Modifying Violent Communities by Enhancing Altruism: A Vision of Possibilities

Stuart W. Twemlow

A model for "diagnosing" and "treating" violent communities is outlined. The treatment consists of enhancing a form of pragmatic altruism by building relationships and mutual understanding between community leaders who are derived from task groups called "community stabilizing systems," defined as groups essential for peaceful, creative stability in a community. Two examples of an intervention derived from this theory are described.

KEY WORDS: community, violence, altruism.

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.

—Fredrich Nietzsche, from Thus Spake Zarathustra

Violence is as American as cherry pie.

—H. Rap Brown

Terry Sutton, a Persian Gulf veteran, reported his Gulf War experiences to a junior high school audience in Topeka, Kansas. He said, "My unit, we liked watching things go boom." He went on to describe how soldiers would deal with boredom by stringing up rats they had trapped on a fishing line, setting up scorpion fights and betting on the outcome, and shooting camels from the air for sport. He says, "It started as a joke." There is much that

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is obviously tragic in this unwitting self-revelation by a 20-year-old “child.” Nietzsche’s abyss has clearly looked into him. If violence is as American as cherry pie, we have something to be really concerned about: not the chaotic violence and cruelty of the inner city, nor the spine chilling yet perversely fascinating violence of the serial killer, not the tragic school shootings, and other extant and dramatic anarchic forms of terrorism, but a much more subtle violent mindset reflected in the violence of everyday life that has become part of our usual thinking; Nietzsche’s abyss has deeply affected all of us.

Those who deal with violence on a consistent basis like the police and the military often gradually develop numbing out defenses. That is, they consciously and deliberately switch their attention to more pleasant topics and make use of humor to defend themselves against the horror of their work or are counter-phobically fascinated by it and thus appear sadistic to others. Most U.S. citizens are exposed to an endless deluge of unmitigated violence in the media, on the Internet, and in print, which subtly and gradually helps shape a defensive “violent mindset” that reflects in the way we treat each other. I have observed that a person with a violent mindset spends much time trying to win at any cost and gauges personal success by economic and material gain. Thus, a social climate is created which fosters and enforces this mindset. This form of violence has a definable oncology—like a slowly growing cancer—eating away at the attitude of the individual, family, and friends and eventually, if shared, it becomes a community habit. Rosenberg’s (2000) concept of toxic energies specifies the destructive effect on individual and community mindsets of social models of violent behaviors. In his opinion, there are five ways in which social violence has an impact on how individuals function. He describes these categories as direct violence and its social impact like war, media-related indirect violence for example, news reports of violence, fantasy stimulating social violence, which could include media violence that has an individual idiosyncratic impact and may stimulate nightmares and other traumatic reaction. Vicariously encountered violence is now available in any video arcade and in many violent video games, and finally access to handguns, which of course have no other function (excepting pistoly, a sport) than to kill human beings.

There are thousands of articles in the literature that suggest the toxic effects of social (including media) violence influences individuals, especially

5 SSA Mary Ellen O’Toole, NIAVC, FBI, notes that the increase in domestic terrorism is characterized by an increase in a type of terrorism that has no political or ideological goal, but appears to be destructiveness for its own sake. The FBI considers the rash of school shootings to be a form of domestic terrorism.

6 Many profoundly democratic countries have greater restrictions on the classic freedoms than we do without feeling restrictions on personal freedoms. For example, in a Paladin Press catalogue advertising for sale a set of volumes on “How to kill,” the item notes “Not for sale in Canada.”
children. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to compare this ongoing debate to debates that cast doubts on the association of cigarette smoking with lung cancer. That, now of course is part of history, including the various ways in which cover-ups stimulated ongoing doubt about the evidence. In some ways it isn't unlike deceptive advertising; the public does not realize that from a scientific point of view there is always a statistical uncertainty even in the most certain situations, but to exploit that, by casting aspersions on the overwhelming evidence to the contrary seems to me to be a major public disservice. I am not implying that there is any media cover-up about violence but sociologists and political scientists, I am sure, are keeping such matters in mind.

"WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING; IT'S THE ONLY THING"

Vince Lombardi's famous comment is not just an expression of his fanaticism as a football coach but is felt by many as a description of our culture. It's not just that we are affected by the need to win but some lives are structured by such a need. Countless families that I have worked with over the years have not only inconvenienced themselves, but sometimes put themselves into considerable debt so that their children could have opportunities for training in numerous, overwhelming and tiring pursuits from soccer to hockey, piano to art, and the list goes on. I saw a family who took a second mortgage out on their house so that they could travel to their son's baseball games since he had a chance at a minor league team. I have treated more than one teenager with special skills in sports or forensics and debate, and they say to me in the confidence of the psychotherapy hour how much they hate the activity but are forced into it by the parents. If they don't excel, their parents are so obviously disappointed or angry that life becomes intolerable. More than one child has opined that their parent's interest in their excellence is more for the parent than for them. Children easily see through the competitiveness of the adult and feel trapped in this coercive, competitive dynamic. I have wondered more than once, if this competitive dynamic might reflect a narcissistic way of dealing with midlife issues. Winning, or the obsession with winning, becomes an illness quite frequently. News reports suggested that the Spanish Special Olympics gold medal basketball team in the 2000 Games faked mental retardation and acted as if they were impaired so they would be accepted as competitors in the Special Olympics. Can you believe that! They had gone to the extent of learning to answer intelligence and other screening tests that would indicate established impairment!

The epitome of ruthless competition is the "Dallas" style for profit corporate CEO. It has not always been this way. Eighteenth century Corporation
Law was designed to allow collaboration for the public good. Corporations were set up in ways so that individuals could share services like constructing bridges and roads for mutual benefit.

COMMUNITY MINDSETS

At every quarterly examination a gold medal was given to the best writer. When the first medal was offered, it produced rather a general contention than an emulation and diffused a spirit of envy, jealousy, and discord through the whole school; boys who were bosom friends before became fierce contentious rivals, and when the prize was adjudged became implacable enemies. Those who were advanced decried the weaker performances; each wished his opponent's abilities less than his own, and they used all their little arts to misrepresent and abuse each other's performances.

—Robert Coram, from Political Inquiries (1791)

Even several centuries ago there was a beginning awareness of the interpersonal dangers of creating a win–lose mindset in schools. As Game Theorists remind us, for best success, a win–win mindset will more likely ensure prosperity and happiness. The win–win Game Theory aspect of this mindset is a part of what I call pragmatic altruism. Table I compares these two mindsets.

