SETTLEMENT HOUSES TODAY: THEIR COMMUNITY BUILDING ROLE

A Report Prepared for the United Neighborhood Houses of New York

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Introduction

For more than 108 years, settlement houses have been warm, welcoming places (homes away from home) where community residents participate in or observe cultural and recreational activities, use services such as child care or programs for seniors, seek help for personal and family problems, learn English and job skills, and join with others to address community issues. For more than 75 years, United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH) has worked with its member agencies to take the case to cause, and to articulate the larger settlement house vision and mission.

With generous funding from the Ford Foundation, UNH was able to retain Chapin Hall Center for Children to examine the current role of settlement houses in community building in several New York City communities. This assessment began as an examination of the nature of settlements' community embeddedness. As work progressed and interest and excitement grew on the part of settlement house staff, board members, and participants, UNH and Chapin Hall decided to focus on documenting community-building initiatives so as to foster a settlement-wide expansion of these activities.

Chapin Hall will continue to document new and expanding community-building activities in the coming year, both what settlements do and how they create and sustain the organizational conditions necessary to support their role. However, we felt that what we had learned to date could add to the public dialogue about the role of institutions in strengthening communities, and could also provide practical examples to settlement houses across the country. Given the current thrust of less government funding and talk of more responsibility at a neighborhood as opposed to a government level, we believe that our work is more critical today than originally anticipated.

This report, written by Prudence Brown at Chapin Hall, is a tribute to the thousands of settlement house staff members, board members, and community residents who have been working together to improve their neighborhoods and to create a better life for their children. We are extremely fortunate to have the expertise, advice, and extraordinary vision of Harold Richman and Prudence Brown in the many discussions and meetings that preceded the writing of this report.

We are providing you with this report to share our experiences and support your community-building activities. We hope you find it useful.

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Acknowledgments

Introduction

As settlement houses carve out their niche in the urban landscape of the 1990s, two questions frequently arise. First, how can a settlement build a comprehensive and integrated program agenda from multiple sources of funding that primarily target specialized services for discrete categories of "consumers?" And, second, how should or how can a settlement work with its neighbors to strengthen the neighborhood's capacity to provide a safe and supportive environment for all its residents?

These questions are embedded in two separate, but related, larger national policy and program debates: the first on services integration, the second on community building. In each of these debates, there is recognition of the critical need for local vehicles—schools, community development corporations, churches, social service organizations, or settlement houses—to function as intermediaries. It is through such vehicles at the neighborhood level that services get integrated, families get supported, community problems get addressed, and community voices get expressed and connected to the larger political and social arena.

In its original conception, the settlement house can be viewed as the quintessential service and community-building institution. Historically, it functioned as a neighborhood intermediary with a mission to provide comprehensive and integrated services and to carry out a number of non-service-related community-building functions that strengthen families and their neighborhoods. Indeed, the settlement's success in carrying out its mission and in implementing its broad social reform agenda could be viewed as depending, in part, on the degree to which it was embedded in the daily life and social fabric of the community.[1] To carry out a "modern" version of this mission requires the settlement house to have a special relationship to its community, a relationship to which it must bring new strategies for engagement and mobilization.

The impetus for the inquiry stems from two observations. First, the settlement house represents a substantial resource that has historically operated in many of the ways called for in contemporary integrated service reform efforts and comprehensive community-building experiments. It is ironic that these experiments often fail to draw upon the settlements' experiences over the last 100 years and to recognize their potential to make a significant contribution to current program and policy development. Second, a number of internal and external pressures on settlements are making it more difficult to maintain their traditional community-building and social reform roles while delivering a wide range of largely publicly funded human services. By highlighting some of the ways in which settlements do now and could in the future enhance the impact of their community-building focus, we hope to stimulate and learn from new approaches that build on a long-standing tradition.

Goals and Approach

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[1] Research conducted "to identify those attributes that are at the heart of the settlement's vitality and durability" concluded that one of the four clusters of attributes that define the settlement house is being "integral to" or embedded in the neighborhood. "Increasing the Effectiveness and Replicability of the Settlement House," Report prepared for the Ford Foundation, United Neighborhood Houses, 1991.

