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A Framework for Analyzing, Developing, and Applying Community Practice Interventions

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Due to multiple factors, the community practice field struggles with incongruent community practice language and activities. In this article, authors unpack various challenges associated with community practice and explore implications for analysis, development, and application of effective interventions. Grounded in applied social science paradigms, authors offer a framework incorporating multi-paradigmatic approaches to inform intervention development and application. Principally centered in praxis—that is, reflection and action—this article builds on the work of foundational scholars to cultivate contextual interventions in planned change work. The authors aim to further develop the community practice knowledge base, expand what constitutes relevant evidence, and aid practitioners in making sense of complexity and contradiction in practice.

Keywords: Community organizing, community development, community planning, models, approaches

Introduction

Community practice involves people in addressing community needs, challenges, and issues through community-level organizing, development, planning, and advocacy. It encapsulates the activities of community organizing, community development, community planning, and community action (Popple, 1996; Weil et al., 2013). It originated in the early days of the industrial revolution, when community and social movements such as the settlement house, worker's rights, racial justice, and child labor movements emphasized empowerment, advocacy, and the role of community in mutual aid and social reform (Addams, 1910; Garvin & Cox, 2001; Reisch, 2008). Community practice has long been considered a method, concentration, and/or a competency within social work practice, community development, and other human service disciplines (Brager et al., 1987; Garvin & Cox, 2001).

Although community practice is often discussed in various interprofessional histories, shifting paradigms within human services, driven by professionalization, neoliberalism, and market forces, have distanced community practice from social work and its fellow human service counterparts (Brady, Schoneman, & Sawyer, 2014; Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Fursova, 2018). One of the challenges that has long plagued community practice is clarity around practice terms, the development of a systematic knowledge base, ideological inconsistency, and questions about what constitutes evidence-informed practice (Brady, 2014). While authors do not seek to hegemonically convert the knowledge base of community practice to mirror that of direct practice social work, human services, pubic administration, urban planning or similar disciplines, they do desire to generate greater ideological, conceptual, and epistemological congruence in community practice terminology, as a modest contribution to the knowledge base. The authors also hope to continue conversations regarding what constitutes relevent evidence within community practice.

This article argues for conceptual clarity in the use of terms, such as practice theory, model, and approach, throughout community practice literature. We offer a guiding framework that integrates conceptual clarity with multi-paradigmatic analysis of community practice intervention, while concurrently informing the development of new ones. This multi-paradigmatic

framework allows congruent alignment of values, ideology, and underlying assumptions of various practice methods with their goals, activities, and outcomes. The focus of this work primarily deals with praxis, that which happens at the complex intersection of theory and practice (Casey, 2016). The aims build upon the work of scholars such as MacNair (1996), Reed (2005), Gutiérrez, Santiago, and Soska (2015), Boehm and Cnaan (2012), Gamble and Weil (2010), Rothman (2008), Thomas, O'Connor, and Netting (2011), Kenny (2019), and other foundational scholars in the field in order to improve the accessibility of effective practice interventions for community-level practitioners, educators, scholars, and students across contexts. We also explore the framework's implications for the practice context, such as orienting practitioners, developing new knowledge, redefining and contesting what demonstrates relevant evidence within the field, and building interdisciplinary and inter-professional cohesion, and thus solidarity.

Conceptual Clarity, Praxis, and the Community Practice Knowledge Base

The knowledge base of community practice regularly makes use of terms such as perspectives, practice theories, practice approaches, and practice models (Quimbo et al., 2018). Few frameworks, if any, attempt to provide clarity in the uneven use of terminology, epistemology, and values utilized throughout community practice (Kenny, 2019; Materria-Castante et al., 2017; Rosato, 2015). As a result, authors draw from the works of Popple (1996) and Weil, Reisch, and Ohmer (2013) to define community practice as encapsulating the activities of community organizing, community development, community planning, and community action. Likewise, authors argue that using the term *community practice*, at least in the context of this piece, provides added clarity in communicating across various disciplines, such as social work, urban planning, community psychology, human services, and community development.

