Seven theories for seven community developers

Community developers need theories to help guide and frame the complexity of their work. However, the field is girded with so many theories from various disciplines that it is difficult for practitioners to sort through them. Although many undergraduate and graduate community development programs have emerged in North America and throughout the world, there is no fixed theoretical canon in the discipline. This chapter focuses on the purpose of theory and the seven theories essential to community development practice.

Why seven theories? In Western cultures, seven implies a sense of near-completeness. There are seven days in a week, seven seas, seven climate zones, and seven ancient and modern wonders of the world. Rome was built on seven hills. While seven may or may not be a lucky number, seven theories are offered as a theoretical core for those who approach community development from at least seven contextual perspectives: organizations; power relationships; shared meanings; relationship building; choice making; conflicts; and integration of the paradoxes that pervade the field.

Introduction: why theory?

Theories are explanations that can provide help in understanding people's behavior and a framework from which community developers can explain and comprehend events. A good theory may be stated in abstract terms and help create strategies and tools for effective practice. Whether community developers want others to conduct relevant research or they want to participate in the research themselves, it is important that they have theoretical grounding. Theory is the major guide to understanding the complexity of community life and social and economic change. The starting point is to offer a definition of community development that is both distinctive and universal and may be applied to all types of societies from

postindustrial to preindustrial. These conditions are met when we define community development as the process of creating or increasing solidarity and agency. He asserts that solidarity is about building a deep sense of shared identity and a code of conduct for community developers. The developers need that solidarity as they sort through conflicting visions and definitions of problems among ethnically and ideologically plural populations. It may occur in the context of a "community of place" such as a neighborhood, city, or town. It may also occur in the context of a "community of interest" such as a breast cancer survivor' group, an environmental organization, or any group that wants to address a particular issue. It's contended that creating agency gives people the capacity to order their world. Agency is "the capacity to intervene in the world, or to refrain from intervention, with the effect of influencing a process or the state of affairs". There are complex forces that work against agency. However, community development is intended to build capacity, which makes it different from other helping professions. Community developers build the capacity of a people when they encourage or teach others to create their own dreams, to learn new skills and knowledge. Agency or capacity building occurs when practitioners assist or initiate community reflection on the lessons its members have learned through their actions. Agency is about building the capacity to understand, create and act, and reflect.

Seven key concerns in the community development field

Following this definition of community development, there are seven major concerns involving solidarity and agency building:

(1) relationships,

(2) structure,

(3) power,

(4) shared meaning,

(5) communication for change,

(6) motivations for decision making, and

(7) integration of these disparate concerns and paradoxes within the field. There are shared similar concerns about African-American approaches to community development. There's emphasized historic power differences and the influence of culture and black community institutions in black community development model. Relationships are linked to a sense of solidarity. How critical are trust and reciprocity in the community development process? What is essential to know about relationship building? Structure refers to social practices, organizations, or groups that play a role in solidarity and capacity building. It also refers to the relationships among them. Some of these social practices and organizations may have a limited role. Therefore, to establish solidarity, new organizations may need

to be built and/or existing ones could expand their missions. Power refers to relationships with those who control resources, such as land, labor, capital, and knowledge, or those who have greater access to those resources than others. Since community development is about building the capacity for social and economic change, the concept of power is essential. Shared meaning refers to social meaning, especially symbols, that people give to a place, physical things, behavior, events, or action. In essence, solidarity must be built within a cultural context. Individuals and groups give different meanings to objects, deeds, and matters. For example, one community might see the construction of an industrial plant as an excellent way to bring prosperity to their town, while another community might see a similar construction as the destruction of their quality of life. Community developers need to pay attention to these meanings if they wish to build a sense of solidarity in a particular community or between communities. Communication for change is linked to the concept of full participation, a consistent value in the community development literature. Within a framework often dominated by technicians, the corporate sector, or national political constraints, practitioners raise questions about how the voice of citizens can be heard at all. Motivation can influence many aspects of community development. It helps us understand whether people will or will not become involved in a community initiative. It also affects making difficult public choices, a process which usually involves thinking through all the policies

to decide which will maximize individual and collective needs. Who is more likely to win or lose if a public policy is implemented? What are the potential consequences on other aspects of life if the policy is carried out? Essentially, the process of making rational choices can be nurtured as a form of capacity building. The integration of paradox and disparate macro and micro concerns are part of community development practice. How does one reconcile concerns about relationships, power, structure, shared meaning, communication for change, and motivational decision making? Is there a theory that ties some of these economic, political, and sociological concerns together? These seven concerns form the basis for essential community development theory: social capital theory, functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, communicative action theory, rational choice theory, and Giddens's structuration theory. **Table 2.1** lists these concerns and theories. Each of these seven theoretical perspectives will be examined and considered as to how they may be applied to community development practice.

