

## CHAPTER 5

# Community Change Context

Richard A. Couto, Sarah Hippensteel Hall, and Marti Goetz

### Introduction

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Change within the community context permits the introduction of new elements into the theoretical concepts of leadership and offers a different perspective on leadership for change, such as power and empowerment. This perspective pays attention to the nature of representation and participation in change efforts. Social capital, implied in all efforts at change, is particularly relevant in the community context. Field, a concept of change discussed at some length in Chapter 7 in its application to the political context, plays an important role in the community context as well.

Community change, not unlike change in other contexts, requires information. In the community change context, change agents turn to their own resources to conduct participatory action research (PAR). This is one small manifestation of an asset-based approach, which concentrates on the resources a group has, as opposed to a deficit-based approach, which concentrates on the resources a group lacks. Advocacy plays a role in community change not seen in other change contexts.

### Purpose of Community Change

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At the overlay of theoretical concepts of leadership, theoretical concepts of change, and change practices resides the purpose of community leadership for change: the vitality of a democratic civil society. Citizen leadership and voluntary associations and advocacy groups form one leg of the three-legged stool of civil society. These

citizen groups hold government agencies accountable for the enforcement of regulations and prod them to action. Citizen groups also play a role in guaranteeing that businesses are mindful of the health of their workers and neighbors and of the environmental quality of the surrounding area.

Without citizen leadership and the values of community that it brings to the decision-making process, choices all too frequently reflect the expeditious consideration of business and political interests.

## Change Vignette

### Citizens for the Responsible Destruction of Chemical Weapons

The *Dayton Daily News* headline read, “A Victory for All the Little Guys” (McCarty, 2003), and the “little guys” of Jefferson Township were celebrating. The Army had announced a stop-work order on a contract it had awarded to a local waste-treatment company, Perma-Fix. Thus, an industrial hazardous chemical, VX hydrolysate, would not be transported into the community for treatment and discharged into the county’s wastewater-treatment facility. Mary Johnson, a celebrating member of the grassroots organization Citizens for the Responsible Destruction of Chemical Weapons (CRDCW) happily invoked the David and Goliath parallel: “It just goes to show you what a community of different people can do when it comes together” (DeBrosse, 2003a).

The case of the CRDCW invites examination of Johnson’s pride in community leadership for change. Some generic aspects of change leadership can certainly be found in the community context, but some unique aspects of change leadership reside there as well. For example, whereas values may be common to the theoretical concepts of leadership in all contexts, leadership in the community context generally emerges when a threat to a group with some cohesive identity surfaces. In an effort to thwart this threat and preserve community, community leadership conducts adaptive work that differs from that conducted by leadership in all other contexts in its lack of formal authority of position. Thus, the adaptive work of community leadership most closely resembles leadership without authority (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz, 2007). Likewise, although empowerment applies to leadership in all contexts, in the community context lies empowerment’s most genuine form—self-empowerment—that which entails full participation and direct representation of community members in decision making. This type of empowerment leads to examination of a much-neglected area of study about leadership and change—power (Csaszar, 2005; Hughes, Wheeler, & Eyben, 2005; Rowlands, 1997).

Following the 1997 U.S. ratification of the international Chemical Weapons Convention treaty and the passage of several U.S. laws, the U.S. Army became responsible for destroying its chemical weapons stockpile. VX, a nerve agent so deadly that less than 0.001 of an ounce of the thick, oily liquid can kill if it comes into contact with the skin or is inhaled, was one of those slated for neutralization. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the army expedited the neutralization of its VX stockpile, which had been stored in sturdy steel containers at the Newport (Indiana) Chemical Depot. The use of sodium hydroxide in neutralizing VX created a highly corrosive by-product, VX hydrolysate. The army had very limited experience in treating and disposing of VX hydrolysate (National Research Council, 1998).

On January 9, 2003, the army awarded a subcontract to Perma-Fix Environmental Services for the treatment and disposal of its VX hydrolysate by-product. Perma-Fix, a national environmental services company, provides waste-management and industrial waste-management services to hospitals, research laboratories, nuclear plants, and other institutions and agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Energy and Defense, at its nine major waste-treatment facilities across the country. The subcontract called for Perma-Fix to treat about 300,000 gallons of VX hydrolysate—about 80 truckloads—at its plant in the Drexel neighborhood of Jefferson Township in Montgomery County, Ohio. The township is a mix of urban neighborhoods and rural farmland. The urban area, Drexel, abuts Dayton and has about 30% of the township's almost 7,000 residents. Thirty-five percent of Drexel's population is African American, and 33% of its families have incomes below the poverty level, according to the 2000 U.S. Census Report. Shipments were scheduled to come almost 200 miles from the Newport Chemical Weapons Depot to Drexel beginning in October 2003.

*Community Residents Become Alarmed.* The army's plans alarmed some local residents, who had successfully opposed proposals for landfills in their area beginning in the late 1980s. They had stayed together as an informal group, Land Lovers against Neighborhood Dumps (LLAND), without directors, officers, or a tax-exempt status. A telephone tree kept them informed and organized.

In August 2002, LLAND concluded its protest of another proposed landfill just as rumors began to circulate that Perma-Fix was looking into an army contract to dispose of a hazardous material. No one had ever heard of VX hydrolysate, so Laura Rench, a founder of LLAND, began researching it. Rench grew up in Jefferson Township and owned and managed a local Christmas tree farm there.

She called Perma-Fix and asked the company to confirm or dispel the rumors about the plan to treat VX hydrolysate in a Drexel waste-management facility. When Perma-Fix didn't give her an answer, she spoke to the Jefferson Township trustees. The three trustees were aware of Perma-Fix's discussions with the army, assured Rench that the proposal was a good one that would bring jobs to the area, and told her about the scheduled public meeting mentioned in the contract (L. Rench, personal communication, September 2, 2005).

Rench's conversations with the residents of the Drexel area offered cause for alarm. Residents had been very unhappy since Perma-Fix moved to their area in 1986. The *Dayton Daily News* had reported neighborhood complaints and employee accidents several times. Most recently, in October of 1999, a near-fatal accident occurred when a worker inhaled toxic fumes while cleaning the inside of a tanker truck (Mong, 1999a). That same month the newspaper reported that residents in the area were complaining of "foul-smelling, headache-producing air," which they believed was coming from the Perma-Fix plant (Mong, 1999b, p. 1).

While gathering this information, Rench met Drexel resident Michelle Cooper. News of the VX hydrolysate contract renewed Cooper's long-time concerns with Perma-Fix. The two women joined forces and began going door to door in the neighborhood. They shared the little information they had with residents but encountered many people who were reluctant to talk with them. People seemed fearful about standing up to the U.S. Army at a time when the nation was preparing to invade Iraq to neutralize its alleged stock of weapons of mass destruction, including, ironically, VX. This initial reluctance of Drexel neighbors to talk or take action frustrated Rench and Cooper, who felt a sense of urgency because there was very little time to organize and they had not even completed their research on VX hydrolysate. Meanwhile, the U.S. Army had already awarded the contract to Perma-Fix and wanted the neutralization process to begin in 10 months.

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*Alarm Becomes Action.* To reach and recruit more residents, Rench and Cooper called a meeting at a local elementary school for January 17, 2003. A LLAND member suggested to Rench that she should contact Jane Forrest Redfern, who had helped LLAND on a landfill fight in the area in her role as executive director of Ohio Citizen Action (OCA). Founded in 1975, OCA, the state's largest environmental organization with 100,000 dues-paying members, had successfully helped many Ohio communities deal with environmental issues, including hazardous-waste concerns, groundwater protection, and new landfill locations. It followed a community-organizing model first laid out by the father of community organizing, Saul Alinsky (1971). Redfern had worked for several decades in the Dayton area on environmental protection issues and had a history of significant local accomplishments in reducing risks to the Miami Valley's drinking water supply. One person who had worked with Redfern described her as being "as comfortable in a room full of developers as she is in a room full of environmentalists. She helps people find their voice, which is one of the purest forms of effective leadership" (Dempsey, 2003).

Rench invited Redfern to this first meeting and shared the information she had gathered and the community's concerns. Rench also told Redfern that she needed to "charge the group up" (L. Rench, personal communication, September 2, 2005). Redfern agreed to help and got excited about the issue and what the community could do to protect itself from the threat of VX hydrolysate. Using the LLAND telephone tree, Rench informed people of the meeting.

At the same time Rench was recruiting Redfern, Willa Bronston, an African American resident of Drexel, independently began her opposition to the Perma-Fix VX hydrolysate disposal plan. She first heard about the plan on the local evening news and immediately called a township trustee to see what could be done to stop the plan. Nothing, she was told. Bronston heard about the meeting LLAND was organizing and decided to attend (W. Bronston, personal communication, September 8, 2005).

