

MODULE 32: JACK ROTHMAN'S MODELS OF COMMUNITY PRACTICE

Module details	Name
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Introduction

Community organization has been considered to be the central element of the community practice. Organizing aims at engaging with the communities to develop their local leadership and capacities to work towards a progressive change in their social, political, economical and personal conditions. However, there have been numerous ways of organizing communities depending on various factors such as situations, degree of change, participants and alike. Based on these variations, Jack Rothman introduced three basic models of community organization in 1960s. In this module, we will understand the basic premises of these models and its relevance to understand the community organizing interventions in the community practice. At the end of this module, the reader will be able to understand:

- Conceptual Framework of Rothman's Models of Community Organization
- Inter-relation of these three models in Community Practice
- Relevance of these models in developing the contemporary community practice methods

Community Organization

Community organization as a term refers to series of engagement at the community level in order to improve the well-being of individuals, groups and neighbourhoods. According to Murray G. Ross, "Community organization is a process by which a community identifies needs and takes action, and in doing so... develops co-operative attitudes and practices."

One of the fundamental aspects of the community organization is the 'Co-operative Spirit' which unites the community members to work towards a common issue. The communities engaged in the organizing process could be identified by their geographical locations or could be set of people working towards a common cause from different locations. Community organization is an ongoing process in which the adjustments and changes happen to keep up the pace with ever-changing conditions governing community life. (Weil D. N., 2010)

The underlying principle of the community organization lies in the democratic value which aims at collective participation of the community in the decision making process, affecting their lives.

Rothman: Models of Community Organization Practice

To address the lack of multiple approaches in conceptualizing various community practice methods in place, Jack Rothman introduced three models of community organization

practice. He introduced three separate frameworks to explain the various community organization methods in practice. These are:

- Locality Development
- Social Planning
- Social Action

With an ever-changing landscape of the community organization methods, these frameworks capture the basic essence which differentiates one method from the other. Rothman defined these models through variables, which will help us understand the differences between the frameworks and their relevance in the contemporary practices. (Rothman, 1996)

Locality Development: This framework focuses on the broader participation from the community. It aims at the collective participation of the community in the entire decision process, i.e. from goal determination to its achievement. This framework resonates with the common understanding of the community development i.e. “Community Development is a process which is designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance on the community’s initiative”. This framework includes, self-help development, democratic procedures, indigenous leadership and voluntary cooperation. Few examples of this kind of community organization would be village level work in community development programs, community work for adult education, neighbourhood work program by settlement houses and alike.

Social Planning: This framework refers to problem-solving technical approach for community development. This method is generally adopted in cases such as delinquency, mental health and housing. This method aims at rational, planned and controlled change in the conditions of the community lives. It has very minimal scope of participation by the community and promotes the autonomy of a subject matter expert with technical capabilities, to make decisions. In this framework, technical experts work around to provide the desired changes in terms of goods and services for the community with minimal or no participation from the community. Few examples of such method are Mental Health Planning or Affordable Housing Projects.

Social Action: This framework focuses on the significance of social justice and democracy in the community development initiatives. It is generally adopted by the marginalised people who organise at a larger level as a community who have been deprived of the rightful

resources, to bring about radical changes in the social institutions governing their lives. This majorly aims at redistribution of power, resources or the authority to make decisions in the community. Few examples of such method are Black Lives Matter, Dalit Panther and alike.

These three frameworks/models have distinctive features and have manifested through community practices under various conditions and set-ups. However, in practice these models are often overlapping and are constantly borrowing from each other in practice. Practice in any of these themes would require techniques borrowed from the other theme e.g. Civil Society Activists would be required to draw out a social plan in order to receive funding from the concerned govt. authorities. Similarly, social planners can encourage the community participation in drawing up plans for affordable housing projects in certain areas. In spite of these intermingling, the dominant orientation of any community practice defines the model it follows. For identifying the central theme of any community practice methods, one must understand these themes or frameworks in terms of its practice variables. These variables will help the reader in understanding these frameworks as an ideal-type models. (Weil, 1996)

Three Models of Community Organization Practice According to Selected Practice Variables

Practice Variables	Locality Development	Social Planning	Social Action
Goal categories of Community Action	Self-help; community capacity and integration (process goals)	Problem-solving with regard to substantive community problems (task goals)	Shifts in power relationship and resources; basic institutional changes (task or process goals)
Assumption concerning community structure and problem conditions	Community eclipsed, anomie; lack of relationships and democratic problem-solving capacities and static traditional community	Substantive social problems, mental and physical health, housing recreation	Disadvantaged populations, social injustice, deprivation and inequity
Basic Change Strategy	Broad cross section of people involved in determining and solving their own problems	Fact-gathering of problem and decision on most rational course of action	Crystallization of issues and organization of people to take action against enemy targets
Characteristic	Consensus:	Consensus or	Conflict or contest;

