

By, Jacob Besser

Sponsored by Dr. Zollinger

The Three Reliances

An examination of static social capital within communities



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Abstract

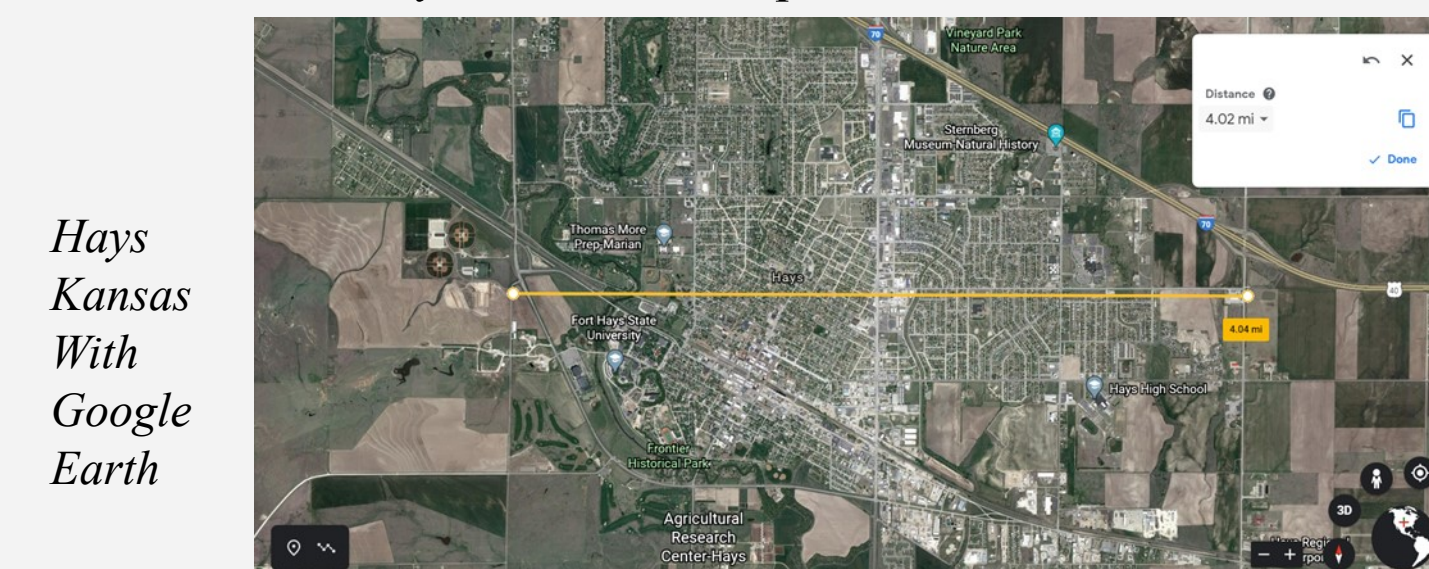
The purpose of this poster is to propose a theoretical framework and its models. *The Three Reliances* is a proposed system of knowledge that presents three pillars of support a rural community can become reliant on when the means to obtain social capital becomes static. The pillars of support are churches, private capital and Internet. When a community develops without a community center or an effective alternative static social capital increases while dynamic social capital decreases, and in turn there will be a substantial decrease in self-actualized community members. At the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy of needs rests self-actualization. Self-actualization is a status marked by high levels of fulfillment, individuals who have self-actualized will have greater social mobility within their communities and will be in advantageous situations to relieve the needs of other community members. Qualities of self-actualized members are commonly practiced in communities with both an effective and efficient community center. How a member of a community meets their self-actualization needs is dependent on what community engagement programs exist.

Phases of Research

The Three Reliance's is a proposed theory that developed from a two year project that began in 2018 and ended in 2020. The project was performed using a five step plan and was considered complete once the compiled research was able to reliably support all hypotheses and resulting findings and observations from such hypotheses. Project bias was restrained by using a method of statement/fact check, where every research statement was supported and tested by research. At no point in the research was data altered or misconstrued to support the findings.