As I have described in other writings (Twemlow, 1995a,b), a dialectical triangle of power struggles (the bully–victim–bystander dynamic) can

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<td>Left brain</td>
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develop, which creates by its very effect on the psychophysiology of consciousness an uncreative perseverative mindset. As consultative mediators in an intervention with a city council whose capacity to function was severely compromised, our team identified these dynamics, enabling a temporary but much freer and respectful interchange between the Mayor, Council members, and City Management (Twemlow, 2000a, b). The most destructive effect of the Bully–Victim–Bystander dynamic is a violent mindset with humiliation, creating a sado-masochistic fetishishing of the victim with regression, often accompanied by the vicarious applause of the Bystanding audience. Most of us realize that such a dynamic exists in schools. In a recent study, 10–20% of children in grades 3–9, in a sample of 10,000 children in a mid-sized East coast city, admitted to getting a thrill out of observing bullies in action. Careful self-examination shows that many communities have institutionalized such a violent bullying mindset, for example through blackballing, hazing, excommunication, and elitist groups like the country club (Twemlow, 1999c). Crime news is replete with degrading reports of sadistic cruelty to the weak and defenseless, to children, the sick, and the homeless.

Altruistic mindsets lead to community philosophies and broad attitudes to intolerance among people, and to care for the indigent and weak, including election of leaders reflecting these mindsets. The mindsets in Table I can be rewritten as philosophies depicted in Table II (adapted from Salk, 1983).

It is not my intention to decry the value of hard work nor the pursuit of excellence, but we might do well to heed the comment of Franz de Waal,

7 Analysis of findings from a survey of children from Springfield, Massachusetts school system. Eric Vernberg, Ph.D., University of Kansas, Clinical Child Psychology Program, 2006 Dole Building, Lawrence, KS 66047.
the famous Dutch animal ethologist who has published several volumes on his observations of a chimpanzee colony in the Burgers Zoo in Arnhem, Holland. He says,

Ever since Darwin, the biological spotlight has been on the outcome of competition—who wins, who loses. When social animals are involved, this is a dreadful simplification. Antagonists do more than estimate their chances of winning before they engage in a fight; they also take into account how much they need their opponent. The contested resource is simply not worth putting a valuable relationship at risk. And if aggression does occur, both parties may hurry to repair the damage. Victory is rarely absolute amongst interdependent competitors whether animal or human...

(de Waal, 1989a, p. 270)

Five centuries ago, Machiavelli described the power games of Italian princes and popes, showing that power games per se (with politics defined as social manipulations to secure and maintain influential positions) can be positive, giving logical coherence and even democratic structure to communities. In comparing chimpanzee politics to human politics, de Waal (1989b) says,

All parties search for social significance and continue to do so until a temporary balance is achieved. This balance determines the new hierarchical positions. Changing relationships reach a point when they become frozen in more or less fixed ranks. When we see how this formalization takes place during reconciliation, then we understand that the hierarchy is a cohesive factor, which puts limits on competition and conflict. Childcare, playing, sex, and cooperation depend on the resultant stability. But underneath the surface the situation is constantly in a state of flux. The balance of power is tested daily and if it proves too weak, it is challenged and a new balance established. Consequently, chimpanzee politics are also constructive. Human beings should regard it as an honour to be classed as political animals.

The process of reconciliation, with forgiving, is a basic pattern in social animals. Conflicted individuals should become friends again. Similarly conflicted communities can be repaired. Factors that make this difficult depend on the individual problems of the leaders and those in key positions in communities. For example, anger that has not been worked through, can be turned into neurotic guilt, and often inhibits the actions of the individuals who are otherwise strongly motivated to community action. Guilt with depression often masochistically immobilizes the individuals' propensity to become part of the move toward repair and pragmatic altruism within the group.

De Waal considers forgiveness and reconciliation to originate in monkeys and apes, and he feels they have engaged in reconciliation and forgiveness for more than 30 million years. Conflict amongst animals is seen as primarily adaptive. Conciliatory gestures and patterns common with apes (and humans) such as stretching out a hand, smiling, kissing, embracing, and so on, are behaviors aimed at reducing violent behavior. The pattern of constructive fighting is to reestablish the hierarchy, not to kill or humiliate. Human communities have gone far beyond that point since they are
influenced by a pervasive, violent social mindset and a seething cauldron of unconscious influences and impulses. As not all of us can undergo treatment to gain insight and thus control over these destructive impulses, it is proposed in this paper that there be a reconsideration of a pragmatic form of altruism together with a model for community functioning, converting a violent community to a more peaceful and healthy one. Research has shown that positive messages portrayed on television have twice the influence of negative messages (Friedlander, 1993). There is hope yet!

This thesis suggests that altruism be seen not merely as a loving humanistic quasi-religious gift for saints, but as a necessary requirement for all of us living in complex communities. That is, altruism has not only a selfless, but also an egoistic, self-focused quality. I believe both are necessary for complicated interrelationships to work efficiently and effectively in peaceful and healthy communities. However, I have noticed in affluent communities where there is a great deal of parental involvement in schools, the concern of the parents has a narcissistic tinge and parental involvement does not enhance school spirit; it is quite the contrary.

One reflection of this mindset in communities is that they lack diversity. For example, even though homicide rates may be low, burglary rates are often high because poor people visit these communities to rob them. Communities need socioeconomic and ethnic diversity as a reminder of the real world and they need to learn to deal with it rather than shutting it out. For example, one community I worked in sent children with learning and behavioral problems to schools in other cities. Shutting out people who deviate from the wished for social norms creates a hyper-vigilant artificiality in such communities, whose efforts are obviously doomed to failure.

In this paper, I will review models of altruism derived from selfless leaders and more pragmatic forms derived from the study of evolutionary, ethological, and psychological literature. I will then summarize an experiment, which put into operation a model based on altruism, in a mid-sized community in Jamaica, and finally, I will outline the program on a similar experiment in a mid-sized community in the Midwest.

WHAT IS A VIOLENT COMMUNITY?

If a community can be viewed as having certain beliefs that drive cultural attitudes and ultimately the action of its members, then a comment overheard from a 9th grade student, “I feel so bad. I don’t know if I want to kill every damn person I see—or myself.” (Cohen, 1999) must be understood as a symptom of certain prevailing community attitudes, especially in the light of the bizarre epidemic of violence in our schools.
Remarkably little has been written about the psychological functioning of large groups (more than a few thousand people), especially unconscious aspects. Freud in 1920 studied the church and the military from a theoretical perspective. He observed what has been seen on countless subsequent occasions, that large groups often regress more intensely and quickly than one or two people together. Leaders of large groups often exert a dramatic and pervasive effect on the members who appear to lose their critical faculties and may follow and support leaders who, under normal conditions, would be rejected, like cult leaders, including Adolf Hitler, Sadam Hussein, and Jim Jones. For example, consider the human shield of ordinary citizens that Sadam Hussein was able to easily collect around himself when he felt persecuted by the outside world as compared to when he often felt able to take on the world; a more usual political posture for him. When a group functions this way, there is an increase in impulsivity, feverishly held agendas press for action, and stereotyping of group members occurs, members who often subjugate their own personal goals for the ideals of the leader. Perhaps even more so than in small groups, the role of the leader is central to the way in which large groups function. Little is known about the unique characteristics of leaders of large groups, although there has been extensive research on the functioning of small groups. Bion (1959) suggests that in small groups there are three types of leaders. It should be noted that such leaders could be observed in a more complex way in larger groups, although Bion never directly applied these writings for large groups. He hoped for this application: caring and reliable leaders reflecting a basic need for a group to depend on somebody (dependency assumption); a frightening ruthless leader reflecting a basic unconscious need for the members to be protected from and led against frightening enemies (fight/flight assumption); and a messianic, omnipotent leader who could care for the group without the group having to understand or participate or work, in other words, a leader with magical skills (pairing assumption). These are not static leadership styles, or even personality traits; they are ways in which groups create attitudes within leaders.