Due to the distance between scholars and practitioners, utilization of various epistemologies, and inherent interdisciplinary practice context, one of the main challenges influencing the knowledge base of community practice is the struggle to

utilize consistent vocabulary, coherent definitions, and accurate conceptual clarity throughout the literature (Kenny, 2019; Materria-Castante & Brennan, 2012; Materria-Castante et. al, 2017). A paucity of definitions exists within the community practice literature for terms such as *practice model*, which is often used synonymously with *strategy*, *mode*, or *approach* (Boehm & Cnaan, 2012; MacNair, 1996; Rothman, 2008; Weil et al., 2013). According to Netting and colleagues (2008), the difference between practice approaches and models lies in the level of prescription for how to do practice. Subsequently, approaches operate at higher levels of abstraction than models and use certain interrelated theoretical assumptions combined with skills, practice knowledge, and values to guide practitioners in the field (Netting et al., 2008). Models essentially make up the practical architecture of organized activities (Bobo et al., 2010; Burghardt, 2014). While practice approaches are somewhat flexible in the guidance provided to practitioners, practice models are more rigid and specific (O'Connor & Netting, 2009).

Ambiguity also exists in the use of the term *practice theory* across the literature. Netting, Kettner, McMurtry, and Thomas (2017) define theory as "sets of interrelated concepts and constructs that provide a framework for understanding how and why something does or does not work" (p. 11). Payne (2014) explicates theory into two distinct meta-categories: formal and informal. Formal theory has typically been tested and retested through methodologically driven systematic inquiry, peer review, and replication in the field, whereas informal theories arise from practice wisdom, case studies, community conversations, personal observations, and experience (Brady et al., 2014; Payne, 2014). Walsh (2013) defines practice theory within the context of direct practice in social work as, "a coherent set of ideas about human nature, including concepts of health, illness, normalcy, and deviance which provide verifiable or established explanations for behavior and rationales for intervention" (p. 3). In contrast, it is seldom defined in community practice literature (Brady & O'Connor, 2014; Bhattacharyya, 2004; Reed, 2005).

Many scholars actively discuss paradigms. Paradigms are at the foundation of theories and models in applied social science disciplines (Kuhn, 2012). According to Guba (1990), paradigms in science are commonly held worldviews comprised of underlying assumptions made about ontology (relationships between

concepts), epistemology (how do we build a knowledge base), and the nature of social change. Scholars utilize multi-paradigmatic frameworks to discuss differing and often-contested values that underlie the knowledge base of multiple human service disciplines (Schoneman & Sawyer, 2016). Within paradigms of social work, human services, and community practice lie ideologies that are rooted in the past history of the profession or discipline, and which inform how practitioners think about practice, research, the role of theory, methods, and social change (Hyde, 1996).

Applying a Multi-paradigmatic Orientation to Community Practice

Prominent scholars note the need to more accurately frame community practice interventions (Kenny, 2019; Thomas et al., 2011). Multi-paradigmatic frameworks' conceptual tools usefully aid in bridging theory and practice. As heuristic devices, they highlight underlying competing values between different worldviews related to reality, knowledge, human nature, and social change (Brady et al., 2019; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Guba, 1990; Kuhn, 2012). Burrell and Morgan (1979) offer an intellectual map for work within organizations that incorporates knowledge and value-based assumptions across various worldviews. Guba (1990) proposes a framework in the field of education, and Cameron and Quinn (2011) utilize a paradigmatic scheme for work in organizations within business. Built from many of the same key principles, which are briefly summarized below, they clarify how knowledge, values, and ideology guide practice.