Table 2.1 *Concerns and related theories*

Concern:	*Related theory*
1 Relationships	Social capital theory
2 Structure	Functionalism
3 Power	Conflict theory
4 Shared meaning	Symbolic interactionism
5 Communication for change	Communicative action
6 Motivations for decision making	Rational choice theory
7 Integration of disparate concerns/paradoxes	Giddens' structuration

1. Concerns about relationships: social capital theory

Community developers know inherently that the quality of social relationships is essential for solidarity building and successful community initiatives. Friendships, trust, and the willingness to share some resources are integral to collective action. Community developers build intuitively on these relationships. Social scientists view these relationships as a form of capital. *Social capital* is that set of resources intrinsic to social relations and includes trust, norms, and networks. It is often correlated with confidence in public institutions, civic engagement, self-reliant economic development, and overall community well-being and happiness.

Trust is part of everyday relationships. Most people trust that banks will not steal their accounts or that when they purchase a pound of meat from the grocer, it will not actually weigh less. Life can be richer if there is trust among neighbors and others in the public and private sectors. Think of settings where corruption, indifference, and open distrust might inhibit common transactions and the sense of the common good. Equality is considered to be an important cultural norm that is high in social capital because it reaches across political, economic, and cultural divisions. Reciprocity is another cultural norm that is viewed as part of social capital. It should not be confused with a *quid pro quo* economic transaction; it is much broader than the concept of "I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine." When individuals, organizations, or communities provide food banks,

scholarship funds, low-cost homes – or other forms of self-help, mutual aid, or emotional support – it stimulates a climate of reciprocity in which the recipients are more likely to give back to the community in some form. A culture with high levels of reciprocity encourages more pluralistic politics and compromise which can make it easier for community development initiatives to emerge. Some critics claim the indicators are linked too closely with "communities of place" because memberships in organizations such as the Sierra Club and other groups have increased significantly. They have also asserted that communities with strong social capital can also breed intolerance and smugness. They have distinguished between "bonding social capital" and "bridging social capital." They contend a mafia group or the Klu Klux Klan (in America) may have strong bonding social capital, but it does not build any new bridges that can expand horizons, provide new ideas, or generate wealth. They suggest to focus more on "bridging social capital" – the formation of new social ties and relationships to expand networks and to provide a broader set of new leaders with fresh ideas and information. For example, some communities have created stronger links between African-American and Caucasian faith-based communities or established leadership programs that nurture emerging and diverse groups of leaders. These activities both create new community linkages to broader resource bases and build new levels of trust, reciprocity, and other shared norms.

How can social capital theory serve as a guide for community development practice?

Community developers can integrate social capital theory into their initiatives. In some cases, they will find communities which have relatively low levels of social capital. In such cases, they may have to begin by nurturing "bonding social capital" through sharing food and drink, celebrations, storytelling, dance, or public art. They will have to create opportunities for people to get to know each other and build new levels of trust through shared interests including music, book clubs, games, or other pursuits. In other cases, 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. Social capital was built through the mutual support of multi-county mini-grant ventures consisting of international and domestic travel seminars in which participants shared rooms, buses, seminars, and programs. These activities led to new forms of bonding and bridging social capital which stimulated not only entrepreneurship but an entrepreneurial culture.

2. Concerns about structure: functionalism

Second, it is important to look at structure, which underlies organizational and group capacity to bring about or stop change. In essence, structure is related

to the concept of agency or capacity building. 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. Structures refer to organizations and institutions such as health care, educational entities, business and nonprofits, or informal groups. Functions refer to their purposes, missions, and what they do in society. These structures form the basis of a social system. Social systems have manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions are intentional and recognized. In contrast, latent functions may be unintentional and unrecognized. For example, it could be argued that the manifest function of urban planning is to assure well-organized and efficiently functioning cities, whereas the latent function is to allocate advantages to certain interests such as those involved with the growth machine or real estate developers. Concern for order and stability also leads functionalists to focus on social change and its sources. They view conflict and stability as two sides of the same coin. If a community development practitioner wants to build community capacity, he or she will have to pay attention to the organizational capacity for stimulating or inhibiting change. Structural functionalism helps one to understand how the status quo is maintained. Some

critics claim that the theory fails to offer much insight into change, social dynamics, or existing structures.