The goals of this inquiry are twofold: first, to explore what community embeddedness means for the contemporary settlement house; and, second, to consider the role of that embeddedness in enhancing the settlement's overall impact in the community and contribution, in particular, to community building. "Community building" refers to a community's physical, economic, and social development—that is, the process of building its institutional infrastructure and housing and commercial base; increasing the strength of its social networks/relations and the level of social organization; and developing human capital and leadership.

The inquiry began with interviews with the executive directors of the three settlements in the Settlement House Initiative: East Side House, Hudson Guild, and University Settlement.[2] These were followed by about 30 interviews with members of their boards and staff, participants in their programs, and other interested community leaders and observers who the directors suggested might have interesting and varied perspectives on the settlements. Examples include a local clergyman, the director of a local community development corporation, a long-time resident and union organizer, and a head of a public housing tenants' association. Also interviewed were a small number of settlement house directors from the larger UNH membership.

The case examples described below are illustrative, rather than exhaustive, and designed to stimulate debate about questions of the settlement's goals and role in the community, rather than to produce judgments about the operations of any one settlement. Although the findings are impressionistic, they lay the conceptual groundwork for a more complete understanding of how each settlement operates within its community.

Indicators of Community Embeddedness

There are a range of indicators of community embeddedness that characterize the three settlement houses in the Settlement House Initiative. These are qualities of the settlements that make them "integral to" the daily life of the community. None of these clusters of characteristics is unique to settlements; but, in combination, they distinguish the settlement from a range of other nonprofits in the community and provide the rationale for making the case that the settlement has a special contribution to make to the community-building agenda.

This is not to say that settlement houses, like other community-based nonprofits, do not struggle with and reflect the limitations imposed by scarce resources and narrowly defined funding opportunities. While developed from observations at the three settlements, the following indicators of community embeddedness are as much standards to which settlements aspire as they are uniformly institutionalized organizational qualities. Staff at none of the three settlements were satisfied with the degree to which they were operational either in scope or in scale, for reasons that are discussed in the second section of the paper.

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[2] The Settlement House Initiative was launched in 1991 to build service delivery reform models in three test sites and replicate the successful elements in other communities. Each of the three communities differs considerably in its history, current population, and neighborhood assets and dynamics. East Side House is located in one of the poorest sections of the South Bronx, Mott Haven. Hudson Guild is located in Clinton/Chelsea, a diverse neighborhood that includes public housing, low and moderate apartment complexes, and gentrified townhouses. University Settlement is on the Lower East Side, an area that has served as a first home to many waves of immigrants.

1. Offering Responsive Service Programs

The range of services provided by the settlement appears to be responsive to community needs, or "market-driven" to the extent permitted by funding availability, and generally filled to capacity. Most programs or services include a mechanism like an advisory group for consumer input. The settlement is perceived as having integrity, respecting the community, and providing excellent services compared to other programs in the neighborhood and/or to industry standards. The settlement's excellent service record positions it to move effectively from "case to cause" and contribute to policy changes that support a more integrated service model.

2. Serving as an "Extended Living Room" or Second Family

The settlement is often perceived by neighborhood residents as their space, their source of back-up support, the place to turn when troubles come to their families or friends. Depending on the layout of the lobby and communal space, people come in to get information on something happening in the community, to sit in the lobby and have coffee, or to join a holiday meal. In some cases, the settlement's space is available at low cost for family and group functions. In other cases, residents talk about the settlement's camp as if it were theirs. As one respondent said, "The more you go to it, the more it is part of you." One woman whose husband became a crack addict reported that, "When I was really down and didn't think that I could go on, I turned to the settlement for help getting straightened out. They are always there for you."

3. Recruiting Staff and Volunteers from the Neighborhood

Many on the settlement's staff (albeit toward the entry-level end of the job spectrum) are neighborhood residents who have strong ties to the social networks and informal systems in the community. One staff member characterized herself as "the eyes and the ears of the street." Similarly, many of the volunteers come from the surrounding neighborhood.

