or disaster, but can also be made explicit by teaching students how to create their commonly shared events into stories. In this latter view, story and narrative help create community from what was originally separate or individual (Gergen, 1999).

Dialogue also fosters community. Dialogue explores the nature of choice, evoking insight, and co-creating between its participants. Dialogue is generative, inventing possibilities, taking the participants from fixed to flexible positions and from implicit to explicit assumptions. It is essential in dialogue to put aside positions and assumptions, and allow it to grow, free and unfettered (Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 1999). One of the simplest ways that dialogue can occur is by simply going for a walk together, carrying on a conversation, sharing ideas and values with no fixed position or assumptions, in an atmosphere of trust and openness, and allowing the process of dialogue to emerge from this ambulatory interchange.

The dialectic process describes interplay of opposites, as seen in constraints and affordances. These opposites are like two sides of the same coin requiring one to step back and begin to see that there is a certain unity where each side represents just one aspect of the same coin. This is the dialectic process, the resolution of opposing elements. Dialectical thinking or mentally entertaining their opposites and their unity has

been considered a primary aspect of wisdom. Dialectical thinking is conducive to common-unity, because it fosters empathy by which the possessor is able to see more than one perspective, to travel in that person's moccasins for a time (Labouvie-vief, 1990).

Students can be taught to begin to think dialectically by having them exchange roles and viewpoints of others in the class, to act these out in scenarios taken from real life stories. Empathy, understanding, and tolerance is fostered by learning how to integrate often disparate viewpoints through dialogue and narrative creating common-unity. Students can also be taught how to resolve the opposing elements of constraints and affordances. Social interactions, with their inherent contradictions, can also be resolved through this dialectical process (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Students can be taught to use this process and begin to empathize by playing each other acting out different stories. They can be asked to process these experiences afterwards by modifying the stories and changing their respective interpretations. Learning to see multiple perspectives in different circumstances through role playing and simulated exercises can provide an opportunity to enhance tolerance and empathy. Experiencing multiple viewpoints can help students recognize that constraints are not static entities; rather, constraints can become an affordance through transformation of beliefs. Constraints can also become challenges to be met and obstacles to be overcome. Learning this, the student establishes a heightened sense of self-efficacy regarding those behaviors related to the identified constraints. With community affordances maximized and community constraints minimized, students can become active members in their chosen communities, participating fully with the appropriate expectations of successful connection at various intersections occurring in their lives.

Modifying community self-efficacy beliefs (constraints and affordances) can be accomplished at any of the three interactive approaches along any of the four modalities. For example, successfully executing a narrative, dialogue or dialectic can modify self-efficacy beliefs through performance enactment. Second, watching someone else model successful elements in any of the three approaches can also help modify self-efficacy beliefs through vicarious learning. Third, verbal messages that are personal and specific by those interacting with the individual can help modify through verbal persuasion. Finally, helping the person to relax and be mindful can help the individual fully participate in these interactive efforts and help to enhance self-efficacy beliefs through emotional arousal.

How to Engage a Community of Learners in Development of Common-Unity within a Place-Community

A number of alternatives may be considered for engaging students and faculty in activities that promote common-unity within an external place-community such as a neighborhood or small town. The efforts might be individual (involving a single class) or coordinated initiatives in which several faculty or academic units collaborate. Among the most readily implemented alternatives are service learning projects, internships, and the activities of student organizations.

Service learning projects, in which students receive classroom credit in return for participation in community-building activity, are perhaps the easiest to implement. Efforts at coordination are minimized, because communication is typically required only between faculty and a member of a community organization. Compliance by student workers is relatively easy to assure because grades are tied to participation. Benefits to the community include an infusion of pro-bono labor and expertise as well as involvement of students who may choose to work in the community after the project has ended. Benefits to the student include an opportunity to apply academic knowledge in practical settings, opportunities to observe and participate in collaborative work, and opportunities to develop relationships within the community.

