

# ***Theories of Community Development***



# Seven Theories for Community Development



# Why Theories

- Theories are explanation that can provide help in understanding peoples behavior and framework form which community developers develop communities by increasing solidarity and agency.
- Seven theories are offered as a theoretical core for those who approach community development from at least seven contextual perspectives:
  1. Relationship
  2. Structure
  3. Power
  4. Shared meaning
  5. Communication for change
  6. Motivation for decision making and
  7. Integration of the paradoxes that pervade the field.



# Concern & Related Theories

## Concern:

1. Relationships
2. Structure
3. Power
4. Shared Meaning
5. Communication for Change
6. Motivation for Decision Making
7. Integration of desperate concerns/paradoxes

## Related Theory

Social Capital Theory  
Functionalism  
Conflict Theory  
Symbolic interactionism  
Communicative Action  
Rational Choice Theory  
Giddens' Structuration



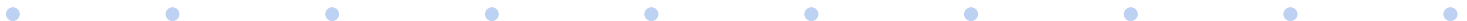
# 1. Concerns about Relationships: Social Capital Theory

- Social relationships are essential for solidarity building and successful community initiatives.
- *Social capital* is that set of resources intrinsic to social relations and includes trust, norms, and networks (Life can be richer if there is trust among neighbors and others in the public and private sectors. It is much broader than the concept of “I’ll scratch your back if you’ll scratch mine.”)



# *How Social Capital Theory serve as a Guide for CD Practice*

- Community Developers will have to create opportunities for people to get to know each other and build new levels of trust through shared interests
- In other words, communities may have strong bonding social capital but really need “bridging social capital” if they are going to prosper and increase their quality of life.



## 2. Concerns about Structure: Functionalism

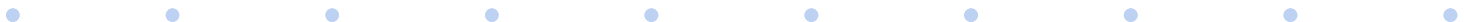
- The theoretical concept concerned with structure is known as *structural functionalism*. It is also called *systems theory*, *equilibrium theory*, or *simply functionalism*.

“According to this theoretical framework, societies contain certain interdependent structures, each of which performs certain functions for societal maintenance.”



# *How Structural Functionalism Guide CD Practice*

- A functionalist-oriented practitioner is more likely to notice dysfunctions in organizations. If existing organizations are not meeting local needs in this area, the functionalist would build community capacity by transforming an existing organization to meet the same concerns.
- A functionalist would also want to build links with broader social systems, such as external organizations, that could help the community's micro-entrepreneurs to flourish. In essence, a functionalist would see structures as important components of capacity building.

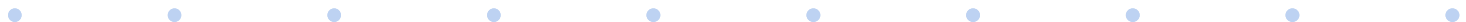




# 3. Concerns about Power: Conflict Theory

Conflict theory suggests that:

1. Conflict is an integral part of social life.
2. There are conflicts between economic classes, ethnic groups, young and old, male and female, or among races.
3. There are conflicts among developed “core” countries and regions and those that are less developed.
4. It is argued that these conflicts result because power, wealth, and prestige are not available to everyone.



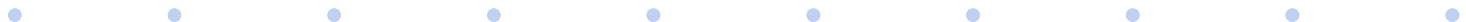
# *How can conflict theory serve as a guide for CD practice?*

- Community developers need conflict theory because it helps them gain insight into why specific differences and competition have developed among groups and organizations in a community.
- Conflict theory can help communities understand the kind and extent of competing interests among groups.



## 4. Concerns about Shared Meaning: Symbolic Interactionism

- Herbert Blumer (1969) named the theory “symbolic interactionism” because it emphasizes the symbolic nature of human interaction rather than a mechanical pattern of stimulus and interaction. For symbolic interactionists, the meaning of a situation is not fixed but is constructed by participants as they anticipate the responses of others.



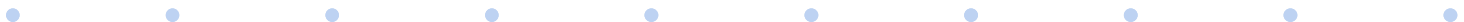
# *How can Symbolic Interactionism serve as a tool for CD practice?*

- Symbolic interactionism is essential for community development because it provides insight into the ways people develop a sense of shared meaning, an essential ingredient for solidarity.
- A symbolic interactionist would be keen on bringing people together to develop a shared understanding.
- Symbolic interactionists probe into the factors that help people understand what they say and do by looking at the origins of symbolic meanings and how meanings persist. Symbolic interactionists are interested in the circumstances in which people question, challenge, criticize, or reconstruct meanings.



