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Community is Not a Place But a Relationship[1]: Lessons for Organizational Development

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Abstract

The premise of this article is that organizations need to be "organized" differently if we want to re-invigorate the power of community in contemporary life. A central theme within the current reform movement toward restorative justice is the devolution of authority from formal governmental systems to community. In order to effectively socialize young people, communities and families must perform certain functions well. As more and more societal activities take place within organizations, we face the dilemma that the weakened communities create a demand for increasing involvement of public organizations in the life of the community. Yet modern organizations do not effectively perform functions unique to families and communities. Drawing on insights from a unique community-system partnership in restorative peacemaking circles, this paper argues we may need to reinvent our organizations so that they learn to behave as members of the community.

Introduction

The recent decline in social capital within contemporary communities has been well documented along with its impact on quality of life especially for children within poor communities (Sampson et al., 1997; Putnam, 2000; Burger, 1994; Runyan et al., 1998; Garbarino and Sherman, 1980). Community policing, community-based schools, strength-based family services and community development are some of the ongoing efforts to strengthen networks of relationships among citizens and encourage greater responsibility for addressing human need in partnership with formal systems (Etzioni, 1996; Saleeby, 1992). The restorative justice movement is also part of the recent rediscovery of the necessity and power of informal social processes within modern social life. Restorative justice reforms seek to re-invigorate the informal social control capacity of communities by engaging direct

[1] This apt phrase and fundamental insight about the meaning of community came from the seminal article by Paul McCold and Benjamin Wachtel (1998).

stakeholders in the justice process (Bazemore and O'Brien, 2004; Bazemore and Schiff, 1996, 2001). If crime is the result of a breakdown in community norms, in the long run, it is the rebuilding of those norms that will prevent future crime and contribute to public safety.

A key policy goal of restorative justice reform, therefore, is the redefinition of the respective roles of government and community and a significant devolution of authority to respond to crime through balanced partnerships between public systems and stakeholders within the community (Burford and Pennel, 1994; Van Ness and Strong, 2002; Braithwaite, 2002; Burford and Adams, 2004). Many observers are, nonetheless, skeptical about such partnerships (Boyes-Watson, 1999; 2004). They doubt public systems will devolve genuine authority to communities and are concerned that efforts by organizations to reach out and build communities will be co-opted by powerful interests of systems and professionals (Daly and Immagerion, 1998; Merkel-Holguin, 2004). While we talk about the need for organizations to contribute to building community, we have not addressed whether organizations are adequately designed to play that role nor have we thought about the contribution communities can make to building the kind of organizations that would strengthen the community. It may be relatively easy to engage with community through corporate philanthropy, public relations or community liaison officers but is it possible for organizations to actually participate as *members* of the community?

The premise of this article is that organizations need to be "organized" differently if we want to re-invigorate the power of community in contemporary life. Organizations are the fundamental social structures of modern society (Coleman, 1982); yet we treat them as irrelevant to most discussions about family and community despite the fact that the workplace has replaced the neighborhood as the primary site for social connectivity (Wolfe, 2004). Unless we intentionally think about how organizations operate as social structures distinct from how communities function, we cannot really understand what needs to change in order to nourish a greater community capacity to support human life.

The insights offered here draw on a unique community-system partnership in a major Northeastern urban center where a community-based organization is sharing knowledge of restorative justice with public systems set up to deal with at-risk youth and their families (Boyes-Watson, 2005). Through a slow process of osmosis, the practice of peacemaking circles and the attendant values of restorative justice are infiltrating a host of public organizations including local schools, courts, social services, district attorney's offices, juvenile corrections and city government. Reversing the more typical process where organizations serve as catalysts for community development, these organizations are being influenced through exposure to community. What happens when organizational change is pushed by change agents within the community? What lessons and insights emerge about the meaning of community and how organizations function when it is the community who helps build organizations?

The crisis of weakened communities

In contemporary society, communities and organizations are in a paradoxical relationship with one another. Traditional communities enveloped families within a dense, reinforcing network of relationships generally based within a specific geographic location. The household was both the primary economic and social unit linked with a broad array of voluntary associations from the religious congregations to the PTAs to local bowling leagues. These face to face interactions engendered habits of civic and political engagement rooted in long term relationships reflective of the interests of the community (Warren, 2001).