4. Promoting Local Leadership/Professional Development

The settlement tries to be self-conscious about identifying and supporting individuals in the community who can take advantage of opportunities to contribute to the life of the settlement, as volunteers, advisory group members, or as staff. It may also sponsor programs that target youth leadership, skill development and job training, tutoring, and literacy. The support individuals get from being part of the settlement community can give them the confidence to take on new roles in other organizations. One woman noted that, "I agreed to be president of my tenant council because I knew that I could rely on my 'family' (the settlement) if I needed anything."

5. Building the Community's Institutional Infrastructure

A settlement is part of the institutional infrastructure of the community, and can invest in helping to build its capacity. Staff serve on community-wide groups and work with many local organizations such as the schools, tenant's groups, community board committees, and local coalitions. The settlement aims to identify unmet needs in the community and either tries to fill the need itself by starting a local credit union, for example, or helps to incubate a new nonprofit to fill the gap. Settlements often have collaborative relationships with a number of local organizations ranging from arts and theater programs to the local police.

6. Stabilizing the Community

The settlement's long history in the community can be a stabilizing influence. Especially in low-income neighborhoods or in neighborhoods in which significant disinvestment has occurred, there are very few institutions that the community can count on "through thick and thin." Often, several generations in a family have been involved in a settlement over time; intergenerational programming can foster a sense of continuity and identification with the larger community.

7. Providing a Vehicle for Community Education and Problem Solving

Neither being identified with short-term political agendas, nor being captured by any one issue or ethnic or age group, a settlement can provide neutral turf for community problem solving, and often has the legitimacy to take on issues that might divide the community if taken on by others. For example, one settlement was approached by the local school to help with racial/ethnic conflicts among students, in and out of school. Another settlement was the first place the community turned for a community-wide forum on safety after several serious crimes occurred in the neighborhood in a short amount of time.

8. Providing a Forum for Community Voice

Although generally careful not to get embroiled in the local political fray, settlements can help groups of community members make their voices heard in strategic ways, as was the case recently when settlement house workers organized a letter-writing campaign from residents to elected officials protesting the cutbacks in city support for youth programs and the increases in day care fees. Settlements generally have the ability to reach widely and deeply into the community when needed, although they have not used such collective mobilization strategies as much in the recent past as many would like.

In sum, settlements have a long history of being integral to and embedded in the community. Within the constraints of available resources, they continue to have the potential to operate out of such a niche. Several respondents, ranging from a board chair to an executive director to a front-line worker, reported that, "Given our history, there is no separation between the community and the settlement—we are the community;" "The settlement is part of community life, it's not just an agency;" and "The settlement is the heart and soul of the community."

Community Embeddedness and Community Building: Current Challenges

The case made above suggests that a settlement house's embeddedness in the community gives it the potential to assume an important role in community building. However, a number of forces—lack of flexible resources being the most important but not the only one—hamper the settlement in fully implementing and leveraging this potential. These forces present several major challenges to the contemporary settlement.

1. Treating Community Members as Neighbors Rather Than Clients

Even as the settlement struggles to treat the participants in its programs and services as neighbors rather than clients, the majority of participants use one service and identify with that service rather than with the settlement as a community institution. This is also true for some line workers who feel as though they work for the public agency that funds and regulates the program, rather than for the settlement. Because public funding tends to target categorical "problem" populations or people who fit into rigidly defined entitlement programs, some staff report pressures on the settlement to become part of a service culture that many believe creates

dependency and undermines a sense of responsibility and control. This may be a particular challenge in neighborhoods with a high concentration of long-term welfare-dependent families whose experience with services frequently is not empowering. The point here is not that services are bad; indeed, they are often critical to the quality of life in a community. But there are many pressures to provide services in a way that is unconnected to or even undermines the settlement's community-building mission.

The pressures that engender a client mentality among participants and workers alike can emphasize a "maintenance and survival strategy targeted at isolated individual clients, not a development plan that can involve the energies of an entire community."[3] Individuals may be "serviced," but the potential that comes from the settlement's embeddedness in the community is not fully leveraged. Settlement executives report that too often staff and time limitations allow community strengths and resources to be overlooked; connections to other resources and networks to unravel; opportunities for participation and leadership to go unexploited; and/or a family's sense of belonging to and responsibility for the neighborhood to go unsupported to the degree to which the settlement aspires. From a community-building perspective, these are the forces that ultimately undermine the quality of life in a neighborhood.