Change tactics and techniques	communication amongst community group and interest; group discussion	Conflict	confrontation, direct action, negotiation
Salient Practitioner Role	Enabler-catalyst, coordinator; teacher of problem-solving skills and ethical values	Fact-gatherer analyst, programme implementer, facilitator	Activist-advocate, agitator, broker, partisan and negotiator
Medium of Change	Manipulation of small task-oriented groups	Manipulation of formal organization and data	Manipulation of mass organization and political processes
Orientation towards power structure	Member of power structure as collaborators in a common venture	Power structure as employers and sponsors	Power structure as external target of actions; oppressors to be coerced and overturned
Boundary definition of the community client system or constituency	Total geographic community	Total community or community segment (functional community)	Community segment
Assumptions regarding interest of community subparts	Common interests or reconcilable differences	Interest reconcilable or in conflict	Conflicting interests which are not easily reconcilable; scarce resources
Conception of the Public Interest	Rationalist- unitary	Idealist-unitary	Realist-individualist
Conception of Client population or constituency	Citizens	Consumers	Victims
Conception of Client Role	Participants in interaction problem-solving	Consumers or recipient	Employers, constituents, members
Use of Empowerment	Building the capacity of the community to make collaborative and informed decisions; promoting feeling of personal mastery by the residents	Finding out from consumers about their needs for service; informing consumers of their services choices	Achieving objective power for beneficiary system- the right and means of impact community decisions; promoting a feeling of mastery by participants

Some Personnel Aspects of the Community Organization Models

	Locality Development	Social Planning	Social Action
Agency Type	Settlement houses, Resident Welfare Association, Health Associations, Consumer Groups, Peace Corps	Welfare Council, City Planning, Environmental Planning Bodies	Dalit Panthers, Women's Movement, Trade union movements, radical political groups
Practice Positions	Village worker, neighbourhood worker, consultant to community development team	Planning division head, planner	Local Organizer
Professional Analogues	Adult educator, non-clinical group, group worker	Public administrator, social survey specialist, planning specialist, demographer	Labour organizer, welfare right organizer, minority group organizer

Every practice variable has been explained in a distinct way for each model, hence looking at these variables and their nature one can ascertain the model they fall into. These variables are the type of client population, process goal, assumptions related to the community structure, strategies and tactics and alike. Goals, have been divided into two parts i.e. *Task Goals* and *Process Goals*. Task goals are mainly aimed at finding a concrete solution to a delimited problem such as changes in a legislation, or creation of new services. Whereas, process goals are towards maintenance of systems, establishing cooperation or self-maintaining community, developing collective participation or encouraging organic leadership in the community. Hence process goals are mainly concerned with the gross or generalized capacity of the community to function over a period of time.