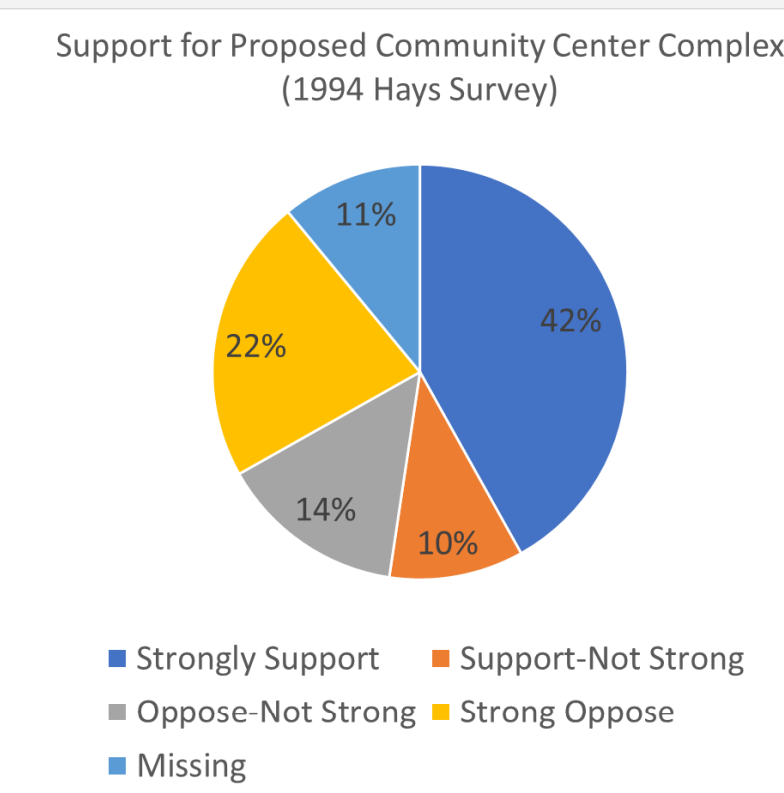
Phase 1 Generating research questions and hypotheses

The initial question was asked, "Why is Hays Kansas without a community center?" Research was made to support the justification of the initial question. Research included a full scan map search of Hays Kansas through google maps and several on campus interviews at Fort Hays State University. Research revealed that while there were two recreational centers as well as a community senior living homes, a community center was not present.



Hays Kansas With Google Earth

Chart provided by Docking Institute



Phase 2-3

Phase 2 Evaluating characteristics of a community with a community center.

The nonprofit organization Director of Ellis county Habitat for Humanity (HFH) reported in a personal interview, that the number of projects completed in a year were subject to volunteer involvement. Something I had observed while living in Carbondale, Colorado, was that HFH could build three homes in a year. I proposed that because Carbondale, Colorado, had a community center they were able to obtain volunteers more easily, because of it's influence over volunteering in the community. To be sure of this proposition, I interviewed with the Director of The Third Street center, the community center at Carbondale, Colorado, as well as a Board of Trustee member from Carbondale, Colorado.

Phase 3 Area of study interviews

After returning to Hays Kansas our sociology chairman at FHSU, Dr. Zollinger and professor Dr. Brinker suggested that I do more key informant interviews in Hays Kansas. We came up with a partial list which I later added to. In total, five semi structured formal interviews were conducted across Hays. These interviews included, the city manager of Hays, the Hays library director, nonprofit owner of Breathe Café, nonprofit owner of Gamer's Guild and the nonprofit director of Hays United Way.