Three paradigms influencing these schemes are the positivist paradigm, the interpretive paradigm, and the critical paradigm. Each of these orientations derives from philosophical traditions throughout the history of applied social sciences. Positivism posits that reality is knowable through objective observation and measurement (Humphrey, 2013). In this paradigm, reality exists outside the mind of the observer and is characterized through order, linearity, laws and verification, generalizability, and rigorous peer review. The interpretive paradigm diverges from positivism in distinct ways. For example, according to interpretivists, subjective experience guides

knowledge (Charmaz, 2014). Learning happens through dialogue and social construction. Reality is multifaceted, multidimensional, and co-constructed through various viewpoints (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Critical theorists, unlike their positivist and interpretivist counterparts, view social change as transformative and radical as opposed to incremental. This paradigm highlights hegemonic social power structures, oppression, and dominance embedded within all knowledge systems. Linking personal and social problems, learning in this paradigm connects to historical systems of social control (Smucker, 2017). The critical paradigm emphasizes both radical structural and personal change. At the structural level, the critical paradigm, rooted in classical and neo-Marxism, seeks to eliminate institutional discrimination and oppressive violence, while centering analysis of power embedded within all knowledge (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967; Mullaly & Dupre, 2018). At the individual transformative level, the critical paradigm derives from Nietzsche (1997), Gramsci (1971/1971), Habermas (1981/1985), and Freire (1970) concerning the importance of consciousness raising and individual liberation to build collective power. The structural branch conveys a vision for systemic transformation emphasizing replacement of the status quo with a utopian vision for society led by those experiencing marginalization. Alternatively, the individual-focused branch dismisses utopian societal transformation as hegemonic and equally problematic to existing oppressive status quo traditions (Mullaly & Dupre, 2018).

Community Practice Paradigms: Rational, Collaborative, and Critical

In community practice, Thomas, O'Connor, and Netting (2011) provide the most recent multi-paradigmatic contribution based on the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Guba (1990). These corral existing assumptions of knowledge, values, the nature of reality, and social change as tools to teach community practice. They argue that these paradigmatic schemes offer a way to link knowledge and values to the goals, activities, and outcomes of practice through three major worldviews: traditional; collaborative; and radical. More than simply an intellectual exercise, these schemes allow practitioners to link values and

knowledge to practice activities. Thomas, O'Connor, and Netting (2011) assert that each paradigm has different goals, visions, and activities for community practice. Adapting them, we categorize various community practice models and approaches throughout the literature to align their knowledge, value-based assumptions, and social change assumptions with their goals, activities, and outcomes. Table 1 highlights underlying common traits associated with the knowledge base of community practice, the major practices, and the social change focus within each.

This section details traits, utility, and limitations among intervention methods within the tradition of community practice (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Hardina, 2002; Ohmer & DeMasi, 2009; Pyles, 2013). Concerning the dearth of scholarship conducted in this area, authors by no means seek to review or cover all within the field, and do not hope to repeat the extensively rigorous work of other scholars (Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Rothman, 2008). Rather, we seek to synthesize their work in the interest of clarity, and frame it based on underlying knowledge-based, value-based, and social change assumptions using their work as examples of how this framework can be applied. Additionally, we hope to enable practitioners to develop and apply other prevalent community practice interventions within the framework to build added analytical, practical, and developmental utility. Tables 2–4 briefly synthesize these dominant rational, collaborative, and critical community practice interventions in the more detailed sections that follow.

Rational Community Practice

Rational community practice aligns with instrumental rationality, which refers to the roots of scientific or technical knowledge (Weber, 1978). Seemingly neutral, and based in positivism and post-positivism, knowledge within rational community practice emphasizes objectivity, linearity, professional expertise, and measurable outcomes. Mobilizing strength through existing community structures, it addresses social problems through carefully ordered, generalizable interventions arranged around a set of "best practices" that operate within existing social structures (Thomas et al., 2011).

Various theories, models, and approaches dominate rational community practice. Community and economic development

