Community Capitals Framework and Obesity: The Environmental Connection
Cornelia Butler Flora
Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Dept. of Sociology, Iowa State University
Director, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development
eflora@iastate.edu
www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu
September 29, 2008

Efforts to reduce obesity

Working collaboratively to reduce childhood obesity

NATURAL CAPITAL
Natural capital provides possibilities and limits to human action. It provides the basis for local food production and for active recreation.

- Air
- Water
- Soil
- Biodiversity
- Landscape
Sustainable, healthy ecosystems with multiple community benefits

- Decrease of environmental racism and classism
- All people in the community have access to diverse and healthy natural capital.
- Those with alternative uses of the ecosystem seek common ground

CULTURAL CAPITAL

- Cosmovision – spirituality
- Symbols-sense of place
- Ways of knowing
- Language-history
- Ways of acting
- Definition of what is problematic

Cultural capital determines how we see the world, what we take for granted, what we value, and what things we think possible to change. Hegemony allows one social group to impose its symbols and reward system on other groups.

CULTURAL CAPITAL

- Cosmovision
- Symbols
- Ways of knowing
- Language
- Ways of acting
- Definition of what is problematic

Local and traditional knowledge is appreciated and enhanced

- Cultural differences are recognized and valued.
- Mechanisms to maintain ancestral knowledge of foods
- Communities are willing to take the time to understand and build on different ways of knowing and doing.

HUMAN CAPITAL

- education
- skills
- health
- self-efficacy

The characteristics and potentials of individuals that are determined by the intersection of nature (genetics) and nurture (determined by interactions and environment).

SOCIAL CAPITAL

- mutual trust
- reciprocity
- groups
- collective identity
- sense of shared future
- working together

The interactions among individuals that occur with a degree of frequency and comfort. Bonding social capital consists of interactions within specific groups and bridging social capital consists of interactions among social groups.

Increased use of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of local people

- Identify capacities
- Enhance capacities
- Recombine capacities

Local and traditional knowledge is appreciated and enhanced

- Cultural differences are recognized and valued.
- Mechanisms to maintain ancestral knowledge of foods
- Communities are willing to take the time to understand and build on different ways of knowing and doing.

HUMAN CAPITAL

- education
- skills
- health
- self-efficacy

The characteristics and potentials of individuals that are determined by the intersection of nature (genetics) and nurture (determined by interactions and environment).

SOCIAL CAPITAL

- mutual trust
- reciprocity
- groups
- collective identity
- sense of shared future
- working together

The interactions among individuals that occur with a degree of frequency and comfort. Bonding social capital consists of interactions within specific groups and bridging social capital consists of interactions among social groups.
Improved initiative, responsibility, and adaptability

- Shared vision for a healthy community
- Building first on internal resources
- Looking for alternative ways to respond to constant changes
- Loss of the victim mentality
- Loss of cargo cult mentality

**POLITICAL CAPITAL**

- Organization
- Connections
- Voice
- Power

Political capital is the ability of a group to influence standards, regulations and enforcement of those regulations that determine the distribution of resources and the ways they are used.

**People who share a vision for a healthy community are organized and work together**

- They know and feel comfortable around powerful people as well as those often excluded
- They make providing good food and active recreation part of the political agenda

**FINANCIAL CAPITAL**

- savings
- debt capital
- investment capital
- tax revenue
- tax abatement
- grants

Forms of currency used to increase capacity of the unit that accesses it. Financial capital is often privileged because it is easy to measure, and there is a tendency to put other capitals into financial capital terms.

**Appropriately diverse and healthy economies**

- reduced poverty
- increased health system efficiency
- increased food system diversity
- increased assets of those participating in the food system

**BUILT CAPITAL**

- Recreation centers
- Soccer fields
- Trails
- Community stores
- School cafeterias
- Day care centers
- Playgrounds
- Sidewalks
- Kitchen incubators

Human-constructed infrastructure that contributes to the availability of good food and active recreation.
BUILT CAPITAL

Physical infrastructure that enhances other community capitals because
- It serves multiple users
- It can be locally maintained and improved
- It links local people together equitably
- It links local people, institutions and businesses to outside ideas and resources

Spiraling Up of Capital
Community Capitals to Reduce Childhood Obesity

Availability of good food and active recreation increases for all
Cultural capital increases as people see the possibility of healthier life styles;
Educational system includes daily physical education and food awareness
Bonding social capital creates community school partnerships
Bridging social capital brings outside expertise together with internal wisdom.

Built Capital
Financial Capital
Natural Capital
Political Capital
Food systems
Nutrition
Physical activity
Cultural Capital
Human Capital
Social Capital