

Foundations of Practice

*Community Development
Core Competencies for
Extension Professionals in
the North Central region*

Community
Power Structure



Janet Ayres



Janet Ayres

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- Senior Fellow at NCRCRD developing *The Foundations of Practice* program
- 30+ year career at Purdue in Leadership & Community Development; served as program leader for 6 years
- Extension work focuses on helping rural communities deal with change through capacity building, especially in areas of leadership development
- Developed many state-wide leadership development programs. Currently working with State Dept. of Ag on a new program, "Four Cornerstones"
- Conducts training for Extension staff and other state agencies
- Past involvement in over 20 regional projects including the *Take Charge* program
- Teaches undergraduate leadership course and helped develop the College of Ag Student Leadership Certificate Program
- Developed leadership development programs in Poland and Russia.

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Learning Objectives

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- Learn how to identify key power actors and structures in the community and why it is important to know this dynamic.
- Understand key concepts of power, authority, leadership & social capital.
- Understand how concepts have changed, yet many people & institutions have not.
- Understand that community issues in today's reality call for a different type of power and leadership.
- Explore Extension's role.

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Discussion on Activity

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In your community...

- Who are the people who influence major community decisions?
- Why did you identify him/her?

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Traditional Characteristics of Power Actors

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- Majority in 40-65 age range
- Above average income
- Above average education
- Business/professional occupations
- Long-term residents
- Do not reflect the diverse population
- Control key resources in community

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Power Actors in Targeted Community

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In your targeted community, do you see the characteristics of key decision makers changing?

If so, in what ways?

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Why Is It Important to Know Key Power Actors?

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Community power actors determine...

- Which community issues are addressed, or not addressed.
- The outcomes of community decisions.
- Allocation of internal or external resources needed for community action.

Support or Block

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Importance of Understanding Community Power Dynamics

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In order to develop more inclusive, effective community programs, we need to know...

- Who has the *authority* to make community decisions.
- Who controls/influences *resources*.
- Who is not part of the decision-making process that *ought* to have a voice.
- How to build community power from both *within* and *outside* the community.

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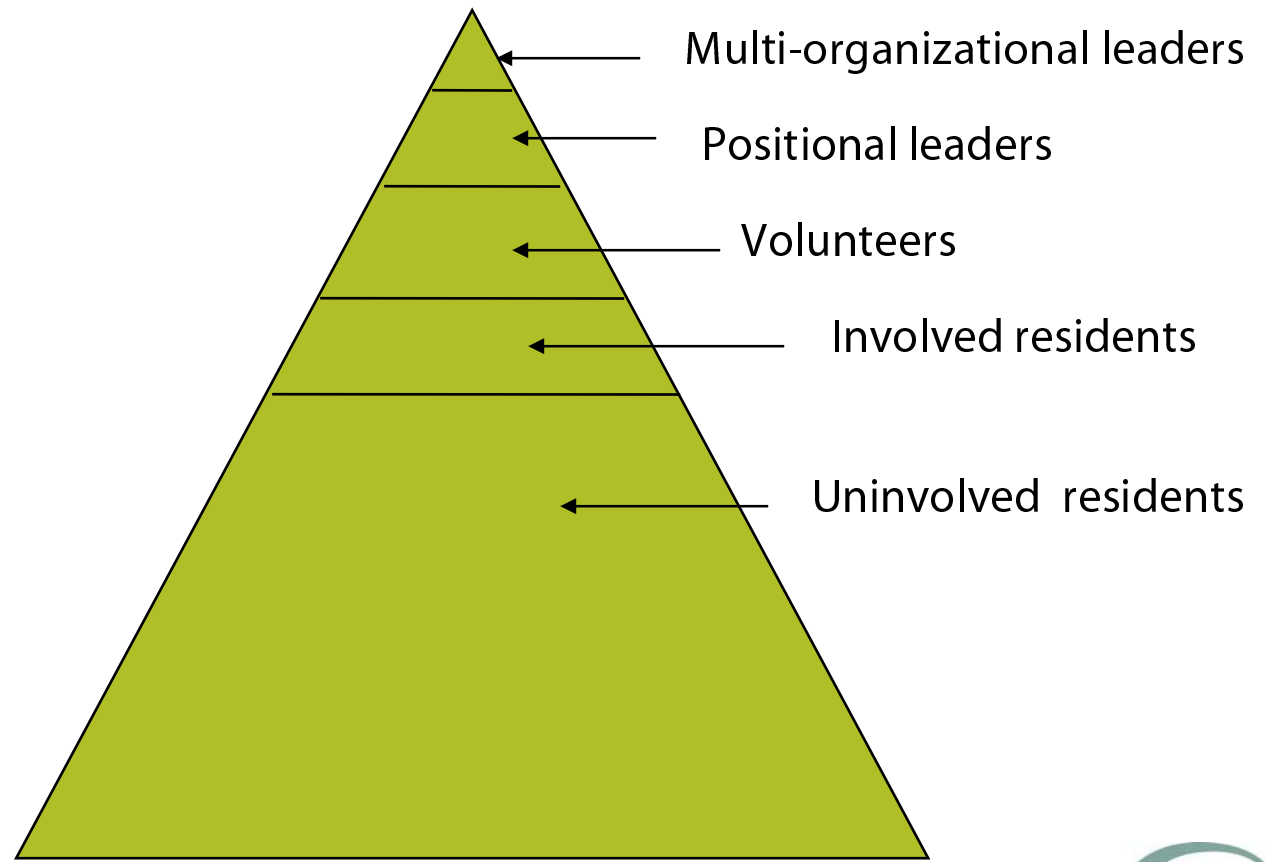
Community Involvement