Table 1. Characteristics of Community Practice Paradigms

Paradigm	Knowledge Assumptions	Common Practices	Social Change Focus
Rational	Professionally Derived Expert Driven Predictive Outcomes Objectivity Generalizability Best Practice (One Best Way) Formal Theory Market Based Logics	Social Planning Economic Development Policy Planning Community Development Community Based Research Systematic Review Program/Intervention Development	Problem Driven Outcome Based Incremental Change Intervention Derived Capital Driven Community Wealth
Collaborative	Local Knowledge Practice Wisdom Human Experience Narratives Subjectivity Trustworthiness Practice Informed Evidence Research Informed Practice Formal and Informal Theory Tacit Knowledge Broad Participation	Community Building Local Advocacy Dialogue Driven Informed by Local Leadership Community Based Participatory Research Consensus Building Collaborative Intervention Development Story-telling/Story Circles Creative Arts Photo-Voice Asset Mapping/Inventories	Process Intensive Incremental Change Context Informed Relationship Centered Community Informed Flexibility Emergence
Critical	Expertise from Most Marginalized Transformation Liberation/Empowerment Experience of Marginalized People Local Knowledge Expert Knowledge Formal and Informal Theory	Social Action Activism Mobilization Unsettling Consciousness Raising Participatory Action Research	Structural Change Elimination of Oppression Elimination of Inequality Increased Consciousness Community Driven Systems Change

Table 2. Rational Community Practice Interventions

Tools	Distinction	Guiding Perspective	Utility	Limitations
Community Development	Practice Approach	General Systems Theory Ecological Systems Theory Rational Bureaucracy	Builds Market Assets Builds Economic Power Expert Driven	Hierarchical Market Centered Expert Driven
Social Planning/Policy	Practice Approach	Rational Bureaucracy Rational Choice Theory	Practical Detail Oriented Outcome Centered	Expert Driven Hierarchical Minimal Evidence Base
Rational Program Planning	Practice Approach	Rational Bureaucracy Rational Choice Theory	Evidenced Based Outcome Centered Predictive	Contingencies Unexpected Results False Security
Policy Planning	Practice Approach	Rational Choice Game Theory Decision Theory	Detailed Outcome Focused	Unintended Outcomes
Program Development	Practice Model	Functionalism Rational Bureaucracy	Outcome Centered Rigorous Problem Analysis Organized	Professionalized Expert-Driven Contingencies

Table 3. Collaborative Community Practice Interventions

Tools	Distinction	Guiding Perspectives	Utility	Limitations
Asset Based Community Development	Practice Approach	Capacity Focused Strengths Perspective	Empirically Driven Inclusive Provides Focus	Minimize Problems Simplicity
Narrative Theory	Practice Theory	Post-Modernism Social Constructivism	Process Oriented Empowering Client/People Centered	Process Oriented Achieving Outcomes Solving Problems
Neighborhood Organizing	Practice Approach	Multiple Perspectives Context and Power Driven Local Knowledge	Practical Inclusive Clear Context	Minimal Evidence Base Complex Problems Broad Focus
Locality Development	Practice Approach	Ecological Systems Theory Context Driven Market Driven	Practical Clear Context Economic Power	Minimal Evidence Base Broad Focus Complex Problems
Coalition Building	Practice Approach	Social Constructivism Organizational Culture Theory	Mobilizing Power Sharing Resources	Competing Agendas Communication
Feminist Organizing	Practice Approach	Feminist Theory Power Analysis Standpoint Theory Intersectionality	Shared Power Relationship Building Process Oriented Democratic Principles	Achieving Outcomes Minimal Evidence Base
Interpretive/Emergent Program Planning	Practice Approach	Feminist Theory Pluralism Social Learning Social Constructivism	Learning Centered Adapting to Change Respects Context Process and Product	Complex Perpetual Change Ambiguity

Table 4. Critical Community Practice Interventions

Tools	Distinction	Guiding Perspectives	Utility	Limitations
Direct Action	Practice Model	Conflict Theory Neo-Marxism Critical Theory	Goal Oriented Various Strategies and Tactics Effectiveness	Negative Connotation Confrontational Paradox/ Contradiction
Midwest Academy of Social Change	Practice Model	Alinsky/IAF Critical Theory Popular Education	Clear and Prescriptive Teaching Focused Action Centered	Structured Contingencies
Structural Social Work	Practice Theory	Neo-Marxism Critical Theory Socialism	Promotes Equality Promotes Equity Building Power	Context Risk Minimal Evidence Base
Social Action/Advocacy	Practice Approach	Conflict Theory Critical Theory	Goal Oriented Issue Based Various Strategies and Tactics	Minimal Evidence Base Risk Ideologically Driven
Social Movement Building	Practice Approach	Anti-Oppression Critical Theory Feminist Theory	Inclusive Various Types People as Resources	Mass Mobilization Resource Mobilization Participatory Incentives Complexity
Freire's Transformative Model	Practice Model	Critical Theory Marxism, Neo-Marxism Popular Education Critical Pedagogy	Learner Centered Empowering Equity Focused Democratic	Risk Institutional Power Minimal Evidence Base
Empowerment	Practice Approach	Empowerment Theory Feminist Theory Critical Theory	Personal and Political Consciousness Raising Builds Power Empirically Supported	Risk Complex Processes
Alinsky/IAF Model	Practice Model	Power Analysis Building Power	Creative Strategy Clear Rules and Principles	Attention to Diversity Confrontational Expert Driven