In my work with community consultation, on more than one occasion, I have come across community leaders who feel pressured by the group to act in ways that do not reflect their inner feelings or desires. By mechanisms understood in psychoanalytic thinking as projective identification and counter-projective identification, the feelings of the group can become internalized by leaders who are then molded into the broadly shared omnipotent and unconscious assumptions of the group members. Thus, it is not just crazy leaders in cults who create mindless regression in the followers, but that the followers themselves unconsciously pressure the leader by their own unconscious and unmet needs. It is my hypothesis that a particular mindset we have described
as violent creates psychological and physical structures within a community that lead to unhappiness, violence, chaotic leadership styles, and lack of economic prosperity. Devine (1996) illustrates this in his sensitive ethnographic study of seriously violent schools in New York City, describing the mindsets of security guards and school administrators who support and continue to promote a spiraling fearful preparation for violence which of course interferes with the learning environment. He describes security guards and teachers as highly stressed, and in some schools, one or two learning periods each day are spent passing children through metal detectors. The whole school environment has qualities of a prison and a war zone. The small school movement (Wasley, Gladden, Holland, King, & Powell, 2000) is a partial attempt to deal with one aspect of this violence that rises with increasing density of population. There are of course many other factors. Elijah Anderson in his book, Code of the Street, emphasizes structural factors. In many deteriorated neighborhoods there is an urgent need for services and help to counter the “strong economy” created by the drug trade. Politicians are not alone to blame! This spiraling cycle in deteriorating communities creates further traumatization of its members, whose mindset becomes less and less capable of a broad perspective and compassionate functioning, thus creating a community group that becomes less and less cohesive. When the cultural context of the group begins to break down, cities become less attractive, more defaced, not only by graffiti, but also by polluted atmospheres, and by poorly designed, ugly buildings. Individuals within that community have less pride in their environment and they begin a process of badmouthing their own communities, creating further deterioration in morale. As community pride deteriorates, charitable organizations also cease to function effectively with an envious and greedy spoiling of the cultural context of the community's knowledge, traditions, and attitudes. Nothing is valued or precious except money. Community tradition and pride are ruined deliberately, and, even stupidly. The community may develop rules, which often are meaningless, confused, and serve only an elite few. Crime flourishes and ruthless businessmen emerge. It would be stupid to blame leadership alone for such deterioration, since there is a dialectical relationship between community and the leaders it produces. Each is dependent on the other for its destructiveness (and constructiveness).

The deeper psychological meanings of this deterioration has been thoroughly conceptualized by Volkan (1999a,b,c) in a series of papers that deal with large-group identity derived from his lifetime of experience as a psychoanalytically informed diplomat in many different parts of the world. He likens the identity of the large group to a tent that covers the community of individuals who reside in it, giving an identity that engenders "a persistent sense of sameness with others in the large group—it provides comfort, belonging and protection" (p. 36). He explores in these papers how this fabric
of large-group identity is maintained by several "threads," including shared traditions covering uniforms or culturally characteristic dress, for example, the kilt for a Scotsman, the cowboy hat for a Texas boy. These symbols reflect ways in which the individuals in a large group use symbols and celebrations to remind themselves of these shared identifications. Another thread is that of the familiar enemy. As Volkan points out, there is a universal tendency to reject unwanted elements of oneself and to project them onto an enemy who becomes an outsider, but yet a negotiable (familiar) enemy, with whom such negotiations can strengthen and reinforce a cultural identity, as illustrated in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which remains potentially resolvable. As long as the enemy is familiar, resolution of the differences is possible. When the enemy is "not me" (i.e., alien, e.g., the Jew to Adolf Hitler), then dialogue and negotiation is impossible. Chosen glories and traumas derived from the history of the group also mold how the tradition is passed on to young people and how their connection with their community is molded. Astute political leaders can make use of distortions of such chosen glories and traumas, as Volkan (1999a) points out in the recent case of Slobodan Milosevich in Serbia.

The fabric of a community requires time to develop. In our country, we have not had a great deal of that time in comparison to, for example, European countries with several thousand years of history and tradition. This is also part of our problem. Our traditions are not as established as they might be, and our rigid emphasis on individualism and the democratic right allows each of us to walk to the beat of his/her own drum which has prevented much of the development of a national identity or a secure sense of sameness in Volkan's sense. Such an identity might be seen as infringement on the First Amendment freedoms. A tent, although of strong fabric, may not be expertly woven if there are too many seamstresses or tailors, and the defects in its structure can be easily demonstrated.

In our work in Jamaica, and in several communities in the USA, we have observed the following attributes of violent communities, where a tough-minded, unforgiving violent mindset of its leaders and members has severely damaged the cohesiveness of the community (Twemlow & Sacco, 1996, 1999). They can be summarized as follows:

1) **Anti-intellectualism.** Thinking and artistic and humanitarian intellectual pursuits are seen as gentle arts, antithetical to an everyday struggle for survival. George Santayana (1931) coined the term "genteel tradition" in a series of lectures at Berkeley, embodying his anger at the way in the US the arts and humanities are considered inferior to science and more for entertainment and recreation. In damaged communities, its members exaggerate this into a caricature of
the arts with crude contempt for sophisticated and refined thinking. Such communities demand of its leaders an action-oriented, short-term focus, including stopgap solutions rather than solutions that require reflection, future planning, and abstract thinking. For instance, politicians under these conditions often become very confused and waste their energy solving tiny problems with great difficulty and debate, satisfying no one, as we have found in consultation with city governments (Twemlow & Sacco, 2001). Such a leadership attitude often suggests solutions that use force and excessive money that is sometimes spent on weaponry. A federal firearms dealer once described to me how in small Midwestern towns, the full city budget for the police department would be spent on sophisticated weaponry without even enough money to train the police in the use of the weapons!

2) Personal power comes from violence. Altruism is seen as weakness. This attitude is fostered and facilitated by organized crime and follows naturally from the tough-mindedness and materialism of a violent mindset. Competition, far from producing excellence, produces a sense of triumph and excitement for the winner. Losers become resentful and angry and retaliation and revenge are possible, and inevitable. Altruism is felt to be only possible for saints, not for the average man. Citizens require protection from each other and protection is sold by organized crime. Often those representing law and order become corrupted by the situation.

3) Immediate versus delayed gratification. Communities that are violent pay little attention to the way they look. Buildings are patched up, new buildings are ugly and of poor quality. The leadership makes inadequately thought-through decisions. For example, on more than one occasion, decisions for expensive building projects have been made before realizing that the supported projects are not possible for zoning or financial reasons. Even though such projects represent the desire of the leader, insufficient time has been spent in investigating projects thoroughly, as there was extreme pressure to immediately resolve the problem. Such communities then become of little interest to newcomers as a living environment and of even less interest to those who want to make investments and develop industry.