Service learning opportunities are also valuable to faculty. They provide the opportunity to incorporate creative, educational, and relatively low-maintenance activities into the curriculum. In addition, service learning opportunities may lead to significant community partnerships for research and scholarly activity. A variety of important benefits may accrue to the university faculty member who generates service learning opportunities.

Despite these benefits, service learning opportunities also have limitations. Perhaps the most significant of these limitations is that they typically last no more than one semester. Although it is possible to link a project to a series of classes over subsequent semesters, many classes do not lend themselves to the problems presented by regular downtime (between-semester breaks) and the learning curve experienced by new students.

Internships, practica, and cooperative education experiences provide additional opportunities for student involvement. By placing interns in agencies that engage in community-building activities universities can establish lasting relationships in which student contributions can be made over a longer period of time. Internships are perhaps best suited for projects that require intensive efforts by one or two workers rather than the less intensive, team-based projects appropriate for service learning projects. They provide similar benefits to all participants as do service learning projects.

A third option for involving students in community-building is collaboration between student organizations (such as majors clubs, honor societies, or student government) and community agencies. This option provides the greatest continuity and availability of labor, but requires greater involvement by faculty and lacks the motivating force of a grade to assure consistent student involvement. It does lend itself to both long-term and short-term projects using varying numbers of students.

A fourth way of involving students in developing communities is to use some combination of the strategies discussed above. This requires intensive effort on the part of faculty or staff, but can be extremely fruitful. An interesting variation of this strategy is an interdisciplinary effort in which faculty and students from more than one department collaborate with a community agency or agencies. Such partnerships, when designed and implemented on a long-term basis, can be powerful agents for change for communities, students, and academic units alike.

Regardless of the alternatives utilized for student involvement and regardless of whether the focus is *Gemeinsheft* or *Gesellschaft*, several steps are appropriate to community-building. Faculty who involve students in community-building projects should assure that each step is taken as the project is conceptualized, implemented, and evaluated. The steps are outlined in Table 2 and described briefly in the following narrative.

The initial state in any community-building activity must be the *identification of a community that desires to participate in the process*. Alternatively, the process might begin with an effort to create shared experiences among members of a defined group that would provide a foundation for valuing common-unity. Where community apathy or disorganization is too great, resistance to change may be so strong that greater levels of activity will be needed than can be provided by student involvement.

The second step involves the *identification and recruitment of community leaders*. Members of the community should be involved in every stage of the project and should gradually assume greater responsibility for its implementation. Community members should eventually assume the roles initially taken by agency staff, faculty, and students.

The next step requires an *assessment of the community to identify beliefs in need of intervention, as well as the community's strengths and resources*. Assessment activities should draw on multiple sources of data and information to assure that a realistic overall picture of community is developed. Particular emphasis should be given to priorities identified by community members. Focus groups often provide a useful approach to identification of these priorities. The priorities that are identified are likely to differ significantly from priorities that are identified by the agency or university.

Step four requires that *projects suitable for varying levels of student involvement in influencing community beliefs (classroom service learning, student organizations, internships, theses, dissertations) be identified*. Partnering of students with community leaders will facilitate bonding, mentoring, and efficient use of labor.

The fifth step involves the *actual student recruitment*. SLP participants can be recruited when the syllabus is introduced. Internship arrangements can be made through the faculty coordinator. Student organizations can introduce the idea at a meeting or in informal student contacts. In each case, it is beneficial to have a guest speaker from the agency or community to describe the project.

Sixth, the project should be implemented. As with any major undertaking, an action plan should be developed and followed carefully. This will: 1) assure that goals, objectives, and tasks are clearly delineated and assigned, and 2) provide positive role modeling for student and community participants.

Step seven requires monitoring the processes and evaluating the impact of the projects on constraints and affordances (beliefs) of members of the community. Monitoring will assure that action plans are being followed. Outcome evaluation will determine whether goals are being accomplished (i.e., constraint and affordance beliefs are

being modified). Both students and community leaders should be involved in monitoring and evaluation to facilitate their learning of the necessary techniques.

