
Final Semester Paper

Course: SOC- 01 Qualitative Research Methods

Instructor: Dr. Dan Monti

Student: Kembly R. Archaga

Topic 1: Summary and implications in our class project of the article *"The Civic Side of Diversity: Ambivalence and Belonging at the Neighborhood Level"* by Hoekstra, E. and Gerties, J.

Summary

In the article, Hoekstra and Gerties explain the concept of diversity and how "Most Americans have come to champion a less expensive but still idealistic idea of diversity that breeds tolerance, respect and contribute to economic prosperity Hoekstra and Gerteis (1). The authors go on saying how this definition appears to be existing, but only in the surface. Deep inside, Americans still struggle with practical implications of living among those who are different than themselves (1).

This first layer of diversity acceptance among Americans is what the authors (building on the findings of previous researchers) identify as the **"Happy Talk"**. This is when the idealistic concept of diversity is present, and inequalities don't seem to be a problem. However, when the conversation turns deeper and it's time to interact, organize, and cohabitate is when the real feelings about discomfort towards diversity become evident.

As the authors describe: the members of a neighborhood are invested in the diversity ideal yet continue to cling to a cultural vision of the neighborhood belonging. To manage these contradictions, people engage in what the authors call **"Civic Talk"** which is a way to set rules and regulations regarding how to behave as part of a group (e.g.: neighborhood). The authors mention civic talk to effectively mask inequalities on the neighborhood level whereas happy talk is not able to achieve this task.

This Civic Talk is expressed in two specific frames that residents and neighborhood associations use to define belonging while effectively masking and maintaining inequalities and the neighborhood level.

These frames are:

- **Social Order:** Frames the rules of belonging to having respectable behavior, keeping properties clean and orderly, avoiding crime and drugs,
- **Civic Engagement:** Sets belonging more directly linked to involvement in neighborhood associations and views this as a membership in the community.

These frames are exclusive because they specify who belongs to the community and who doesn't while reinforcing race, class distinction, and pre-established boundaries.

Implications

The project for our Qualitative Research Methods class aims to restore and promote growth in poor areas near the Central West End neighborhood in St. Louis, MO. While conducting interviews, we were able to identify clear examples of the "Happy talk":

Subject #1:

Q: As far as diversity in the diversity, do you think that's a good thing?

A: *I do. I have always been an open-minded person. You can't learn if don't open your mind. I have never agreed with that "one race has to be scared of another race" thing. I don't like when a group of people think they have to be beating another group of people.*

Subject #2:

Q: Are you against new people moving in to the area?

A: *No, I am not. I like seeing progress in the area.*

Subject #3:

Q: Do you wish that more people would move into the neighborhood?

A: *Yes. I would like to see diversity of races, ages, professionals, income, and all changes would be good on a wide spectrum. A microcosm of what the city is like.*

However, after the happy talk, the examples of local rules and what restrictions would be necessary to be a "good" member of the community become evident. This is when the two civic talk frames show up in the conversation. The following are social order and civic engagement frames that were part of the interviews we conducted.

Social Order.

Subject #1:

Q: What changes since that time, have you noticed in that area?

A: *The area has cleaned up a lot. There aren't as many people from out of the area hanging out in the streets no more. There used to be people from outside of the area drawn to the streets of this neighborhood mostly to cause trouble, do drugs, etc. They were just there with no intention of doing the right thing.*

- Expected behavior: Do something productive with your time instead of doing criminal activities in the area.

Subject #2:

Q: Changes that you have seen in the area?

A: *For years we couldn't do anything about the dirty alleys. People would dump trash and we couldn't get them to stop doing that. Recently, things have changed. We are starting to see people do better at not dumping and we are even supposed to get cameras for the alleys to curb down dumping trash in the alleys.*

- Expected behavior: Maintain a clean area, street, neighborhood.

Subject #3:

Q: Do you think people in general behave like good neighbors?

A: *Some of them. There is still drugs and alcohol around but not everybody behaves bad.*

- Expected behavior: Not to engage in drugs use or alcohol consumption.

Civic Engagement frame.

Subject #1:

There was no mention of anything related to civic engagement.

Subject #2:

Q: Do new-comers participate in these community activities?

A: *No, they do not participate at all. They are mostly younger people. I would say they are not familiar with what it takes to maintain a neighborhood and a community strong and clean.*

- Expected behavior: Engage in community organizations that promote cleaning programs.

Subject #3:

Q: Do you think new neighbors go out of their way to get to know the members of the community?

A: *Some do, and some don't. Some people do participate in the activities of the community and other just keep to themselves. The same happens with long-term residents of the community.*

- Expected behavior: Become more active in the community.

Topic 2: Summary and implications in our class project of the article "Getting by in New York City:

Bonding, Bridging and Linking Capital in Poverty-Impacted Neighborhoods" by Lukasiewicz, K., Bahar, O.S., et al.

Summary

This article refers to "Social Capital" as a sum of actual and potential resources available to individuals, transmitted through social networks of relationships. Lukasiewicz, Bahar (2). As the article states, the resources can be both material and emotional and include sense of trust. The analysis of this concept is done in three areas:

- **Bonding social capital:** This close and strong support transmitted through connections of people who are alike. Its main characteristics are low efforts to obtain and high levels of trust.
- **Bridging social capital:** This area connects different people with one another. This level has weaker ties.
- **Linking social capital:** This area is based on the weakest connections. However, it can provide access to institutions and other networks that could potentially result in opportunities to get ahead by improving socio economic status (SES).

