

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

# Community Capacity to Participate in the Decision Making Process



## **Paper Authors:**

Nicholas Freudenberg, The City University of New  
York,

Manuel Pastor, University of Southern California, and  
Barbara Israel, University of Michigan

## **Discussants:**

Peggy Shepard, West Harlem Environmental Action,  
Inc. (WE ACT), and  
Suzanne Wells, US Environmental Protection Agency

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# Session Agenda

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- 10:30 a.m. Authors' recap of paper
- 11:00 a.m. Discussants' remarks
- 11:15 a.m. Audience discussion

# Appropriateness of the Factor

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- Office of Environmental Justice identified seven factors for assessing disproportionate environmental health impacts
  - proximity & exposure
  - population susceptibility/vulnerability
  - unique exposure pathways
  - cumulative impacts/burdens
  - **community capacity to participate**
  - vulnerable physical infrastructure
  - chronic community stress

# Community capacity to participate is unique from other factors

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- ❑ Not a risk assessment variable
- ❑ Requires action on the part of community members
- ❑ Community capacity is the only attribute that leads to advocacy

# Intervention Strategies

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- Training & Technology Transfer
- Technical Assistance
- Community-Based Participatory Research
- Empowerment Approaches
- Community Organizing/Social Action

# Government & Intervention Strategies

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- Majority of EPA intervention strategies focus on technical assistance
- Some government involvement in training & technology transfer
- Good, but few, community-based participatory research projects
- Virtually no empowerment approaches or community organizing/social action models

# Government & Intervention Strategies

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- ❑ What is the role for technical assistance in building community capacity?
- ❑ Does government have the right balance in the intervention strategies it provides? Do we have a disconnect?
- ❑ How do we support developing skills in organizational capacity, e.g., facilitation, strategic planning, goal setting, communication?



# Government “Assistance” & Intervention Strategies

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- ❑ What other types of organizations can provide these intervention activities (on behalf of government)?
- ❑ How can the government support other organizations in these types of intervention strategies?

# Measuring Community Capacity

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- Authors suggest need for a valid and reliable measurement instrument
- Which organizations or agencies are likely to take the lead in developing a instrument for measuring community capacity?

# How do we create a “virtuous cycle of participation?”

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- Community capacity building
- Community victories
- Community input influences government decisions