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Identifying Community Power Actors

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Reputation

Those with the reputation for community power among knowledgeable members of the community.

Identifies behind-the-scene leaders.

Positional

People in organizational positions with *authority* to make decisions.

Identifies inter-organizational and positional leaders.

Event Analysis

People who participate most actively in community events.

Identifies volunteers.

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Community Power Structures

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The community's power structure is the way in which those with community power relate to each other.

- Pyramid
- Factional
- Special Interest
- Coalition
- Amorphous

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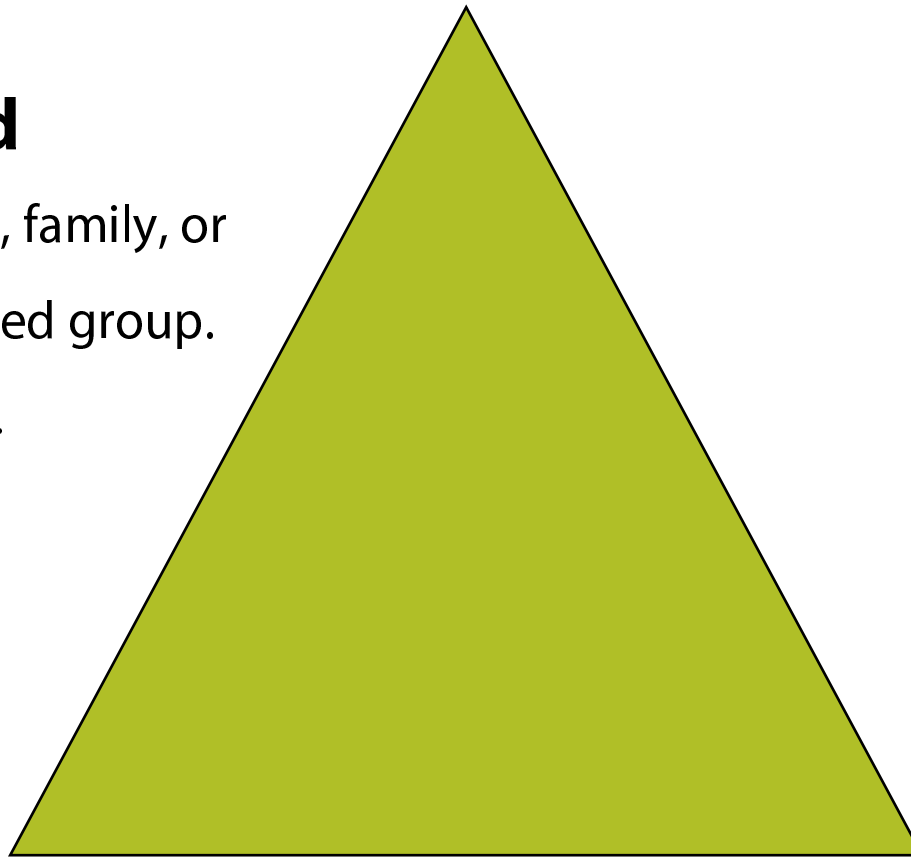
Types of Community Power Structures