According to the article, social capital plays an important role in providing opportunities to get ahead both horizontally and vertically. The components of social capital help in different ways to achieve this process. Strong bonding capital helps people daily, bridging and linking capital can provide people with the opportunity to use social leverage and potential allow social upward mobility.

Additionally, neighborhood resources such as libraries, parks, stores, and social services among others, facilitate both development and accumulation of social capital.

Implications

While conducting the interviews for our research, we came across some aspects that can be identified as part of the Social Capital criteria. The following are example for each one of the elements for this concept:

Social Bonding Capital

Subject # 1:

Q: Do you still have many acquaintances in the area?

A: *I have friends in that area who own property. I see how they are handling the area and it can only get better from now.*

Subject 1 has lived in the area most of his life and states he still has many friends who own property in that area. He is an active member or the community who provide as well as gets support from lifetime friendships. He also stated that some extended family members are still part of this community.

Subject #2:

Q: Are you an active participant in the community and their programs?

A: *yes, you could say that. I work with this community only.*

Subject 2 says he is a member of this community and provides support to the neighborhood organization that he belongs to by promoting clean alleys initiatives. He stated he is always willing to collaborate in any way he can with members of his community.

Subject #3:

Q: Are you involved with organizations that work in the community?

A: *The "West elm neighbors' organizations" from Vandeventer, west elm and Sarah. We try to stay on top of issues that affect us. We talk about political campaigns, street lighting, infrastructure, abandoned buildings.*

Subject 3 is involved in organizations both in and out of her neighborhood. In her neighborhood, she is part of the “West Elm Neighbors” association. They provide local support to member of their immediate community as well coordinate support with other areas in the Central West End (CWE).

Bridging Social Capital.

Subject #1:

Q: Do you think that kind of intolerance (intolerance of other races) was a problem in that area?

A: *I don't think so. I know that was a problem in other pockets of the city, but in our area it really wasn't. You see, back in the sixties, I was the guy who help get started a group called "The west end boys society". We took over 400 kids and organized baseball leagues and one of the things we taught was not to pick on other kids.*

In this answer, subject 1 alluded to an organization he helped get started and maintained for several years, the “The west end boys society”. This organization provided a recreation by way of baseball tournaments to kids in this area. By doing this, subject 1 also provided resources to members outside of his immediate network of family and friends and instilled morals and values among the participants.

Subject #2:

Q: What are immediate changes you would like to see implemented to improve the neighborhood?

A: *A foot patrol would be great to slow down fast drivers in the area. We have had problems with that. Bumps in the road or blocking the streets are not as effective as they think.*

Subject 2 mentioned having talks with some members of his community to form a watch group that could collaborate with a foot patrol formed by police in order to maintain peace and order in the area specially the school nearby. This would provide member of the community with safety and increase their trust more in sending their kids to school.

Subject #3:

Q: Are you involved with other organizations outside your immediate community?

A: yes. I am involved with the *beacon of salvation* which is an organization for child well-being. I do office work and direct visitors around the building. I also volunteer with *Tandy Neighborhood association* that works with groups in the south side and the west end and every place except downtown. I'm a person who believes the whole city need to be healthy for the whole city to thrive.

Subject 3 is an example of a member of the community providing help to organizations in need of support both emotional as well as material. Her statement "*I'm a person who believes the whole city need to be healthy for the whole city to thrive*" clearly defines the power of social capital and how it can help to get ahead in life. Furthermore, it states how she is contributing to this goal.

Linking Social Capital

After reviewing the interview notes and transcripts, we concluded that none of the subjects provided us with any information that could fit the criteria for linking social capital.

Topic 3: Monti's three questions applicability.

Based on results from the surveys as well as the interviews conducted to three members of the community, we can now speculate the criteria they would define to address the three questions:

1. Who can be a member of the community?

Despite all three members stating they are open to diversity and saying anybody can be a member of their community despite of having different backgrounds, they have a clear idea of who can be a member of the community.

- They don't want members who do drugs.
- They don't want members who consume alcohol.
- They don't want members who will not care for their houses.
- They don't want people without a purpose, job, occupation.
- They don't want people who dump trash and don't keep a clean environment.
- They don't want people who run undesirable business such as liquor stores and high interest loan stores.

2. How closely do residents expect others to play by their rules?

The residents we interviewed have a clear understanding of the behavior they expect from residents of the area:

- They expect residents to be active participants in community organizations.
- They expect residents to interact with neighbors and help each other.
- They expect residents to care about other members' needs in the community.

Although members of the community expect neighbors (especially new neighbors) to behave in this manner, they are flexible and tolerant with the indifference that some members display. According to subject 1, sometimes it is good that people keep to themselves and focus on their own lives.

3. How accountable are people expected to be to each other?

In general, the subjects we interviewed expressed how they let people do their own thing which means that accountability is not very high. They mostly hope that members of the community would behave in ways that would benefit the greater good and the area in general. Subjects 1 and three stated that people's attitudes have relaxed over the years and that they don't mind if people just keep to themselves. In general, however, all subjects expressed the desire for a more collaborative environment for the improvement of the area in general.

References

1. Hoekstra E, Gerteis J. The Civic Side of Diversity: Ambivalence and Belonging at the Neighborhood Level. *City & Community*. 2019;18(1):195-212.
2. Lukasiewicz K, Bahar OS, Ali S, Gopalan P, Parker G, Hawkins R, et al. Getting by in New York City: Bonding, Bridging and Linking Capital in Poverty-Impacted Neighborhoods. *City & Community*. 2019;18(1):280-301.