The night of the meeting, Redfern, with relatively little knowledge of the VX hydrolysate issue, used her experience to shape the agenda. She knew the meeting had to address two questions: What do residents want for their community? When will residents know they have won? Such meetings, she had learned, often generate four responses to these questions: a short-term solution, a long-term solution, a call for government action, and a desire for reliable information from someone residents can trust to be accountable. Redfern asked the dozen or so people in the room to introduce themselves and then conducted an inventory of what people knew about the issue. During the course of the meeting, as Redfern expected, those attending provided clear answers to two of the four questions:

- They wanted the U.S. Army to keep the treated nerve agent by-product in Newport and not send it to Drexel for secondary treatment.
- They wanted Perma-Fix to be a good neighbor and abide by environmental regulations and not pollute the nearby neighborhoods or the environment.
- They wanted public officials, government agencies, and companies to be accountable for their actions and inactions.
- They wanted the truth. (W. Bronston, personal communication, September 8, 2005; J. Redfern, personal communication, September 6, 2005; L. Rench, personal communication, September 2, 2005)

Redfern asked LLAND members to take inventory of their resources, including the skills and knowledge available within their own ranks and the skills and knowledge they would need to obtain outside the group (J. Redfern, personal communication, September 6, 2005). This inventory helped the group identify and assess their allies, those whose support they needed, those likely to oppose them, and those neutral about the issue.

Redfern explained the issues at stake and what it would take for the community to stop Perma-Fix from bringing the VX hydrolysate to the neighborhood. Drawing on her experience, she assured them they could prevail against Perma-Fix and the U.S. Army. Encouraged by the accomplishments of so much in just a few hours, LLAND members left the meeting buoyed by newfound confidence. They began to conduct further library and Internet research to determine the accuracy of their information and to identify any gaps in information.

On January 23, 2003, the U.S. Army and Perma-Fix held a daytime public-information session, set up like an open house with display booths, at the Board of Education building. Bronston called her lifelong friend Mary Johnson and two other neighbors and asked them to attend the meeting. They observed right away that few people were in attendance and began to worry that the low turnout might be interpreted as tacit community support of the project. When Bronston and her friends asked the U.S. Army and Perma-Fix representatives about the experiences at other treatment locations for VX hydrolysate, they learned that the process was experimental. They left with the same concerns they had brought to the meeting—concerns about risks to the residents living near the Perma-Fix facility, especially given that the Drexel neighborhood didn't have a fire department nearby to respond to emergencies.

Even though they had met Redfern and Rench, Bronston and Johnson did not interact much with the LLAND group, and they did their own research. Johnson, a retired nurse, wanted to understand the basic science of nerve gas and what happens to it during disposal. Bronston and Johnson canvassed their neighborhood, knocking on hundreds of doors, talking to people about what they knew, and asking for help. But they found, as Rench had, that most people expressed a reluctance to be involved.

They created a presentation to give to township trustees, county commissioners, and officials in the fire department, the wastewater-treatment plant, the environmental agency, and other agencies. At the Montgomery County Commission meeting on February 4, 2003, they did their best to present all their findings, concerns, and questions within the 3-minute timeframe allotted to each of them. When the commissioners asked the two women what they wanted them to do, Bronston and Johnson responded that they would like the commissioners to take a moral stand. The commissioners declined to do so, leaving Bronston and Johnson very disappointed (W. Bronston, personal communication, September 8, 2005; M. Johnson, personal communication, September 8, 2005).

Several LLAND members also attended the commission meeting. Afterwards, they spoke with Bronston and Johnson about working together. Up to this point, two separate teams had been doing the same research and coming to the same conclusions. Bronston and her friends met with LLAND members several times and eventually decided to join forces to form Citizens for the Responsible Destruction of Chemical Weapons (CRDCW).

*Mobilizing Resources.* CRDCW moved into action and divided responsibilities. Bronston and Johnson were asked to visit every jurisdiction in the Greater Dayton area, ask for residents'

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support, and encourage communities to pass resolutions against the VX hydrolysate disposal plan. Bronston and Johnson met with residents of cities, towns, and villages; members of churches, the NAACP, and the Urban League; officials of regional government agencies; and many other individuals. Having learned from their experience with the Montgomery County commissioners, they drafted a resolution that the officials could use as a template to pass a resolution against the plan. Then when officials asked what Bronston and Johnson wanted them to do, the women handed them the draft resolution and asked them to support it (W. Bronston, personal communication, September 8, 2005; M. Johnson, personal communication, September 8, 2005).

In the meantime, Rench, Redfern, and other members of the original LLAND group conducted research and enlisted Ellis Jacobs of the Legal Aid Society of Dayton in their cause. They knew Legal Aid was a nonprofit organization that provided civil legal assistance to poor families and individuals in the Greater Dayton area, including communities such as Drexel. Jacobs immediately went to work trying to find ways that the army contract could be rescinded or cancelled. He quickly learned that the VX hydrolysate disposal plan at Drexel didn't contain an environmental impact statement (EIS). All federal agencies, including the U.S. Army, are required by the National Environmental Policy Act to conduct a study on the consequence of any action on the environment. Jacobs sent a letter to the U.S. Army stating that no EIS was on file for the proposed disposal process slated for the Perma-Fix facility. The army responded that it had filed a "generic off-site disposal facility" EIS and a Final Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on the area, land, ecological resources, water, socioeconomic resources, or people "living near the site." Both of these documents had been filed before the selection of the Drexel site. Jacobs pointed out the obvious, namely, that the EIS and FONSI could not be applied to Drexel without first conducting a study of the impact on Drexel specifically (E. Jacobs, personal communication, September 2, 2005).

Jacobs also discovered that the U.S. Army had a clause in its proposed contract with Perma-Fix of Dayton that required "public acceptance" of the plan before Perma-Fix could begin treating shipments of VX hydrolysate and then discharging it into Montgomery County's wastewater-treatment system. At the request of Jacobs and the CRDCW, U.S. Representative Mike Turner asked the army to define public acceptance (J. Redfern, September 6, 2005). In his response, Assistant Secretary of the Army Claude M. Bolton Jr. explained to Jacobs that approval of the Ohio EPA, with its public involvement process, satisfied the army's public acceptance requirement. The Ohio EPA, on the other hand, told Jacobs that it had no authority in the matter, and even if it did public involvement did not mean public acceptance; approval of a permit did not require the latter (E. Jacobs, personal communication, September 2, 2005). Legally, the army was obligated to demonstrate public acceptance of the project, however tortuous the logic of setting criteria might be. Bronston and Johnson's work proved invaluable in suggesting a lack of public acceptance. They obtained resolutions opposing the VX hydrolysate disposal plan from 37 entities, including 20 different jurisdictions!

CRDCW members took other steps to display the lack of public acceptance. They scheduled an accountability session on April 10, 2003, at the local high school to bring all parties together in one place and to show that the community was active and organized. They compiled a list of local, state, and federal public officials and agency representatives, making sure to include the Montgomery County commissioners, and U.S. Army and Perma-Fix representatives. The CRDCW sent an invitation explaining the purpose of the meeting and stating that invitees would find their

name and affiliation on a designated chair at the front of the room. The CRDCW also informed the media of the session. Thus, members of the audience and the media could easily ascertain which agencies had failed to send a representative by looking at the clearly labeled empty chairs. The CRDCW asked each agency to give a 5-minute presentation about what their agency was doing about the issue. More than 200 people attended. Redfern recalled an army representative claiming that the meeting “was the most well-organized session they had ever attended” (J. Redfern, personal communication, September 6, 2005).

Redfern also taught CRDCW members to work with the media in a way that generated a lot of negative publicity about the issue. CRDCW members learned how to issue press releases, contact the assignment editor, and follow up once a press release was issued. Redfern suggested a goal of some kind of media exposure about the VX hydrolysate disposal plan and the problems at the Perma-Fix facility no less than once every 10 days. CRDCW far exceeded this goal. The *Dayton Daily News* ran nearly 70 articles about VX hydrolysate or the Perma-Fix facility from the time Redfern was invited to help the CRDCW in January 2003 to the battle’s conclusion in October 2003—an average of one story every 4 days.

Media events and coverage helped get the word out about the issue and build community opposition to the VX hydrolysate disposal plan. Eventually, the CRDCW framed its fight in a national context, explaining that the Drexel community health effects resulting from such a disposal plan would have ramifications across the country. At about the same time, the U.S. Army began to make decisions about the best places to neutralize their chemical stockpiles given Homeland Security concerns. The army decided temporarily that keeping the VX hydrolysate in Newport was a better idea than risking additional Homeland Security issues by transporting it the long distance to Drexel on public transportation routes.

CRDCW raised residents’ awareness of environmental issues. For example, Redfern began educating the neighbors near the Perma-Fix facility about the firm’s history of environmental problems, such as the release of noxious fumes that caused burning eyes, nausea, and headaches. One resident said, “Often, particularly in the morning, it smells so awful that I get dizzy and sick to my stomach” (E. Jacobs, personal communication, September 2, 2005). The problem was particularly evident in the evenings and on weekends, whether because it was worse at those times or simply more noticeable given that more people were at home during those times.