The final step involves a reassessment of the constraints and affordances (beliefs) of the community following the intervention. The results should determine whether the project should be continued, expanded, redirected, or eliminated. If the project is to continue, the cycle is reinitiated with Step 1.

TABLE 2

Steps to Successful Community-Building

- STEP 1 Identify a group of people comprised largely of members who value community and / or
Engage a defined group of people in activities that create and emphasize shared experiences and thereby enhance community value.
- STEP 2 Identify and recruit community leaders to participate in community building.
- STEP 3 Conduct a community assessment to identify needs and strengths.
- STEP 4 Identify projects suitable for varying levels of student involvement.
- STEP 5 Recruit students. Provide training and team-building activities.
- STEP 6 Implement the project.
- STEP 7 Monitor the processes and evaluate outcomes.
- STEP 8 Reassess the state of the community. Reinitiate the cycle.

The process detailed for engaging a community of learners with a place community is consistent with our theory of common-unity. Implementation of student projects can have a strong impact on the beliefs of all participants. Developing a positive set of beliefs can, in turn, have a powerful effect on the participants' futures. Students, for example, are able to see community-building in action. They come to believe that communities can change, that natural leadership resides in the communities, and that appropriate interventions can produce positive outcomes. Community members often come to recognize their own power and begin to believe that their worlds can be different and better. They may begin to more greatly value their neighbors, experience stronger attachment to their community, and develop trust in the agencies and universities that desire to help them through the process. Faculty, departments, and even universities may change as well. Underlying the ivory tower mentality of some academics are beliefs about the role and efficacy of the academic community that may mediate against real-world involvement. As the effectiveness of student involvement in community-building activities is demonstrated, those beliefs may change, creating an atmosphere where residents of the ivory tower may more readily descend to share in the real and vital work of recreating and building communities.

Summary and Discussion

We have proposed a more focused approach to community building through establishing common-unity, and at the same time we have concentrated our attention to be-

liefs about personal efficacy regarding constraints and affordances. This approach has precedent established in the related traditions of social psychology, health promotion, and social work. Common-unity, or *Gemeinschaft*, includes a focus on commonly shared meaning, mutually derived purpose, and found function. In this way, the community formed is greater than the sum of its parts. This synergy holds and maintains community involvement through difficult or easy times. The community coheres naturally from the union of shared mutuality. This is a felt experience that creates members from individuals who have begun the process of encounter and connection.

We have also proposed a simple deductive theory about how common-unity might be established among groups of people. In addition, we have suggested mechanisms that teachers may use to build common-unity among their students and we have suggested procedures through which a place-community may be built through student effort. It is notable that many of these mechanisms are readily available. All accredited curricula in parks, recreation, tourism and leisure studies must include internships and practica and standards imply (if not establish) that majors clubs must be in existence. On many campuses, park, recreation, and tourism faculty are, in fact, recognized leaders in extending campuses into communities. A number of our park, recreation, and tourism educator peers are champions of service learning and of connecting campuses with place communities. These faculty members are advancing student learning and are acting in a manner that is consistent with the historical roots of public recreation in our place-based communities. Perhaps this paper will provide a foundation for building upon the many creative and innovative programs that are in existence. Perhaps through these efforts, encounters that travelers have with common-unity may become more frequent and more intense.

Finally, it is notable that research implications of this paper exist. One of these implications would be delineation of constraints and affordances as proposed in Figure 1. Certainly coherent domains of constraints and affordances could be identified. Among these might be community power structures, affinity for other members, accessibility, and similarities and differences. In addition, it is important to note that the deductive theory that is summarized in Table 1 is preliminary and lacking in terms of complete explication. That theory defines common-unity and suggests how it is related to constraints and affordances. Conceptual work is needed to provide a specific foundation for propositions that are advanced. Research is then needed to operationalize the concepts implied by the propositions and to test propositions of the theory. Through that work, we may learn of specific strategies for common-unity building and, perhaps, we may gain insights on how our body of scholarship might advance toward greater understanding of constraints and affordances to community as well as to parks, recreation, and tourism.

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