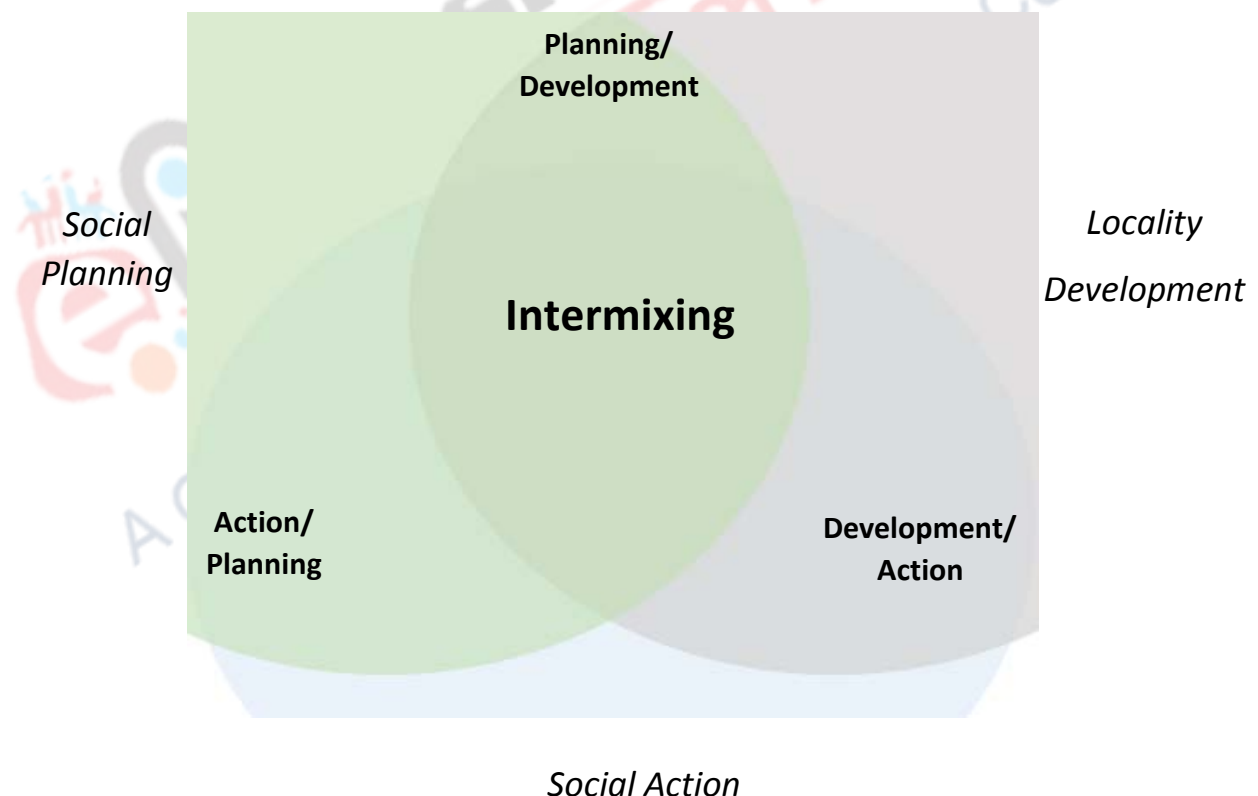
Professional aspects within a model also differ from one another, in the second table we have discussed agency types, practice positions and professional analogues on the basis of these three models. The interpretation of practice variables and the professional aspects differs from one model to another, lending it a unique nature and type.

However, these specific and ideal-type models often play out in combination with each in real life. Hence, now we will look into how these models interplay with each other to create a multi-dimensional community practice approach.

Interweaving of Models

So far, we have understood the models as per the practice variable in a self-contained ideal-type frameworks. However, in practice the methods applied on the field are often overlapping and a mixed approach. The most suitable approach on the field might be having salient features from one or two models at the same time. Hence, now we will discuss the mixing of the approaches from the models to devise community practice methods. To understand the overlapping and mixing of models, we can take the example of primary colours and ensuing secondary colours which are created through the process of inter-mixing. These intermixing creates various hues and shades depending on the content of primary colours involved in mixing. Similarly, through intermixing of the models community practitioners can develop several methods of community practice, which will exhibit the features of various models under one program or initiative.

Overlapping Intervention Modes with Varying Frequencies of Different Models



Above, you can see the bimodal interventions, analogues to the concept of secondary colours derived from primary colours. The center exhibits the cross-section of the models, whereas on the peripheries are the bimodal interventions. These bimodal interventions can vary the influences of two models in them. We can now focus on the bimodal interventions with two models primarily governing the approach at a time.

Development/Action: The best example to explain this mode of community practice is either feminist organizing intervention. Feminist organizations focus more on empowering the participants through capacity building and in turn promulgate collective participation in the group, which is typical of Locality Development. However, these feminist organizations work towards a radical change in the existing patriarchal social structures in the society, through agitation and negotiation, which is typical of Social Action. Hence these organizations carefully combine the assumption and goals of Social Action Intervention mode, while it adopts the methods of Locality Development Intervention mode. Similarly, there could be various other programs where the leaning could be towards one model with few features resembling that of another model.

Action/ Planning: To explain this bimodal, we carefully look at the consumer protection programs under Ralph Nader. These programs aim at exposing the consumer exploitation at the hands of corporate and government through demonstrations, media exposure and various other radical means used in the Social Action Intervention mode. But, this program is deeply rooted and backed by the factual documentation and research reports by policy specialists, borrowing from Social Planning Intervention mode. Hence this program is combination of Social Action and Social Planning to advocate for consumer rights. Another example explaining the bimodal intervention of 'advocacy planning' is when a Right-based advocacy organization hires the services of professionals (pro-bono or paid) to prepare proposals to raise funds or get government support in their pursuit of advocacy. These professionals may not be permanent part of such organizations but often play an important role in formulating plans for such organizations.