Redfern taught neighborhood residents to record their daily observations. They were given odor and incident logs and asked to record any air-related issues, including the date and time and a description of what occurred. Redfern urged residents to call the Regional Air Pollution Control Agency (RAPCA) each time they noticed a strong odor or suspected a violation. RAPCA’s mission is to protect the citizens of the Miami Valley from the adverse health and welfare impacts of air pollution. RAPCA has the initial responsibility for maintaining air quality in Montgomery County through enforcement of federal, state, and local air-pollution regulations and implementation of the state’s industrial-permit system. RAPCA began to receive an average of two complaints a week from residents in the area.

Redfern also instructed community members in how to conduct a survey of health incidents that occurred around the Perma-Fix facility, which she then submitted to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). The ATSDR, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has a mission to serve the public by using the best science, taking

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responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances.

*Seeking Public Action and Local Support.* RAPCA records, which Jacobs required the agency to make public, showed the agency found 150 “instances of emissions” attributable to biological reactors from 2001 to 2003. These emissions produced strong odors and caused many people to suffer from burning eyes. Jacobs also learned that in January 2002 RAPCA had notified officials at Perma-Fix and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency that Perma-Fix was in violation of federal clean air laws. Since then, RAPCA and the Ohio EPA had been awaiting a ruling from the U.S. EPA that would confirm a violation before following up on this finding. In the meantime, residents, frustrated with RAPCA’s inaction, started calling the local Ohio EPA office to complain. The Ohio EPA referred them back to RAPCA. Residents came to realize that unless they demanded action, discussions of the VX hydrolysate issue would simply continue unabated in a bureaucratic stalemate, much like discussion of the 2002 federal clean air violation.

Jacobs sent a letter to RAPCA and the Ohio EPA director pressing one or the other agency to act. Jacobs explained to the *Dayton Daily News*, “We’re saying we don’t care. Somebody needs to pick up the ball on this, and it’s a big ball” (DeBrosse, 2003c; E. Jacobs, personal communication, September 2, 2005). As Drexel neighbors collected more complaints about air emissions, they became more upset that no one was addressing their complaints (J. Redfern, personal communication, September 6, 2005). Finally, after months of receiving surveys and logs from neighbors, RAPCA stated in a letter dated June 12, 2003, that it would start daily surveillance of the Perma-Fix facility’s air emissions (E. Jacobs, personal communication, September 2, 2005).

CRDCW members not only undertook a broad media campaign, they also undertook a deep media campaign on a local level. They posted fliers all over the affected communities, including in grocery stores and churches. Members stood on local street corners gathering signatures on petitions and telling people about the issue at the same time.

Most of these efforts proved effective in raising awareness and recruiting people to oppose the VX hydrolysate disposal plan, but one of them backfired. CRDCW encouraged people to sign preprinted postcards it created and then mail the cards to the program manager of the U.S. Army, Office for Chemical Demilitarization, who oversaw the neutralization issue. The postcard read, “As a resident of the Miami Valley, I strongly oppose transporting partially treated VX Nerve Agent (VX hydrolysate) to the Miami Valley for further treatment and disposal into our sewers and waterways” (J. Redfern, personal communication, September 6, 2005). Hundreds of people signed these cards, added their names and addresses, and mailed them. The army’s policy of sending an acknowledgment letter for every letter received meant that everyone who filled in their name and address received a letter from the U.S. Army that stated, “The Army is also doing its best to support Homeland Security Initiatives by eliminating a potential terrorist target as expediently as possible” (E. Jacobs, personal communication, September 2, 2005). At a time when the army was at war and terrorist threats ranged from orange to red, these letters raised questions about CRDCW’s credibility among some local residents (L. Rench, personal communication, September 2, 2005).

During this time, the U.S. Army was recruiting members for their community advisory panel and implementing their plan for outreach activities and public involvement. But only one community



representative actually joined the panel. The panel held three meetings—March 18, April 2, and May 29—to “educate the community” and answer questions about the VX hydrolysate disposal plan. Representatives from the CRDCW attended each of the three meetings. They asked the panel prepared questions and, after receiving answers, they stood up, sang a gospel song, and left.

In addition to these public forums, in May 2003 Jacobs signaled that a local resident and the NAACP were prepared to go to federal court to sue the U.S. EPA, the Ohio EPA, and Perma-Fix of Dayton for violation of Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. Jacobs explained that the U.S. Army was in violation of the law by its action to move a hazardous program from the Newport Chemical Depot to the Drexel neighborhood in Jefferson Township:

The U.S. Army is clearly violating the Executive Order on Environmental Justice by moving the second phase of treatment from a rural location that is 97 percent white and where treatment will take place at least 2.6 miles from residences to a densely-populated urban location where the treatment will take place directly across the street from residences in an area that is more than 33 percent people of color and where no less than 33 percent of the households are below the poverty level. (E. Jacobs, personal communication, September 2, 2005)

Jacobs pointed out that the army acknowledged there would be hazardous air emissions from handling and processing VX hydrolysate and dangers from transportation and processing accidents and fires. Yet the army had not made any effort to measure the effects on the environment, the surrounding neighborhood, and the health of individuals stemming from the specific process to be used at Perma-Fix. After further research, the Legal Aid Society of Dayton filed suit in August 2003 against the U.S. Army and its program manager for chemical demilitarization on behalf of CRDCW and several local residents.

Despite all of this, Montgomery County commissioners still refused to speak out against the VX hydrolysate disposal plan or become directly involved in any way. The CRDCW insisted that they get involved because the commissioners had control over the county wastewater-treatment plant, which would have to handle the discharge from the Perma-Fix-treated VX hydrolysate.

When the commissioners finally acted, they hired an outside consultant to determine how the discharge would affect the county’s wastewater-treatment process; the commission was responsible for the quality of discharge that left the county wastewater-treatment facility and flowed into the river, regardless of where the waste came from before it entered their plant. In response to the consultant’s report, on October 8, 2003, the Montgomery County Sanitary Engineer’s Office refused to issue a permit for the Perma-Fix facility to discharge treated waste products from neutralized VX hydrolysate into the county’s wastewater system. It cited “the considerable number of unanswered questions, incomplete, missing or inadequate data, apparent treatment process deficiencies and the risks—health and ecological—involved” (DeBrosse, 2003b, p. A1).

On October 11, 2003, U.S. Representative Mike Turner called Redfern to officially announce that the U.S. Army was withdrawing its contract from the Perma-Fix facility in Dayton. The CRDCW drafted a press release and arranged for a press conference with Representative Turner. The U.S. Army did not state the exact reason it had withdrawn the contract. Regardless, the CRDCW—the little guys—had won!

## Concepts of Change

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So how does a relatively powerless and underrepresented group of people organize to effectively protect their community against the threat of an environmental hazard? What is the recipe that brings individuals together around a local issue and helps them succeed in their fight? The answers entail familiar aspects of theoretical concepts of leadership—values, adaptive work, leadership without authority, and the common and distinguishing elements of leadership. These concepts may apply a bit differently in the community context. The primary value and nature of adaptive work in this and other community change contexts, for example, are the defense of a community against a threat. The community context also best illustrates leadership without authority or at least without positional authority.

As is often the case, an expansive field of actors and events surrounded what appeared to be a local change effort. CRDCW faced the threat of global terrorism, specifically the fear of a terrorist attack that would release deadly VX somewhere in the United States. The U.S. war in Iraq played a minor part in the case, given its association with the war on terror in general and its initial, ironic mission to destroy Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, including VX. National and international disarmament efforts started the VX hydrolysate problem by requiring the neutralization of VX. The corporate structure of Perma-Fix and its safety-practice history involving local, state, and federal environmental agencies, factored into the case. The county engineer, commissioners, and a consultant from Northwestern University all played a part in assessing the quality of the wastewater resulting from the VX hydrolysate treatment.

Some actors and groups in this case clearly had local roots. The work LLAND had done in opposing landfills in the area had a cumulative effect on the local citizenry. No one could have foretold how LLAND's work years earlier would influence the efforts of CRDCW. Similarly, Ohio Citizen Action and the Legal Aid Society of Dayton did not have previous ties to CRDCW. Nevertheless, both organizations offered relevant skills and resources in support of CRDCW efforts.

Racism played a major role in this case as well. The history of racism in the United States led to legislation designed to prevent the perpetration of further injustices against minorities by prohibiting the disposal of toxic wastes in minority communities (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 1998). This legislation gave CRDCW a strong legal footing for combating the proposed VX hydrolysate treatment plant in the Drexel community.

