

The Problem Community in American Sociology and Public Health

Gunnar Almgren

School of Social Work and Center for Studies in
Demography and Ecology
University of Washington

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Main Topics of Talk:

- The Problem of Defining Community in American Sociology
- The Major Questions of Community in American Sociology: Overlaps with Contemporary Social Epidemiology
- The Problem of Community in the Social Epidemiology: Theoretical and Conceptual Questions

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Traditional Notions About Community: The Rigors of Nostalgia, Sociology 101 and the Sociology of Deviance

- **Quality of Association: Gemeinschaft over Gesellschaft**
- **The Spatial Imperative**
- **The Fate of Community in Mass Society:**
 - **Community Lost**
 - **Community Saved**
 - **Community Liberated**
- **The Chicago School of Urban Sociology: Social Disorganization vs. “The Social Order of the Slum”**

The Problem of Community in American Sociology and Public Health: Community in Macro Perspective

Carle Zimmerman's (1938) Defining Characteristics of Community:

- Social Fact
- Specification
- Association
- Limited Area

Hillary's (1955) 3 Areas of Definitional Consensus:

- Presence of Social Interactions
- Shared Ties Among Individuals
- Spatial Context

The Nature of Community in Mass Society:

- Community of Limited Liability (Janowitz, 1952; Greer 1962)
- Bifurcation of Community (Bender, 1978)
- Community without Propinquity (McMillan and Chavis, 1986)
- The "New" Decline of Community Arguments:
 - In Civic Engagement (Putnam, 1996)
 - Social Cohesion (Wilkinson, 1996)

The Problem Community in American Sociology and Public Health: Community in Local Area Perspective

The Chicago School of Urban Sociology: Social Disorganization vs. “The Social Order of the Slum”

- **Classic Social Disorganization Theory and Extensions to Public Health**
- **Alternative Conceptions of Impoverished Urban Communities**
- **The New Language of Neighborhood Collective Efficacy**

The Problem Community in American Sociology and Public Health: **Major Questions About the Nature of Community**

- ★ 1. The distinguishing characteristics of specific definitions of community
- ★ 2. The bases of communal experience and integration
- ★ 3. The unique functions and tasks of community
- 4. The units of social structure within community and the relationships between structural units
- ★ 5. The economic and social bases of community social structure
- ★ 6. The relationships between community structural units and macrostructures external to the community
- ★ 7. The relationship between individual experience and behavior and communal experience and behavior
- 8. The process of transformation from gemeinschaft to gesellschaft states of community
- ★ 9. The resilience and adaptation of community in the face of macro structural change

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The Problem of Community in Social Epidemiology: Theoretical and Conceptual Questions:

- Aggregate individual effects vs. “community” as a social fact:
when is the whole distinct from the sum of parts?**
- More refined conceptualization and measurement of social
capital and related aspects of community**
- Investigating the range and effects of collective efficacy across
different levels of economic segregation, racial/ethnic
segregation, and health care resource deprivation**
- Investigating health effects across theoretical rather than
statistical boundaries of community**