How can structural functionalism guide community development practice?

Structural functionalism is a useful tool for practitioners. Looking at the case of an inner city neighborhood that is struggling to create a micro-enterprise business that will benefit local people, if one applied structural functionalism to community development practice, one would help the community analyze which organizations are committed to training, nurturing, and financing micro-enterprise development and what their latent or hidden functions might be. 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. While structural functionalism is an important tool for community development, it is limited because it does not fully explore the issue of power that may be found in other theories.

3. Concerns about power: conflict theory

Power is the third key issue for community development. Power is control or

access to resources (land, labor, capital, and knowledge). Since community development builds capacity, concerns about power are pivotal. Insights into power tend to be found in political science or political sociology. More contemporary theorists have added to the richness of the literature. There is an argument that where there is power there is resistance. It is examined that the struggles against the power of men over women, administration over the ways people live, and of psychiatry over the mentally ill requires power as a feature of all human relations. Power has fluidity in the sense that it can be reversed and exists in different degrees. Beyond conventional politics at the state level, Foucault's focus extends to the organizations and institutions of civil society and to interpersonal relations. We can apply Marxist theory to understand the expansion of capitalism to a globalized system which needs to continually expand its boundaries. "Political states," such as Japan, the UK, the European Union and the U.S., are among the core developed states based on higher level skills and capitalization. These states dominate the peripheral areas such that weak states are economically dependent on the "core." The low-technology states form a buffer zone to prevent outright conflict between the core and the periphery. Some have applied Wallerstein's world system theory to regional economics, with places like Appalachia serving as a "periphery" to global market forces. In summary, conflict theory suggests that conflict is an integral part of social life. There are

conflicts between economic classes, ethnic groups, young and old, male and female, or among races. There are conflicts among developed "core" countries and regions and those that are less developed. It is argued that these conflicts result because power, wealth, and prestige are not available to everyone. Some groups are excluded from dominant discourse. It is assumed that those who hold or control desirable goods and services or who dominate culture will protect their own interests at the expense of others. Conflict can be constructive when it forces people with common interests to make gains to benefit them all. Racial inequalities or other social problems would never be resolved to any degree without conflict to disturb the status quo. Conflict can be resolved in a variety of ways including disappearance of the conflict, victory for one of the parties, compromise, conciliation, and irreconcilability. This theoretical framework that underlies both the power of one party over another and the potential for conflict is not intended to be exhaustive. Instead, it points to some of the major concerns that can guide community development practice.

How can conflict theory serve as a guide for community development practice?
Community organizers tend to more readily embrace conflict theory as a pivotal component of their work. However, it may be argued that community developers also need conflict theory if their goal is to build capacity. Power differences are a

reality of community life and need to be considered as development occurs. Take the case of an Appalachian community near a major state forest. The state Department of Transportation (DOT) wanted to build a highway through the state forest. They claimed it would lead to more jobs and economic development. A group of local citizens questioned this assumption. They believed the highway would pull businesses away from the prosperous downtown area to the edge of town, lead to sprawling development that would detract from the quality of life, destroy a popular fishing hole, and harm the integrity of the forest. The DOT refused to converse with the community; they claimed the proposed highway's economic benefits were irrefutable. Conflict theory served as a reference point for moving the community's interests further. At first glance, it appeared that the DOT was in charge of making the major decisions about the highway. However, the community developer put conflict theory into practice. Community residents were encouraged to analyze the power of the DOT as well as their own political, technical, economic, and social power. Through its analysis, the group was expanded to include downtown businesspeople, hunters, environmental, and religious groups. In this particular case, the community decided it needed more technical power. They were able to secure the services of university researchers, such as economists, foresters, sociologists, and planners, who had the credentials to write an alternative impact assessment of the proposed highway. This report was