### Social Capital

Looking at the VX hydrolysate case through the lens of social capital also proves instructive. Sociologist James Coleman first developed the concept of social capital as an analog to other forms of capital—financial, physical, and human—in organizational and for-profit contexts. He used it to refer to the bonds among people who are the human capital of an organization. Political scientist Robert Putnam (1995, 2000; Putnam, Leonardi, & Raffaella, 1993) took this concept and considerably

expanded it to include social networks among people in community contexts. These community social networks stemmed from membership in groups ranging from labor organizations to bird-watching clubs. The cultural norms of trust and cooperation developed in these community settings spilled over, in Putnam's estimation, into business and political contexts. Putnam later researched membership in various associations and groups in the United States and found a decline in social capital; more people were bowling alone, in a manner of speaking, than in leagues. Putnam's social capital thesis may come into play in the VX hydrolysate disposal case to explain how LLAND and other associations provided experience in group action that permitted Bronston, Cooper, Johnson, and Rench to collaborate quickly. His thesis falls short in explaining why residents of Drexel and Jefferson Township—one better off than the other—both had the social capital to collaborate. If poverty is associated with a deficit of social capital, then the low-income neighborhoods should have remained inactive.

The lens of citizen leadership provides another look at social capital, especially when citizen leaders are considered social capital entrepreneurs. Citizen leadership suggests that social capital is not so much a characteristic of a group or an individual as it is an investment in people as members of a community. This investment includes not only developing the moral resources of trust, cooperation, and association but also fostering the social goods and services that permit people to sustain themselves in a community marked by a reasonable degree of well-being. Most often, public policy in the United States invests social capital—education, health care, income floors, and so on—based on membership in the workforce. The more lucrative your work, the more social capital you have; the more social capital invested in you, the better your employment opportunities. Citizen leaders become social capital entrepreneurs by investing in people regardless of their place in the labor force and sometimes precisely because they are not part of the labor force—the elderly and very young, disabled, unskilled, and unemployed—and thus are likely to be bypassed by other forms of social capital investment.

In the VX hydrolysate disposal case, the concept of social capital entrepreneurship counted the environment as a social good. The risks associated with the disposal of VX hydrolysate fell to Drexel because the neighborhood had a dearth of social capital investment. More precisely, Drexel was put at risk of social capital disinvestment by the proposed disposal plan that almost certainly would have resulted in the degradation of the neighborhood's environment, thereby denying residents the ability to sustain themselves in a community of well-being. The relation of environmental risks and social capital as investment in people as workforce members implicitly resides in the environmental justice policies of the EPA. The pattern of locating the most toxic wastes in communities with the least income and lowest rates of employment underscores the neglect of social goods among people not considered valuable to the workforce. Although legislation exists that was intended to redress this type of inequity, it might never have been acknowledged without the citizen leadership, or social capital entrepreneurship, of CRDCW. CRDCW invested the moral resources necessary to guarantee that the social good of environmental quality not be further eroded in a low-income, high-unemployment area.

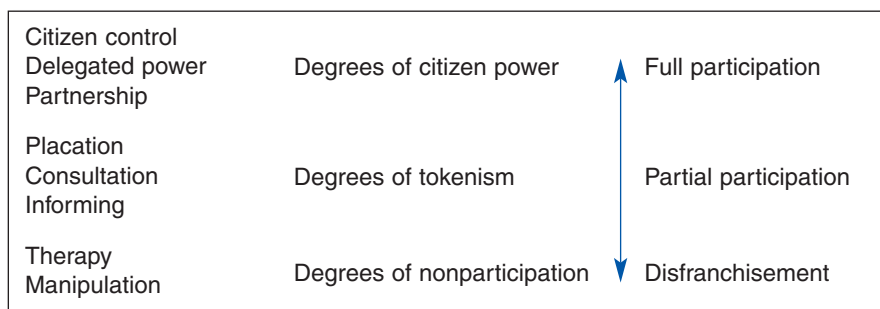
## Empowerment

Empowerment is a specific moral resource best expressed in leadership change efforts at the community level. Discussions of empowerment often confuse it with the delegation of power and sometimes with the mere appearance of change in the forms and expressions of power. Genuine empowerment, by contrast, involves new and improved forms of representation and participation in decision making. Social advocacy pioneer Sherry R. Arnstein (1969) assembled a ladder of participation ranging from citizen control at one end to manipulation at the other, with varying degrees of effective and ineffective participation in between. These levels of participation are in turn marked by varying degrees of influence and power. A ladder of participation and representation appears in Figure 5.1. The three top rungs of participation entail degrees of power, and the next three entail degrees of recognition that imply some power. The last two rungs, therapy and manipulation, are forms of control by those in authority and nonparticipation by those served by programs. Accompanying these forms of participation are forms of representation that range from direct participation, as exemplified by the participation of CRDCW members in their own meetings as well as the panel meetings organized by the U.S. Army and Perma-Fix, to indirect participation, as exemplified by the citizens selected by the U.S. Army and Perma-Fix to represent residents of the area. The degree of direct representation and full participation in the accountability session offered an even clearer distinction: CRDCW practiced citizen control by organizing the accountability session and then setting the rules, including representation and participation of authorities, and CRDCW practiced consultation and informing during the panel sessions that were governed by rules established by individuals in positions of authority.

## The Facets and Forms of Power

Empowerment, as measured by representation and participation, brings us face to face with power, a much-neglected element of leadership, according to James MacGregor Burns (2007, pp. v–vi). Political sociologist John Gaventa’s (1980) early work brought the three dimensions of power to the fore in a synthesis and analytical

**FIGURE 5.1** A Ladder of Citizen Participation



framework of the history of a coal-mining region of central Appalachia. In his book, Gaventa dealt exclusively with one form of power—*power over* others—and resistance to it. Gaventa explained then and more recently that *power over* others has three dimensions:

- *Visible*—when those in authority use sanctions or coercion to accomplish their ends, often expressing the futility of resistance by saying things like “You can’t fight the Army!”
- *Hidden*—when those in authority do not have to make their power visible by using sanctions and coercion because the people’s mere knowledge of the authorities’ capability to use sanctions and coercion is enough to deter opposition. Such was the case when Perma-Fix and the U.S. Army used a generic environmental-impact statement rather than one specific to the Drexel community.
- *Invisible*—when groups in and out of power hold to the same set of beliefs about what is right and just. Even though these beliefs support great inequality, they are not viewed as unjust but as part of a natural order that social conditions manifest. The hesitancy to confront the U.S. Army at a time when it was mobilizing to conduct a war on terrorism draws on values to which almost all Americans are thoroughly socialized. (Gaventa, 1980, 2005)

Empowerment increases the visibility of power: People move from the “commonsense” acceptance of a decision, such as the location of a VX hydrolysate-processing plant at Drexel, to the realization that there are winners and losers hidden in any arrangement. When people challenge the arrangement, their power becomes visible. Redfern played a key role in this process of power analysis, or what Paulo Freire (1993), a Brazilian adult educator, calls conscientization.

But a complete analysis of empowerment must not only consider the *power over* but also the *power to*, defined as the sense of power that individuals or group members must possess if they are to bring about change. In the VX hydrolysate case, this sense of power began with Redfern’s explanation of what needed to be done and her confidence that the group could succeed with hard work. The power within and the power with go hand in hand with the *power to*. Empowered group members come to understand the power they have as part of the group (the power with) and the power group members have within themselves (the *power within*). Using this power entails serious internal conflict because people who have come to accept hidden forms of power—the invisible dimension of *power over*—must now challenge their “commonsense” views. This brings them to unfamiliar and uncertain territory that may be somewhat intimidating. For example, CRDCW experienced a setback in its mobilization efforts when residents who had registered their opposition to VX hydrolysate reprocessing in Drexel received letters from the U.S. Army invoking homeland security. These letters fed residents’ doubts about their *power to* challenge an authority such as the U.S. Army about certain decisions it makes.

A true sense of empowerment does not take the form of *power over* other group members but is much more aligned with a sense of *power to* bring about change by

developing a sense of *power within* one's self and then seeking to direct that power in collaboration with others. Ultimately, community change leadership, much more than change leadership in other contexts, emphasizes power as a resource a group may mobilize to conduct its adaptive work.

Gaventa (2005) offered a “Rubik’s power cube” analogy. The cube contains the four forms of power—over, to, with, and within (Csaszar, 2004; Hughes et al., 2005; Rowlands, 1997). Each form has three dimensions—visible, hidden, or invisible. Gaventa added different levels for power and participation—global, national, and local. Clearly, CRDCW participated and exercised power primarily, but not exclusively, at the local level. When CRDCW members asked a congressional representative to clarify the nature of public approval of U.S. Army plans for disposal of hazardous wastes and their by-products, what had been a local issue took on national implications. The CRDCW also played a small part in the global effort to deal with weapons of mass destruction.