currently permeate the community practice field, particularly within cities, neighborhoods and regional entities (Chapple, 2015). Informed by general systems theory, ecological systems theory, neoliberalism, and rational bureaucracy, this approach centers the use of economic principles to bring wealth and resources to drive community change. It combines hierarchy, accountability, political neutrality, and bureaucratic management practices (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Udy, 1959; Weber, 2015; Weil & Gamble, 1995). It emphasizes market principles to drive accumulation of community wealth. This approach galvanizes broad support among policy makers, community leaders, private developers, planning professionals, and non-profit community workers (Chapple, 2015). However, taken to the extreme, this approach creates power struggles among well-meaning practitioners and residents and can fundamentally alter the culture, dynamic, and demographics of a community, at its worst resulting in gentrification, displacement, disintegration, and poverty re-concentration (Moskowitz, 2017). Communities solely depending on this approach can create social problems that reinforce oppressive structures. The Model Cities program is a primary example of this reality, which had mixed results (Ward, 2013; Weber & Wallace, 2012).

Dominant program and policy planning approaches are primarily based in rationality (Netting et al., 2017; Netting et al., 2008). Pyles (2009) describes social planning/policy as, "technical processes for addressing social welfare issues through public policies and programs" (p. 59). Netting, O'Connor, and Fauri (2008) define rational program planning as, "planning based on linear problem solving in which a step by step process moves toward a predetermined goal" (p. 266). Policy planning is typically defined by scholars as developing predetermined, data-based analytic strategies to achieve specific policy goals (Gamble & Weil, 2010; O'Connor, & Netting, 2011; Jansson, 2019; Rothman, 2008).

Social planning has been developed, studied, and expanded by practitioners and scholars in the field (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Rothman, 2008). With comparable theoretical underpinnings as community development, rational bureaucracy and various rational choice theories undergird social planning, program planning, program development, rational program planning, and policy planning (O'Connor & Netting, 2011; Ostrom, 2007;

Weber, 2015). In these planning approaches, decisions are made based on a set of informed, detailed, data-driven alternatives aimed toward predetermined outcomes (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Netting et al., 2008; Rothman, 2008).

Collaborative Community Practice

Collaborative community practice emphasizes partnerships between stakeholders, locally-derived knowledge, practice wisdom, participatory practice processes, community building, and incremental change. Focusing on the incremental, participatory development of communities, it affirms context-driven theories, such as symbolic interactionism, social learning theory, social constructivism, empowerment theory, narrative theory, and feminist perspectives that embrace subjectivity, tacit knowledge, and the process of intentional reformative change (Thomas et al., 2011). Theoretical perspectives, such as social constructivism, the strengths perspective, intersectionality, feminist theory, social learning, and symbolic interactionism, inform many of these collaborative community practice interventions (Bandura, 1977; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; Saleebey, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). The most prevalent interventions in collaborative community practice include asset-based community development (ABCD), feminist organizing, coalition building, neighborhood organizing, emergent strategy, and emergent planning (Boal, 1974/1979; Boehm & Cnaan, 2012; Brown, 2017; Hardina, 2002; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; Sawyer, 2014; Shemer & Agmon-Snir, 2019)