widely circulated by the community to the media and prominent state legislators. Gradually, external support (power) emerged to help the community and the DOT decided to postpone the project. In a similar situation, the use of conflict theory took another twist. The opponents of a DOT proposed road sought a mediator /facilitator to help them negotiate with the DOT and other stakeholders. They believed a neutral third party could create a safe climate for discussion, and that during such discussions power differences would be minimized. In this particular case, their use of conflict theory paid off because the dispute was settled to everyone's satisfaction. In summary, 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. It can help them to understand why some people are silent or have internalized the values of elites even to their own disadvantage. Practitioners and researchers can use Simmel's theory to see how people resolve their differences. Alternately, they can borrow from Marx and the neo-Marxists to consider the sharp differences between and among class economic interests, gender, race, and other concerns. Conflict theory can help communities understand the kind and extent of competing interests among groups. It also can shed light on the distribution of power, whether concentrated in the hands of a few or more broadly distributed. Communities can also explore the use of conflict to upset the status quo – whether through protests,

economic boycotts, peaceful resistance, or other ranges of possibilities - especially if competing groups or institutions refuse to change positions or negotiate.

While conflict theory is an essential tool for capacity building, it should be noted that critics claim it is limited because it ignores the less controversial and more orderly parts of society and does not help in understanding the role of symbols in building solidarity. This leads to another theoretical framework about shared meaning.

4. Concerns about shared meaning: symbolic interactionism

Shared meaning is the fourth key concern in community development. If the field is committed to building or strengthening solidarity, then practitioners must be concerned about the meaning people give to places, people and events. The theory "symbolic interactionism" 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. An example is the importance of symbols, especially language, this shapes the shaping the meaning of the one who makes the gesture as well as the one who receives it. Some theorists believe that social life is possible because people communicate through symbols. For example, when the traffic light is red, it means stop; when the thumb is up, it means everything is fine. Among the symbols that humans use, language seems to

be the most important because it allows people to communicate and construct their version of reality. Symbolic interactionists contend that people interpret the world through symbols but stand back and think of themselves as objects. For example, a group of Native Americans view a mountain as a sacred place for prayer and healing, and react negatively when someone tries to develop or alter access to it. Developers, foresters, tourism leaders, and others are likely to have other meanings for the mountain. Different individuals or groups attach a different meaning to a particular event. These interpretations are likely to be viewed by others as a form of deviance which may be accepted, rejected, or fought over. Social interactionists argue that one way people build meaning is by observing what other people do, by imitating them, and following their guidance.

How can symbolic interactionism serve as a tool for community development 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. When a community developer helps a community develop a shared vision of their future, she is helping them build a sense of unity. A community-owned vision comes about through the interaction of people and is related through pictorial, verbal, or musical symbols. A symbolic interactionist would be keen on bringing people together to

develop a shared understanding. For example, take a case where some citizens have expressed an interest in preserving the farmland adjacent to the city and have asked a community developer for assistance. If one employed a symbolic interactionist perspective, one would ask them what the presence of farmland means to them. One would link them with farmers and others to see if there were a different or competing meaning. Participants would be asked how they developed their meaning of farmland. A symbolic interactionist would not ignore the concept of power. Participants would be asked questions as to whose concept of farmland dominates public policy. Through the employment of symbolic interaction theory, a sense of solidarity could be gradually established in a community.

A symbolic interactionist would identify groups that deviate from the dominant meaning of something and would engage them with other groups in order to move the community toward solidarity. Symbolic interactionists would also use symbols to build capacity. For example, a community might choose to preserve a historic structure because they believed it was beautiful, or explain its importance in a labor, class, racial, or gender struggle or some other interests. A community developer could augment their meaning with data about the historical and architectural significance that external agents see in the structure. Community capacity could be built in other ways such as providing information about tax credits for historic structures or how to locate grants for preservation. Increasingly,

community development researchers and practitioners are asked to help citizens reflect and understand the meaning of their work. The symbolic interactionist concepts may be used to aid in collective evaluations. Essentially, it all boils down to what it means and who gives it meaning. 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. Critics argue that symbolic interactionists do not have an established systematic framework for predicting *which* meanings will be generated, for determining *how* meanings persist or understanding how they change. For example, say a group of Mexican workers and a poultry processing firm move into a poor rural community that was historically dominated by Anglo-Saxon Protestants. The events may trigger cooperation, goodwill, ambivalence, anger, fear, or defensiveness. The cast of characters involved in these events may be endless. What has really happened and whose interpretation captures the reality of the situation? Symbolic interactionists have limited methodologies for answering such questions. In spite of these limitations, it is hoped that a strong case has been made as to why symbolic interactionism is an essential theory for community development practice.

