In Conclusion . . . *It’s all about networks . . . and networks are all about connections . . . and connections are all about relationships*

We will present our work on the Social Organization Theory of Community Action and Change, including recent work with US military families to model and empirically examine social psychological mediators between structure and action.

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The “Best Place”

- Where is the best place you have lived during your adult life?
- What are three characteristics making it the “best”?
- Which of the three characteristics is most significant?
The Power of Social Connections

“In the end, these social connections, these bonds, are what it is all about. When they are strong, we are happy; when they are threatened, we worry; when they disappear, we suffer. . . Whether we like it or not, our happiness is in each other’s hands.”

Daniel Gilbert, Host

http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/
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Bowen & Martin 2011
Focus

• Discuss our work over the last 15 years to develop the Social Organization Theory of Community Action and Change
• Present key assumptions and concepts from the theory
• Comment on the yin and yang of theory building
• Highlight the results of a recent empirical analysis, incorporating sense of community as a mediator
• Discuss next steps in our work
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION THEORY
Conceptual Articles and Chapters

Community Capacity: Antecedents and Consequences

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ABSTRACT. Traditional practice models of family support often lack a community focus. Increasingly, human service professionals who work with families focus their intervention and prevention efforts on the communities in which families live and work. The Family Advocacy Division of the United States Air Force recently revised its program standards to address community issues in an effort to strengthen families through community-based prevention activities. This article presents a basic framework designed to inform this expanded practice initiative. Key terms are defined for understanding communities as a context for family life, including community results, community capacity, and social capital. The model is considered to have implications for informing community-oriented interventions in the delivery of family support services.

Community Social Organization: A Conceptual Linchpin in Examining Families in the Context of Communities

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Abstract. The concept of social organization provides an important framework for understanding families in the context of community and examines the influence of community characteristics, contexts, and policies that shape family life. In this conceptual framework, family social organization is defined as the pattern of social relationships and interactions that influence family well-being. We discuss the significance of community for understanding family dynamics, the challenges in defining community context, and the key role of community organization in shaping family life. We conclude with recommendations for future research and practice.

Key Words: communities, community capacity, families, social organization.

Community context factors, including transactions with other families and institutions, are significant elements in understanding and strengthening families. The work of family science scholars increasingly recognizes that families are embedded in community contexts that influence their everyday life experiences and their individual and collective life trajectories. The conceptual framework presented in this article provides a useful tool for understanding community influence on family functioning. Scanzoni (2001) notes that extending approaches to human variability provide a level of understanding and application that is more comprehensive and includes the family in the context of the community. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of family functioning and the ways in which families are embedded in community processes and structures. These interventions range from the community-building efforts of Family Service America to the strengthening of families (Sivert and Ryan, 1997) to the promotion of community capacity in the U.S. Air Force as a strategy for preventing family violence (Bowen, Martin, & Nelson, 2002). Family program professionals increasingly work with community members as allies in support of families and mobilizing families to exert greater influence over their lives.
Concept of Community

- Geographic locations or spatial settings—places where individuals and families live and work
- Community boundaries may be expanded or reduced depending on the initiative
- Individual and family memberships, identifications, and relationships may extend beyond any particular geographic locations

KEY ASSUMPTIONS AND CONCEPTS
Key Assumptions

• Locally anchored community forces surround families and mediate between social structure and individual/family results.
• These forces influence both their everyday life experiences and the way in which the individual and collective lives of their members unfold over time.
• Individuals may not be aware of the ways in which these forces shape and inform their experiences and their health and well-being.
Community Forces

Family

Informal

Formal
Communities can become high quality places when connections exist at multiple levels, are frequent, and are meaningful and purposeful.
Key Concepts

• Social Structure
• Social Organization
  – Formal Systems
  – Informal Networks
  – Social Capital
  – Community Capacity
• Individual and Family Results
Social Organization

• Values, norms, processes and behavior patterns within a community that organize, facilitate, and constrain interactions among community members.