# 5. Communication for Change: Communicative Action Theory

- “Communicative action” describes the seam where monetary and bureaucratic structures (rational systems) meet the lifeworld.
- Habermas (in presenting this approach) is concerned about the domination and rationalization of the life-world, in which science and technology are the *modi operandi* to address complex public issues.
- Habermas’s communicative action theory is guided by the intersection of technical and corporate knowledge with local and practical knowledge. Combined, they can lead to a new kind of “**emancipatory knowledge**” that offers fresh ideas and action.

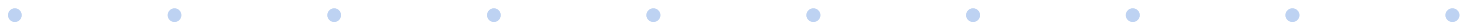


# *How can Communicative Action Theory guide CD practice?*

- There are many ways for community developers to carry out Habermas's communicative action theory.

One of the best practiced example is the National Issues Forums

National Issues Forums are conscious acts of deliberation that make it easier for the system and the life-world to interact.



## 6. Motivation for Decision Making: Rational Choice Theory

When applied to community development, rational choice theory is concerned with finding appropriate rewards and minimizing risks to individuals who become involved in community initiatives.

- There are four structural factors relate to individual participation in a collective activities.
  - 1. Prior contact with a group member**
  - 2. Prior membership in organization**
  - 3. History of prior activism**
  - 4. Biographically availability**



## 7. Integration of disparate concerns and paradigms: Giddens's Structuration theory

- All the previously mentioned theories are essential concepts for building community capacity.
- However there is obvious tensions inherent in these theories due to the dualism macro versus micro perspective.
- In his structuration theory, Anthony Giddens (1984,1989) offers a perspective that is more fluid and offer a third dimension, or an “in-between” level of analysis, which is neither macro nor micro.





# *How can Giddens's structuration theory guide CD practice?*

Structuration theory provides many theoretical insights for those engaged in community development because

1. It links disparate macro-theories about structure and conflict with micro-theories about individual and group behavior such as social capital, rational choice, and symbols or symbolic interactionism.
2. Giddens's concept of modalities is essential for community development Practice.



# Basis of Community Development

Needs-Based  
Community  
Development



Asset-Based  
Community  
Development



# Basis of Community Development

## Needs-Based Community Development



The conventional or traditional approach which is to identify the issues, problems, and needs of a community.

# Basis of Community Development

Contrary to need based approach, asset based approach focuses on a community's strengths and assets.

