ISJR - International Society for Justice Research

ISJR-Newsletter

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2nd Issue; November 2001, edited by Ron Cohen
3rd Issue; February 2003, edited by Dahlia Moore

Contents

Editor's Column

Dear Friends.

Following a brief note from the president, Faye Crosby, The June edition is divided into three segments.

The first is devoted to "Utopia Bound" A paper by Louise H. Kidder of Temple University. We hope to begin a debate/discussion and will be happy to include your comments, suggestions and replies in the next issue of the newsletter.

The second segment provides information about relevant and recent books and publications. The list was prepared by Ron Cohen. If you come across interesting books that are not on the list – please share the knowledge with us. We can also add a section for recently published articles – so send me your references for the next edition!

The last segment continues to inform you about the current research projects of those of our members for whom no information was provided in our last newsletter. If you haven't sent a description of your work, feel free to send it to me, and it will be included in the next edition.

As always – the updated list of members is enclosed. Karen Hegtvedt takes care of updates, so – please inform her of any changes (khegtve@emory.edu)

Next issue (that will appear – hopefully - in November) will include information about our June 29 - July 2, 2004 conference in Canada.

Please send all suggestions, comments or material you want to include to dmoore@colman.ac.il and we'll do our best to include it.

Dahlia Moore

Back

A brief note from the President

Dear Colleagues.

According to the ISJR bylaws, the President serves a term of two-years. Also, the president-elect is elected one year prior to serving as President. Thus, this summer, we will hold elections. We are fortunate to have two very well qualified candidates for President: **Claudia Dalbert** (Germany) and **Jim Olson** (Canada). In a short while, a paper ballot will be sent to all members. In the meantime, if anyone would like to nominate another candidate, including him- or herself, please send an email immediately to Faye Crosby at fjcrosby@ucsc.edu . All members of the executive committee and the two candidates are devoted to the continuing democratization of ISJR.

Faye Crosby

Back

Utopia Bound

Louise H. Kidder , Temple University

My unwitting fieldwork began in the summer of 1972 when I joined an intentional community. It is a community on the outskirts of Philadelphia founded in 1940 by 6 families from the city. They included social workers, socialists, Quakers, and a

stained glass artist. They wanted to live in community and live off the land if need be for they had experienced the Depression of 1929. The homesteading movement as described by Ralph Borsodi in his School for Living and his book Flight From The City :An experiment in creative living on the land gave them models for both community and self-sufficiency (Borsodi, 1933).

When my husband and I with our 1-year old son began membership visits in the fall of 1971 we were often asked, not in jest, "are you going to study us?" I always said, "No. I just want to live here." For 29 years that was true-I lived here and conducted research in Philadelphia or Tokyo, always studying social justice but never studying intentional communities. Then something happened that made me want to examine my community and others like it. A conflict developed over (of all things) septic systems. It called into question our assumptions about "communality," "blame" and "responsibility." I refrained from writing field notes or interviewing neighbors but I worried about what was "fair," who should be "responsible," and who was to "blame".

That was when I decided to study intentional communities. With a copy of the Communities Directory, a 45-day "See America" Greyhound bus pass, several plane tickets, and rental cars, I traveled to intentional communities from Pennsylvania to California and Massachusetts to Mexico. I kept my promise not to study my own but I drew on 30 years of living in community. When asked to explain who I was and why I wanted to visit I always referred to my own membership in an intentional community; I was a fellow traveler.

Gates and Boundaries
A critical legal scholar challenged me when I described my interest in communes and intentional communities-places I implied were idealistic, idyllic, left-leaning, right-living, and justice-seeking. "How are these communities any different from gated communities?" she asked. I struggled to say intentional communities "include" people for the right reasons and "exclude" only those who would defeat "community." But the question lingers and I have begun to see how "liberal" and "open-minded" intentional communities create boundaries, with or without gates. My focus changed from the original questions of "blame" and "fairness" to an interest in "bounded" communities with or without gates. Studying these boundaries might tell me something new about social justice, though for now they are a concern unto themselves.

Intentional communities all have boundaries that distinguish members from non-members, the "inside" from the "outside." They differ in the ease with which people can join or resign. They differ in the ease with which members can cross outside on a daily basis.   Some differences are a function of the economy of the community. Some are a function of the philosophy.