According to Putnam (1995, p.67), "...features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" have been in a downward trajectory in the U.S. since the 1950s. Suburban sprawl, geographic mobility, dominance of market forces, dual-earner families, single parent households and electronic entertainment are among many factors which have undermined traditional communal life centered on families within local neighborhoods (Putnam, 2000). Today most households rely on paychecks from organizations for their economic survival and this workplace commitment competes with community and family obligations.

One result has been increasing reliance upon formal organizations to care for those outside the workplace such as the young, elderly, infirm, disruptive or disaffected (McKnight, 1995). With deficits in time and energy, basic human needs are now supplied by service, health care, education, elder care, insurance, financial and criminal justice organizations. These systems perform vital tasks previously handled by families, kinship groups, neighborhoods, religious and other community structures. Yet without meaningful engagement of families and communities, these highly advanced systems of service delivery often fail to adequately provide education, socialization, discipline and care. For much of the 20th century, for instance, criminal justice administrators enjoyed public trust in the capacity of the system to respond effectively to crime. Retrospectively, it is painfully apparent that the capacity of the system to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders depended on the vitality of informal social controls and robust opportunity structures within communities (Garland, 2001). Those public institutions charged with the delivery of vital services actually rely on an invisible bedrock of social capital which has been steadily eroding for decades.

The dilemma is that the weakened communities create a need for increasing involvement of public organizations in the life of the community. Yet public organizations depend on informal processes within the family and community to be effective. The greater the deficit within communities, the more there is a need for public systems whose intervention is increasingly ineffective without support from communities. The decline of community has generated a crisis for public organizations but the more systems intervene to solve the crisis, the worse the situation becomes.

What is community?

The concept of community is a loaded one. It can be vested with positive associations of connection and belonging or conjure up negative associations of persecution, narrow-mindedness and exclusion. Within contemporary U.S. society, most people define community in terms of specific relationships usually family and friends, including co-workers. Beyond this sphere of intimacy, there has been a decline in the tendency to identify community as inclusive of neighbors, church groups or other voluntary associations (Putnam, 2000). This absence of communal ties beyond the immediate sphere of friends and family is a breakdown in the kind of social ties that constitute what we now call social capital (Coleman, 1988).

McCold and Wachtel (1998) argue that community is no longer defined by place but by a perception of personal connectedness. More than simply a connection via locality, this conception of community includes a multiplicity of groups and networks to which we feel a sense of belonging. One of the characteristics of modern life is that we cannot take for granted that a sense of personal connectedness exists among people who live near one another. Quite often it does not. This is a significant loss for all the human activities that are centered around place: the public safety of streets where people, especially children, walk and play; the ability to lend a helping hand to a non-mobile person or the quality of shared public spaces (Jacobs, 1961).

This weakness is also a strength. Widening the scope of communities brings the potential richness and resources of diversity to the resolution of human need. Traditional communities are generally hierarchical, not egalitarian: women, children and those of lower status based on race, ethnicity or class are not treated with the same regard and care as those with power (Crawford and Clear, 2001). Traditional communities are also often ethnocentric and exclusionary treating outsiders as the "other" or less than fully human. The modern trajectory away from community has been a positive trajectory toward an appreciation of the inherent value of all individuals and their basic entitlement to equal care, consideration and voice.

Community, therefore, can be defined as a particular type of social bond characterized by a sense of mutuality, care, connection, identity, awareness and obligation to others. This bond, in turn, motivates certain behaviors. When people have a sense of trust and mutuality with others, they rely on that connection to meet their needs in a pattern of loose reciprocity rooted in ongoing and enduring relationships. They give each other rides; lend and borrow things; feed each others' children; gossip about them; watch out for them on the street; discipline them when they misbehave; carry groceries upstairs; offer a tip on a job opening or apartment; check in on the sick and notice when someone who should be around is missing. This suggests that community is rooted in a particular sense of connection which, in turn, leads to certain kinds of social action.