4) Lack of stable political and family systems. Leaders of such communities may be feared, but are not respected. The leadership structure is often seen to be corrupt and people become hopeless that it could ever be effective. Often, the nuclear family deteriorates or if it maintains itself, it is corrupt. As the ever-sarcastic Kurt Vonnegut once
pointed out, who would wish to maintain a nuclear family where the nuclear parents are having affairs, drinking and abusing their children? Such corrupted nuclear families no longer function to provide the feeling of belonging and stability that typified the traditional family. Of course, many well-meaning parents in two-income families suffer from exhaustion and burnout in their attempt to eke out an existence. How can they engage their children?

5) *Powerlessness, despair and anomie.* The cycle of violence and deterioration produces a feeling of powerlessness, apathy, and lack of purpose. Individuals are not connected and traditional centers of community activity fail to function. Community centers, boys and girls clubs, charitable organizations, community service groups, and churches lack attendance, leadership, and altruistic goals.

6) *Escapism as a response to helplessness.* In violent communities there is an increase in escapist pursuits, for example, drug and alcohol addiction as temporary ways of handling feelings of powerlessness and anomie. In Jamaica, for example, alcohol was an accepted part of a culture, which had rudimentary drinking laws. Police stations often had fully functioning bars where policemen used alcohol to deal with the constant stress of their work. Such communities also usually have few healthier forms of escape, with poorly supported sports leagues, poor quality recreational activities, and inadequate parental support of schools.

7) *The bully–victim–bystander relationship dominates.* One estimate of the degree of regression in a violent community is to assess the frequency of bullying, sexual harassment, and weapons violence in schools and in the workplace. Although there are no official estimates of bullying in U.S. schools, there is anecdotal evidence of widespread harassment and bullying in schools and in the workplace, fueled by the already described destructive dynamics of the bully–victim–bystander relationship (Twemlow, 1999a,b).

8) *Denial of violence.* As part of the coercive power dynamics of a violent community, there are often struggling attempts to deny that violence because of its embarrassment to all. Communities frequently deny violence by implying that violent individuals are not like them. This *denial* allows a person to distance himself or herself from any responsibility for the problem. Denial may also involve an *oversimplification* of the situation, for example, jailing of violent criminals to deter violent crime. Continuing the use of force when it does not work,

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8Kurt Vonnegut in an open lecture to the Lawrence Community, Lied Center, February 9, 1998.
represents a *stereotyped* response pattern, and, *over-generalizing* a response to situations where it doesn’t apply can produce serious problems. For example, simple use of force to quell a riot in a school doesn’t mean that in a complex community the use of military to suppress force will be successful, as Jamaica ruefully discovered. Many schools have adopted the patterns of the street cultures in dealing with students’ behavior. For example, school administrators may talk about having a “sweep” of the corridors to prevent hall walking just as police narcotic squads have “sweeps” of the streets or parks.

9) *Disconnection and corruption of the police.* The police in violent communities are very often under fire and become more and more alienated from those whom they are supposed to protect. Community policing efforts become trivialized or nominal, and thus, unsuccessful. Police corruption increases with the populace calling police derogatory names like “pig” (USA) or “animal” (Jamaica). Similarly, the police maintain an angry attitude to the community, considering it ignorant, selfish, and unresponsive. These misperceptions can lead to an increase in violent crime if only due to the lack of cooperation between citizens and police in the apprehension of criminals. Police cannot function without support of the citizens.

10) *Population increase and redistribution.* As communities deteriorate, populations move into areas where the land is not carefully policed. Shantytowns emerge. Increasing numbers of individuals sleep on sidewalks, as is occurring in cities like San Francisco. Squatters then become a fixed part of every city street.

11) *Lack of social welfare programs.* The tough-mindedness of violent communities always undermines social welfare programs and the leaders who dominate such communities frequently look very negatively on any assistance to the weak and the poor, considering them freeloaders and lazy.

12) *Criminal enterprises.* flourish in such communities, as is occurring in epidemic proportions in the Balkan countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Countries like Kosovo are functioning essentially in a state of anarchy.

13) *Abuse and rejection of the vulnerable.* Socialized care of the young, the old, and the disabled becomes much less tolerated in such communities. Instead, care of their older citizens is contracted out to nursing homes and programs emphasize the capacity to work and a sense of purpose as prerequisites, thus ignoring and denying the regressive impact of these violent community characteristics on many citizens.
14) Gender, ethnic, and religious insensitivities. Violent communities become intolerant of differences based on gender, race, and religion. Domestic violence and conjugal and date rape increases. Hate groups emerge, as has occurred in Topeka, Kansas, with the activities of a religious cult, which demeans and degrades the image of the community, both to its own citizens and to the world. Simplistic rigidity can effect decisions in a remarkably pervasive way. For example, Kansas School board’s decision to change the way evolution is taught in schools to one that gives less strength to scientific proof has made Kansas the laughing stock of the world. These 14 factors are summarized in Fig. 1.

Applying them to your own community is often an eye-opening experience. It is easy to see very deteriorated communities as nothing like ours. But most individuals who live in communities where the crime rate is high and where economic prosperity is confined only to a small elite class can identify many, if not all, of these factors. What then, are some possible responses and ways of intervening? We have developed a model for such an intervention (Twemlow & Sacco, 1996), which was successful in a mid-sized community in Jamaica, and which in various ways is being applied in the

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"The Rich Get Richer & the Poor Get Poorer"

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Growing Healthy Children Requires Good Enough Parenting in a Good Enough Village

**Fig. 1.** How the 14 attributes of violent communities interact.
United States. The model depends on a theory of how communities function that does not place as much emphasis on the political power of the individual elected nor on economics, but instead on the leadership qualities of the four community-stabilizing systems, now to be described.

CONVERTING VIOLENT COMMUNITIES TO PEACEFUL, HEALTHY ONES

Violent communities have some positive characteristics, not the least of which are that many of its citizens desire very strongly to change. We were able to make use of that quality to produce quick change in interventions in Jamaica, where tourist revenue had dropped to an all-time low because of violence. The very desperateness of the situation there, and in other communities such as occurred in elementary schools we assisted in the Midwest and on the East Coast (Twemlow, 2000a), motivates citizens to change, especially if their income or children are hurt.

To develop a community where the quality of life is high and where citizens can have time to reflect, develop a strong tradition, a sense of belonging and cohesiveness, and to grow up in safety and prosperity is a complex and not well-understood task. The center of this model is the way in which the four community-stabilizing systems work together catalyzing what we have called pragmatic altruism and its offshoot substructures. Figure 2 depicts this pattern of functioning diagrammatically.