• Process by which communities achieve their desired results for individuals and families, including the ability to demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity and positive challenges.

• Social organization includes networks of people, the exchanges and reciprocity that transpire in relationships, accepted standards and norms of social support, and social controls that regulate behavior and interaction.

Community Capacity

• The extent to which formal systems and informal networks:
  – (a) demonstrate a sense of shared responsibility for the general welfare of the community and its members, and
  – (b) demonstrate collective competence in taking advantage of opportunities for addressing community needs and confronting situations that threaten the safety and well-being of community members.

Empirical Support


THE YIN AND YANG OF THEORY BUILDING
Families and Communities: A Social Organization Theory of Action and Change

Jay A. Mancini and Gary L. Bowen

Families are embedded in multiple contexts that reflect community structure and process. Though families influence those contexts to some degree, in the main families are the recipients of events, values, and norms that comprise community collective life. Families are rarely isolated, and their boundaries are permeable, whether by the media, neighbors, confidants, or social institutions. Community social organization is a comprehensive descriptor of the contexts in which families live. "Social organization is how people in a community interrelate, cooperate, and provide mutual support; it includes social support norms, social controls that regulate behavior and interaction patterns, and networks that operate in a community" (Mancini & Bowen, 2005; Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2004; Mancini, Martin, & Bowen, 2003). From a social action and change perspective, social organization supports building community capacity, in effect, shared responsibility and collective competence as primary situations and processes that enable communities to provide desired supports to families (Bowen, Martin, Mancini, & Nelson, 2000; Mancini & Bowen, 2009).

Our focus in this expansive chapter on families and communities locates families as the pivot-point in the discussion, and assembles community structures and processes around them, mirroring what occurs in everyday life. Our discussion seeks to answer several primary questions. First, to what extent have family social scientists included aspects of community structure and process in their analysis of family-related processes and outcomes? Second, in what ways does our work inform efforts to conceptualize ways in which communities influence families? Our aim is to offer a conceptual model as a heuristic for theory development and future research efforts. Although community can be defined from multiple perspectives (Coulton, 1995; Mogeys, 1964), we focus primarily on community as providing a geographic context in which families function and interrelate.

Our discussion is informed by two sources of data. First, we look back in the family science literature at key discussions of families and communities, and in particular, we retrieve ideas from early theories and discussions about families. We assume that to move the discipline forward toward a more nuanced examination of families and communities, it is instructive to revisit important ideas and approaches from the past. Second, we analyze certain characteristics of the family science discipline through a focus on three pivotal professional journals and their contents from 2000 to 2009: Journal of Marriage and Family (JMF), Family Relations (FR), and the Journal of Family Issues (JFI). As explained in detail later,
Social Organization Theory

Individual/Family Results

Intermediate Results
- Sense of Community

Social Organizational Process
- Network Structure
- Social Capital
- Community Capacity

Community Antecedents
- Social Infrastructure
- Physical Infrastructure
Sense of Community (SOC): A Social Psychological Mediator

- Attempt to open up the “black box” between macrolevel social organizational processes and microlevel individual and family outcomes
- A “situational social psychology” (Zelditch, 1991)
- SOC—“the degree to which individuals feel a sense of identification, esprit de corps, and attachment with their community” (Mancini & Bowen, 2013, p. 804)
Sense of Community (SOC): A Social Psychological Mediator

- Empirically, SOC is evidenced by feelings of belonging in the community, feeling close to other community members, a feeling that one’s circumstances are similar to others in the community, as well as to more behavioral indicators including making new friends, spending time with others, and showing concern for others.
Sense of Community (SOC): A Social Psychological Mediator

• Importantly, we see the operation of formal systems and informal networks as correlates, rather than indicators, of SOC.

• In the context of a high SOC, we propose that individuals and families have a greater chance of achieving results, as well as a greater motivation to act and to participate in change efforts.