Image: thirdstreetcenter.net

Phase 4-5

4. Testing theories with literature and constructing a survey model to further test the theories

Phase four was the longest phase of research and took nearly one year to complete. All information gathered up to this point had to first be thematically organized. From the interviews I was able to thematically determine the Three Reliance's of Hays Kansas. What took time was testing each reliance, which required a very exhaustive literature review. Another problem that arose was the issue of the community center and it's role in the newly suggested theory. "Community development is a participatory effort to mobilize community assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life" (Green, Haines 2016). A community center answers the most complex need which is often ignored by community and that is self-actualization. It is ignored because of how many other needs must first be addressed to begin consideration of self-actualization. I developed a survey to measure a community's capacity to aid self actualization and hope that it will be used in the future by anyone that is willing to fund it. Research resulted in a decision to abandon the proposition of a traditional community center for Hays. The final problem that arose, was that to apply self-actualization to my concepts and theories I was going to need to expand my understanding of what self-actualization was and how it was relevant to my research.

5. Finding a breaking point

After concluding that Hays would not benefit from a community center, I revisited my theories and observations and decided that it would be of greater importance to postulate a more efficient Community center model, rather than to abandon the community center idea all together. The new model is fragmented and takes place not under one roof, but rather is implemented in the local businesses of a community. This is the moment I reached my conclusion and decided that my next project would be to construct what could be considered as the third generation model of a community center.