Bound by the Economy of a Community
Tax laws and the Internal Revenue Service have created strange bedfellows. They have placed a naturist (also called "nudist") community in the same category as a nunnery, and an experimental community with poly-amorous pagans in the same category as a monastery. These unlikely pairs share economic arrangements which place all property ownership in the hands of the community and limit private ownership to a few possessions and a small monthly allowance (e.g. $60 in one community). What these economic arrangements create are a shared experience of "voluntary poverty" and barriers to participation in the world outside the community.

For instance, leaving the community and going out on a Saturday night could consume half of a member's monthly allowance: a movie ticket, ($6-$9), a modest

meal ($10-$20) and mileage costs for the use of a community car ($5-$10). As one former member of such a community said, "relationships ... are the currency of a community." This person had resigned his membership several years earlier when his relationship with a woman in the community ended. It was impossible to "date" anyone outside the community on such a limited budget, and if the "dating scene" inside the community was not good, the alternative was to leave. The economy of the community creates a barrier too high to cross more than once or twice a month.

On the other hand, the economic constraints that limit daily travel facilitate extended trips to similar communities. Communal living and working make "exchanges" possible among the communities that belong to the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. A member can have a "free" working vacation in another egalitarian community. Several communities participate in a system of Labor Exchange known as "Lex". Someone from a northern urban community can live and work in a rural southern community or vice versa. The boundaries that limit travel to the outside world facilitate travel among these communities (provided one can hitch a ride or buy a bus ticket to travel the distance). The ease of visiting among egalitarian communities occurs not only because of their shared labor economies, but also their common philosophies. They belong to a network, they share friends, they understand how to live and work communally.

From All Things in Common to Private Ownership
Intentional communities are as varied as any other kinds of communities. No one philosophy, family pattern, or economic arrangement characterizes all. No one community is exactly replicated anyplace. Communities also change within their lifetimes in their patterns of ownership and philosophies.

In 1970 a hippie commune began as "a caravan of brightly painted school buses, VW vans, trucks and campers left San Francisco...These pioneers became Okies in reverse, trading the spectacular vistas of the Bay Area ...for the underdeveloped farmlands and blackjack oak forests of middle Tennessee" (Fike, 1998, p. vii). No image could be more different than this one from the founding of my community. My community archives have sepia-toned photos of the founding members picnicking on the farmland they hoped to buy in the late 1930's. The women wore black dresses, the men wore dark suits, they all had laced-up shoes and several wore hats as they surveyed the land and envisioned 80 homesteads. What did these laced up social workers and Quakers have in common with hippie communards in VW campers? Not much, until 1982.

The caravan and commune that landed in middle Tennessee grew to a population of 1500 or more. No one knows the exact census, but everyone knows it became impossible for the people working small enterprises on the farm and the small number of men working on construction crews in town to earn sufficient wages to support the farm and a thousand people. The community had a "Front Door" where seekers and visitors come by the hundreds. "They showed up happy and together, testy and on medications, able-bodied, frail, all stages of pregnant, some down-to-earth, some delusional, many with only the slightest idea of what we were about" (Fike, 1998, p.36).   The experiment in openness and communal caring grew and grew until 1982 when "the community was starting to collapse under its own weight (Fike, 1998, p.xi). Members who lived through that period and stayed, refer to the period as "the changeover." They speak with some nostalgia about the early years when 40 or 50 people lived in leaking army tents and make-shift shelters. Except for some founding members, they are glad they "changed over" from collective sharing of everything to private incomes, property houses, and payment of dues. No one I talked with referred to the thousand or more people as "free riders." They say instead that the situation became unworkable, and they risked losing

everything, including the land, to creditors.

The commune members who remained on the farm are now middle-aged and largely middle class. The Gatehouse of the commune, which was once called "The Front Door", is now closed at night. No one would call this a "gated community" despite the industrial strength front gate, but it is no longer a hippie commune either. Private ownership of incomes and private ownership of homes and businesses on the land saved the farm and changed it. Many members go off the land to work and come home to single-family homes at night. They can afford to go out on weekends or stay on the farm for community viewing of videos. Many send their children to public school rather than pay tuition to attend the farm's private school. Some outsiders who know about the community may characterize people from The Farm as "different" in positive or negative ways (a nurse in the nearest big town guessed I was staying at the farm because I appeared to have "an aura"). But for the most part, they are indistinguishable in the outside world, much like the people from my community. Our two communities now have a great deal in common, including the by-laws of my community which helped guide the farm members as they "changed over" from "everything in common" to private ownership.