Gaventa (2005) suggested that power and participation occur in different spaces—closed, invited, and claimed or created. CRDCW encouraged the participation of residents at its meetings, thereby creating spaces for people to discover the *power within* them to work with others to accomplish change. CRDCW members claimed space by singing in panel meetings where they were expected only to listen and ask questions. Clearly, they did not participate in the space where the army made its final decision to cancel the contract with Perma-Fix. But their organized resistance to the plan represented a new space for both them and the army.

*Power over* continues as long as people focus only on the closed or invited spaces dictated by those in positions of authority and power. Empowerment comes with a sense of the *power within* groups without authority to create space for participation and decision making. Again, the accountability meeting and the panel meetings demonstrated the power of the “powerless” party to create a space in which all parties are invited to participate.

This discussion of power underscores the relational dimension of leadership and change. Power with has a synergistic quality. It has roots in the *power within* and the *power to*. It undermines the authority of those who rely on *power over*. It spills over into new forms of representation and participation in decision making, all of which promote genuine forms of empowerment. This implies that the forms and amounts of power are not fixed but created and cocreated. Thus, *power within* is the self-discovery of capacity for action and *power to* is the exercise of that sense of agency. Done in conjunction with others—namely, power with—these two forms of power create a synergy of vitality and transformation at the personal, local, national, and global levels of Gaventa’s Rubik’s cube.

## Concepts of Leadership

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### Values—A Cohesive Sense of Community

The values of community—some sense of connectedness to a place, a group of people, or a common problem or an issue—lie at the center of theoretical concepts

of leadership. Although a sense of community may often be present among a group of people, something needs to trigger it so that people mobilize resources. Most often this trigger takes the form of a clear threat to the community, such as the environmental threat described in the case study in this chapter.

Jefferson Township gradually became more cohesive as more residents learned of the VX hydrolysate problem. People called on friends to accompany them to meetings. A telephone tree created to combat a previous environmental threat to the community still connected people to each other years after the initial impetus to assemble it had passed. Residents made new community connections based on a sense of place and a common threat. Black and White residents collaborated.

Residents mobilized group resources to do the adaptive work necessary to deal with a threat to group values and welfare (Heifetz, 1994, 2007). They compiled and organized the information they already had and then charged certain group members with researching and disseminating additional information. They did so without the benefit of any official authority stemming from organizational or political position. Whatever authority residents had came from their position within the CRDCW, an organization they had started. Their adaptive work resembles a very high degree of leadership without authority and, thus, what Heifetz (2007) termed the “most useful analytical unit of leadership” (p. 34).

### **Citizen Leadership—Leadership Without Authority**

We may extrapolate on this case study further by referring to citizen leadership (Couto, 1995). Citizen leadership facilitates organized action among people traditionally underrepresented in official decision-making processes. It takes as its premise the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, age, gender, income, or any other demographic factor. Unlike leaders in other contexts, citizen leaders most often do not choose to lead and reluctantly leave private lives for public roles. Most often, their first action is to approach public officials, such as the Jefferson Township trustees, to do something about a particular problem. Often the lack of information and action from those in formal positions of authority creates a realization that citizens will have to do the adaptive work themselves. In a law of inverse proportion, citizen leaders come to trust themselves more as they come to trust public and corporate authorities less. The adaptive work of citizen leaders occurs in response to a clear, simple question: Will our children have the chance to live in dignity and health in their community?

### **Adaptive Work**

The adaptive work of community leadership offers the means to redress the conditions that undermine and understate the human dignity of community members. Thus, community leadership supports civil society. In so doing, it has to overcome a lot, including the beliefs of many community residents that they do not count and that the values of others always outweigh their own values. In the case study detailed in this chapter, for example, many residents initially cited the futility of fighting the U.S. Army.

## Change, Conflict, and Collaboration

The three constants of leadership—change, conflict, and collaboration—were evident in this case study as well. CRDCW members conflicted with Perma-Fix officials, U.S. Army representatives, and political officials at the local and county levels. They collaborated with each other, with Ohio Citizen Action (itself a collaborative network of environmental groups), with the 37 organizations and jurisdictions that supported their resolution, with their congressional representative, and with countless others.

Despite their conflict with some local and county officials, CRDCW members nevertheless participated with them in some events, such as accountability night, and later collaborated with them in opposing the plant. The Montgomery County commissioners didn't take action until CRDCW members brought them into the conflict on their side. CRDCW opposed change, thus challenging the assumption that leadership always initiates change and suggesting that, in some cases at least, it may actually prevent change. Adam Yarmolinsky (2007) suggested that rather than initiating change, leadership mediates change.

Leaders must be mindful of the interrelationship between change, conflict, and collaboration. As a community leader once explained, conflict clarifies values and thus provides a better foundation for possible collaboration (Couto, 2002, pp. 90–91). The experience of another community leader suggests principles of conflict as respectful engagement—seeing conflict as temporary in an enduring collaborative relationship, educating oneself and others to resolve conflict, making a set of humane assumptions about those with whom one is in conflict, and giving credit to others for favorable outcomes (Couto, 2002, pp. 140–141).

## Initiative, Inclusiveness, and Creativity

Leadership may have common tasks, but values, initiative, inclusiveness, and creativity differentiate some forms of leadership from others. The case study in this chapter illustrates how a few individuals took the initiative to oppose the VX hydrolysate disposal plan, a little later friends and neighbors joined in their efforts, and eventually various individuals and groups merged into CRDCW in a successful bid to combat the disposal plan. Leadership entails acting on behalf of values, but when or if people choose to act varies greatly and is affected by the amount of information they have and events going on around them.

Creativity was evident in many CRDCW actions. The creative labeling of chairs for the accountability session, for example, clearly identified those who were not participating and created a compelling photo opportunity for journalists. CRDCW also demonstrated creativity with their gospel singing at the panel hearings conducted by the U.S. Army and Perma-Fix. Creativity is more than artistic expression, however; it also involves the type of strategic thinking and problem solving demonstrated in the mobilization of CRDCW resources and the networking with other groups and resources. Finally, creativity enables people to have fun—an important rule for community organizing (Alinsky, 1971, p. 128).



## Change Practices

Successful community change efforts generally have four elements:

- A cohesive sense of identity and a sense of imminent threat to it
- Strong local leadership
- Vertical and horizontal networks
- Expert outside advice (Couto, 1999)

The discussion of theoretical concepts examined the first factor. Rench, Cooper, Bronston, and Johnson stand as examples of strong and effective local leadership. This leaves the last two elements of community change leadership to examine.

### Vertical and Horizontal Networks

The discussion of social capital and community leadership as social capital entrepreneurship touched on networks. Now we examine networking as an essential element of community change leadership. Initially, community leadership may be at a complete loss about where to start to accomplish the change it seeks. The VX hydrolysate case typified most community change scenarios in that residents turned to one another, to local authorities, and to people within the organization(s) that posed the threat (Perma-Fix and the U.S. Army, in this case). If these networks do not help, community leadership then looks for groups that have made or are making similar change efforts. This horizontal network informs community leaders of lessons learned and mistakes made. Leaders in one community receive empathy and support from leaders in another community, not only in terms of the how-to's of conducting change but also in terms of the personal sacrifices they must make in giving up time with family and friends to pursue a change initiative and the personal conflicts they must face while leading without authority.

Often local community leadership learns of its horizontal network through links to organizations in a vertical network. In the VX hydrolysate case, Ohio Citizen Action assisted local groups across the state. Even before the founding of CRDCW, Redfern explicitly shared with local residents the lessons about the horizontal networks of communities like theirs and how these networks were instrumental in achieving desired change.

The vertical network parallels the levels of participation in Gaventa's (2005) Rubik's cube. To be successful, local community leadership needs the horizontal help of other local groups and resources as well as the vertical help of regional, state, national, and perhaps even international groups. These horizontal and vertical networks are interrelated, one informing the other. A LLAND member, for example, suggested that Rench contact Redfern; Redfern in turn brought with her a horizontal network of local residents with experience in similar change efforts and a vertical network of additional resources.

## Expert Advice

These networks provide local community leadership with outside expert advice, another element critical to success at the local level. Redfern proffered outside expert advice when she taught local residents how to handle media relations and other events, such as the accountability session, that make up an organizing campaign. She also understood the nature of community-organizing campaigns and the risks of burnout and intimidation. She often assessed the group to modulate provocation (see, e.g., Heifetz, 1994, pp. 206–231). Her work reflected some basic tenets of Alinsky-style organizing, such as keeping a group focused and working on change within their realm of experience and getting opponents outside their realm of experience (Alinsky, 1971, p. 127).

CRDCW also brought in outside expert Jacobs of the Legal Aid Society of Dayton. He framed the processing of VX hydrolysate in legal terms that addressed the inadequacy of a generic environmental-impact statement and environmental justice. Without the benefit of his legal expertise, local leadership may not have succeeded in their efforts to protect their cohesive community from an imminent threat.