## Asset-Based Community Development

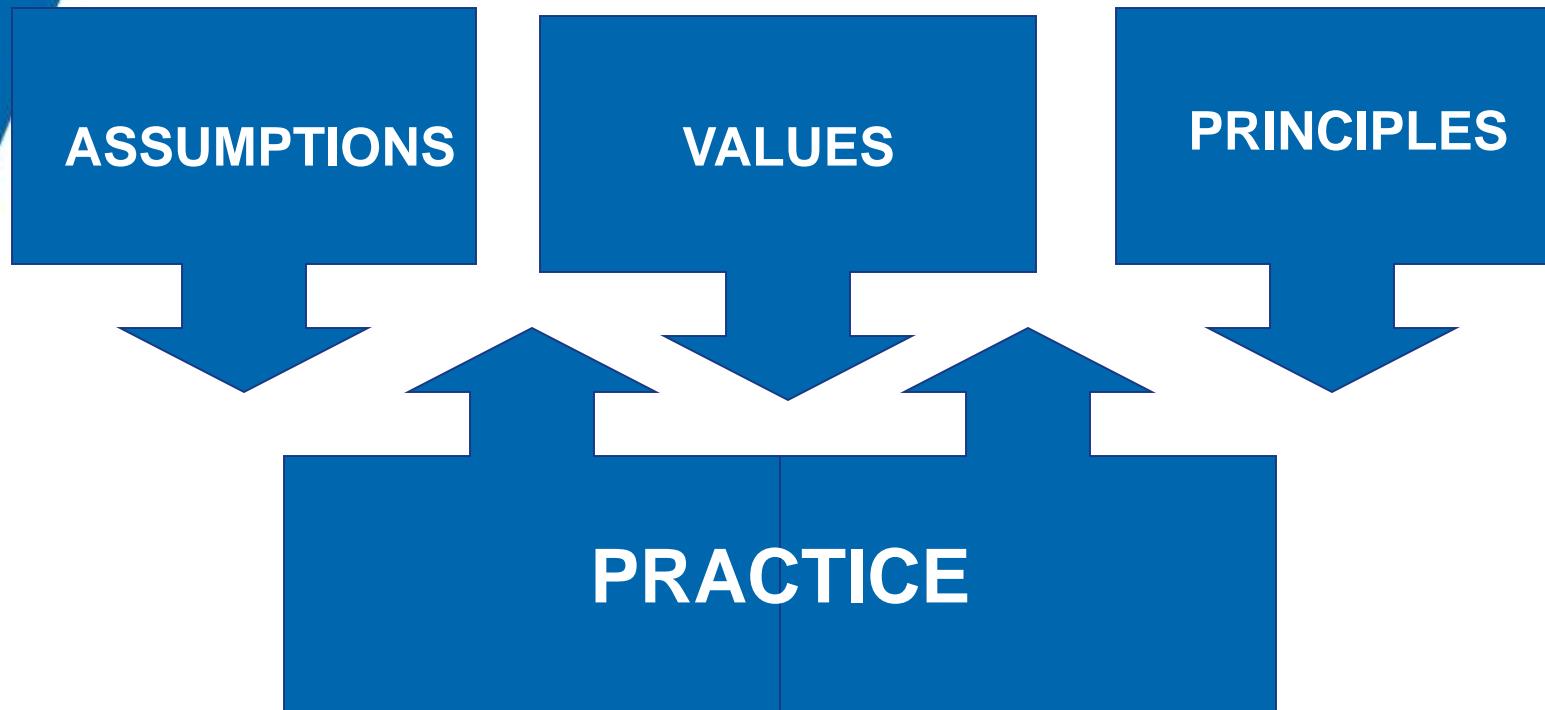


# Process of Asset-Based Community Development

- *Community organizing*
- *Visioning*
- *Planning*
  - *Data collection and analysis*
  - *Asset mapping*
  - *Community survey*
- *Public participation*
- *Implementation and evaluation*



# Framework for Community Development



# Community Development Assumptions

## ASSUMPTIONS



**People are capable of rational behavior.**

**Significant behavior is learned behavior.**

**Significant behavior is learned through interaction over time.**

**People can give purposeful direction to their behavior.**

**People can impact their environment toward a desired future.**



# Community Development Values



## VALUES

All people have basic dignity.

People have the right to help make decisions on issues that impact their well-being.

Participatory democracy is the best way to conduct a community's civic business

People have the right to strive to create the environment they want.

People have the right to reject an externally imposed environment.

The more purposeful interaction and dialogue within a community, the more potential for learning and development.

Implied within a process of purposeful interaction is an ever-widening concept of community.

Every discipline and profession is a potential contributor to a community development process

Motivation is created through interaction with the environment.





# Community Development Principles

## PRINCIPLES



Self-help and self-responsibility are required for successful development.

Participation in public decision-making should be free and open to all citizens.

Broad representation and increased breadth of perspective and understanding are conditions conducive to effective community development.

Methods that produce accurate information about the community are vital to the process.

Understanding and general agreement are the basis for community change.

All individuals have the right to be heard in open discussion, and the responsibility to respect opposing viewpoints.

Trust is essential for effective working relationships.



# The Process of Community Development



## PROCESS

The CD process provides the basic framework within which the community should work, altering details based upon its issues and resources.

1. *Establish an organizing group*
2. *Create a vision statement*
3. *Identify community stakeholders*
4. *Collect and analyze information*
5. *Develop an effective communications process*
6. *Expand the community organization*

# The Process of Community Development



## PROCESS

The CD process provides the basic framework within which the community should work, altering details based upon its issues and resources.

- *Create a comprehensive strategic plan*
- *Identify the leadership and establish a plan*
- *Implement the plan*
- *Review and evaluate the planning outcomes*
- *Celebrate the successes*
- *Create new goals and objectives as needed*

# Challenges of the Community Development Process

- **Difficult**
- **Time Consuming**
- **Costly**