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Pyramid

One person, family, or tightly knitted group.

A hierarchy.



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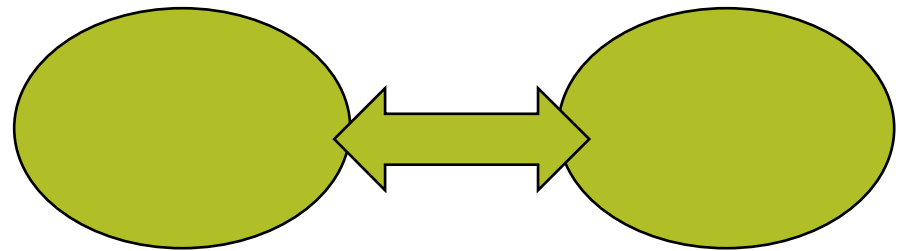
Types of Community Power Structures

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Factional

A community split by more than one group.

- Labor/Management
- Religious groups
- Political groups
- Others?



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Types of Community Power Structures

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Special Interest Groups

Single-focus cause

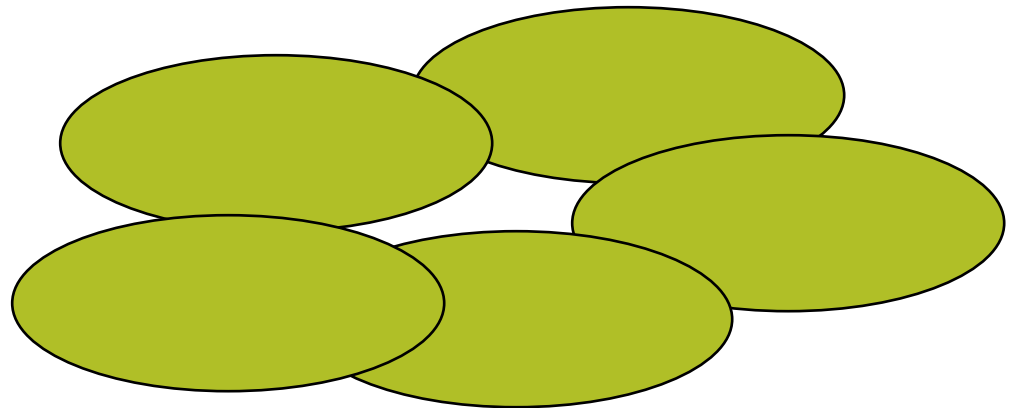


Types of Community Power Structures

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Coalition

Collaboration of
multiple groups



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Types of Community Power Structures

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Amorphous

Lack of clearly identified
power structure.

Often occurs during a time of
transition, especially if
there had been a
“pyramid” structure.



External Power

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While a community has internal power, power is also derived from external sources.

Can you identify some external power sources?



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Concepts Have Changed

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How we think about *power* and *leadership* has changed over the last few decades. Technology, the Internet and the globalization of our world have affected our lives in many ways, including leadership.