2. Being of the Community as Well as in It: Governance and Community Ownership

A major vehicle for community input in the contemporary settlement are the advisory groups that are set up to guide and support particular services and programs. Some of these are mandated (e.g., the Head Start Parent Group) and others are voluntary; some take on a life of their own (e.g., raising money for specific projects), others operate more pro forma. They are seen as useful consumer mechanisms for program improvement, as well as for leadership development. But, because they are constructed around individual programs, they do not tend to foster identification with the larger agency, nor do they provide a forum for program development or a voice for community members not enrolled in a particular service.

The formal governance mechanism for the settlement house, its board, tends to draw heavily from a group of people who live outside the community but bring fundraising and other specific competencies to the organization. Board members are likely to be given the broad policy-setting and financial oversight of the settlement, acting—as one director put it—as the "guardians" of the long-term interests of the settlement, rather than being fully representative of the community. The board then relies heavily on staff to perceive and interpret community interests, as expressed through the advisory groups and other informal channels. In a smaller number of cases, settlement boards are drawn from the local community but identify additional mechanisms through which to build a fundraising capacity.

While there seems to be general consensus both within and outside of the settlement that broader and more meaningful resident participation would be advantageous for the settlement and for the community, efforts to set up mechanisms to accomplish this seem artificial or without clout, take tremendous staff effort, and/or never get off the ground. Clearly, funding regulations that take a mechanistic and rigid approach to establishing "appropriate" levels of neighborhood membership

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[3] Kretzmann, John and McKnight, John. Building Communities from the Inside Out. Evanston, IL: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research at Northwestern University, 1993.

are not likely to yield constructive solutions to this complex issue. But defining meaningful resident participation and testing new ways to achieve it are issues that deserve continued settlement board and staff attention.

3. Linking Individual and Family Change with Community Change

The settlement's tradition is one of both family support and community organization and reform, taking "case to cause." Because the resources available to settlements these days are largely restricted to support for direct service programs, which are often severely underfunded and carry burdensome reporting requirements, it is difficult for settlement leadership to maintain a larger analysis of the community as a whole and to devise—much less find funding for—a multi-tiered strategy that includes but does not overly rely on service provision. Keeping a view on the larger causes of resident problems and sources of strength in the community, and engaging in significant efforts to address and build on them respectively, takes considerable staff time and expertise.

Two fairly common examples of settlement house involvement in broad community development involve incubating new organizations or activities in the community and helping the community, and particularly its low-income residents, have a voice in a decision that will have significant impact on the community. Following is an illustration of the first situation:

As a neighborhood begins to experience gentrification, it becomes apparent that there is need for an organization to help maintain affordable housing for its current low-income residents. Lacking community leadership and/or in a community where everyone has complex and conflicting political agendas, the settlement is asked to fill this important need. Its deep roots and long history in the neighborhood make it the organization that is perceived to be fair and committed to the overall well-being of the community. The settlement then proceeds to develop and incubate a new nonprofit group that, after several years, becomes an independent organization in the community.

This is clearly an important contribution to the community and one for which the settlement is often uniquely positioned. In the process of carrying out this work, the settlement forms a range of new relationships with individuals and groups, thereby becoming further embedded in the community and consequently more accessible and potentially more effective. Similar examples of building and improving a community's institutional infrastructure can be identified in partnerships with local churches, civic and arts groups, and other community institutions such as hospitals and schools.

In the second instance, a major physical and economic redevelopment initiative is being planned in a community, generating many questions about how it should be configured and what the consequences will be for different groups in the community. Again, the settlement is uniquely positioned to "sit at the table" and try to ensure that the whole community's interests, including those of low-income residents, the elderly, children, and so forth are considered. The influence of a well-connected board and a long history of working on the community's behalf as well as a broad set of community networks (rather than the often narrow constituency of a single-issue advocacy group) gives the settlement a unique position in this community process.