Planning/Development: To understand the fabric of planning-development model, we can look at the Enterprise-Empowerment zones, which aims at the capacity building of local minority communities through encouraging them to start and run their own businesses. The stress on building the agency of community and collective participation is very high. However, its not entirely orchestrated by the community itself, rather these programs involve a lot of technical experts both from the government and the corporates to design the process and program, which is technical in nature. Hence we see a combination of Locality Development with Social Planning in such programs.

These bimodal intervention programs can be of varying configurations and weigh towards different models of community practice. The leaning of a particular intervention can be

adjudged by the nature and influence of practice variables in these interventions. Along with bimodal, many interventions can be influenced by all three models of interventions in varying degrees. Such intermixed gradation is often called as the Trimodal mixtures. E.g. Community Welfare Planning Councils, promote collective participation for planning and idea generation, to draw out detailed plans and policies of technical nature for community services. These agencies also actively engage in advocacy and lobbying in the city councils to introduce fundamental change in state legislature to meet the needs of the community. Hence there is growing need for the intermixing of various practice variables to make the community intervention more flexible, suitable, tactful and multi-dimensional to meet the needs of the community.

Dilemmas: Three Models of Intervention in Community Practice

Locality Development- External Linkages: This model focusses mainly on the organic development and participation of the community. However most of the locality development programs are often funded by the external agencies and not the community itself. These external agencies could be municipalities, international agencies or national organizations, which highlights the gap in the conceptual integrity of this framework.

Such interventions could be funded by both vertically-linked organisations, which are hierarchical in nature and follow a top-to-bottom approach; or horizontally-linked organizations such as pressure groups and other network alliances, which operate on the social action intervention mode. Hence, under locality development intervention much of the initiative is developed by the external agencies and not the community itself, which reveals a contradiction to the principle of community development.

Social Planning- Policy Participation: For this intervention mode, the biggest dilemma is the inclusion of the element of *participation* in the planning process. Typically, this intervention mode involves technical planning, data-driven approach and subject-matter expertise. However in the current scenario there is growing demand of participation in such modes to make it more relevant for the community. However, participation could be of both kinds such as substantive participation in the decision-making process and ancillary participation for an informal involvement.

Substantive participation is when, the community members are involved in the decision-making of policy implementation developed by others. This participation is often limited to the 'maximum feasible participation'. Whereas, ancillary participation is more of facilitative

and symbolic in nature. Ancillary participation is typically seen when the administrators would invite participation from the community members to seek their reaction or recommendations to the policy proposals.

Thus the inclusion of participation as an element in the planning process fractures the conceptual formulation of this intervention mode.

Social Action- Multiple Actors and Conventional Tactics: The biggest dilemma of this intervention mode is the complex engagement of various factors in it. This mode has three dimensions which lend the complexity to this model. Firstly, radical change to bring about a fundamental alteration in the society and its structure, is a very narrow framework. As, even a subtle change in the system can also bring about a fundamental alteration in the society e.g. moderating the content of advertisements on the television can have a fundamental impact on the culture of the society.

Secondly, the concerned constituency for such modes have become porous over time. Originally, these modes were designed to organize the disadvantaged and the marginalized to raise their voices. However, with course of time, we can see such action mode being used by right-wing political parties or the landlords, to create more fragmentations in the society. Hence, the constituencies have expanded which essentially used such intervention mode for community development.

Lastly, the tactics used in conventional social action intervention mode were aggressive advocacy means and measures, however now the whole idea of pragmatism has overtaken social action mode. Confrontation tactics are deemed ineffective whereas negotiation and consensus-building, data collection as well as research are most sought-after tactics to organize communities. With these changes, the true essence of Social Action Mode has somewhat been diluted and reduced.

Conclusion

We have seen how the three models which were formulated as self-contained and ideal-type set ups have grown to be more flexible and inter-related over the course of time. Such changes in the nature of these models and their application highlights the growing need of multi-dimensional community practice approach rather than rigid frameworks to forcefully categorise community practice methods. The cross-sectional inter-mingling of practice variables shows the changing needs and causes for the communities, to organize for. Along

with inter-mixing, these models have phasing relationship within them. We can often see how a project which started in the social action mode gradually phases into the locality development mode to build capacities of the community for sustainability and going further adopt the status of bureaucratic social planning role on the account of subject-matter expertise gained over the course of time. Hence, community practitioner must be attuned to the transition points for switching from one mode of community intervention to another.

