**CONCEPT PAPER #1 - BLOCKBUSTING**

I found the blockbusting concept interesting in how I feel it is still present in our society, but not as obvious.   Block busting is a “practice in  which real estate agents use pressure and racial fear to create panic, causing large numbers of homes to be put up for sale at the same time” (Eichler, p. 28, 2007).

                I feel that blockbusting is still present in our community, but is overlooked when we consider all the logistics of a community system.   Though blockbusting has one primary definition it could be interpreted in different context. For example in the TV drama show Desperate Housewives, a former neighbor returned after serving in prision and targeted his neighbors so he could purchase their homes.  He offered twice the value of their homes and noted the various ways they can use this financial gain to experience more to life.  The neighbor purchased most of the houses in the neighborhood, but in return he converted the homes into an alternative housing program for previous inmates to have a fresh start once they were out of the system.   Another example would be several housing developments in my home town.  There have been several motor-home communities that have been forced to shut down because of their prime location on the highway, but it was primarily because the governing committee (City Hall) felt that the motor-home did not have much curb appeal or welcoming ambience to the town.  Several years ago these communities were cleared out and have yet to become any new housing developments because the town requires such high standards for any construction company to take on.  Last year they targeted another motor-home community and forced them to move out, but in return the real estate sold the property to another company for twice the value.  The families have less than a month notice before losing their homes, but in return the former motor-home community has now become a Pet Cemetery.  I feel that these are prime example of blockbusting that occurs in our society today.  It may be in a different context of the definition, but it’s the same concept of targeting a specific community for the benefits of another community.

This pertains to the learning objectives on analyzing the community systems, structure, and systemic issues related to culture, diversity, and social class.  By real estate agents targeting a specific community they are using authority and education to undermine those who do not understand the real estate business and/or are easily influenced by other’s actions.  For instance if one of their neighbors told them about a great offer they had on their house, they will in return consider the same offer for a opportunity to make some change in their life.   Do you feel that with our declining economy that more communities are prone to being targeted than others? Do you think it’s possible to live the American dream of owning a luxurious home when there are only crap homes available?  How can we expect for our society to live up to the lifestyle standards others have made when we use blockbusting to relocate others?

CONCEPT PAPER #2 – Cultural Competency

1. In Chapter 5, Eichler (2007) discusses the various ways consensus organizing needs to consider cultural competency. There are two steps; first is to “learn about your own history” and second is to “learn to use difference to work together, while deepening similarities” (Eichler, 2007, p. 80). We should have not have an opinion before we educate ourselves of our own history and the history of those around us. We should not be bias as to how other cultures deal with specific situations, but be open to what other opportunities we have that can contribute to a more unified society.
2. The cultural competency concept relates to culture, diversity, and social class in the context of community systems. We all come from different walks of life and we should value those shared experiences to better enhance our understanding of the holistic system. “Once we understand our own history, we should begin to relate to others with respect, warmth, concern, empathy, curiosity, and interest” (Eichler, 2007, p. 81).
3. At first we were strangers to each other, but throughout the program we have become allies and build true friendship we had never expected. In the beginning of the program we all protected ourselves with this gigantic wall, but we have since broken it down. Our Junior Year was focused on breaking down this barrier and allowing us to genuinely show interest with each other, especially allowing us to see each other’s vulnerable sides. This made us human. We are not perfect, but we have since accepted each other for our uniqueness. When we are in classes out of the Human Service Program, we unit as a pack and rely on each other as a comfort zone. Like cultural competency, we are intimidated by the unknown and need time to become accustomed to our new environment. We are not strangers to each other anymore, but a new culture and strangers to others as a group. Why is it that we work so hard during our Junior Year to break down these barriers, that once we were mixed up with other core classes we will stick with our “pack” and fear the unknown? Is it because we are still unsure of their history and we don’t have the time to break down the barriers? At times I feel that I am missing out various opportunities to educate myself more on the various experiences my peers have endured, but because I’m slightly afraid of the unknown that cultural competency will get the best of me. How can we break down these barriers so we can better unit and work together to better our communities?