• We do not propose SOC as the only potential social psychological mediator in our model.
EXAMPLE OF CURRENT EMPIRICAL WORK
Families, Army Life, and Programs Project

• Data were collected from participants (N=273 military families) in the continental United States. Research criterion included: (1) families have at least one active-duty military member and one adolescent between the ages of 11 and 18, and (2) all eligible family members come to the youth center on the installation to take the survey at the same time (e.g., in two-parent families, both parents and the adolescent were required to come).

  – Adults: 233 (85.7%) males and 45 (16.5%) of females were active duty military personnel. 161 (65.5%) males and 185 (69.0%) females were 31-40 years of age. 109 (44.1%) of males and 98 (36.6%) of females reported “some college” education.

  – Children: Equal split of males (n = 135) and females (n = 138). Ages ranged from 11-18 (M = 14.04, SD = 2.08). Most attended public schools off post (n = 153, 56.3%).
Community Support within the Military Environment

• Active-duty and Partner (civilian)
  – Same items with different stems (*active-duty members on this post* v. *family members on this post*):
    1) Find it easy to make connections with other families
    2) Are active in post-sponsored community events and activities
    3) Feel a sense of connection with one another
    4) Assume responsibility for making this post a better place to live and work
    5) Join together to solve problems that threaten the safety and well-being of members and families assigned to this post
    6) Look after and shown concern for members and families assigned to this post
    7) Take advantage of opportunities to support the needs of members and families assigned to this post
  – $\alpha = .90$ and $.91$ for active-duty and civilian respondents
Military Community Support Measure

• Exploratory Factory Analysis
  – Indicated one factor (explained 65% of the variance for both active-duty and partner reports)
  – KMO = .878 and .904 for active-duty and civilian reports; Barlett’s Test of Sphericity was statistically significant (p < .001)
Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Active-Duty items

1.48
2.67
3.69
4.69
5.69
6.86
7.92

Active-Duty

Civilian Partner s

Civilian items

1.69
2.62
3.69
4.76
5.79
6.78
7.87

Note. $X^2/df = 2.22$;
RMSEA = 0.07; CFI = 0.96
Influence of Military Community Support on Adult Outcomes

Active Duty Military Community Support

- .196**

Civilian Military Community Support

- .163***
- .220***

Anxiety – AD
$R^2 = .10$

Dep. Symptoms – AD
$R^2 = .13$

Self-Efficacy – AD
$R^2 = .07$

Personal Well-being AD;
$R^2 = .14$

Self-Efficacy – CIV
$R^2 = .03$

Personal Well-being CIV;
$R^2 = .05$

Standardized coefficients

Note. $X^2/df = .28$;
RMSEA = .00;
CFI = 1.0.
Influence of Military Community Support on Adult Outcomes

Active Duty Military Community Support

- .197**

Civilian Military Community Support

- .197**

Anxiety – AD
R² = .10/.14

Dep. Symptoms – AD
R² = .13/.17

Self-Efficacy – AD
R² = .07/.11

Personal Well-being AD;
R² = .14/.20

Self-Efficacy – CIV
R² = .03/.10

Personal Well-being CIV;
R² = .05/.12

Controlling for Males’ and Females’ Reports of:
Males’ and Females’ reports of marital quality and adverse childhood events

Note. X²/df = .734;
RMSEA = .00;
CFI = 1.0.
Standardized coefficients
Influence of Military Community Support on Child Outcomes

Active Duty Military Community Support

Civilian Military Community Support

Anxiety – AD report
R² = .03

Anxiety – CIV report
R² = .03

Dep. Symptoms
AD report; R² = .05

Self-Efficacy
R² = .03

Note. X²/df = 3.02;
RMSEA = .09; CFI = .98.
Standardized coefficients
Influence of Military Community Support on Child Outcomes