In summary, community leaders emerging from these four community-stabilizing systems (CSS) must catalyze change in the substructures in the community at large for the community to be able to function peacefully and with prosperity. These four systems include public safety, education, health and social services, and spirituality, and embody the heart and soul of a functioning community. When any one of these four domains becomes infected with violence, there is a weakening of the community's ability to decrease impulsivity and to ensure positive community action and coordination. Public safety is maintained by the symbols of the police, the military, fire, and prison staff. The soul and heart of the community is enhanced through the spiritual rootedness of its members in various altruistic ways—church leaders being one representation, but also leadership in community organizations that have chosen altruistic or spiritual purposes, like Rotary, Lions, and other groups. Education is considered by most the lifeblood of any community and the way a community invests in its own future. But the effects of education, particularly its economic benefits, are hard to measure directly, and thus seem like a high-risk investment. A chance must be taken and a great deal must be invested in our teaching systems, not only in schools, but
also in continuing education and schools of higher education. The health and social services of a system are also central to its functioning. Socialized and private systems of care in an integrated, cohesive network are essential for any community to function. In this model, then, the leadership of the community is distributed amongst these four CSSs that must work together and where structures must be set up to ensure this happens. A project in a midwestern town has adopted this model. There is often a remarkable lack of shared knowledge about how these systems function and much can be gained by having regular meetings to develop ongoing relationships as a basis for successful interaction. Exercises are helpful; for example, one CSS developing solutions for the problems of another or church leaders may take

The Healthy Community Initiative, Topeka, KS.
on a problem of how to integrate community policing into a ghetto area in a safe and creative way. Saunders (1999) points out, "The human dimension of conflict must become central to peacemaking and building peaceful societies. Only government can write peace treaties, but only human beings—citizens outside government—can transform conflictual relationships between people into peaceful relationships" (p. xvii).

Development of relationships is the key to ongoing solutions for highly sensitive problems. It is not a matter of moving money from account to account, nor of rebuilding physical structures. The spine of the community lies in very sensitive, highly personal issues that require development of understanding and ongoing human relationships between its members, no less in those who govern and lead it. Ideally then, this group of four central leaders will develop a close personal relationship with each other that is collaborative, rather than competitive, and which keeps a central focus on nonblaming and mutual problem solving. Relationship building requires quick and clear communication. The CSS leaders must develop solid relationships with public communication systems, newspapers, television and radio, and the Internet as a basic and essential network of communication systems that, if not involved, can become needlessly obstructive and antagonistic. It is difficult for elected officials to focus on the community as a whole. The usual method of election from districts often produces leaders who are not suited to collaborative work. Much broader perspectives are needed to govern and a central group CSS could provide such guidance. In some ways, pragmatic altruism functions much like the blood circulation in the human body. Blood circulation is necessary for all of the organs to function and blood must be distributed to the very smallest cell in the body for the body as a whole to remain alive and healthy. There are many details that could be listed about how the four CSSs produce healthily functioning substructures as listed in Fig. 2. Many stories can be told of difficult problems facing those creating such a healthy community, rather than an enmeshed network of substructures. Those who follow this model comment very early that what seems to be missing are political and economic CSSs. My theory takes issue with that attitude. Instead, I feel that the political structure of a community and the success of its businesses including the stability of its economic foundation are a result, not a cause, of the way in which the four community-stabilizing systems function. Stable politics and a strong economy can exist in high-crime-dominated cities or in dictatorships maintained by coercion.10

10Singapore is a country with a low crime, drug abuse, and prostitution rate but is ruled by a dictatorial government using threat of severe punishment if there are infractions on its edicts. A colleague of mine visiting Singapore saw a group of soldiers berate an unshaven, drunk man who was waiting in line for a movie ticket. He was roundly abused in front of the crowd and told to go home and clean up before he could hang out with good citizens. This degree of
The creation of a healthy, creative, and connected community is, of course, further complicated by the apparent denial of other antihumanitarian trends in our country including forms of “institutionalized violence” at the Federal level exemplified by a reluctance to deal with many issues, such as the need for a form of health insurance for the many millions of workers who cannot afford it but make too much money for federal aid programs. The problems inherent in extremes of wealth have also been related to increasing violence. Yet, for the four CSSs to function, there clearly must be involvement of politicians, businessmen, and economists. This is not to trivialize or minimize the importance of politics or economics, but simply to point out a conceptual shift in how communities are seen to best develop stable political structures and thriving businesses. In communities with a violent mindset too much control by politics and business factions can lead to a downgrading of the four CSSs, which can be dismissed as esoteric and idealistic.

THE HUMAN ALTRUISTIC RESPONSE

Ironically, it might be that human altruism began on the field of battle! In *Will to Power*, Fredrich Nietzsche in 1884 said, when describing the order of rank in his Utopia, that the passions of the creator of the New World “must be elevated to the heights—we must cease from carving marble! The exceptional and powerful position of these creatures (compared with that of all princes here too): the Roman Caesar with Christ’s soul” (translated by Kaufmann & Hollingdale, 1967). This tough-minded gentleness suggests virtues embodied in all cultures where a warrior class had high social status. Such “gentle warriors” were used as a model of strength, courage, and spirituality for the young, including the samurai of ancient Japan, the medieval knights of England, and the mythic warrior class of many, if not most cultures in the world. Modern soldiers do not embody these qualities because our culture has emphasized the violent mindset approach to war, wherein the elimination of the enemy as quickly and efficiently as possible is the goal. The human agents of that objective become dehumanized instruments of destruction. Instead, in the era when wars were more honorable, the goal of war was reestablishment of a social hierarchy (as de Waal suggests in chimpanzees), with acknowledgement of the value of the enemy through codes of conduct that protected the enemy by demanding respect, self-control, honor,

*Infraction on civil liberties would not be tolerated in the US. Other examples are available in dictatorships like Communist China.*

*11 James Gilligan, M.D., personal communication. Although this correlation is well documented in many studies, recently authorities raise questions using what appears to be vague and unreliable crime statistics.*
loyalty, courage, gentleness, and kindness in the conduct of war (Nitobe, 1975). This attitude to conflict, in the win–win sense of game theory, recognized the potential value of the enemy to the culture as a whole. The strength and gentleness of these warrior soldiers enabled them to see their services as altruistic—for their country.

The academic debate on altruism is a debate about whether altruism can exist without some self-serving objective. The term was first defined by the philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who suggested that altruism and egoism are two distinct and separate motives. Batson (1991) summarizes the modern debate on this issue, which often reflects the biases of the backgrounds of those who argue it—religious leaders argue for a pure form of altruism embodied in the saints, whereas psychologists tend to point out that there is always a dialectical balance between egoism and altruism, holding that an unselfish act in the service of others is not necessarily lessened by the self-centered component. We call this latter form pragmatic altruism. The selfless altruism of saints is not the altruism that defines and is a basic foundation for a healthy and peaceful community.

