A Review of Community and the Outlook of Community Social Approach

Noriko Takahashi[1], Shuji Iizima[2] , Mitsuhiko Bando[2]

(1. Department of Disaster Psychiatry, Fukushima University, Japan; 2. Kyushu University, Japan)

Abstract: In this study, following quantitative and qualitative reviews of the Japanese academic literature on "community", the authors chronologically identified the fundamental theoretical concepts of community they found. They, then, categorized the studies found by academic field to consider the future of community-related research in clinical psychology in Japan. They found that, although advances made in community theoretical research after the period of rapid economic growth in the aftermath of World War II, these were criticized as naïve. However, in the research that burgeoned after the collapse of the Japanese bubble economy in the early 1990s, the study of communities changed with the realization that this study is embedded in a changing world. This was reflected in changes in the terminology used to describe the coalescence of multiple selves. During this historical transition, much knowledge was accumulated from community-based research looking at solutions to social problems, human relationships, and education and training. The authors anticipate the development of a "socio-community-based approach" to community research in clinical psychology, which will draw on knowledge from similar research in fields such as social welfare, sociology, and cultural anthropology.

Key words: community-based approach, community theory, socio-community-based approach

1. Introduction

While social isolation has recently become a problem with people interacting and bonding less with people outside of their families (Hiroi, 2010), there are also, ironically, more opportunities for people to communicate beyond the framework of family and social class. According to Delanty (2003), to have multiple memberships and participate in communities that are formed from this interactive process demands a highly individualized identity to uphold the various collective goals and values. This suggests that, as opportunities for communication and community membership grow, henceforward, it will be ever more important, when providing psychological support to individuals and groups, to understand the communities of which they are a part.

However, when using a community-based approach, practitioners may run into problems, such as finding that clinic-based methodologies do not work as well in the field, or that it is difficult to know whether their interventions are useful for the communities in which they are working. Moreover, in the social sciences, so many theories of community have been developed that Yoshihara (2011) coined the term "community inflation".

Thus, in this study, we first did a quantitative review of the Japanese academic literature on community and, then, chronologically identified the fundamental theoretical concepts of community used. Finally, to consider the future of community-related research in clinical psychology in Japan, we categorized the studies found by

Noriko Takahashi, MA in Human-Environment Studies, Associate Professor, Department of Disaster Psychiatry, Fukushima University; research areas/interests: human-environment studies. E-mail: noriko-t@ipc.fukushima-u.ac.jp.

academic field, such as clinical psychology, social welfare, sociology, and cultural anthropology.

2. Methodology

(1) To quantitatively assess the number of Japanese studies that have been published related to the concept of community, we searched the archives of the National Diet Library for studies using the terms community (in English), its Japanese translation, kyōdōtai (共同体), and its transliteration into Japanese, komyūniti.

(2) We chronologically identified the fundamental theoretical concepts of community used from the classical concepts used in the social sciences to newer concepts.

(3) We categorized the studies found by academic field, for example, clinical psychology, social welfare, sociology, and cultural anthropology.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Quantitative Review of Japanese Research Related to the Concept of Community

Looking at the histories of these three terms in Japanese research, community had the longest, appearing since the 1800s, followed by kyōdōtai, which first appeared in 1922, and then komyūniti, which appeared in 1941. Looking at the number of studies published annually, using each word, both the number of studies using kyōdōtai and the number using komyūniti increased starting in 1991 and peaked in 2013. Redundant searches using the word komyūniti alone and the names of the various academic fields in the social sciences and humanities (e.g., sociology, education, psychology, economics, law, anthropology) showed that in every field, after decreasing from around 1980 to around 1990, the number of studies published then increased and peaked around 2013.

3.1.1 Community Theories in the Social Sciences

A qualitative review of the research showed that the use of naïve realist concepts of the community was subjected to criticism in the social sciences for close to half a century. For example, Wallerstein (1997) argued that, since the 15th century, capitalism has restructured the world into a core and a periphery. After capitalism took the world by storm, this structure was instantiated in the relationships among races, ethnicities, and genders, and, as scholarship flourished, knowledge too became largely distorted by it. Galtung (1991) pointed out that, compared to the favorable relations among people at the world's center, there is structural violence that causes structural conflicts among people in the periphery. Recently, in addition to these critiques, the interest in community problems appears to have shifted to problems between the private and public spheres. However, Saito (2000) pointed out that there are multiple meanings for the "self" and the "public" in both spheres.

3.1.2 Clinical Interventions in Communities in Crisis

As to the first Japanese study of community-based clinical crisis interventions, one may be able to cite the case studies, which were social science collaborations, of psychiatrists, by Noda, Tani and Yoneyama (1981), in which, communities differed in multiple ways and people who knew that the nature of a crisis might produce undesirable outcomes were placed in situations in which they were powerless to help. While their studies only looked at individual and group counseling considering the different sociocultural contexts, studies by Yamamoto et al. (1995) and Yamamoto (2000) presented specific crisis interventions for regional communities, while Mukaiyachi (2009) and Tajima (2011) proposed various concrete approaches.

3.2 Fundamental Community Theoretical Concepts

3.2.1 Communities and Associations

Ferdinand Tönnies (in works published 1887–1957) distinguished between closely-knit social groups for communal living Gemeinschaft ("communities") and man-made functional organizations understood to constitute public life and society Gesellschaft ("associations"). In traditional urban sociology, the concept of community as a symbiotic organism began to lose ground with the advance of urbanization and modernization (Tamura & Nishizawa, 2000). Community-based entities, such as schools and hospitals, would not be considered "communities" in this sense, but rather "associations".