Formalized in the 1990s, ABCD shifts traditional community development's underlying tenets from a problem-centered focus to an asset-based perspective that mobilizes the inherent gifts, talents, and associations within the community towards mobilization, and, as a collaborative community practice approach, is greatly utilized throughout international practice contexts (Yeneabat & Butterfield, 2020). Asset Inventories drive activities in partnership with practitioners and community associations to collectively address community concerns (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; McKnight & Block, 2012; Saleebey, 2013). Philosophically aligned with both the strengths perspective and empowerment, this approach has various benefits and challenges (Gutiérrez, 1990; Saleebey, 2013). Practitioners need

to be able to deal with healthy conflict to actualize ABCD's potential, as they provide community members with more power. Success often depends on community readiness, time, and attention to cooptation (Block, 2008; Emejulu, 2015). Given its central focus on building power from within the community through contesting services, non-profit professionals, and social entrepreneurs in fields such as human services, social work, and urban planning, ABCD is often avoided as a practice approach among professionals (Johnson-Butterfield, Yeneabat, & Moxley, 2016; McKnight, & Block, 2012). It has also been criticized for its co-optation by neoliberal actors and service providers, business leaders, and human service professionals (Fursova, 2018; McCleod & Emejulu, 2014).

Similarly, both coalition building and collective impact involve organizations and institutions formalizing organizational structures to galvanize resources around a set of goals, and its success depends on organizations working together (Christens & Tran Inzeo, 2015; Walzer et al., 2016). Informed by organizational culture theory, social constructivism, social exchange, and social learning theory, coalitions center dialogue and mutual learning, and they assume that various agendas coalesce for social change (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Weil & Gamble, 1995). In a practice context, this approach utilizes collective impact to solve human service problems and struggles with similar limitations as ABCD in balancing competing agendas, conflicts, and mutually reinforcing activities (Kania & Kramer, 2013; Raderstrong & Boyega-Robinson, 2016; Schmitz, 2012).

Locality development and neighborhood organizing approaches also fall within collaborative community practice (Ohmer & DeMasi, 2009). Fisher (1994) conceptualizes neighborhood maintenance as analogous to neighborhood organizing, and each encompasses weighing multiple complexities into a comprehensive set of practice activities within a neighborhood (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Weil & Gamble, 1995). Rothman (2008) contextualizes locality development within a geographic region often larger than a neighborhood. Both have the same need to negotiate agendas, acknowledge and analyze power dynamics, and develop a comprehensive set of practices. Their theoretical base lies within ecological systems theory, local knowledge, and both formal and informal theory (Fisher, 1994; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Rothman, 2008). Locality development and local-level

development has been greatly honed and expanded over the years in the international contexts of community practice and development (Pawar, 2014; Pawar & Cox, 2010).

Collaborative community practice also applies versions of program, policy, and community planning. For example, emergent planning assumes that planning constantly changes based on new information from multiple data sources, contextual complexities, and swift responses to new realities, changing dynamics, and contingencies (Brown, 2017; Netting et al., 2008; Shemer & Agmon-Snir, 2019). Supported by feminist theory, social constructivism, and social learning, it assumes actors take part in a process of contextual learning situated within their social environment (Bandura, 1977; Block, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). In planning for capacity development or participatory planning, Rothman (2008) makes analogous claims including community members as active partners. In both of these approaches, plans change and adapt as new situations arise. These assumptions bring limitations, such as ambiguity, time intensive practice, tensions from perpetual change, and conflict with formalized "best practices" and evidence-based practices.

Feminist organizing makes major contributions to collaborative community practice. In one study, six major characteristics were found that included: (1) focus on human needs; (2) connectedness of issues; (3) holistic approach to development; (4) process orientation; (5) emphasis on community participation; and (6) networking (Gittell et al., 2000). Depending upon goals and scope, feminist organizing can also be oriented to many different types of community practice, but only so long as the principles of feminist organizing are promoted in the process, goals, and tools utilized (Hyde, 1996; Pyles, 2013). Gutiérrez and Lewis (1994) contend:

> The goal of feminist organizing is the elimination of permanent power hierarchies between all people that can prevent them from realizing their human potential…the elimination of sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression through the process of empowerment. (pp. 99–100)

Various forms of feminist practice exist. For example, more critical and radical feminisms, such as black feminism, intersectionality, and socialist feminism, focus more on analyzing power,

transformation, and liberation. What sets these radical feminist organizing approaches apart from collaborative feminist organizing is the focus on systems-level changes, empowerment, and dismantling of oppressive practices and power; this is why feminisms often fall within more than one paradigm within the broader framework.