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Traditional Leadership

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- Focus on individual or few people with power
- More emphasis on authority of individual/position
- More homogeneous population
- Change occurred over longer time periods
- Limited involvement by residents
- Information not shared/processes not open
- Decisions made by those in authority

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Community Issues Today

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- Rapid change
- Complex – no simple solutions, multi-party
- Controversial – many perspectives
- Cross multiple jurisdictions – “no one in charge”
- Different levels of power exercised
- Different levels of knowledge exercised
- Strongly held values
- Largely left unmanaged

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Collaborative Leadership

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- Collaborative model of working together (across organizations and jurisdictions) on complex, controversial issues
- Leadership focus is on the process, not the individual
- Change & conflict are inherent to the process
- Process is inclusive of “stakeholders” in the issue
- Problem-solving is through deliberation and negotiation of interests
- Consensus decision making

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Contemporary Leadership

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“Leadership is the inspiration and mobilization of others to undertake collective action in the pursuit of the common good.”

-- John M. Bryson and Barbara C. Crosby

Leadership for the Common Good Fieldbook

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Shifts in Key Concepts – *Authority & Power*

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Related to the concept of power is *authority*.

Authority entails the rights, expectations, and responsibilities given to a person who occupies a *position*.

Examples: Mayor, county commissioner, editor of local newspaper. These individuals are frequently referred to as *community leaders*.

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Shifts in Key Concepts – *Authority & Power*

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Ronald Heifetz at Harvard says that those in positions of authority often find it difficult to be leaders because of the expectations the person and others have of the position and the resistance to change.

Authority is a *position*; leadership is a *process*.

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Power Over vs Power With

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Power – The ability to control or influence the decisions and/or actions of others.

The concept of power *over others* has changed to *shared power with others*.

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Components of Power

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Power...

the ability to do, to act, to get things done.

Power = Motivation + Resources

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Motivation to Be Involved

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What might **motivate** a person to get involved in the community?

- Be involved with others; social aspects
- Do something important; make a difference
- Use their skills or knowledge
- Obligation/expected – the “right” thing to do
- Feels good to help others
- Learn something new
- Other reasons?

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Resources to Be Able to Act

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Resources needed to take community action include:

- Volunteers, knowledge, skills, talents, time, labor
- Money, grants, loans
- Networks with resources outside community
- Natural resources
- Physical resources (land, buildings, equipment)
- Political connections
- Other resources?

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Power Exists Within Many Entities

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- Individuals
- Families
- Groups
- Organizations
- Agencies/institutions
- Community – the network/relationships among these units is referred to as **social capital**

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Social Capital

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The ability of a community to address its important issues, to take collective action, is related to the levels of relationships and trust that exist between individuals and organizations in the community.

Fundamental to effective community development work is the ability to engage more and diverse people who are motivated to be involved in the community with skills & knowledge to be able to participate effectively.