CONCEPT PAPER #3 – Participation

1. Eichler (2007) noted how “human beings have a greater desire to participate in something when other people are participating in it” (p. 120). In order to create change we need to get others on board to support the issue we are most concerned about. Eichler (2007) advised that “you should talk about who is helping you, instead of talking about who isn’t” (p. 120). We need to provide our supporters with all the information about what they are getting into so we can build stronger relationships based on trust.
2. This concept relates to the first and second learning objectives in which we are creating change by advocating for the community and gaining the support of community members. For instance, I developed a program for the WWU Alumni Association to promote Western pride. My executive director always emphasized on how important it was to get the staff and faculty hype up about the program so they can encourage their students to show more Western pride. At first I had to develop a program that got others interested in participating in it, such as Eichler recommended. Then I had to maintain their interest by providing some kind of incentive for their participation. Eichler made some valuable points in how to intrigue others by talking about who was involved and I revised my program into a friendly contest of who had more pride. Once President Shepard showed his support of the program, then a lot more people showed interest in the program. I didn’t realize that I was starting a movement in the Western community to show more pride until last December when I was recognized in front of WWU faculty and staff for my efforts to promote Western pride. It’s an amazing feeling to be recognized for something you feel wasn’t a big deal. I still don’t think it’s a big deal even though I’m now getting own assistant to expand the program out of the Western community.
3. We are so heavily influenced by the media and celebrities, but how much is too much? The media is constantly talking about who is supporting what programs, but none has actually talked about what they did. Having money and writing a check is one thing, but getting involved and actually working for the cause is another thing. Individuals in the lime light either uses their social status for personal gain, but it has only recently occur that they are using their social status to help others. Why is it that we rely on others to start the movement before we get involved? Are we afraid that we are supporting the wrong cause? Have these supporters been burned in the past or are they afraid of participating in change?

CONCEPT PAPER #4 – What’s stopping us?

1. Eichler (2007) discussed the concepts of the four walls that prevent us from practicing consensus organizing. He notes them as “reluctance to see value in all people,” “you are right, others are wrong,” “aversion to work and long-term effort,” and “the need to be noticed and get credit” (Eichler, 2007, p. 223). Eichler (2007) notes that “most community organizers and community activist do not tear down these walls; rather, they reinforce and fortify these walls” (p. 223). I see these four walls as our defense mechanism to the strangers in our community. We tend to hesitate to interact with the unknown because we don’t want to break down any of these walls.
2. I believe that this concept relates to the third learning objective in which it reflects on our values, attitudes, and ethics in the relationships we create. During our junior core series we focused on co-constricting identities and how we easily make an opinion about an individual before giving them the chance to let them show who they are/what they are about. Throughout the three quarter series we were able to break down these walls and have been able to value our peers after we were able to get to know each other. We were able to find something in common and build a relationship upon that similarity. Though starting our senior core series we had to drastically adjust to new faces in our class. Change is not always bad, but it does take some time to adjust to having new peers. We are all slowly adjusted to our new surrounding and how we should accept these changes especially after graduation and enter the “real world.”
3. I feel that if we are able to break down these walls these we will become more well-rounded individuals and human service professionals. Though I do understand it’s easier said than done, but was is it so hard to break down these walls. What is stopping us from becoming better-rounded and accept others for who they are? Last quarter we talked about being acknowledge by society, but this quarter we are focused on how isolated we are. Will be able to stop assuming an individual’s identify before really giving them a chance to show us who they are? Graduation is just right around the corner and I’m a bit afraid that these walls are going to be sky high. Am I the only feeling this?