The potency of this social bond is also its power to constrain behavior. The reason criminologists have argued that informal social controls are effective in

preventing crime is that the psychological emotions of shame and pride vis a vis ones community are a potent source of conformity (Scheff, 1994; Morrison, 2001). Thus strong communities are a source of moral authority often in tension with individuality, difference and diversity. In the past there was a strong likelihood that you would remain within a particular community, physically and psychically, throughout your lifetime. Under modern conditions, however, most adults choose membership in various communities weakening the force of ascription in defining membership throughout their life course. The negative side of excessive individualism is a lack of empathy and indifference to the fate of others. This absence of concern for the well being of others underlies both criminal offending and institutionalized social injustice.

The goal of restorative justice today, therefore, cannot simply be to "restore" the power of community but to "transform" communities so that the sense of connection is inclusive of all members. An even bigger question is whether communities can be inclusive of those who are considered "outsiders": ethnic groups, foreigners, strangers, people across the globe whose values, norms and culture are different (Pavlich, 2001). While human beings are biologically hard wired to form bonds within small face to face communities, this intense bonding is also the basis for competing against other groups for scarce resources (Fukuyama, 2004). The creation of a broad sense of social connectedness among communities is a more intentionally political construction of a sense of community. All major religions, the values of Western democracy and emerging concepts of human rights encourage human beings to develop an expansive sense of connectedness among groups and to rely upon this sense of connectedness as a basis for ethical social action (Selznick, 2004). The aphorisms to "treat your neighbor as yourself" or the more contemporary exhortation to "think globally, act locally" encourages a sense of connection in order to motivate and constrain behavior. It encompasses both the particular relationships of place where we interact most intensely and most often, and our relationship to the wider world.

Community, therefore, is a specific type of social bond, not tied to place but to an awareness of interconnectedness and sense of mutuality, which shapes behavior. Community building, therefore, in part, is about building this awareness. Including those who have been excluded from traditional communities and expanding the boundaries to include an ever-widening awareness of humanity, is a project of profound change. This "vision" of a world community may be a far cry from our current reality but what we envision helps to shape our future.

The tension between organizations and community

So where do organizations fit into this understanding of community building? If community building is about the appreciation of interconnectedness, organizations as social structures are particularly ill suited to promoting such an

awareness. Current relational practices within most organizations structure human relationships in ways which actively discourage an awareness of connection. The structures and routines of organizational life, and the habits and attitudes of individuals within organizations undermine the building of community bonds through the structure of organizations.

The first fact of organizational life that undermines connection is that organizations are structured around tasks rather than persons (Coleman, 1982). While organizational actors are responsible for performance of specific tasks vis a vis human beings, organizations are not designed to be responsible for, or responsive to, persons. The result is a kind of responsibility vacuum: a teacher may teach, counselor advise, therapist listen and doctor prescribe, yet no one, through an organizational relationship, has responsibility for the well-being of a whole person. In an organizational relationship there is no sense of enduring commitment for a person; each time there is a referral to yet another professional or agency, there is an abdication of responsibility for that person.

When it comes to the care of human beings, both within organizations and by organizations, this means that everyone can do their specific task, and do it well, yet at the end of the day, no one really "gets the job done" (Pranis et al., 2003, p. 227). If the task of the organization is educating, treating, disciplining or socializing human beings, failure lies in the absence of any sense of holistic responsibility for the recipient as a unique and valued individual. The recipient, a human being, rarely experiences a sense of connection or belonging in any of these relationships. These gaps are not merely a matter of poor communication, inter-agency coordination or absence of wrap-around services. According to McKnight (1995, p.x) "Care is the one thing a system cannot produce." Care, in his view, is the consenting commitment of citizens to one another; it is a form of mutuality, not charity. In the community context, people do not "age out" of relationships or lose their eligibility; responsibilities evolve and shift, but relationships endure.

The second feature of organizational life which limits community building is the "accountability gap" that arises from the separation of organizational roles from other social relationships. Morality is the underlying foundation for social capital (Fukuyama, 2004). It is shaped and motivated by contact, empathy and identification, enhanced by a certain kinds of interactions and diminished by others. When people cannot imagine themselves in another persons shoes or experience them as a full human being, it is easier to do harm to them or be indifferent to their suffering or needs. Social distance, or the degree to which people do not identify with others or feel connected by a common sense of fate, undermines morality (Pranis, 2001).