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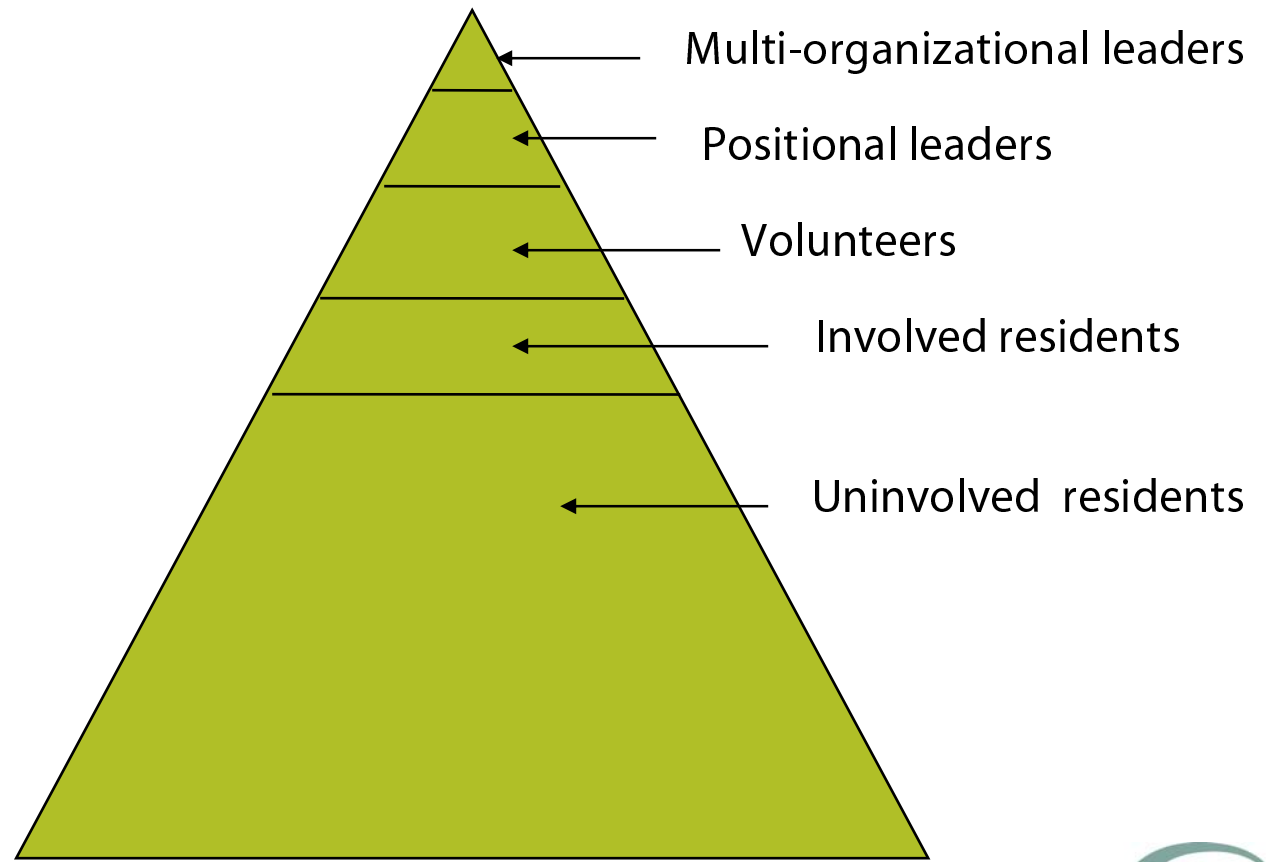


Community Involvement

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Why Do So Few Participate?

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Ability to Participate

- Don't have or take the time
- Don't have the energy
- Feel powerless, it won't make a difference
- Not knowledgeable of community issues
- Feel they lack communication or other skills
- Lack the self confidence or courage
- Have never been asked

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Why Do So Few Participate?

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Sense of Civic Responsibility

- Don't see community issues as their concern
- Not interested in community issues
- Feel powerless to make a difference

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Community Power

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Fundamental to building community power is:

- Building capacity to increase the skills and knowledge of individuals and organizations within the community
- Fostering trusting relationships between individuals and organizations
- Creating opportunities for people to come together to discuss important issues
- Creating frequent and open communication networks
- Creating transparent problem-solving and decision-making processes
- Creating access to external power sources (contacts, grants, information, etc.)

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Does a Community Have Power?

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A way to think about whether or not a community has power to act, is to assess the following:

- When a community faces a critically important issue, how is the issue resolved? What is the process? Who is involved? How is the decision made and by whom?
- Do people come together to discuss and debate community issues which affect them?
- Is there a sense of trust in the community?

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Challenges

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While individuals may embrace new concepts of leadership and power, they may not know how to implement the concepts. Different skills are needed today.

Institutions are slow to change and may be based on a traditional model of leadership/power.

Communities are composed of both, creating a **disconnect** between talk and action.

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Extension's Role in Building Community Power

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What are some things Extension can do to build a community's ability to address important issues?

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Summary

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- Communities are changing and so are power structures
- Concepts of leadership and power have changed; many individuals and institutions have not
- The rate of change, and the complexity and controversy of community issues today, calls for a new model of community power and different leadership skills
- Community power can be developed
- Extension can play a critical role

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Resources

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Next Session

SLIDE 40

Community Situational Analysis

October 28 and 29, 2008

1:30 to 3 p.m. CST



Anne Heinze Silvis

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The ability to analyze a particular issue or situation in a community from a historical, political, cultural and community context and determine Extension's role in the issue is an important competency of community development.