Outside experts within community leadership's vertical networks provide access to decision makers and help frame problems for the latter to redress. Bronston and Johnson, for example, created a horizontal and vertical network of decision makers and groups to influence other decision makers. CRDCW brought these networks to bear on the Montgomery County Commission, which eventually took up the matter of VX hydrolysate process despite considerable reluctance.

## Advocacy

The VX hydrolysate case exemplified a best-practices model of community organizing, one that involved listening to residents' concerns, identifying patterns in those concerns, and then pulling people together to create an action plan to address those concerns. It involved power and empowerment and democratic practices of representation and participation in decision making (Szakos & Szakos, 2007, pp. 1–12).

Often organizing is confused with advocacy, another change practice of community leadership. They may be the same if community members organize to advocate for themselves and if they are directly represented and participate fully in their advocacy. Advocacy and organizing differ substantially when one group advocates on behalf of another, thus resulting in indirect representation and, at best, partial participation of group members.

David Cohen (Cohen, De la Vega, & Watson, 2001), founder of the Advocacy Institute, described advocacy in terms of organizing. In doing so, he underscored the role of community leadership in change efforts for social justice:

Advocacy consists of organized efforts and actions based on the reality of “what is.” These organized actions seek to highlight ignored and suppressed critical issues, influence public attitudes, and promote the enactment and implementation of laws and public policies that turn visions of “what should be” in a just, decent society into reality. Human rights—political, economic, and social—provide an overarching framework for these visions. Advocacy organizations

draw their strength from and are accountable to people—their members, constituents, and/or members of affected groups. Advocacy has purposeful results: to enable social justice advocates to gain access and voice in the decision making of relevant institutions; to change the power relationships between these institutions and the people affected by their decisions, thereby changing the institutions themselves; and to effect a clear improvement in people's lives. (p. 8)

However local their issue and efforts might have been, at some level CRDCW members understood they were advocating for an improved condition not only for themselves but also for others like them. This understanding came across in the jubilant victory celebration of “the little guy.”

## Participatory Action Research

Effective advocacy demands reliable and relevant information. In the VX hydrolysate case, local residents conducted door-to-door surveys to collect residents' opinions and health histories and library and Internet research to collect data on the nature of VX hydrolysate and its hazards. This research provided local residents with the reliable, detailed information they needed to participate fully in public forums. They had an in-depth understanding of the issue, were able to ask probing questions, and could provide new information or documentation about various aspects of the issue to be decided.

People in authority often dismiss this type of crucial research when the people conducting the research lack scholarly credentials. Increasingly, however, action research and its most genuine community-based form, participatory action research, have received attention and credence even from academic researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003), some of whom even extol the value of “local knowledge” (Geertz, 1983). Community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) permits the community to “own” knowledge about itself, places community leaders in a better position to advocate for policies and with the media, and represents the deliberate training of community leaders by bridging cultural and class differences and differences between community organizing and community advocacy. The tenets of CBPAR address the strategic elements of increasing formal and informal leadership roles of groups underrepresented in policy- and decision-making processes.

CBPAR has deep roots that bloom in varied forms: action science, constructivist inquiry, usable knowledge, participatory research, and, very recently, community-based participatory research for health (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). According to one definition, action research engages researchers and community leaders “in a collaborative process of critical inquiry into problems of social practice in a learning context” (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985, p. 236). Action research, a phrase coined by social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1951), displays the following characteristics:

- A change effort that focuses on a particular problem in a social system and seeks to provide assistance to the client system
- Iterative cycles of discourse between professionals and community members to identify a problem, plan, act, and evaluate

- Reeducation to change well-established patterns of thinking and acting
- Challenges to the status quo from a perspective of democratic values
- Contributions to basic knowledge in social science and social action in everyday life (Argyris et al., 1985, pp. 8–9)

Participatory action research involves the participation of the people for whom the knowledge is being produced and holds researchers accountable to them. Participatory action research has the following characteristics, all of which were evident in the work and research of CRDCW:

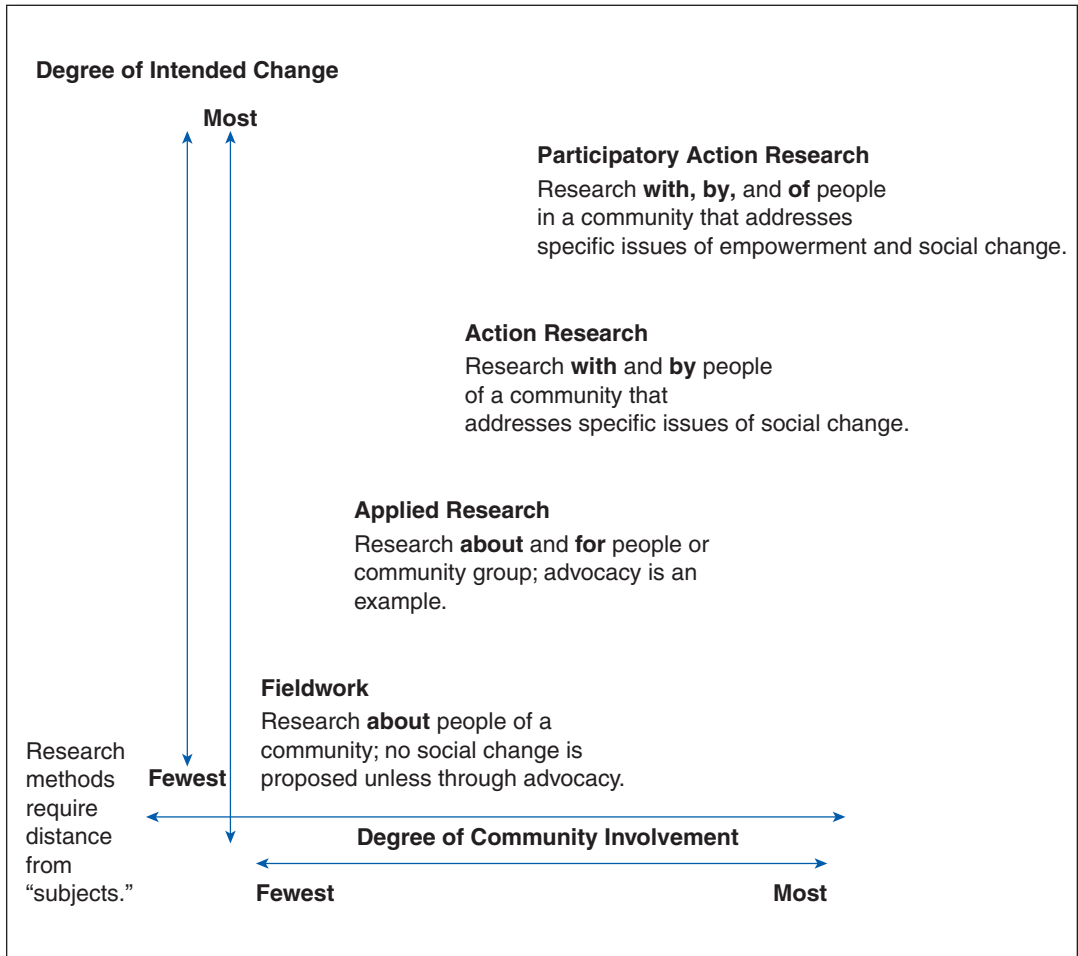
- The problem under study and the decision to study it have origins in the community or group affected by the problem.
- The goal of the research is action for change based on the information gathered.
- The community or group affected by the problem controls the processes of defining the problem, gathering the information, and subsequently making the decision about the appropriate action to take.
- Members of the community or group are equal in the research process to those conducting the study.
- Everyone is regarded as a researcher and learner.
- Skills are transferred among all participants and information is shared (Couto, 1987).

Figure 5.2 locates the varieties of community-based research along axes of community participation and intended change. It helps to distinguish the applied and fieldwork research of scholars, such as the water-quality expert the Montgomery County Commission brought in from Northwestern University, based on the degree of change sought and the participation of local residents. Empowerment in participatory action research increases when the direct representation and participation of local residents in the research process increase.

## Asset-Based Community Change

A group must believe it has the skills and resources to conduct PAR well before embarking on it; arriving at this belief, or decision, is yet another form of the adaptive work of mobilizing resources. In particular, PAR illustrates another change practice of community leadership—asset mapping and development. An asset approach to community leadership (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) is exactly opposite to a needs or deficit approach. Robert Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti suggested the difference in their 1993 study of Italy. They described a prosperous and well-run area in northern Italy as having the asset of social capital and a poor and mismanaged area in southern Italy as having a deficit of social capital. An asset approach permits local residents or members of a community to think about what they can do for themselves. A deficit approach leads them to think about how they can make up for what they lack with an infusion of external resources. An asset approach contributes to genuine empowerment and

**FIGURE 5.2** Taxonomy of Community-Based Research Forms by Methods, Community Involvement, and Change



organized self-advocacy. A deficit approach results in others advocating on behalf of a group whose members have only token representation and indirect participation. An asset approach assumes that people are capable of doing their own adaptive work, including mobilizing resources in horizontal and vertical networks. A deficit approach relies on an outside expert or authority figure to do these things for the people. An asset approach permits group members to conduct their own information gathering—with assistance. A deficit approach assumes that others will gather information for and about the group—even if the information gathered is intended for the group’s benefit.