Altruistic personality traits defined in the psychological literature (Batson, 1991) include a strong sense of responsibility and concern for those in need, high positive self-image, and especially a skill in taking another’s perspective on an issue (empathy). The egoistic motive of those with altruistic personality traits included avoiding shame and guilt for failing to live up to prior established self-images as good, caring persons, suggesting a somewhat punitive conscience, but one which motivates altruistic acts, rather than neurotic self-absorption and self-punishment (guilt). How do modern organizational leaders fare when evaluated from the point of view of altruism? Tracey and Hinkin (1998) examined transformational leadership in comparison with transactional leadership in a study of 291 managers from 47 New York hotels. Transformative leadership emphasizes higher ideals and moral values, the ability to define a vision for their organizations, and that followers must accept the credibility of the leader and even idealize him/her. Transactional leaders, instead, tend to focus on process, task completion, and compliance and rely not so much on their own charismatic eloquence, but on rewards and punishments to influence performance of their employees. Aberbach (1995) took a psychoanalytic perspective on the charismatic elements of leaders. He suggested that the charismatic leader often has a highly traumatic background with disturbed attachment patterns in the family of origin, which partially empowers him/her with insight and courage. Aberbach used examples, like that of Winston Churchill, to suggest that these leaders are, “bonded in crisis through a mutual attempt to break free of enemy and alienation, and a sense of powerlessness and despair.” From this perspective then, altruism is a quality, if not an impulse and motivation,
for the human spirit that involves a variety of personality components, including capacity for empathy, a certain self-critical, even self-blaming egoism with a drivenness by ideals and a sense of responsibility, a feeling of compassion for others, and a strong desire and motivation to help, often at one’s own expense. Such leaders may have traumatic family backgrounds, which have not only scarred them, but also motivated them to a leadership style that emphasizes self-development and care and concern for others, rather than on technical, materialistic and organizational components of the organization, all qualities we consider desirable for leaders in our healthy communities.

THE SELFLESS ALTRUISTIC LEADER

Although religious altruism emphasizes self-sacrifice and in its most pure form has as its goal service to others without any expectation of reward, this deification of the concept excludes most of us ordinary earthlings. Nonetheless, much can be learned about the qualities of altruism from the study of selfless leaders. I have chosen two such leaders, who emphasize self-sacrifice and lived in a highly ascetic tradition, yet became politically powerful and revolutionized whole cultures.

Mahatma Gandhi, a legend in the political history of South Africa and India, had an astute sense of timing that enabled him to single-handedly shift the strong and violent governments of both countries by personal example. In his autobiographical writings and in writings of those who interpreted his philosophy, he evolved a remarkable strategy for dealing with institutionalized violence. Buck (1984; 1999) discusses Gandhi’s term “Satya-graha” (1950) derived from “satya,” which means truth and “agraha,” which is a loving firmness that is a firm force growing out of truth and love. As Gandhi developed these religious and philosophical ideas into a political system, he suggested that this loving force was an invitation to join cooperatively rather than competitively. However, Gandhi’s methods involved extreme self-sacrifice and even death for his followers, yet such followers never physically injured others in their now legendary nonviolent resistance, which became the foundation for the strategies of Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders in many countries. In his autobiographical writings (Gandhi, 1940), he points out with painful, even punitive self-criticism that his life was far from perfect and that he was, at times, impulsive and destructive. Whatever else it was, Gandhi’s satya was by personal example and painful self-examination and sacrifice. Although often depicted as a naïve pacifist, Gandhi was instead an astute politician who realized that cooperation with preservation of respect for both sides of the conflict is more effective and more powerful than competition. As he says
(Gandhi, 1966, p.30), “If there is a victor left, the very victory will be a living death for the nation that emerges victorious.” In the less dramatic language of psychology and game theory, it might be said that unless one cares for the opponent, minimizing damage and maximizing what the opponent can offer to the solution, the win–lose game is always a nightmare for the victor.

A much lesser known, but equally great political leader who embodied self-criticism and altruism, was Asoka Maurya (Gokhale, 1966). This 3rd century B.C.E. leader of India had an arguably greater effect and brought peace to India more than any other leader before or since. Maurya combined an aversion to war, solicitude for the welfare of his people, and frankness in claiming successes and admitting failures that have made him the subject of many in-depth political, philosophical, and historical studies. Discussion debates the relative influences of Buddhism and the philosophy of Kautalya on Maurya. Kautalya’s doctrine emphasizes the necessity for political power to ensure security and growth in a country. Buddhism, instead, emphasizes nonviolence and respect for all, irrespective of power and wealth. Maurya’s life was in part an attempt, typical of these altruistic leaders, to resolve the conflicts between these two opposite demands made on them. Out of his work grew a new age in India, emphasizing religious values, art, diplomacy and statecraft, rather than the use of power, material gain, persecution, and enslavement of the weak. From time to time in the course of his rule, he made pronouncements and edicts that were ways in which his followers or subjects could more easily practice a Buddhism emphasizing humility, nonviolence, and a lesser emphasis on material attachments and possessions. For Maurya, Buddhist philosophy became a personal way of life as well as a leadership philosophy, which excluded violent actions and encouraged an altruistic, rather than a violent mindset. Maurya put this integrated philosophy into practice.

PRAGMATIC ALTRUISM: A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE

Research into the practical value of altruistic behavior appears in diverse places. For example, an economist (Clotfelter, 1980) surveyed 1,299 households to determine the motivation of citizens who provided help to victims of crime. Using hypothetical situations, this analysis supported the hypothesis that purely altruistic behavior and behavior based on self-interest, as well as behavior guided by social norms, are all important in these helpful bystander actions, with individuals with higher incomes and those with higher education tending to be most helpful. Several observational studies
on children helping each other when school playground bullying and fighting occurs have yielded a variety of interesting results, summarized by Ginsberg (1977). Such studies indicate that children, who see continued aggressive behavior on the playground, especially if the victim child communicates submission or distress, are more likely to respond for the benefit of the victim. In stark contrast, the Genovese case in New York in 1964 was a chilling example of the absence of any apparent concern for others (Milgram & Hollander, 1964). In this instance, neighbors in a Kew Gardens apartment in New York City watched as a woman, Kitty Genovese, was stabbed to death in the early hours of the morning in a horrendous knife killing lasting over 30 minutes. None of the 38 neighbors who were aware of her cries for help assisted in any way, or even called the police. When interviewed, such witnesses said they were afraid to get involved. Many other such studies suggest that if people have time enough to examine the possible consequences of an altruistic action, then they’re less likely to act in a helpful way if there is significant personal risk. Studies of situations which demand immediate responses, such as an individual who has a heart attack in a busy city street, are far more likely to elicit a majority of altruistic responses from bystanders than one where people have time to think about the consequences of their involvement (Shapiro & Gabbard, 1994).