5. Communication for change: communicative action theory

It is safe to assume that community development occurs within the context of democracy that is deliberative and participatory. Public talk is not simply talk; it is essential for democratic participation. It is about thinking through public policy choices. Deliberation occurs when the public examines the impacts of potential choices and tries them on, just as one might try on clothing in a department store before making a choice. In such settings, public talk involves rich discussions among a variety of networks. From the community development perspective, participation occurs in a setting where a diversity of voices is heard in order to explore problems, test solutions, and make changes to policies when the community finds flaws. Communities with robust democratic networks may be viewed as *communicatively integrated*. This type of integration involves the communicative activities that link individuals, networks, and institutions into a community of place or interest. Local politics are also influenced by federal and state laws, national party politics, and regulations. Although the system is embedded in language, it is self-producing. Power and markets can be relatively detached from community, family, and group values. At the same time, there is the world of everyday life or the *lifeworld.* Lifeworld is constituted of language and culture: The lifeworld, is, so to speak, the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they reciprocally raise claim that their utterances fit the world

... and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements and arrive at agreements. In practical terms, citizens find it difficult to engage in dialogue with “more rational” scientists, engineers, or political and corporate elites. The problem is compounded when there is technical arrogance or limited receptivity to local voices. For example, many local newspapers and television stations are corporately owned. It is therefore difficult to hear local voices since they are filtered through more dominant perspectives.

How can communicative action theory guide community development practice?

By its very nature, community development involves the participation of networks, groups, and individuals whose voices are part of the lifeworld. While this lifeworld operates within the context of technical, political, and market realities, it should be noted that the principles of community development entail participation of citizens in defining their own problems and dreams. If technicians or political and corporate interests dominate discussions, citizen involvement and participation become a mere afterthought. If technical knowledge is discarded or minimized, community development efforts may not be successful.

6. Motivation for decision making: rational choice theory

The rational economic man model was proposed by Alfred Marshall (1895). He believed that humans were interested in maximizing their utility, happiness, or

profits. The rational man would investigate each alternative and choose that which would best suit his individual needs. Rational choice theory has several embellishments and spinoffs from various social scientists. It is believed that collective behavior could be expected under two conditions:

(1) selective incentives – such as increased stature in the community, tax breaks, or other benefits – could increase the rewards of those engaging in collective action, and

(2) the threat of sanctions against those who fail to participate.

In recent years, social scientists have explored how four structural factors relate to individual participation in collective activities. One is prior contact with a group member because it is easier to recruit through interpersonal channels. A second is prior membership in organizations due to the likelihood that those who are already active may join other groups and, conversely, isolated individuals may perceive joining as a type of risk. The second is a history of prior activism because those with previous experience are more likely to reinforce their identity through new forms of activism. The fourth factor is biographical availability, which pulls people toward and away from social movements. For example, full-time employment, marriage, and family responsibilities may increase the risks and costs of becoming involved. Conversely, those who are free of personal constraints may be more

likely to join. Critics of rational choice theory have argued that actors do not have equal access to information or that information is distorted. Others assert that many people's choices are limited by social, political, and economic interests and values, which limits their participation in rational choice making.

How can rational choice theory serve as a guide for community development practice?

Community developers know that while people may have altruistic concerns, they also have their own needs and make choices about how to invest their time. There have been many creative responses to rational choice theory. For example, the Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Program offers free horticultural training but participants must volunteer hours back to the community in order to receive the training. Leadership programs have popped up in many communities where participants gain the advantage of expanding their network and knowledge bases. Their positive experience in meeting and working with others in collective settings leads to a greater openness and involvement. 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. Such rewards might be as simple as free babysitting services or an awards and recognition banquet. Both examples would facilitate people's choices to invest their time or money in community development efforts. In other

situations, there is a tendency toward misinformation, misunderstanding, competing sets of data, or different interpretations of the same data. Any or all of these make it difficult to reach common ground and establish solidarity. In such cases, community developers can find new ways to gather data, interpret information, or glean new information from mutually respected third party sources. It should be asserted that in many settings universities are no longer viewed as neutral or objective. They may be perceived as instruments of the state, the corporate sector, or a particular political or economic interest. One of the limitations of rational choice theory is that it can be implemented by technicians, the corporate sector, and bureaucracies in ways that can overwhelm and silence citizens who may not understand such knowledge.