In both these cases, there is little disagreement among settlement houses about whether such activities fall within their mission. However, both entail a tremendous amount of time and planning on the settlement's part—time that is often unfunded and competes with the organization's already underfunded service functions. This presents a significant dilemma for the settlement. In the long run, an organized community provides a more efficient context for carrying out a number of initiatives, ranging from mounting an immunization drive to reducing street violence to reaching families who most need early childhood or literacy services. An organized community can exert a level of social control and social support that complements and exceeds the reach of social services and discrete programs. But the settlement rarely has the flexible resources to invest in the broader development of the community, even though it is often uniquely positioned to do so and even though such an investment is likely to enhance the impact of the rest of its work.

4. Defining the Settlement's Constituencies and Social Change Agenda

Given the fact that many urban communities have long and deep divisions within them, with multiple community interests that compete for scarce resources, defining the settlement's constituencies is often difficult. Sometimes conflicts exist between the interests of various subgroups in the community and the settlement's principles and commitment to social justice. For example, "not-in-my-back-yard" sentiment may create hostility toward locating public housing or social services in the neighborhood. Identifying the common good and finding common ground within a larger social justice framework becomes a very complicated and sometimes "dangerous" task for the settlement, although it is one which can strengthen the community a great deal in the long run. This work could be defined as "relationship-driven" community development. It is a process that constantly builds and rebuilds relationships between and among local residents, local associations, and local institutions so that the community's ability to address its problems and to attract resources from the outside is enhanced.

One of the potential consequences of the frustration created by lack of time and resources, not to mention the difficulty of the task of relationship-driven community development, is that a settlement's vision can get so narrowed that problems and their solutions get defined largely at the case level, and staff efforts become focused almost exclusively on running (often excellent) service programs. This, in turn, makes it more difficult to view participants as neighbors rather than clients, to do with rather than do for, and to utilize and strengthen the community's informal and emerging leadership and assets. As settlements become more and more part of the government's social service system, reliant on it for revenue and destabilized by cutbacks, they face increasingly complex dynamics affecting their ability to be political advocates for change in government policy and practice. The settlement may then experience more difficulty exerting its power to advocate for social justice and/or it may need to find new strategies for using the power of its embeddedness in the community to leverage community change and social reform.

Discussion

For the contemporary settlement to address the challenges described above and define the role it aims to play in making the community a more supportive environment for residents, two complementary strategies appear necessary: (1) settlements need to attract new resources for community building, and (2) settlements need to consider how existing resources can be used to serve community-building functions, alone and in collaboration with other organizations. Given

their holistic perspective, settlements are well positioned to use a "community-building lens" as they view all their activities.

For example, a settlement in the Bronx took on an important community-building function within its existing program framework: it identified the lack of any organized sports for the youth in the neighborhood. At the same time, the neighborhood was experiencing both isolation and tension among its major ethnic and racial groups. The settlement launched a baseball league, organized teams, recruited parents to coach, and ultimately assigned 750 youth to 55 teams. With its community-building goal in focus, the settlement maintained control of the composition of the teams and deliberately mixed the youth ethnically and geographically, and recruited parents from different backgrounds as coaches. Parents and youth alike formed new relationships and ended up rallying around their teams, rather than their ethnic groups. (The enterprise was also expanded to other sports, although baseball has remained the largest draw.)

One of the important community-building functions that the sports league accomplished was strengthening cross-ethnic relations among parents that, in turn, led to such social benefits as involving more parents in the school's PTA and building a unified parental voice for school reform. It also attracted a more economically diverse group of youth and parents than were generally involved in the settlement's service programs, which, in turn, helped to offset the tendency in the community to view the settlement as a "place for poor people."

In practice, almost any settlement activity can be shaped by looking through a community-building lens, from technological innovation to the arts. A new project at United Neighborhood Houses, the Information Technology Initiative (ITI), will test out in a small group of settlements such technologies as electronic mail and information and referral databases. The goals are to promote communication among different community groups, to support community planning, and to enable the settlement house to be the first point of contact for anyone in the community who wants information about the community. Community residents, as well as settlement staff and board members, can participate in the planning and oversight of the settlement and its initiatives in a strong and informed way only when they have access to and understand relevant information about the community. Such information can also help residents be informed players in various other decisions in the neighborhood regarding schools, community planning functions, safety issues, etc. Thus, the use of technology becomes simply another tool to help organize and build the capacity of the neighborhood.