Contemporary evolutionary theory has become an unexpected source of support for the survival value of altruism and for its pragmatic importance. Philosophers such as Badcock (1986), Slavin and Kriegman (1992), and Trivers (1985) point out that the “every man for himself” interpretation of Darwin’s survival of the fittest principle is oversimplified. The more sophisticated interpretations point out that the survival of the species depends on a combination of self-interest and mutual cooperation. Kin altruism is a form of altruism, which occurs between relatives who share genetic material. The altruistic act helps mutual perpetuation of the shared genetic material and is also thus egoistic. Even amongst unrelated individuals, altruism could bring benefits to the altruist in the form of longer term, sometimes indirect reciprocal payments and exchanges, thus aiding survival of the species (reciprocal altruism). Evolutionary biology is thus developing its own terminology for what has been rediscovered by psychoanalysis, game theory, philosophy, ethics, political science, and religious studies, to name some of the many different fields that have begun to pay attention to the meaning of altruism.

Shapiro and Gabbard (1994) note that altruistic behavior, traditionally regarded as a defensive reaction formation to sadism in humans, is instead, the body of research suggests, in human beings an independently motivated nondefensive system that cannot be distinguished from selfish motives. Instead, self-oriented and altruistic motivations, according to Shapiro and Gabbard, are equal and essential partners.
In applying the human altruistic response to the pragmatic demands of healthy communities, one must understand these various complex cultural, social, intra-psychic and biological determinants of the altruistic response. Shapiro and Gabbard (1994) list a variety of limitations on altruism, which emphasize intra-psychic factors. These limitations need to be directly addressed by anyone proposing to make use of this concept to improve the health, peacefulness, and cooperativeness of members of complex communities. Such limiting factors include:

1) The observer’s ability to achieve an accurate understanding of the victim’s needs (empathy).
2) The observer’s ability to achieve a balance between self-interest and concern for others. Pathologically narcissistic leaders will have very serious problems in this regard, as is illustrated by some extremists, like Osama bin Laden or Adolf Hitler.
3) The observer’s assessment of the cost–benefit ratio specific for the altruistic action.

To these we add two social influences on altruism:

4) Violent individual and community mindsets, as defined in this paper, can provide a defective social model for the young for collaborative living. For example, the potential effects of the model of the soldier who emphasized the sadistic elements of combat to a junior high school class in the introduction to this paper. Currently, Kansas is examining a way to enable the state to get millions of dollars in funds that they do not deserve using a loophole that will enable the state to draw interest on funds temporarily dispersed to nursing homes. Political and legal experts are quoted as saying, “As long as it is legal, they aren’t going to oppose it. After all the state could use the money.” The House speaker said, “I think we would get beat up a bit if we decided not to pursue it.” Sanctioning unethical, manipulative and self-centered behavior to produce undeserved financial gains, especially if covering budgetary ineptitudes, is an extraordinarily poor example to young people.

5) The extent of the numbing effect of subtle and not so subtle actual violence on individuals, so that the existence of neediness of others is denied, rationalized, or avoided.

Thus the altruistic response can be limited by unconscious and conscious factors, personality distortions, and social and cultural mores, attitudes and

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other influences. The individual proposing to use this approach to create a healthy community must address all of these issues.

TRANSLATING INDIVIDUAL ALTRUISM INTO COMMUNITY ALTRUISM

Individual altruism has a reciprocal relationship with power dynamics. As coerciveness enters human relationships, dehumanization results and individuals thus become less altruistic. Conversely, altruism rehumanizes often corrupt and coercive populations as the Jamaica experiment will illustrate. Individual altruism can also create a group phenomenon. Whales have been observed to assist sick whales to remain on the surface to enable them to breathe, forming a support ring around the sick whale. Group altruism in humans is possible in stable systems that are noncoercive; although, often bloody struggles have occurred when social order is established as suggested by Machiavelli. In the West, altruism has been institutionalized already; for example, religions organizations like the Salvation Army whose establishment in Piccadilly Circus in London is close to Dr. Barnado’s home, the origins of the first orphanage. Kings like Maurya or revolutionaries like Gandhi can convert whole populations to more altruistic actions by fiat or revolution. Mother Teresa of Calcutta sponsored the largest convent in the world by personal example. The charismatic leader in fostering community altruism is historically well established.

What is it that causes human groups to forget what seems to be an innate altruism (Shapiro & Gabhard, 1994) in this, the bloodiest century in human history? Rwanda, Kosovo, WWII—the list is endless. The killing in Rwanda and WWII became a routine daily work task for some soldiers. Human groups without an altruistic ideology can become doomsday machines. Are there intrinsic elements in organizations that can foster altruism? We do not know. Features of an organization which may foster altruism, besides the leader’s personal philosophy and qualities, include open system management where leadership is participatory and where power and authority can be held by employees in an organization open to inclusion of a purpose beyond economic goals. Organizations that are successful economically like McDonalds spawn charitable institutions like the Ronald McDonald House, but a better direct example for employees would be to align the work of the company with a need more similar to the function of the organization, such as McDonalds’ giving food to needy nations. There are many examples where wealthy business people foster charities derived from their own problems, but an organization that fosters altruism decided collectively by its members is a rare and a potentially more powerful force for community cohesiveness.
For example, business partners with schools are modern organizational concepts that encourage paid business people to do charitable work with schools. Altruism, once started, often "snowballs" and can connect and resurrect a violent community, particularly if that community takes on a major altruistic project. The Jamaican project to be reported next is a good example.

AN EXPERIMENT IN PRAGMATIC ALTRUISM: THE JAMAICA PROJECT

Twemlow and Sacco (1996) and Sacco and Twemlow (1997) summarize an extensive experiment in a mid-sized community in Jamaica, which had a high homicide rate. Over a three-year period, violence was reduced significantly and lasting community projects were created by stimulating altruistic impulses in community leaders in the community-stabilizing systems (CSS). In this instance, police and schoolteachers were the strongest participants in this project, which involved the training of self-selected leaders from these two CSSs in a method of leadership that emphasized the philosophy and mindset of pragmatic altruism, translated into the appropriate language for the professions involved. Over a period of three years, with seminars and regular supervisory contact and consultation, this community developed its own original creative projects that illustrated such altruistic impulses. For example, programs were developed to assist the violent and degraded school system, riddled with rape, knifings, and an extraordinarily high level of truancy (more than 70% in secondary schools). The police set up recreational sports leagues, models of nonbullying behavior, and ways in which children could obtain assistance in intervening in traumatic domestic situations. This and other actions converted the police’s public image from that of “animal” to that of community helper. Citizens assisted the police more and threatened them less. One senior policeman helped the homeless mentally ill by using police cars and voluntary help to provide bathing and sustenance to them. This program and others, including the humanization of the procedure for arrest, investigation of rape victims, services for sexually transmitted diseases in pre-adolescent children, and other altruistic leadership projects, converted the role of policeman into a loved community leader, from that as a corrupt, violent “animal.”

THE HEALTHY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE IN TOPEKA, KANSAS

Derived from this Jamaica experiment and other extensive community efforts to connect and foster collaboration and cooperation, this similar
project was developed to address the needs of a mid-sized community with a high rate for violent crime and property offenses and with significant problems in educational achievement and economic growth. This Healthy Community Initiative has as its goal to develop collaborative relationships between representatives of the four CSSs, who will then offer creative solutions to community problems. A model of creative openness was founded on personal relationships developed in an atmosphere of pragmatic altruism by this core-guiding group.