3.2.2 Communitarianism

In contrast to liberalism's view that individuals exist autonomously, communitarianism emphasizes the preeminence of the group (Gerard Delanty, in works published 2003–2006). In communitarianism, great societies become possible when existing communities subsume the identities of their individuals for the greater good (Hashimoto, 2008). In such communities that emphasize the preeminence of the group, clinical psychological theories, which are products of urbanization and modernization, may not function adequately.

3.2.3 Communitas

Communitas refers to situations in which people relate to each other equally and existentially, in contrast to their past hierarchical relationships, due to of shared experiences, for example, marriage, death, and pilgrimage (Yamato & Funabiki, 1997). In the work of Victor Turner (published 1960–1976), communitas is born from resistance to existing social structures and sustained by the resulting "antistructure". Focusing on the dynamic aspects found in the concept of communitas should enable understanding the dynamics occurring at the boundaries of such communities.

3.2.4 Social Capital

The concept of social capital focuses on the value of social networks in enhancing individual and group productivity. The work of Robert Putnam (published 2000−2006) distinguishes between "bonding" the cooperative glue that improves within-group effectiveness, and "bridging" the lubricant that improves between-group effectiveness. Studies of mental health clinicians working in communities based on this concept would look at whether a clinician is providing support to improve effectiveness or adaptation within a group or is providing support oriented toward improving bridging with other groups.

3.2.5 Social Network Theory

Social network theory in the work of John Barnes (published 1954–2006) sees community as a set of interpersonal interactions. It is not an organizational entity, there is no spokesperson, and there is no center or boundaries. However, groups with significant constraints such as people of low socio-economic status tend to form "communities that are rooted in place" and groups with few constraints such as people with high socio-economic status tend to form "communities that transcend place" (Matsumoto, 1995). Based on this concept, due to the individual characteristics of groups with which a mental health clinician may be working, a group's potential to freely form a community without restrictions related to place and space will differ.

3.2.6 Communication-based Communities

Zygmunt Bauman (in works published from 2001–2008) explains that while community is a refuge where people feel safe, coping with insecurity by building walls around communities amplifies their sense of insecurity. As argued by Delanty (2003–2006), the building of communities is based more on their communication practices

than on their existing structures or cultural values. As a tool for mental health practice, communication can be used to close off a community of people with a shared identity from the outside or it can be used to open the community up to the outside.

3.2.7 The Postmodern Community

At a time of instability, when randomness was the main experience of life for many people, there was a longing to be part of a community. This idea that a community can be open to anyone, referred to with terms like "communities of choice" or "communities of divergence" is, characteristically, always incomplete because of the absence of differences between the self and the other and reference points to use as a base (Delanty, 2003–2006). Mental health practitioners who work in cities may have a sense of communities' being something close to this, and it may be a view that, in the genealogy of community theory, could be said to be ultra-modern and unique.

3.3 Community-based Research in Japan

3.3.1 Communities as Potential Sources of Solutions for Social Problems

In Japanese research literature related to the community, many studies have been conducted, most importantly, to gain a better understanding of how communities and community interventions could potentially lead to solutions to social problems, such as the declining birth rate and the depopulation of rural communities. To list a few examples, Morishita (2013) looked at ways to promote social participation among the elderly, Kin (2013) performed an analysis of community childcare support services and proposed measures to restructure them, Ichiko (2012) studied city planning focusing on disaster prevention, and Takamura (2013) looked at how public agencies and residents worked together to resolve problems in suburban apartment developments.

3.3.2 Relationships within Communities

There have also been studies that looked at relationships within communities such as, symbiosis theory (Hirota, 2011) and lovers (Miyazawa, 2014). As Itobayashi (2010) pointed out, the traditional concept of "commons" referred not to the relationship between man and nature or the environment, but to relationships between one human being and another. One could similarly say that the condition for a community of human relationships is closely related to the relationships between community members.

3.3.3 Communities as Places for Education and Training

a) Educational institutions: because public schools are public, in addition to being spaces that are accessible to everyone, they differ from places for people who share a specific set of values. However, although being public means students are not required to have a uniform set of characteristics, a dilemma arises: while public schools are in the public sphere, they are also communities (Matsushita, 2011). Schools belonging to the public sphere are reconstructed into communities as students and faculty and staff interact with each other. Problems of bullying and truancy may also occur because of this dilemma and reconstruction process.

b) Professional training: There is also the concept that within communities that are places of learning, people organize themselves into "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1999) through a process of cooperation. People begin to participate in these communities peripherally and then learn practical skills as they gain experience through observation and imitation of the other members.

4. Conclusion

While capitalism that started in 15th-century Western Europe took the world by storm, it also restructured relationships among global communities. In Japan, while advances were made in community theoretical research

after the period of rapid economic growth post World War II, they were criticized as naïve. However, it appears that in the research that burgeoned after the collapse of the Japanese bubble economy in the early 1990s, the study of communities changed, as there was a realization that this study is embedded in a changing world. This was reflected in changes in the terminology used to describe the coalescence of multiple selves. When we say "community" or "social", we are referencing to approaches in this genealogy of clinical research and practice. Thus, Western literature and practice will likely be among future topics for our research.

This study showed that, in Japan, much of the knowledge that has been accumulated was from "community" studies that used communities as places to look at potential solutions for social problems, human relationships, and education and training. We anticipate that within the community-based approach for research in clinical psychology, a "socio-community approach" will develop based on knowledge from similar research in fields such as social welfare, sociology, and cultural anthropology.

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