Critical Community Practice

Critical community practice stands for elimination of oppression, and the transformative change of societal structures and systems (Evans et al., 2014). It "seeks to transform unjust systems that arise from inequalities perpetuated by dominant groups" (Brady et al., 2014, p. 37). Centering on the structural changing of communities, it emphasizes critical theories and perspectives to guide social change, such as Marxism, critical race theory, radical feminisms, structural social work, and others (Kaufman, 2016; Mullaly & Dupre, 2018; Reisch, 2005; Thomas et al., 2011). It encompasses direct action, social action/advocacy, social movement building, Freire's Transformative Model, empowerment, and the Alinsky/IAF Model (Alinsky, 1971; Chambers, 2018; Freire, 1970; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Graeber, 2009; Lee, 2001; Solomon, 1976). Theoretical perspectives that undergird these models and approaches stem from critical theory, critical pedagogy, neo-Marxism, conflict theory, and various other anti-oppressive perspectives (Danso, 2015; Freire, 1970; Mullaly & Dupre, 2018; Pyles, 2013). Critical community practice envisions new possibilities, systems, and social arrangements that emphasize equity, equality, and liberation from oppressive structures (Reisch, 2005; Thomas et al., 2011). The hallmarks of these new social arrangements involve entirely new ways of conceiving, realizing, and actualizing more essential democratic practice in communities and societies (Bronkema & Butler Flora, 2015; Scully & Diebel, 2015)

Direct action organizing disrupts systems of power through revealing oppressive power-based problems and involves pushing boundaries by intentionally creating tension through violent and/or non-violent means (Graeber, 2009; Kauffman, 2017). First mentioned as a part of the workers' movement in the United States, this approach poses multiple risks to participants comprised of physical, emotional, psychological, and legal challenges

to individuals (Thompson & Murfin, 1976). It is also limited by its confrontational nature, negative connotations, and often inherent contradictions. Organizers also have difficulty gauging how the targets of such approaches may react, but in multiple cases have been effective in achieving goals as in the Suffrage Movement, Organized Labor, Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Indian Independence Movement (Gamson, 1990; Tilly & Wood, 2016).

Social action shares certain characteristics of direct action, but it also integrates advocacy (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Rothman, 2008). This is particularly true of the Alinsky/IAF Model. Alinsky's (1971) pluralist, power-based, non-ideological model that organized communities based on mutual self-interest for systems-level change left a major mark on critical and radical community practice (Chambers, 2018). His main tools for consolidating power were building powerful people-based organizations and using creative, confrontational, direct action-oriented tactics (Alinsky, 1971). His model was oriented toward achieving end results and prescribed that the community organizer develops community leaders. He also drew a serious distinction between the organizer that worked for, rather than with, the community (Alinsky, 1971; Bradshaw et al., 1993). Even though he emphasized developing leaders, he justified the role of the organizer as expert for building and maintaining organizations. In this way, he worked for radical change of oppressive structures while often reinforcing them (Bradshaw et al., 1993).

Freire (1970), an educator who worked with people living in poverty in Brazil, developed another critical model based in education, literacy, and consciousness-raising. His work went through further development within Latin America and throughout the world, being continuously refined and utilized as a form of radical community practice (Bengle & Sorensen, 2017). Central to Freire's model were: the banking model of education; dialogue; the culture of silence; praxis; and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; Kaufman, 2016; Pyles, 2013). In the banking model, the teacher, acting as an expert, deposits information into the student. As a result, the banking model "attempts to control thinking and action, leads men and women to adjust to the world, and limits their creative power" (Freire, 1970, p. 77). Freire viewed dialogue as the antidote to this oppressive dynamic. Described as a practice of freedom, it is a central component in the development of an individual and

collective critical consciousness, and is essential in building trust. This further requires an intense faith in people and the presence of hope (Freire, 1970).