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

The classical theories of structural functionalism, conflict theory, and rational choice theory are essential concepts for building community capacity. The fluid contemporary theories of social capital, communicative action, and the classical theory of symbolic interactionism are important for creating or strengthening solidarity. There are obvious tensions inherent in these theories. The dualism of macro versus micro characterizes much of the theoretical thinking in sociology. Sharing the same goal of picturing social reality, these schools choose

to proceed from opposite directions. The macro-thinkers attempt to draw a holistic picture and lay down the works of society, whereas the micro-theorists hope to arrive at the same results by scrutinizing what happens "in" and "between" individual people. Neither approach is entirely successful in producing a complete and exhaustive picture for community development practice. In a more recent development, efforts have been made at a "micro-translation," which seeks to visualize social reality as composed of individuals interacting with one another to form "larger interaction ritual chains". However, recent theory also recognizes that social agency itself, pointed out above as a key concern for community development, needs to be theoretically addressed. This must be done in a way that transcends both the established orientations in modern social theory and the whole macro–micro split. There is a structuration theory as stated by Anthony Giddens (1984, 1989) which offers a perspective that is more fluid and process-oriented. He introduces a third dimension, or an "in-between" level of analysis, which is neither macro nor micro. It has to do with the cultural traditions, beliefs, societal norms, and how actors draw upon those in their behavior. Their actuality consists in the moments when individuals' behaviors rise to that level of society's traditions and norms. People also draw and act upon thought patterns or cultural "molds"; for example, the classical notion of reciprocity – getting one thing in return for something else. Cultural traditions and patterns become modalities by

virtue of placing them on Giddens's analytical scheme. They represent a third level, that between individualistic behavior and the macro-structures. Even though the reality of modalities may be only momentary, when people actually rise to them in their behavior, then the social process and the role of culture and normative patterns can be better visualized. "Actors draw upon the modalities of structuration in reproduction of systems of interaction" (Giddens 1984: 28). Social structure is upheld and existing divisions of society carry on through these "mental molds." The laying out of society on the six abovementioned levels – social capital theory, functionalism, conflict, symbolic interactionism, communicative action theory, and rational choice theory – reflects a fluid process in which all levels interact. Individuals represent the agency whereby interaction among levels takes place. Coming back to the community development profession and its key concerns, Giddens's model is perhaps best suited to grasp how social agency is exercised and solidarity established amid and often against the existing structural divisions of society. Behavior is neither haphazard nor merely a reflection of the existing social structure and its divisions. Modalities represent the levels at which people establish solidarity by following the symbolic norms and patterns of their cultures and traditions. Similarly, new rules of behavior also occur through the medium of modalities, in this instance their creative redefinition. This is how the existing divisions can be overcome and

new bonds between people forged. For this to take place, genuine social creativity is necessary. This means that people come up with solutions and ideas that simultaneously draw on the common reference point of their cultural traditions, and transcend those traditions to establish new bonds and patterns of solidarity. Modalities serve not only as the rules for the reproduction of the social system, but for its transformation. Giddens's concept of modalities is the link between macro- and micro-theories. Modalities are part of the analytical scheme in a particular place. For example, individualism in the United States is a strong modality and can keep citizens from united action. The notion of the common good is another American modality which may be used to transform a divided community into one with a greater sense of solidarity. Modalities may be used to influence the macro- or micro-level of social change. There are several substantive analyses looking at cultural patterns and systems of ideas and how they mediate the social process. In these analyses, social processing and the dynamics of social transformation are at least partly carried out on the level of modalities. We can analyze how power can be used in the region to prevent or implement decisions. The use of force and threat of sanctions are discussed along with less intrusive aspects such as attitudes that are infused into the dominant culture by elites and internalized by non-elites. For example, there are perspectives such as "you can't change anything around here" or "you don't have to be poor if you want to really