Bound by Philosophy and Like-Mindedness
It is true as the critical legal scholar charged-many intentional communities are made up of like-minded people by virtue of being intentional rather than coincidental. This does not mean everyone thinks alike on all issues, but they are likely to share political preferences. (In my community we joke about having only one or two members who do not vote a straight Democratic ticket, and one of those attends Anarchist and World Federalist meetings. It is no wonder our community has not been warmly embraced in a largely Republican township.) They may also share other values that are part of a life-style (e.g., organic gardening, home schooling, and vegetarian cooking) though none of these is a criterion for membership.

Several members of a community listed in the Communities Directory disavow their listing on the grounds that they are not an "intentional community" because they do not want to live in seclusion with like-minded people. They value a freewheeling diversity of opinion and life style and regard themselves as an urban laboratory in the desert rather than an idyllic community in the country. They have considered deleting their entry in the Communities Directory so as not to be mistaken for an "intentional community" of similar people. Their wish to be freewheeling and urban was illustrated in a dispute that pitted the rights of a skate-boarder to use a public space adjoining another member's apartment. Aside from this generational clash that might have occurred as easily in an intentional community, the members of the urban laboratory in the desert seemed no less like-minded than the members of other intentional communities I have studied. They shared an interest in creating an alternative society, they were a small group (about 60 adults) most of whom worked and lived within the boundaries of their laboratory. Their residences and work lives are unlike those in the surrounding area. Their low rent and equally low salaries (roughly minimum wage) within the community make forays outside the community relatively infrequent. They have chosen to live in a unique place. It is not surprising that they share values and life-styles.

Is It Utopia Yet?
One of the founders of Twin Oaks, an egalitarian community asks Is It Utopia Yet? (Kat Kincade, 1994). Her work and my fieldwork in intentional communities suggest that the quest for utopian communities remains elusive but worthwhile. At worst, the quest may disappoint, at best, it will inspire, and it is guaranteed to be interesting. My travels and analyses have just begun. I look forward to continuing this work and I welcome others to join me.

Information about the Fellowship of Intentional Communities is available on the web at www.ic.org . The Communities Directory can be ordered online through that website and over 700 communities across the U.S. and around the world are listed there with their descriptions, phone numbers, and websites.

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Kat Kincade (1994) Is It Utopia Yet? Twin Oaks Publishing.
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Back

Applications

Applications to join ISJR are very welcome and may be addressed by e-mail to Faye Crosby (fjcrosby@ucsc.edu) including your curriculum vitae and a list of publications.

Back

Members Research Interests

Manfred Schmitt (schmittm@uni-trier.de)
I am currently involved as p.i. in four justice research projects. (1) Jürgen Maes and I are testing causal models of the effects of fraternal deprivation on well-being and protest. We use a large longitudinal data set on the psychological effects of the German unification.
(2) Jürgen Maes and I use the data from the German unification project also for testing our (Montada, Dalbert, Schmitt) relative privilege and existential guilt theory. Using structural equation modeling, we find, in support of our theoretical model, unique longitudinal effects of existential of West Germans on changes in solidarity with deprived East Germans.
(3) A third line if research is devoted to justice sensitivity as a personality trait. Several of our studies have shown that justice sensitivity is a powerful predictor of emotional reactions to and protest against injustice. Currently, we are looking more closely at cognitive processes that mediate these effects. Using the emotional Stroop paradigm, we were able to show that perceived injustice directs attention to negative information. The strength of this effect varies systematically with justice sensitivity. Using a dual task paradigm, we were able to show that justice sensitive individuals use more cognitive capacity than insensitive individuals for processing information about an unfair event. As a consequence, justice sensitive individuals have less capacity left for a second task.
(4) A fourth series of studies looks at synergistic interactions among functionally equivalent person and situation factors of justice behavior and justice judgments. In a series of studies, we were able to show that individuals with a favorable attitude towards equality as an allocation principle put less weight on performance and need differences between recipients. This effect is not additive. Rather, attitude and context amplify each other systematically.

Back

ISJR Members
Latest List - Word Document

Recent Books and Publications about and around Justice
(Gathered by Ron Cohen)

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Back

The End

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