Similarly, arts programming in the settlement has played a unifying and community-building role for over one hundred years. The arts can draw new people to the settlement, develop new talents and abilities, and sustain diverse cultural traditions while fostering cross-cultural, cross-generational and cross-class communication and understanding. Nurturing artists and making their work accessible to new audiences is an important tradition of the settlement, one that serves to build the spiritual and aesthetic life of the community. By providing avenues for expression and shared experience, dance, drama, art, and music also can serve an empowerment function, both for individuals and groups.

Another point of entry for settlements into the community-building arena is community economic development. One of the consequences of a primary focus on specific services is that it

is harder to maintain attention to poverty's consistent and broader negative effects on the lives of children and families. Although economic status is one of the most powerful determinants of family and community health and well-being, the settlement has not devoted substantial attention to the economic well-being of its constituents, except by making sure that low-income families get the benefits to which they are entitled and, in some cases, by providing literacy, job referral, and job training programs.

The economic development role for a settlement in any one community depends on a whole host of conditions and opportunities, and on the comparative advantage of the settlement to initiate, inspire, collaborate with, and/or persuade others to carry out an economic development agenda. Kretzmann and McKnight encourage exploring the economic uses of noneconomic institutions (e.g. purchasing, hiring, and investment policies of a local hospital; developing new businesses, etc.); developing locally controlled credit institutions; and turning physical liabilities into community-building material (e.g., reclaiming vacant and abandoned space, making energy and waste resources work for the neighborhood, etc.). Two examples in the economic development arena include a strong credit union in East Harlem and an emerging vendor market in Roosevelt Park on the Lower East Side.

In many low-income communities where serious disinvestment has occurred, there are few basic community banking services, let alone significant financial institutions invested in local housing and commercial development. A settlement in East Harlem responded to this by helping to start a community development credit union which has grown over the last 36 years to have assets of over $4 million and a membership of over 4,000. Recently, the settlement opened a Youth Credit Union, which is managed by the youth themselves. Besides the financial services both credit unions offer, the depositor-owned institutions serve to build community confidence and control; they have played a part in the formation of the Community Coalition for Fair Banking (CCFB) in East Harlem. The settlement is a member of CCFB, which is composed of such groups as tenant organizations, business associations, religious institutions, block associations, housing development organizations and other nonprofits. To address community reinvestment and economic development issues affecting East Harlem, CCFB has helped business and housing groups find funding from banks, created a small revolving loan fund, and done research and education on bank mortgage lending and successful Community Reinvestment Act challenges.

Another example of a settlement's activity in community economic development involves the transformation of a derelict park on the Lower East Side into an emerging vendors' market. When it became clear that a significant organizing effort was required to make Sara Delano Roosevelt Park safe and hospitable for neighborhood residents, a community characterized by turf battles and political divisiveness turned to the settlement to take the leadership role in mounting such an effort. After sponsoring a successful arts festival in the park, involving volunteers in park clean-up and gardening, and forming a coalition of groups and individuals interested in the park, the settlement used its leverage in concert with the coalition to pressure the city to be more responsive in terms of police protection, and funds and supervision for the park. When the city decided to put a vendors' market in part of the park, the settlement was well positioned to apply for and be awarded the permit to operate the market. This community redevelopment initiative has the potential to serve a job creation and training function, generate

income for activities in the park such as a summer day camp, and provide the community with increased retail opportunities.

What is significant about these two community efforts is that they rely on and exploit the broad local ties of the settlement, and position it to establish a whole new set of relationships outside of the service arena. As important as the concrete impact of the economic development activities is or may be in each community, the act of organizing these efforts has put the settlements in touch with a much broader segment of the community than those receiving settlement services. They have had the opportunity to work with a more economically diverse group, to demonstrate their commitment to the whole community, and to be perceived in new ways by different groups within the community.