As agents of an institution, human beings are routinely disinclined to engage as moral persons fully accountable for the consequences of their actions. The legal fiction of the corporation as a person creates a supra-entity that diminishes the accountability of real human begins within the corporation. At a psychological level, the practical boundaries of organizational life insulates many organizational actors from awareness of the consequences of their organiza-

tional decisions. The division of labor within the organization often means that no single individual meets the legal conditions of criminal liability for corporate behavior (Loschnig-Gspandl, 2003).

The final feature of organizational life that diminishes the development of community is the role of a third party in shaping the boundaries of awareness and decision-making within the organization. The structure of hierarchical authority within the organization concentrates decision-making for policies, goals and procedures within the formal authority of management. Agents are not free to make their own choices but are subject to the "third party" or formal policies of the organization. Line workers within human services often report that they bend the rules in order to meet the needs of their clients but they do this at serious jeopardy to their own security, success or status within the organization. Ways of thinking and acting within organizations are organizational issues, not individual ones.

Because norms, values and practices are more intentionally designed and institutionalized within organizations than within communities, managers and executives are in a position to set in motion processes which shape those norms and culture. All organizations provide conditions for their agents to make decisions by setting boundaries for what to consider and how to think about it. Organizational decision making depends as much on a controlled absence of information as access to information. While authentic change in an organizational context cannot simply be imposed from above, organizational change also cannot "bubble up" from below without the intentional participation at the level of executive management.

Community as a catalyst for change

The premise of this article is that if we want to rebuild our communities, organizations need to be "organized" differently. The features of organizational life described above: the functional specialization around task rather than persons; the isolation of organizational roles from other social roles and relationships; and the power of management to shape the moral and informational environment of subordinates are deeply inscribed in the basic architecture of modern organizations. Any transformation in this structure is not trivial but profound. "Profound change… combines an inner shift in people's values, aspirations and behaviors with "outer" shifts in processes, strategies, practices and systems." (Senge et al., 1999: 15) This kind of transformation involves a shift in ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Profound change is learning-driven rather than engineered from above. People can be invited to enter a change process and supported through it but the choice lies with the individual and their personal commitment. Profound change is always incremental because it is subject to constant resistance. Limiting processes within organizations and individuals relentlessly push back to slow the pace. Eventually profound change becomes self-reinforcing but

engaging in profound change requires a long term investment in time, energy and resources.

Six years ago a community-based organization based in a poor inner city neighborhood developed a vision of the world where all young people, no matter who they were and what mistakes they had made, were of value and belonged. To build such a community, the organization implemented peacemaking circles, a restorative practice derived from aboriginal societies which gives equal voice and consideration to all participants (Yazzie, 1994; Meyer, 2002; Boyes-Watson, 2002, 2005). Across gulfs of race, class, age, ethnicity, gender, status and organizational position, the opportunity to interact and communicate in circles forged a growing sense of connection and awareness of interdependence among gang members, parents, teachers, illegal immigrants, judges, social workers, legislators, parole officers, cops, teenage moms, school superintendents, ex-cons, correction officers, Buddhist monks, city officials and Catholic nuns. Employees from the state social services, juvenile corrections, courts and schools who participated in circles began to explore how to implement restorative principles within their own organizations. Like all profound change processes, those who were like-minded were the first to engage. Over several years, more staff including senior management have become interested in restorative practices such as conferences and circles as a way to build connection within work teams, between management and staff and with families, young people and outside agencies.

What are these public organizations learning through engagement with restorative justice? Below is a discussion of tentative insights, emerging not only from interviews with systems personnel in this case study, but from reports by other organizations working to adopt restorative justice practices and principles. Senge et al. (1999) draw a distinction between problem-solving approach to organizational change and a creative approach rooted in vision. Problem-solving tends to be backward looking relying on existing technologies, habits and structures, to make a liability or problem go away. It is a return to the status quo ante. Creativity, by contrast, is fundamentally forward looking based on the capacity to imagine what does not yet exist. The creative approach to organizational change is rooted in a vision of what could be. It is the tension between this vision and a rigorous understanding of the current reality which generates the energy to create something new.