CONCEPT PAPER #5 – Suburbia, Third Places, Community

We had several interesting topics discussed in class; suburbia, third places, and community resiliency/strengths.  I’m finally starting to understand how all these topics relate to each other.  Suburbia mainly focused on how we are “zoned” in our community and each “zone” has a purpose.  It may also separate us by social class, but its mainly creates boundaries.  I’m just a little confused when a school is placed within a residential area, would that be considered suburbia or not?  Third places are the social place that is not our home or work, but it’s a welcoming environment that has no discrimination against social status or ethnicity. I presented about community, but mostly focused on strengths. The most common variant I have noticed among the three topics is how the increasing technology trends have decreased the interaction we have with each other.  We are already afraid of talking to strangers, but we have now use the web-community to lessen this fear.  Though we are not physically interacting with other, why has our community/society rely on this type of web-community?   Is it easier to communicate with peers via Facebook/Email or is a phone call/face to face meeting to much to ask in our crazy schedule?

CONCEPT PAPER #6 –

1. **Ecofeminism**: A concept that “views women as more in tune with nature than men…with the assertion that our ecological problems stem from the male notion of dominance” (p. 283). **Gaia Hypothesis**: “see the Earth as a self-regulating entity analogous in many ways to a living organism, which must be nourished and protected rather than exploited” (p. 283). **Deep Ecology aka Biocentrism**: “It places the rest of nature above human beings in order to protect nature” (p. 284)
2. These three concepts/terms relate to the first and second learning objectives in which it focuses on advocacy of a certain belief. We often take for granted our environment and that we have destroyed it in so many ways. After last week’s panel on Sustainability, I have been thinking about the current trends and how it has affected our society. I went on a couple of hikes this weekend and just observed how we have taken over the environment. It’s always ironic to see a deer lounging around a *For Sale* sign when there is not home for the deer’s family or even seeing an Eagle make its nest on top of a light post. We have all these housing developments being built, but what about the ecological system that was there prior to the homes. How are these creatures affected?
3. We all have rights, but does the Earth really have rights too? Sargent noted that “Nature is not for human use; it has value in and of itself and has rights that need to be protected” (p. 284). If nature is not for human use than what is it used for? What type of rights should it be entitled to? Does categorizing something as endangered species considered a right?

We tend to abuse the term “sustainability” and affiliate it with anything that is supposedly eco-friendly. We tend to use images to signify “sustainability” with a leaf or a feminine figure (Mother Nature). I don’t recall reading in any text that women are raised to love nature and men are supposed to hate nature. I see it more that the men/boys are encouraged to be outdoors, but it’s in a more destruction motive (sports fishing, logging, hunting, etc). Some of are most well-known gardeners that I know of are men; such as Cisco. Though they do relate the concept of female figure representing nature because of the idea that both provide life to the world, but men also have key roles in providing life too.

CONCEPT PAPER #7

**Reproductive Right**: “The right of a woman to control her own body” (Sargent, 2009, p. 174).

**Reproductive Freedom**: “An attempt to separate it from the narrow, legal concepts of rights” (Sargent, 2009, p. 174).

**Postfeminism (ladettes):** “young women who act similarly to men, and this is presented as meaning going out to get drunk and have sex with whomever is available” (Sargent, 2009, p. 175).

This concept relates to the first learning outcome in which it summarizes the historical root for advocacy and social movement that give women the right to have said of their body. We see women as providers for new life, but men do play the other half that contributes to new life. Women should have say in what type of birth control they are taking to protect themselves from reproducing. Not all women want children, but do enjoy the sexual intercourse. Women should not be perceived differently for protecting themselves. I feel that birth control should be advertised to men just as much as women.

Post feminism on the other hand is one that I have never understood. When a guy “hooks up” with various women then are idolized as either a pimp or a stud, but when a girl “hooks up” she is considered a whore or as a ladettes. She is then perceived by society as a negative individual, but the guy did the same thing is not. That guy is placed on a pedestal and honored because of their “achievements.” I just don’t get it. How can our society idolize one gender over the other? Why should society have the privilege to label individuals because of their actions? Is there really a sense of pride in “hooking up” with random individuals? What happen to being monogamous and devoted to one individual?