CRDCW clearly used an asset approach. Members took inventory of the group’s needs and the resources they had to meet those needs. They also identified where to find resources they lacked. CRDCW developed many PAR assets, such as media savvy, political influence, and outside help. Almost all of the outsiders associated with these additional, external resources were accountable to CRDCW.

## Conclusion

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In the CRDCW case, people worked very hard in community leadership efforts for change. The stress of working so hard for so long against very powerful opponents caused many people to drop out. People had to summon the courage to challenge their own and others' preconceptions about equality and inequality. Unlike many other leadership contexts, the residents of Drexel and Jefferson Township more broadly did not choose to be leaders; rather, they took on leadership roles out of necessity, to combat an imminent threat to their personal and community well-being. After the resolution of the conflict, residents did not continue in or return to positions of authority with all the accompanying perks. Therefore, it was particularly important for the CRDCW members to celebrate and receive recognition for their efforts when they succeeded in thwarting the VX hydrolysate treatment plan for Drexel—hence the headlines about the victory celebration.

The CRDCW experience gave Drexel residents a model of success and the confidence to take on other change efforts. For example, CRDCW wanted to see Perma-Fix clean up its operation and become a better neighbor. Some of the group members worked with RAPCA and Montgomery County to make this happen. Community leadership most often develops in reaction to a threat, however. People are willing to work incredibly hard to hold on to what they value about their community. Once they face down a threat to their community, they often revert to their private roles and the enjoyment of the community they worked so hard to preserve. Moving community leadership from reaction to a threat to action to improve the quality of life in the community is very difficult.

A lot of diverse people came together to fight the VX hydrolysate disposal plan, thereby creating unity within the community. The CRDCW efforts will become part of the collective memory of the community just as the LLAND efforts did, providing social capital to use when another threat to Drexel and Jefferson Township emerges. The community leadership in this case has become part of a horizontal network of success from which lessons may be drawn when other instances requiring community leadership for change arise. It preserves hope in “what a community of different people can do when it comes together” (DeBrosse, 2003a, p. A1).

## Application and Reflection

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### Application

#### When Community Claims Collide

Ed Long was upset. He had just returned from the Ivanhoe Home Owners Association's (IHOA) specially called meeting. The president explained that the Green Valley Housing Opportunity Program (GVHOP) was planning to build an apartment building in a lot on the edge of Ivanhoe, with the subdivision surrounding the building on three sides. The city's

zoning and planning committee had already approved the plans almost a year ago and just notified IHOA of a second meeting to be held in a month. The building would have six apartments with two adults with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities (MRDD) in each.

Ed Long and his neighbors are solidly middle class, and their modest condominiums are their primary asset and the most likely means of financing their children's college education. Long and his neighbors were concerned that the apartment building would change the nature of their community and decrease property values. Ivanhoe is a 15-year-old subdivision with 100 families. A new apartment building with people with special needs would mean a drastic change in the nature of the group of homeowners. The residents' caregivers would come and go at all times, disrupting the informal networks IHOA had established to monitor intruders in the community and in general look after each other. The building would also require developing a wooded lot that served as a green space for the community. Long was further irritated because he felt that the president of IHOA had taken this development lying down.

Over the next several weeks, Long began to organize to stop the housing development at the upcoming zoning and planning committee meeting. He was skilled at organizing from his experience as the president of the local chapter of the Association of State, County, and Municipal Employees Union; Long's experience as an emergency medical technician also helped him. He knew he had to rally the troops, so he began to mobilize IHOA members. Soon the city officials were deluged with phone calls asking for action to stop the development of the proposed apartment building. Long brought members to a meeting of the zoning and planning committee and protested the plan that the committee had approved a year before. Long and his neighbors packed a subsequent city council meeting as well; there was standing room only in the room, and chairs had to be set up in the lobby for the overflow of 100 or so homeowners. These actions brought the approval process to a halt. The city council postponed final approval of the project and tabled its consideration at two consecutive monthly meetings. They hoped that the IHOA and GVHOP would work things out.

The action of the city council was pretty disappointing for Sally Torrisi, the 10-year executive director of the GVHOP. She had been very conscientious to follow all the rules. Federal regulations required that funds be available for the construction of apartments for people with disabilities only if the buildings were located on property zoned for apartments; on property that had access to community services; in cities that needed more affordable housing to qualify for other federal funding; and on property with a seller willing to commit the land for the project for as long as it takes to get approval for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Ivanhoe lot met all four criteria.

Torrisi had jumped through other hoops of approval. The site had to meet environmental quality standards to ensure an absence of harmful materials in the soil or water. She had it tested and researched, and it met the requirements. She met with the director of zoning and planning, Bill Norton. The 15-year veteran in this position remembered the parcel of land well. Twelve years ago the lot had been left out of the development of other housing in Ivanhoe. It was zoned for multifamily housing. At her formal presentation to the zoning and planning commission, its members agreed that the community needed more housing for people with disabilities, and this parcel seemed appropriate for that purpose.

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

This proposed housing was a bold step for GVHOP in several ways. All 48 other units were renovated homes in which no more than four people could live, or they were apartments for two people. This construction would be new, designed, from the beginning, with wheelchair access and other specialized features for 12 people with MRDD. Torrisi hoped that this construction would be a model and more rapidly increase the supply of housing for the 900 persons in the county who needed it.

With the assistance of a real estate attorney with years of experience in affordable housing development across the state, Torrisi took the committee's approval and documentation about the site and gained almost \$1,000,000 in funding from HUD, the Federal Home Loan Bank, the county board of MRDD, the state housing finance fund, and a private philanthropy. She called Norton with the good news but learned that he was leaving for another job in the state capital. He also suggested that Torrisi talk with the neighbors. His tone was a bit ominous. Torrisi researched a bit more and found out that the neighbors had a homeowners association that represented the tightly knit community. It functioned officially to monitor compliance with the covenants that all homeowners agreed to when buying property in the Ivanhoe area.

Torrisi tried to reach the IHOA leaders but without success. She met them a year after gaining approval at the second meeting of the zoning and planning committee. Since learning about the apartment development plans, Long had gained notoriety in the IHOA and was selected its new president. In the first meeting with Long before the zoning and planning committee, Torrisi found Long cordial, but with the committee he was vehement in his opposition to the plan and made sure that the committee took note of the large number of residents with him at these ordinarily sparsely attended meetings.

Torrisi was not deterred. She had run into neighbors' opposition in previous projects. Her amiable and accommodating manner generally enables her to approach neighbors in a collaborative manner. Her experience taught her that the quality of GVHOP property maintenance, including professional lawn service, and the friendly manner of MRDD residents won acceptance in the neighborhoods.

In light of the new opposition, the city council delayed action, and Torrisi did her best to accommodate the IHOA's requests for information—reams of paper and myriad documents. She agreed to design alterations at the site that included creating a new street for access to the site and planting trees to block the view of the building.

However, Torrisi drew the line at Ed's request that GVHOP join the IHOA. Doing so would bring the apartment site under the covenant agreement that specified that "any member of the HOA who proposes structural change has to get approval from the Architecture Committee" and give the IHOA a legal right to oppose the apartment development on "structural" grounds. This sounded too much like the back door to zoning out the project and a violation of Fair Housing laws. In addition, the IHOA had a single landscape firm do all the work for the condominiums of the community. Should the GVHOP not employ them, Torrisi imagined, the IHOA would have reasons to nitpick GVHOP for the upkeep of its site.

So Torrisi dug in her heels. The law states that "it is unlawful for local governments to utilize land use and zoning policies to keep persons with disabilities from locating to their area." The law came into being because of discriminatory practices of real estate brokers,



financial institutions, and public and private property owners. They frequently used various means, including zoning and covenants, to exclude people based on religion, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual preference, or family makeup. Torrisi was determined that persons with MRDD have the same rights as anyone else to select housing freely in a full and unrestricted market. She was not going to subject GVHOP and its proposed tenants to the IHOA's covenants that could exclude them, despite local zoning laws and federal regulations that permitted them the right to develop the property.

Despite GVHOP's concessions and some ambivalence among a few IHOA members, the two sides could not agree on a mutually acceptable plan. The city council could no longer postpone a decision. They gave the recommendation of the zoning and planning committee to approve the GVHOP proposal and the opposition of the IHOA. They asked a spokesperson for each group to make a short summation of each group's position. Torrisi was asked to go first.