The adoption of restorative justice is more than just the installation of a program or technique: the adoption of restorative justice moves organizations towards more communitarian values. It is a project of profound change which requires sustained leadership to invent new organizational infrastructures which brings different sets of participants together to talk in different ways about different things. More than anything else, this process requires personal commitment, not only from above but at all levels of the organization. People must, at some level, choose restorative justice for themselves.

Restorative practices open people to a sense of community by building awareness and respect towards others. Yet the practice of building this

awareness represents a profound challenge to the current reality of organizational life. The structures and routines of organizational life and the habits and attitudes of individuals within organizations push back to resist change. In order for organizations to organize differently, they need to build the capacity for change which is a capacity for ongoing learning throughout the organization. Above all, these organizations are learning to become learning-driven. To choose to practice restorative justice is to begin a long and slow process of change.

Toward a vision of organizations as members of community: The crucial role of shared leadership

Coping with and leading profound change within organizations calls for the art of leadership rather than the science of management. Management is about control over people's actions for order and consistency: managers know where they are going and when they get there. While command and control management can insure compliance with specific rules or policies, profound change, at the level of what people think, believe and value, requires creating an opportunity for making a choice. According to Kotter (2001), leaders don't make plans or solve problems; what leaders really do is prepare organizations for change and help them cope as they struggle through it.

More than just introducing restorative practices as a technique for use with clients, organizations in this case study are embarking on a deeper process of change. Although senior managers have ideas about the utility of restorative circles or conferences for specific organizational tasks, they have refrained from relying on managerial authority to dictate implementation from above. Instead they are behaving as leaders by encouraging the circle or conference as a space for organizational learning within small pilot groups who decide how to make best use of these practices. In one youth treatment facility, what began as a circle to talk about how to use circles with clients led to a sustained series of circles to produce a shared vision, mission and values statement for staff.

To offer this opportunity for learning requires substantial investment of resources from the organization as well as from the individual participants. A typical circle requires two to three hours of sustained conversation. This, in itself, is a challenge to the fast-paced, crisis-driven environment of most organizations. One senior level administrator realized that staff rarely slow down long enough to reflect on the meaning and value of their work. The only time this happens is when they are out of the office attending conferences and there is little return on the investment in these creative "time outs" for the existing organizational culture and procedures. By implementing the circle within the internal routine of the organization, management is creating an opportunity for staff "to step out of the river" and think about their work at a deeper, more meaningful level. Management in several organizations have also offered staff the chance to learn the circle from the community organization which requires four continuous days

away from normal duties. In these instances, the power of executive authority is put to the service of organizational learning by intentionally creating the space for subordinates within the organization to learn and grow.

By using circles, not simply as a tool for working with community but also for as a way to build community within the organization, those in leadership positions are inviting the leadership potential of all participants. Typically, management and disciplinary practices contradict restorative values of respect and equity generating palpable tensions within the organization (Carey, 2001). Do supervisors listen to subordinates? Do they treat them with respect or compassion? Is there a shared vision for the work of the organization? What is the mission of the organization anyway? These questions and many more arise when restorative practices open space for organizational development and learning.

Institutionalizing a leadership-centered culture is the ultimate act of leadership. "Organizations are webs of participation. Change the participation and you change the organization." (Seely Brown as quoted in Senge et al., 1999, p. 49). Circles bring different people together to have a different kind of conversation breaking down social distance of age, position, class, race, gender, life experience, and so forth. In one circle organized to address the issue of growing rates of school drop-outs, the participation of young people who had dropped out and others struggling to remain in school, helped positively influence an emerging school policy. School administrators benefited from the opportunity to hear the perspective of youth, parents and dropouts along with teachers and guidance counselors. Widening the circle of participation creates the possibility for genuine partnerships between the organization and the community and for shared leadership to emerge between the powerful systems actors and typically disempowered sectors of the community.

Building awareness to increase accountability

To build community with organizations, there is also the need for seeing beyond the boundaries of the organization and developing an awareness of ones interdependency and connections with others. The "responsibility vacuum" that arises from functional specialization lends itself to creation of the "accountability gap." Each organizational entity sees only its part and does not see its relationship to the whole: schools blame parents; parents blame social services; social services blame schools and on it goes. Each part of a whole blames another part without beginning to come together collectively to do things differently because no one is accountable for the overall effectiveness of the system.