work." Gaventa argues that there are other modalities in which Appalachian culture has resisted the penetration of dominant social values. Those with less power can develop their own resources for analyzing issues and can explore their grievances openly. He views the "myth of American democracy" as another modality that can set the stage for greater openness and transparency in local government. To further create a sense of solidarity and unity in opposition to the Communist Party and the system, Walesa incorporated Polish workers' strong Christian identification into helping define their new self-understanding and self-image. While the symbolic interactionists tend to ignore structure, Giddens' mid-level theory about modalities is a crucial link among symbolic interactionism, rational choice theory, social capital, the micro–macro conflict, communicative action, and structural functionalist theories (Giddens 1984). This was especially obvious in his attempts to explain the rise of modern capitalism through the interplay of social structural conditions and the religious beliefs of Protestantism. He followed similar analyses for non-Western societies in his volumes on the sociology of religion. What Giddens delineated in theory Weber actually performed in his works, bridging the macro and the micro dimensions in his attention to society's traditions and norms. He observed how people, independent of the macro-structural forces of society, transform these traditions and norms by interpreting and reinterpreting them. However, with the advent

of new technologies, there can be interaction across different times and spaces. Community developers are likely to feel some kinship with Giddens because he has a dynamic rather than static concept of the world. He recognizes the interplay of humans and structure in shaping and being shaped. Critics are likely to argue that he has oversubscribed to the concept of the power of human agency. The space of this Lesson limits a response to those critiques and a fuller exploration of Giddens's theoretical insights.

How can Giddens's structuration theory guide community development practice?

Structuration theory provides many theoretical insights for those engaged in community development because 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. Giddens's concept of modalities is essential for community development practice. Revisiting the case of the Appalachian community group that opposed the construction of a road through a nearby state forest, as addressed under the heading, "How Can Conflict Theory Serve as a Guide for Community Development Practice?," the group believed they were overpowered by the Department of Transportation (DOT) that wanted to build the road. The community found it difficult to argue against the DOT report, which contained sophisticated economic, social, and natural resource information. Here is what the

community development practitioner did. First, the practitioner asked community residents to identify the strengths of their local traditions – particularly storytelling and the arts – as a venue for building solidarity regarding the integrity of the forest. Together, the community and the practitioner examined the modalities of storytelling and the arts to see if they could use the media to make an impact on the public and local legislators. The community's strong respect for the local Cooperative Extension Service was identified as another modality to mobilize the broader information resources of the land grant university. Without spending much money, the community developer was able to draw upon the services of professional economists, sociologists, foresters, and others. These professionals developed an alternative to the DOT report that was widely disseminated. Storytelling, the local arts, and links with the local Extension Service influenced broader structures and led to fewer power imbalances. Eventually, the DOT decided to permanently "postpone" the development of the road. Because the community developer understood the power of modalities (local cultural traditions and patterns), the community was able to develop a sense of shared meaning. This led to greater influence on structure and resolved the conflict. While the symbolic interactions and rational choice theorists tend to ignore structure, Giddens's mid-level theory about modalities is a crucial link among symbolic interactionism, rational choice making, the macro "conflict" theory, and structural

functionalism. The fluid theories associated with Habermas's communicative action and social capital may be viewed as mid-level theories, as part of structuration theory. They also address the intersection of modalities and structure. However, there are several limitations to Giddens's theories. His writing is analytical and abstract to the point of being vague and imprecise. He rarely gives concrete examples, which can be frustrating to those community developers who are more empirically grounded. Giddens's analysis is also difficult because it involves constant movement among the levels of modalities, societal institutions, and the actions of individuals. In spite of these limitations, structuration theory is especially useful for community developers because of the potent role of symbolic norms and cultural patterns (modalities) in creating new structures, influencing power differences, and infusing individual behavior with a sense of solidarity.

Conclusion

Community development is often thought of as intention to build solidarity and agency (capacity building). Theory is essential for community development practice because it provides explanations of individual and group behavior. It also provides frameworks so that community developers may comprehend and explain events. There are seven theories that should be part of a community development canon, or knowledge:

(1) social capital;

(2) structural functionalism;

(3) conflict;

(4) symbolic interactionism;

(5) communicative action;

(6) rational choice; and

(7) structuration theory. Each theory should be explored along with its limitations and applicability for community development practice. This Lecture is about reaching across the conceptual divide between theory and action. It should stimulate dialogue and further discussion on essential theory for community development practice. The classical theories of structural functionalism, conflict, symbolic interactionism, and rational choice can be balanced by the more fluid and synthesizing theories of social capital, communicative action, and structuration. These theoretical camps may be linked in novel ways to help community developers become more effective.