

Exploring “Community” in Multi-Family Communities

M. Jordan Scott, Master of Arts Candidate

Human Dimensions of Organizations, The University of Texas at Austin

Overview

Considerations

- 33% of Americans live in multi-family (apartment) housing.
- Property management consultants advocate for greater community in these multi-family properties.
- Specifically, consultants argue greater community will reduce turnover expense.

Research Questions

- Do residents value a strong sense of community?
- How might a property manager create a sense of community at their properties?
- How do they measure strength of community?
- Does a strong sense of community equate to a reduction in turnover?

Methods

To explore community in multi-family rental housing, this Capstone relied on a two-step analysis:

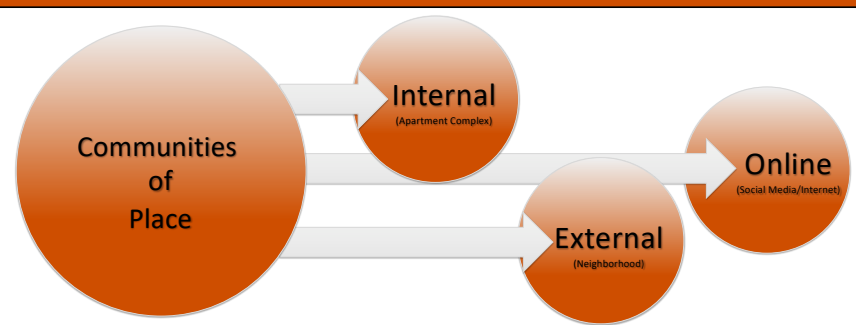
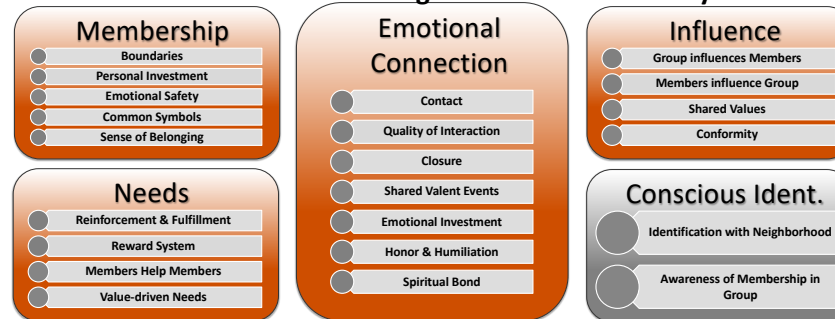
- A literary review of existing research related to the concepts of community in housing and the problem of turnover.
- A qualitative analysis of 15 articles recommending community in multi-family housing.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my family and staff for their support during my 15-months of exploration of the human dimensions of organizations. I'm especially grateful to my wife, Laila Scott and my assistant, Megan Etz for their support.

I would also like to thank the HDO program staff, especially my advisor Dr. Mary Rose, second reader Dr. Casey Boyle, Dr. Davida Charney, and Dr. Clay Spinuzzi for their advice, direction, and encouragement during the Capstone project

Five Factors Affecting a Sense of Community



Literature Cited

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), 6-23.

Peterson, N. A., Speer, P. W., & McMillan, D. W. (2008). Validation of A brief sense of community scale: Confirmation of the principal theory of sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(1), 61-73.

Obst, Patricia L. and Smith, Sandy G. and Zinkiewicz, Lucy (2001) An Exploration of Sense of Community, Part 3: Dimensions and Predictors of Psychological Sense of Community in Geographical Communities. *Journal of Community Psychology* 30(1):119-133.

Talen, E. (2000). The problem with community in planning. *Journal of planning literature*, 15(2), 171-183.

Conclusions

Do multi-family renters desire community?

YES!

Can property managers create a sense of community in the properties they manage?

YES!

Can we measure the sense of community among residents at a property?

YES!

Does greater community lead to reduced turnover?

UNSUPPORTED.

What does it all mean?

Industry insiders advocate for greater community. While research does not support linking greater community with reduced turnover expenses, managers *can* establish and improve a sense of community within their properties. Most managers already view community building as fundamental to their role. Strengthening community-building efforts will help property managers better perform their roles and meet customer needs.

To create community, managers should:

- Define what “community” means for their property. In what ways do staff and residents desire community from both an emotional and a physical perspective?
- Expand community-building efforts beyond hosting events. Community building should address the four factors of the sense of community.
- Managers should incorporate online spaces (social media and web) to build community.
- Avoid the trap of community as a consumable. Community building is not an end-goal but rather an improvement to existing customer service processes.

Further Information

M. Jordan Scott
512 Asset Management, LLC
512.656.3142
Jordan@512assetmgmt.com