Image: Hays Daily News

Models

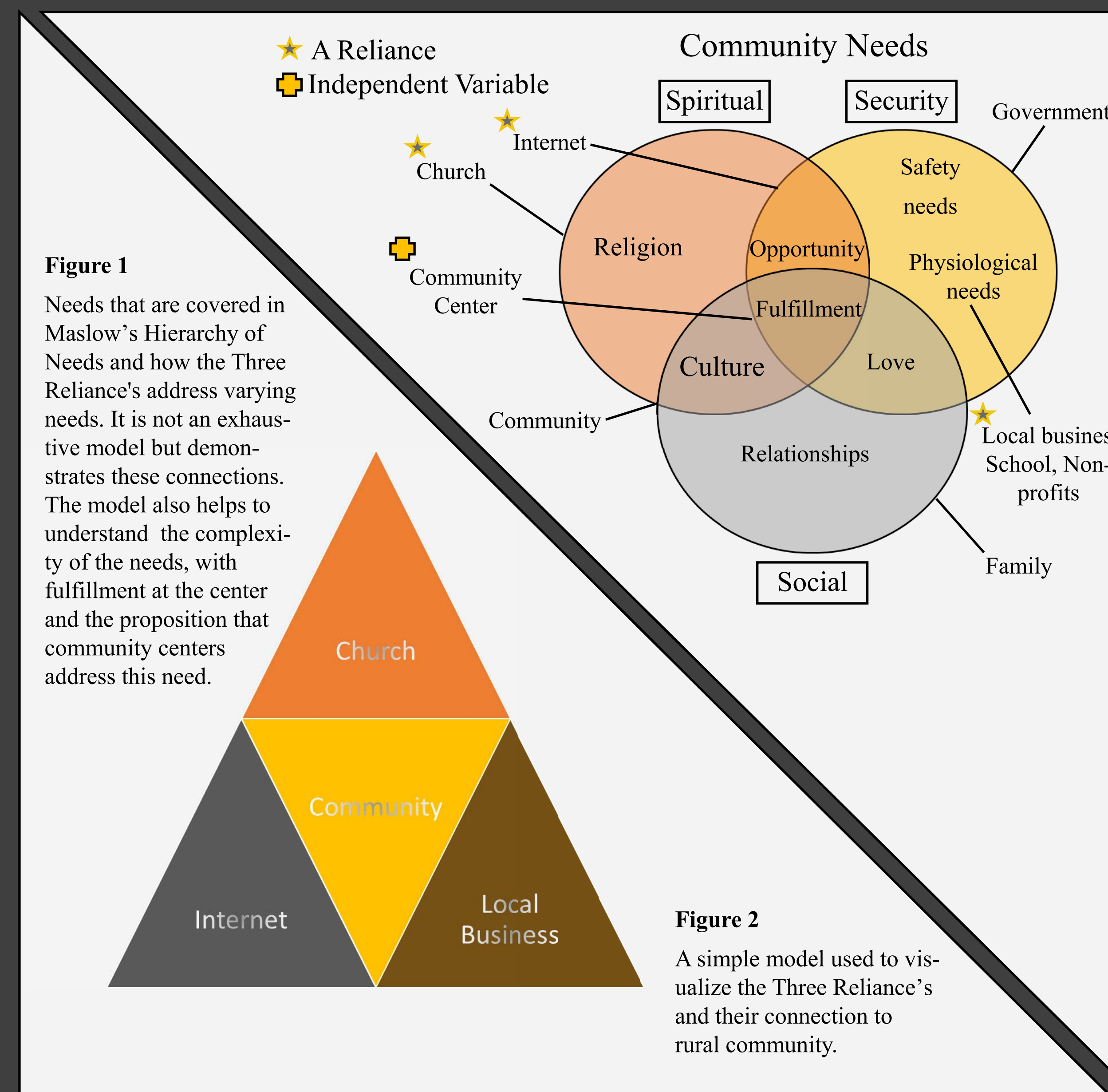


Figure 1
Needs that are covered in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how the Three Reliance's address varying needs. It is not an exhaustive model but demonstrates these connections. The model also helps to understand the complexity of the needs, with fulfillment at the center and the proposition that community centers address this need.

Figure 2

A simple model used to visualize the Three Reliance's and their connection to rural community.

Conclusions

The initial research question asked, "Why is Hays without a community center?" The short hand answer was, infrastructure placement. Because there was already a library and a number of other amenities that a community center would otherwise provide there was no pressing need to centralize these common generation two themed Community center ideas. What I discovered from a combination of literature reviews as well as an interview with Mark Bannister who was the director of the Docking Institute during the surveys that were administered to gauge interest in a Community center in Hays 1994, was that all over the nation government was funding block grants for Community centers. What they essentially became was a "Community Fad." They almost became something like a trophy to exhibit high levels of social mobility within communities. They were dysfunctional in communities that were unable to maintain the upkeep required to make them valuable. They received little funding after grants were received and unless coordinated by directors with high levels of merit were virtually unsustainable. While the Community centers were structurally flawed in what they were advertised to provide, well established communities have done well to integrate them. What this means is that the generation 2 community center model is not inclusive to all communities. What my goal is now, is to essentially create a more inclusive model that could find success in a greater number of communities. After all, the entire point of a community center should be to increase dynamic social capital and accommodate more individuals to allow for greater social mobility across all socio-geographical identities.

Example survey questions

1.) How important is it that you are involved in your local community? (1=not interested, 10=very interested.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I chose questions that could be used to test each other.

The survey helps to identify the challenges an individual may have, which prevent them from being self actualized. In this example the individual's involvement in church may influence their involvement in their local Community.

3.) How strongly do you feel that your involvement through church support your sense of belonging in the community?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Key Terms

Self Actualization- An achievable status which is acquired by a member of a community who projects inner qualities which are marked by high levels of fulfillment into their community.

Reliance- Any organization or structure which becomes an essential object for the community to exist.

Socio-geographical identity- Rural, Urban, Suburban and the qualities they possess which impact the identity of a community as well as its makeup and organization, which in turn influences its geographical makeup.

Static Social Capital- Same groups and more isolation with stronger sense of identity, background history and culture.

Dynamic Social Capital- Social capital that is inclusive to many demographics and allows individuals to become engaged in social activity.

Generation 1 Community Center- Community hall/center Addresses community engagement. Engaged community members are the stakeholders. (Political) pre-1920

Generation 2 Community Center-The modern day Community Center addresses community needs. The community becomes the stake holder. (Economic) 1920-2000

Generation 3 Community Center- Addresses community detachment, the stakeholders become a combination of those that have their needs met and those that do not. It will aid community leaders and create more opportunity for unrepresented members of the community. The community center will no longer be a center but will instead become fragmented across multiple local businesses.

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