

Developing and Enriching Communities

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One of the major things that has gone wrong today is that governments have become so far removed from the average person that there is no connection between themWe have to get back to communities; and gain greater autonomy to determine the future of our own community.

Suzuki, 1991



Historical, Social, Political & Economic Factors That Have Impacted On Disability Services

- Concept of “otherness” of people with intellectual disabilities (Parmenter, 2001)
- Dominant influence of deinstitutionalization on policy planning
- Normalization theory
- Person-centred values vs economic-based restructured services (Schalock, 1999)
- Rights discourse & its limitations



Continued

- Self-determination
- Professional dominance
- Centralised decision making
- Quality Outcomes
- Silo approach to service delivery
- Neo liberal economies - Economic rationalism vs Rational economics
- Globalization & market economy





Continued

- Welfare reform and mutual obligation
- Individualism
- Empowerment & Emancipation to
Citizenship
- Risk-management paranoia
- Development of an Ethical Community
(Dokecki, 1992)

Deinstitutionalization, then, is not just something that happened to people with intellectual disabilities and their families. It also happened to decision makers and staff in services and to researchers. They have to shift their attention to new problems and issues in the community....But they had also to recognise that institutions were the expressions of beliefs in society and that their demise may leave those beliefs and the practices that underpin them still to be tackled in the community.

(Mansell & Ericsson, 1996, 252-253)



Need for Ethical Framework

- An emphasis upon individual civil rights and personal autonomy alone leaves us without an ethical framework that is sufficient to confront the ethical issues that are arising – e.g. the implications of the discoveries of the human genome project
- The aim of intervention (i.e. support) should be to enhance community and human development
- These are reciprocal relationships



Building Social Capital

What is Social Capital?

Social Capital refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms, social trust and facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit

(Eva Cox, in Bullen & Onyx, 1999)



Continued

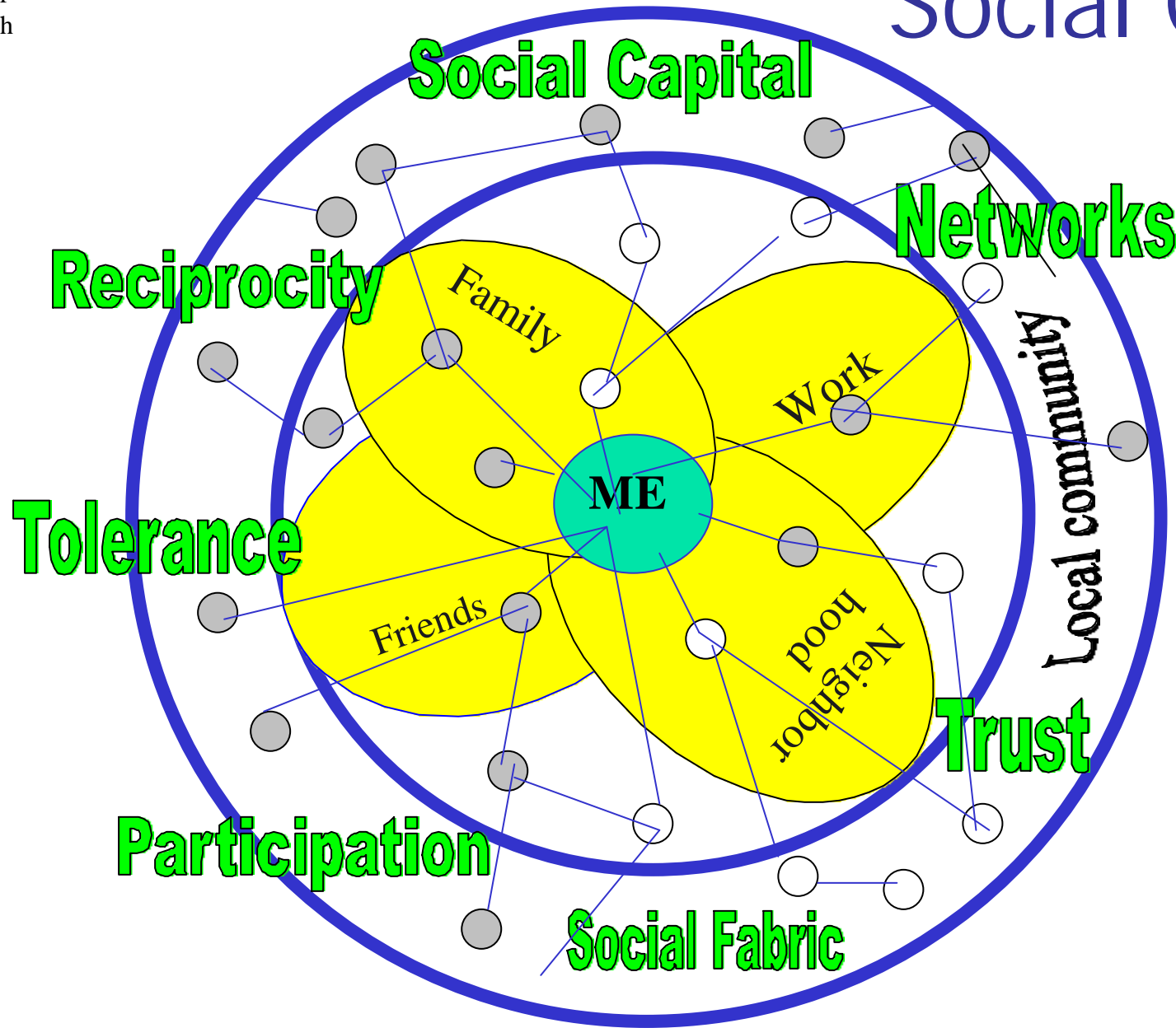
What are its elements?