### Remarks of Sally Torrisi

Members of the Council. My name is Sally Torrisi. I am the executive director of the Green Valley Housing Opportunity Program. I would like to put our plan for a six unit apartment building into context; share with you our experience in providing housing for persons with development disabilities; and explain our shared responsibilities to meet federal, state, and local regulations.

I have worked with persons with development disabilities for more than 30 years. During that time, I have seen dramatic changes in practices. Initially, I worked in mental institutions in which persons with mental retardation and developmental disabilities were essentially warehoused. Fortunately, we now recognize the variety of disabilities and the ability for independent or assisted living for many people with disabilities. These are the people whom we serve.

We have provided housing in the community for them and worked with them to become as self-reliant as possible. In that effort of increased self-reliance, GVHOP has pioneered in making people with development disabilities tenants of our housing and not clients of our program. We are accountable to them as their landlord; a dramatic reversal of the former provider-client approach. It has been our goal to take these changes one step further by actually building six apartments, rather than renovating an existing structure, and to do so with accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities in mind.

GVHOP owns 48 properties. We have faced skepticism before, but in every case we have won our neighbors over by the care with which we maintain our properties and the demeanor and personalities of the people who live there. We have worked with the IHOA and accommodated every request that they made except to subject ourselves to their covenants, which might jeopardize the project.

I mentioned our responsibilities because we both have responsibilities in this matter. Federal, state, and local laws regulate and restrict where the housing we propose may be located. GVHOP has complied with every one of these regulations. We have presented our plans to your zoning and planning committee and received their approval to build on this property. We have met the specifications of lenders to gain financing for the proposed building.

Change is difficult, and change in neighborhoods is even more difficult. So there are federal, state, and local laws to make sure that persons with disabilities are not the victims

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

of continued patterns of prejudice and discrimination. The federal Fair Housing laws protect the rights of minorities against the will of majorities. If every homeowners association has the right to say, "not in my backyard," then we can find no space with access to services for people who are seeking self-reliance, where people with disabilities may live with increased degrees of independence and dignity. Federal and state law sanctions with penalties those who violate the rights of other people to live where they are otherwise legally entitled to live. We do this so that we will not go back to warehousing people in the least desirable locations where no one wants to live.

Look around. There are not large numbers of people with disabilities here to demand their rights. I am not an organizer. I cannot mobilize 100 people with disabilities to demand their rights, nor would I for fear of their encountering the prejudice this housing and the policies that it embodies intend to tear down.

I am an advocate for those people who cannot organize. In this case, I acknowledge that I am somewhat of an irritant to the IHOA but what a pearl of a world this would be if our humanity were expressed in the beauty of our differences. I suggest that it is harmful in the long run to use the instinct of community to separate and protect us from one another rather than creating a global culture of diverse but interwoven communities (Wheatley, 2005, p. 45). I speak for the community of persons with disabilities and I hope you will also. They are depending on me and you to do that. Thank you.

### Remarks of Ed Long

Good evening, my name is Ed Long. I have been spokesperson for the Ivanhoe Home Owners Association and recently elected president. I want to thank you for slowing the train that was speeding down the tracks of approval in the wrong direction.

I am an organizer, and I believe that citizens should not be penalized for showing up at this meeting and advocating for themselves, their homes, their families, and their communities. I looked around as Ms. Torrisi suggested. You know what I saw? I saw a consultant and a few board members of GVHOP supporting its proposed plan and a hundred or more residents of this town opposing it.

We are not suggesting a return to the bad old days of institutions and warehousing. In all of IHOA's meetings, there was not one ill word spoken or harsh judgment cast toward people with disabilities. Some of us, including myself, work with them and others of us have family members with disabilities. We are not saying, "Not in my backyard!" We are saying that the federal, state, and local regulations that Ms. Torrisi complied with do not measure a community nor do they preserve it.

The parcel of land in question is surrounded on three sides by the Ivanhoe community. It's like a missing piece of a puzzle. The plans of GVHOP are trying to place a piece that does not fit with the rest of Ivanhoe. That parcel has become part of our community, an asset. We are talking about the integrity of the community. Let me assure you that we would be here in these same numbers if any apartment building were proposed.

Our opposition is not with persons with disabilities but with the "fit" of this building in the heart of Ivanhoe. We are concerned with the additional traffic that such a building would bring into our neighborhood, an addition especially high given the special vehicles and the number of caregivers that persons with disabilities require. We have worked hard over the

15 years since the zoning for this parcel was decided to establish a tightly knit community. Things do change—our community has changed, but the zoning of that parcel did not. It should have to reflect the change around it and to make sure it is integral with Ivanhoe, not the wishes of federal and state officials who have not been here. In that regard, I think it is significant that GVHOP, which has bought the parcel in question, has refused to join the IHOA. Its planned apartment building would be a patch of intrusion to the standards that the rest of us have agreed to.

Yes, of course, people with disabilities have rights, but we are here to assert our rights to a community with integrity. Look around. You won't find people of great wealth in this room. Our homes are our wealth, and our community is our investment in the future of our children. We are not a majority oppressing a minority. It is hard to think of yourself as a majority when you are up against the power of the federal and state government in asserting your right to have a little bit of the American dream and want to hold on to it.

You are our voice in this matter, our elected representatives. Please vote your conscience and do what is right for the people who elected you to represent them. Thank you.

Having heard both sides, the council goes into executive session. Imagine yourself a member of the council. What decision does the city council reach? Why? Illustrate the field of decision making in which you fit as a council member. Who are the other actors and what is their relationship with each other and with the city council? Are there less obvious actors in the field with implications for consequences for your decision, such as other federal agencies, lawyers, and county officials who might take action to enforce Fair Housing laws? How do you define community in this case? What community do you represent and need to speak for? Is there a win-win solution?

## REFLECTION

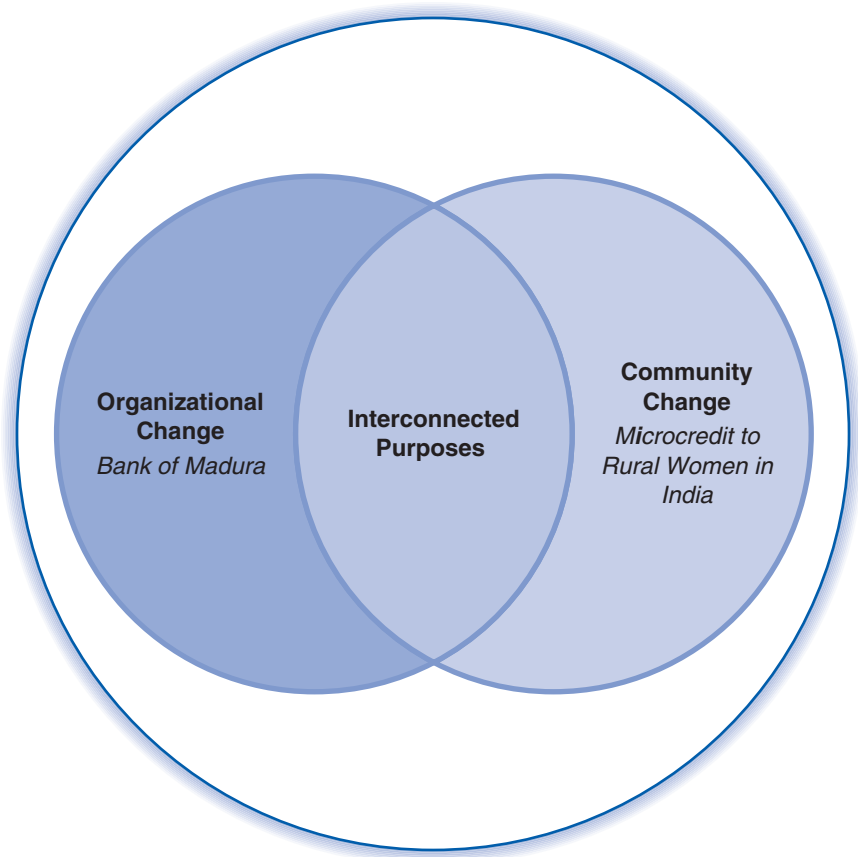
- How does this case parallel the Jefferson Township case?
- Do both communities, IHOA and the persons with MRDD, face threats?
- How does Ed Long exemplify the skills of organizing exemplified in Jefferson Township?
- What is the difference between organizing and advocacy?
- How does GVHOP resemble the U.S. Army and Perma-Fix in the VX hydrolysate case?
- How do Sally Torrisi and Ed Long compare with Jane Forrest Redfern as community change leaders? IHOA with CRDCW? GVHOP with OHA?
- How did Bill Norton's departure affect the decision-making process?
- What is the balance in preserving the homogeneity of a community and increasing its diversity by including people who are absent and perhaps purposefully excluded?
- Which position represents the "real, significant change" that James MacGregor Burns (2007) means when he talks about transforming leadership?
- Who are the "little guys" in this case and what would victory for them mean?

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