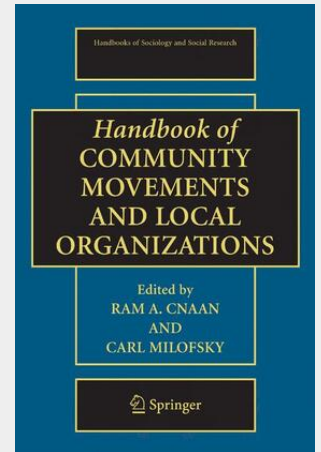


Handbook of Community Movements and Local Organizations

Creating a Frame for Understanding Local Organizations RAM CNAAN, CARL MILOFSKY, AND ALBERT HUNTER In this book, scholars from a number of disciplines present work focused on communities, with particular attention to community organizations. A few scholars have emphasized the importance of the need to map this intellectual territory (Calhoun, 1992). In some ways community study seems to be well-trodden ground; there has been influential work on social capital, for example (Coleman, 1987, 1988; Putnam, 1995; Foley and Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Foley, 1998). Yet the rich diversity of communities and community organizations has rarely been studied from a perspective that is both conceptual and descriptive. The growing sense that - studied local organizations constitute a massive yet little understood portion of the nonprofit cosmos has led Smith (1997a,b) to call them the "darkmatter of the nonprofit universe. " An interdisciplinary attempt to make community a unit of study has not been previously undertaken, and thus we feel that this Handbook makes a unique contribution to scholarly understanding of both communities and nonprofit organizations that operate at the community level. A community is a group of people connected by the physical or virtual location (to some extent we can speak of "places" on the World Wide Web, e. g.) in which they dwell or congregate, organizations they form, and cultural values and symbols they share. Communities are affected, and in a sense defined by, forces that affect community members and their space.

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