- Networks
- Trust
- Reciprocity
- Tolerance
- Social fabric
- Participation

Bullen & Onyx,

(1999)

Social Capital





How Realistic is the Notion of Building Social Capital?

Robert Putnam's thesis on the decline of the community

- People have become increasingly disconnected from one another and from their communities
- Declining participation in organizations

Why the decline?

- Longer working hours
- Suburban sprawl
- Television and electronic mass media
- The "ME" generation



A More Optimistic View

Florida's thesis:

- The rise of the creative class is transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life
- The creative class is a new social class – scientists, engineers, architects, designers writers, musicians, and people who will use creativity in their work, in business, education, health care, law or some other profession

(Florida, 2002)



Factors Driving the Transformation of Everyday Life

- Economy is powered by human creativity
- Diversity in lifestyles
- Economy moving from corporate to people-driven
- Weaker social ties replacing stronger bonds of earlier eras
- People are creating their own identities that are not based on traditional bases such as work, family, church or neighbourhoods



What Has All of This to Do with Disability?

- Need to respond to societal changes & their impact upon the notion of community
- We need to develop a shared vision that recognises transformations in society
- We need to link into efforts that are building new forms of social cohesion in a world defined by increasing diversity and beset by growing fragmentation
- Build a creative community that harnesses the creativity of ALL people



Building Community Coalition with People with Disabilities & their Families: An Empowerment Approach

- Identify local leaders
- Recruit people with disabilities & their family members
- Create a chemistry of collaboration
- Sustain coalition activities

Keys & Factor (2001)



Necessary Conditions for the Empowerment of Marginalized Group Members

- Interest - partnership
- Action - include & engage
- Impact - outcomes



Ageing & Disabilities

Examples in three Illinois Communities of Community Coalition Building

- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban



Characteristics of Good Leadership

- Empower members of marginalized groups
- Committed to the issues identified by the coalition
- Connected to the community
- Committed to investing time



Characteristics of Good Recruitment of People with Disabilities & Their Families

- Leaders with ties to those sought
- Recruit at least 3 persons with disabilities and 3 family members to ensure they are comfortable in participating



The Chemistry of Collaboration

- A need of commitment by coalition leaders to the inclusion of members from marginalized groups
- Adequate supports need to be provided to help these people to feel fully included
- Meaningful roles for these people to play need to be a found and encouragement given by other coalition members
- Once included with active voices and meaningful roles these members use their talents to improve the work of the coalition



Sustaining Coalition Involvement

- Successful experiences with empowering people with disabilities & family members enhance sustainability
- Sustaining a coalition requires committed leaders, empowered members from marginal groups, and a chemistry of collaboration between them
- Communities with limited material resources find it difficult to sustain coalition activities following withdrawal of external funding



CONCLUSIONS

- Future developments in support for people with disabilities & their families need to be in the context of general societal movements
- The shift from government/service provider leadership to empowering people to find local solutions will affect funding mechanisms
- Not all communities currently have the capacity to sustain community coalitions
- Community development programs need to be piloted and tested



State and Commonwealth Initiatives

Premier's Department NSW

- Families First

www.parenting.nsw.gov.au

- Community Builders NSW

Strengthening Rural Communities

www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au

scu@premiers.nsw.gov.au



State and Commonwealth Initiatives cont.

Department of Family and Community Services

- Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

Information: Freecall 1 800 300 125

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

- ABS Social Capital Program

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