In order for people in organizations to act differently, they must have access to different kinds of information about the impact of their decisions beyond the boundaries of their functional specialization. In child welfare, the voices of children and parents are generally absent. They are almost never asked what

they think is the best solution. Few judges are aware of the impact of their decision to remove a child on the parents, wider family network or community. Nor are they aware of the impact of incarceration on the children or spouse of a convicted criminal or the impact on the community when a person is released years down the road. When a disruptive adolescent is expelled from school, a principal rarely confronts the consequence of that decision for the streets he roams all day long or the household dynamic with younger siblings.

The bounded rationality of organizational thinking restricts a set of consequences to the needs and requirements of the organization in isolation from wider sets of relationships. Just as criminal offenders are isolated from the consequences and suffering of their victims, corporate actors are often unaware of the impact of their decisions on the community. As Senge (1990, p. 26) notes, most of us learn best from experience yet organizational decision-makers rarely directly experience the real life consequences of their most significant decisions.

The use of restorative conferences and circles by social services or criminal justice agencies creates the chance for organizational decision-makers to hear different voices and literally see their work from the perspective of the community. Social workers in social services have been deeply moved to hear how decisions made by the department years earlier, shaped the lives of young adults in the community, sometimes for better and sometimes for worse. These conferences have convinced them of the need to routinely include the perspective of clients and families when assessing the quality of departmental decision-making. Within the conference or circle, viewpoints of family members and young people are given equal weight with professionals and experts. By including voices generally absent from these kinds of interactions, awareness of other kinds of collateral costs to organizational decisions enter the consciousness of decision-makers. Creative solutions arise through a broader understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependencies of life: that awareness itself, the basis for community, opens the possibility for solutions which takes into account the impact on communities and families.

Systems thinking, therefore, emerges from new organizational structures that intentionally engage feedback from complex environments in order to move beyond habits of blame towards habits of mutual responsibility. Here is an illustration of the kind of creative solutions which emerge from systems thinking. When scientists working for Xerox Corporation set out to design a new photocopier, they set themselves the goal of designing a competitive product that would both succeed in the market and be responsive to the needs of the planet (Hawken et al., 1999). Because they entered into the design process with both agendas they were able to create a profitable product almost entirely composed of recyclable materials. Without the "systems thinking" of the design team, *an intentional product of the organizational environment*, these values would not be reflected in the product they created.

For public organizations, collaborative forums with communities are an opportunity to begin to create solutions which are responsive to family and

community as well as organizational needs. Sitting in circle with a diverse group of people, a judge found it remarkable to listen to an ex-con talk about his crimes. As a judge, he hears from the lawyers, but never from defendants themselves. His formal position as a judge makes it unlikely for him to hear the reasons people commit crime and the reasons they decide to stop. Yet this knowledge is of great value to judges, police and others in the system. Because of what this judge has learned within the circle he is thinking differently about the work of the court. When he sees a young man on probation, he now "sees" five or six friends connected to the young man and is wondering if the goal of the court should be to address the wider network of disaffected young people rather than simply resolve the individual legal case.

The importation of restorative justice practices into criminal justice, social services and other public agencies also increases accountability for organizational decision makers. Braithwaite (2003) has observed the effectiveness of regulatory systems which engage organizational actors in direct conversation with workers, clients or customers affected or harmed by organizational decisions and policies. Hearing the stories of those directly affected by their policies in an encounter of human dimensions offers those who have been harmed the chance to tell their story and it offers organizational decision-makers an opportunity to identify with them as members of the same community. In one instance, in response to systematic insurance fraud involving several different companies, face to face meetings with the victims from poor communities led some executives to feel a deep sense of shame and personal responsibility for the actions of their companies. As a result, they returned to their boardrooms motivated to institute key reforms within their companies (Braithwaite, 2002, p. 23).

Bringing a whole person to work

Profound organizational change cannot take place unless people within organizations share deep assumptions and values with one another. Restorative practices within organizations offer a space where people reveal a deeper, more personal side of themselves to others in the workplace. After they have participated in circles together, employees often are surprised how little they know about the passions, troubles, interests or talents of people they have worked alongside for years. Wolfe (2004, p. 143) notes that middle class Americans report higher levels of engagement with people in the workplace than in the community. As people spend more time at work, it is natural that people create ties of friendship, trust, mutuality in the workplace. Yet the quality of these ties are weaker, more superficial and instrumental than those rooted in family and community. Although people are motivated to create connection at work, the organizational structure of the workplace undermines the formation of those ties.