Active Duty Military Community Support

Civilian Military Community Support

Anxiety – AD report
R² = .03/.07

Anxiety – CIV report
R² = .03/.11

Dep. Symptoms
AD report; R² = .05/.09

Self-Efficacy
R² = .03/.25

Note. X²/df = 2.64;
RMSEA = .08; CFI = .99.
Standardized coefficients

Controlling for Males’ and Females’ Reports of:
Males’ and Females’ reports of marital quality and adverse childhood events
The Mediating Role of Sense of Community for Adult Outcomes

Active Duty Military Community Support

Active Duty Members’ Sense of Community

Civilian Partners’ Sense of Community

Civilian Military Community Support

Anxiety – AD
R² = .11

Dep. Symptoms – AD
R² = .14

Self-Efficacy – AD
R² = .08

Personal Well-being AD;
R² = .17

Anxiety – CIV
R² = .01

Dep. Symptoms – CIV
R² = .02

Personal Well-being CIV
R² = .10

Self-Efficacy – CIV
R² = .04

Note. X²/df = .48;
RMSEA = .00;
CFI = 1.0.
Standardized coefficients

Active Duty Military Community Support

Active Duty Members’ Sense of Community

Civilian Partners’ Sense of Community

Civilian Military Community Support

Note. X²/df = .48;
RMSEA = .00;
CFI = 1.0.
Standardized coefficients
The Mediating Role of Sense of Community for Adult Outcomes

Active Duty Military Community Support

Anxiety – AD
$R^2 = 0.11/0.16$

Dep. Symptoms – AD
$R^2 = 0.14/0.18$

Self-Efficacy – AD
$R^2 = 0.08/0.12$

Personal Well-being AD;
$R^2 = 0.17/0.24$

Anxiety – CIV
$R^2 = 0.01/0.07$

Dep. Symptoms – CIV
$R^2 = 0.02/0.10$

Personal Well-being CIV
$R^2 = 0.10/0.14$

Self-Efficacy – CIV
$R^2 = 0.04/0.11$

Note. $X^2/df = 1.66$; RMSEA = .05; CFI = 1.0.
Standardized coefficients

Controlling for Males’ and Females’ Reports of:
Males’ and Females’ reports of marital quality and adverse childhood events
The Mediating Role of Sense of Community for Child Outcomes

Note. $X^2/df = 2.76$; RMSEA = .08; CFI = .98. Standardized coefficients
The Mediating Role of Sense of Community for Child Outcomes

Active Duty Military Community Support

Civilian Military Community Support

Active Duty Members’ Sense of Community

Anxiety – AD report
$R^2 = .03/.08$

Anxiety – CIV report
$R^2 = .03/.11$

Dep. Symptoms
AD report; $R^2 = .05/.09$

Self-Efficacy
$R^2 = .02/.26$

Controlling for Males’ and Females’ Reports of:
Males’ and Females’ reports of marital quality and adverse childhood events

Note. $X^2/df = 2.77$
RMSEA = .08; CFI = .99.
Standardized coefficients
NEXT STEPS
Measurement Approaches

- **Microlevel**: relies on the individual as the unit of analysis
- **Compositional**: uses proxy variables to reflect the community’s physical and sociodemographic infrastructure (e.g., neighborhood poverty rate)
- **Social organizational (contextual effects)**: incorporates group-level variables and a hierarchical data structure (Blalock, 1984)
Overall mean

Individual variance

Individual level residual

Single Level Ecological Data

Partitioning the Total Variance

Summary Points: RAND Report

• Link between neighborhood/community characteristics and indicators of health and well-being
  – These characteristics hypothesized to influence outcomes beyond individual characteristics (e.g., gender, age)

• Using zip codes, created a military neighborhood ranking index

• Findings generally supportive of social indicators research as a way to better understand life in and around military bases
In Conclusion

Zonder je niet af van de gemeenschap
Do not separate yourself from the community
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