Gaining visibility, trust and credibility, in turn, positions the organization to fill other community-building roles. For example, the settlement in East Harlem described above has become a member of East Harlem Partnership for Change (EHPFC), a newly established group organized by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The goal is to build a powerful broad-based organization in East Harlem that can take on a variety of issues of concern to the community. Starting with problems related to local postal services and sanitation, EHPFC aims to develop a new cadre of leaders in the community. As a member of EHPFC, settlement staff and families are afforded many opportunities to work with others on behalf of their community and to develop new leadership roles for themselves in the process.

The rich potential that comes from collaboration is particularly apparent in this case, where it is unlikely that the settlement could have taken the lead in mounting an organizing effort on the scale of that being developed by IAF. Even if it had the resources, the settlement may not be the right organization in this community to assume primary leadership. Some community members might view the settlement as too "establishment," too rich, or too white (even though many staff people come from the neighborhood). A more effective role for the settlement in such organizing efforts frequently is to provide back-up support, to be the "silent partner" or simply to join the enterprise as one of many constituencies in the community. Another alternative that may make sense in some communities is the use of joint ventures between the settlement and a group that ultimately would assume leadership but is not yet strong enough to do so alone, or would bring other capacities and political capital to the partnership.

Both resources and training are needed to support a new cohort of community organizers at settlement houses. It takes enormous time and skill to do classic organizing, especially in communities that are chronically depleted economically and socially. Most existing social work education programs no longer have community organizing as a practice specialty or have not integrated into their generic curricula the skills and orientation needed for effective community work.

In the absence of significant new resources, however, there are still important contributions settlements can make to building community. The staff person who organized the baseball league described earlier was not a trained organizer, but rather a physical education staff member viewing his job through a community-building lens. Indeed, some settlements try consciously to "make everyone on staff an organizer" by instilling in each staff person an appreciation for the

community context in which their work is taking place, for the relationship of individual to community change, and for the values of social justice and reform. While the programs in which they work are regulated and confined by funding sources, staff are encouraged not to confine their actions, or—minimally—their thinking to narrow approaches. This means getting involved in issue networks, advocacy groups, or community coalitions and seeing the management of the settlement "out and about" in various community, city, and broader forums. This also means that the reward system and culture of the settlement should put a premium on creativity, on finding ways to focus on causes, not just symptoms, and on identifying and working with the strengths that individuals and the community as a whole bring to the situation. This is no little organizational task, given the ways in which workers are already stretched by overload, by the severity of the problems facing many settlement participants, and by their own sense of powerlessness to affect the "big picture."

Conclusion

Settlements have a long tradition of being embedded in and integral to their communities, of having broad community-building agendas involving the energies of the entire community, of "standing for" values of social justice and wholeness incorporating diversity. These traditions are increasingly difficult to build upon and exploit in the context of the pull to serve discrete populations, often defined by problems or needs, with targeted—though generally insufficient—public funding.

Working to make these services more effective, to deliver them more efficiently, and to advocate more successfully for enhanced funding to support them are important and necessary actions in which settlements are currently engaged. Despite the difficulties of this task in an environment that often seems indifferent or even hostile to the poor, settlements also recognize the need to reach back to their tradition and find creative new ways to view their work through a community-building lens.

John Gardner talks about how a community builds a "web of mutual obligation" that reconciles group purposes with individual and national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity.[4] He argues that, no matter how efficient delivery of social services to the poor becomes, "the poor will continue to feel helpless unless there is a rebuilding of community—so that they are part of a web of mutual obligation in which all give, all receive." Settlements have a tradition of building relationships that create community, of a "strengthening approach that releases the power that is in families and neighborhoods,"[5] of providing forums and opportunities for citizens to act—on their own behalf and on behalf of their community. These are traditions that need to be adapted to the realities of urban life today and incorporated into the daily work of the settlement, as well as targeted for special attention. While the challenges are great, the traditions are compelling and the alternatives insufficient.

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[4] John Gardner, "Collaborative Problem-Solving." Speech delivered to the National Academy of Public Administration, Chicago, June 4, 1994.
[5] Rolland Smith, "The Myth of the Settlement House." Speech delivered to the Conference of United Neighborhood Centers of America, September 30, 1994.