The modern workplace values mental and technical expertise over emotional intelligence or spiritual wisdom. The hyper-valuation of professional expertise

serves as a substantial barrier to formation of bonds within the workplace and to the shared leadership with those outside the organization who feel excluded and disrespected by the specialized discourse of professionals. Opening the dialogue within the organization to include the personal, emotional and spiritual dimensions of life is highly challenging to organizational norms. Some staff experience the pressure to "get personal" within restorative practices as one of its most challenging aspects. People are aware of status differences and fearful of exposing themselves in the work context. What will the boss think? What will my subordinates think? Even more disconcerting is the idea of sharing personal information with clients or customers. According to a director of a youth detention facility, admitting that in his childhood, Christmas and birthdays were not the best of times, was difficult but enormously positive in forging connections with his youthful charges and his staff as well.

The shift away from the dominance of professional discourse levels the playing field between the organization and the community increasing trust and honest communication. When they are in circle, both professionals and client family members report a new sense of mutual respect because everyone is encouraged to speak from the heart and share personal experiences. Within the more egalitarian discursive space of the circle, creative solutions to complex problems can emerge which draw on the expertise and wisdom of all parts of the community, not just professionals. The knowledge and experience within families does not replace the resources of professional expertise but is complementary allowing for a new synthesis that draws on the full potency of the community.

Arguably, there is a need in any organization for a holistic integration of the cognitive, emotional, spiritual and physical, for both personal well being and productive capacity. But those organizations whose work involves the care of families and children, have a particular need to pay attention to the moral maturity of staff. For many public systems, the emotional well being of staff is critical to the operational success of the organization particularly since the stress of working with families in crisis demands high levels of emotional fortitude often drained by the overwhelming demands of the work. Finding support in the workplace through engaging with others as whole human beings, offers a source of support and healing, not just for clients, but for staff too.

The chance to bring ones whole self to the workplace also opens the possibility for organizations to be more responsive to the rhythms and needs of family and community. There are many organizational policies which increase the harmony between organizational and community life. Schools can create environments which deepen the bonds between students and teachers and parents. Family leave, elder care and medical care policies enable families to look after they young, the elderly and the sick rather than be wholly dependent upon paid labor. Ending the company policy of moving managers from one location to another every three years recognizes the value of building roots for family life and well being. The creative possibilities of ways to re-organize organizations so that they are compatible with the rhythms of life in communities and families are limited only by our imagination.

Communities are not a place but a way to be

This paper argues that the essence of "community" is cognitive and emotional attitude towards others that shapes behavior towards them. Community is not simply rooted in neighborhood or geography nor is it defined by one's ethnicity or other ascribed characteristics. On a broad scale, the predominance of small scale, intimate, isolated communities has given way to a complex, interconnected global society. Yet the enduring need for communitarian ways of thinking are rooted in basic human necessity. To both survive and thrive, we need to trust and care for one another.

"A central tenet of restorative justice is the assumption that the nature of our social relationships sustains our capacity to live as responsible citizens." (Morrison, 2001, p. 197) Restorative practices foster relationships that generate an awareness of interdependence and interconnectedness in order to motivate responsible and caring conduct towards others. It is simultaneously a process that is rooted in community and one that strengthens community.

Organizations can function as members of the community but not without building the infrastructure that calls forth a sense of awareness and connection among persons who work in organizations along with the people and communities they live in and serve. Without the social spaces where they can experience a concrete sense of their commonality as human beings, and gain a sense of their shared fate as members of the same community, it is unlikely that organizational actors will behave as members of the community.

To create these kinds of social spaces is a process of organizational change which needs to emerge from a process of organizational learning and development. We will need to look toward the evolution of new organizational forms which bridge the gap between organizational and community structures. We will need to figure out how to take responsibility for the future and make decisions which encompass an awareness of the implications seven years or even seven generations down the road. Above all, we need to remind ourselves that it is possible to do things differently.

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