On October 18, 1999, Mayor Joan Wagonon of Topeka, in a speech to the YWCA, at the beginning of its “Week Without Violence,” announced this Healthy Communities Initiative to address particularly problems of violence and to specifically develop characteristics of such a healthy community. She listed these as:

- Clear, identifiable leadership
- Sense of pride in community identity
- Civil, rational ways to resolve conflict
- Low levels of community violence
- Basic needs of citizens for food, clothing, shelter, and jobs
- Overall citizen satisfaction
- Openness to change
- Tolerance
- Diversity

A broad vision for such a healthy community could also be defined as follows.\textsuperscript{13}

**Education**

- All citizens, including children, shall receive sufficient inspired intellectual, social, and emotional education to enable them to be happy and productive.
- Lifelong educational opportunities should be freely available to children and all citizens.

**Spirituality**

- All citizens, including children, should have the opportunity to develop a sense of self worth, family, and community.
- All citizens, including children, should experience models of diversity and the richness of the human expression of faith.
- All citizens, including children, should experience models of responsible growth and service to others.

\textsuperscript{13}Workbook on the Quality of Life, Rotary/Menninger 2000.
Health and Social Services

- Opportunities for development of the health of the mind and body shall be freely available in the community to all citizens, including children.
- Health is understood to be a community as well as an individual responsibility.

Public Safety

- All citizens, including children, should experience models of self-control and discipline, including the necessity for the structure of law and order.
- All citizens, including children, should be participants in ensuring law and order.
- The system of justice must be seen to be fair to all concerned.

This vision focuses on spirituality, health, public safety, and education and is created from a pragmatic altruistic mindset, which will, according to this model, produce a stable leadership, political structure, and a thriving economy. Clearly, to achieve the work necessary to affect these changes requires money and political influence. Political leadership and funding, including support by the business community, is a necessary precondition for these community-stabilizing systems to develop an effective, collaborative relationship for the benefit of all citizens.

In the first year, several organizational aspects became unique and defining for the Healthy Community initiative: Robert's Rules of Order were not used with the leader in the role of facilitator and minimum direction and focus were given to the group. At times, the dependency assumption created dissonance within the group, as well as a complaint of lack of leadership and focus. At the same time, enough of an agenda occurred to keep the group going in the direction of projects that might help the city and in a way for measuring the effects of intervention. Early on, a variety of community leaders who had undisclosed agendas or projects of their own dropped out and a core group of about ten community leaders from the four CSSs settled down to become a working group. It was useful to have a state epidemiologist assist us in devising outcome measures which fit quite nicely into regular ongoing county telephone survey interviews conducted to access a variety of disorders, diseases, and need for services. We developed a set of questions (see Appendix 1) to allow assessment of the effect of community intervention. We hoped to measure connectedness, defined as a feeling of cohesiveness among members of the community, who become more able to help each other without feeling entitled or deprived. Some of these ideas were derived from the literature on early problems in children at school that emphasize a
feeling of not being connected with their peer group. After approximately nine months of discussion, the group established its goal as “to increase connectedness of people with each other, so that they all feel partly responsible for others’ welfare.” The emphasis of this model was:

- Mutual problem solving.
- Collaborative construction of programs.
- Sharing success and failures rather than competing and blaming.
- Serious commitment to this process by authentic community leaders.

Although the mayor was part of the group, she was not in a political role. It was defined earlier that to be functional in this unique way, these community leaders had to share four fundamental attributes:

1. To be unpaid for their services (altruism).
2. To be apolitical.
3. To not be pressured to make short-term decisions without thorough thinking through and discussion.
4. To give the credit of the program to the institutions which instituted the reforms rather than to claim credit for the group itself.

Thus, after an initial press conference, the group faded into the background and was almost forgotten. Members were encouraged when talking about the worth to represent their own personal views and not to represent any group consensus to the public. The most difficult aspect of the groups functioning was the pressure to act. At times various members became almost frantic in their need to create programs that would justify their existence. At the same time, although the community had serious problems, there were no specific crises necessitating immediate action and the group facilitator felt that his main function was to make sure that adequate and thorough discussion of the topic occurred before any action occurred. After a year of talking, a consensus poll was taken of topics or projects that would seem of interest. Several emerged in the areas of violent crime, the image of the city, the way neighborhood organizations functioned, and the need for action groups, which were formed to raise money and to implement the projects. What did occur was that each of the four representatives of the CSS helped with projects other than in their own areas of expertise.

The meetings were held initially in law enforcement centers and City Hall but gradually moved to individual homes of the members, who eventually began to address each other on a first name basis. The group facilitator/leader model, while causing some confusion at first, also forced the group out of the dependency assumption into action (Bion, 1959). It was important for this group to review statistics, evaluation techniques, and to
conduct field trips into areas of the town to gather direct information and to
give the members experiences that brought home to them the intensity of
the serious problems that beset the city. It was noteworthy, for example, that
in a tour of areas of town high in drug peddling and prostitution, members
of the group had feelings that functioned as an awakening in one or two
instances. Some members had no realization of the extent of the problems
in spite of having lived many decades in the city. This intensive fieldwork
and presentation to the group of information by those in the know gave the
process a vitality and an intensity that could not be gathered in any other
way.

The work of this initiative is an ongoing one and will be reported in more
detail as, and if, any effects of it result in useful social institutions and projects
or lessons from its failure. The most difficult resistance is that the group
members continue to desire action that, in the opinion of the facilitators,
occur before sufficient thought has been given to the issues. This resistance
probably results from a sense of urgency in view of the economic difficulties
in the town, caused in part by the moving away of a major institution that
provided intellectual and medical support services to the community and
significant income, including employment.

APPENDIX 1—STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR ANONYMOUS
TELEPHONE SURVEY

1. How would you rate your community as a place to live?
   Excellent
   Very Good
   Fair
   Poor
2. How long have you lived in the community in which you live now?___
3. During the past 5 years, have you been active in a coalition or civic
group that attempted to address one or more community problems?
   Yes
   No

Rate your community on each of the following questions as Excellent(5),
Very Good(4), Good(3), Fair(2), or Poor(1):

a. Willingness of citizens to become involved in community issues
   1...2...3...4...5
b. Availability of effective leadership for solving community problems
   1...2...3...4...5
c. Cooperation and communication between community organizations (including government, civic organizations and social agencies). 1...2...3...4...5

d. People sharing a sense of belonging to the community 1...2...3...4...5

e. Past history of success at problem solving 1...2...3...4...5

f. Community-decision making shared among community members and among community organizations 1...2...3...4...5

g. Community investment of financial resources in community problem solving 1...2...3...4...5

h. People available in the community with skills to solve community problems 1...2...3...4...5

i. Shared values and vision among community citizens 1...2...3...4...5

j. Self-honesty and ability to learn from mistakes 1...2...3...4...5

Factors which showed as predicting the capacity of a community to get projects completed were: self honesty, interagency cooperation, shared decision-making and past success.

REFERENCES