Various empowerment approaches closely align with Freire (1970). Empowerment is a transformative phenomenon constructed through a process of dialogue and action (Bengle & Sorensen, 2017; Lee, 2001; Kaufman, 2016; Saleebey, 2013). According to Hardina (2002), "the purpose of community organization practice is to empower members of oppressed groups" (p. 4). Solomon (1976) defines empowerment as:

> a process…to reduce the powerlessness that has been created by negative valuations based on membership in a stigmatized group. It involves identification of power blocks . . . and implementation of specific strategies aimed at the reduction of the effects from indirect power blocks. (p. 19)

Gutiérrez and Lewis (1994) outline the elements of empowerment and place them under the overarching goal of social justice. They highlight the elements of power, psychological transformation, and connections or social supports. Recognizing the importance of critical consciousness, having knowledge of structures of power and oppression, and linking the personal issues to political conditions are necessary within this approach (Lee, 2001).

Social movement building typically integrates multiple radical approaches, including direct action, social action, and empowerment, due to their scope and the need for public displays of unity, power, and mass mobilization (Staggenborg, 2016). Social movements focus primarily on conscious oriented citizens working to create broad social change to institutions and social structures that perpetuate oppression (Tilly & Wood, 2016). Their essential characteristics involve changes in consciousness, shifts in collective behavior, and transformation in institutional values (Castells, 1984). Social movements raise consciousness through mass mobilization with the goal of fundamentally changing institutional structures, and their appeal is largely one grounded in values and human rights (Jasper, 2014). Examples include the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Rights (LGBT) movements, Feminist Movements, Workers' Movements, Poor People's Movements, Black Lives Matter, Civil

Rights, the Global Justice Movement, and Black Power (Bloom & Martin, 2013; Kauffman, 2017; Emejulu & Scanlon, 2016; Piven & Cloward, 1978).

Framework Implications: Complexity, Solidarity, and Expanding Knowledge

Early community practice often looked to local knowledge, practice wisdom, and case study approaches and moved to building and analyzing community-based interventions created to help marginalized populations (Brady et al., 2014). At the same time, various social pressures…including the professionalization movement, the push towards linear, positivist science-based forms of evaluation, and broad emphasis on the individual as a source of social problems—influenced the adoption of evidence-based practice (EBP), and the valuing of specific types of professional knowledge and values over others. This manifested itself as a guiding hegemonic worldview for structured activities within organizations and institutions across disciplines such as social work, public administration, urban planning, human services, community development, and non-profit management (Brady et al., 2019).

As a result of the influence of EBP and post-positivism, various responses and approaches to building the knowledge base of community practice have taken root, due to political, economic, and institutional pressure. Rational theories, models, and approaches dominate the field, often not due to their overall efficacy, but due to the influences of power, hegemony, and professionalization (Sawyer & Coles, 2020). While these approaches provide specific ways for understanding the creation and utilization of practice tools, utilizing a singular, dominant epistemological frame creates severe limitations for practitioners and opens the door to oppressive practice (Fursova, 2018; Materria-Castante & Brennan, 2012; Thomas et al., 2011). This framework expands capacities by offering alternative ways to envision effective practice in communities.

This piece does not capture all of the multiple intervention theories, models, and approaches to community practice. Though a rigorous systematic review of community practice interventions lies beyond the scope of this article, the core intent

remains to bring to light embedded assumptions, biases, and complexities within the numerous interdisciplinary community practice interventions within the field. The interventions above mix foundational interventions which are fundamental to community practice and contemporary exemplars. This framework brings to light diverse assumptions, agendas, contradictions, power sources, and biases that become evident when gathering inter-professional practitioners to build community practice initiatives, develop effective interventions, expand the community practice knowledge base, and forge solidarity across disciplines.

When practitioners use theories, models, and approaches which are not paradigmatically aligned, paradox, contradiction, and needless complexities arise. Aligning community interventions based on knowledge, values, and social change-based assumptions significantly reduces complexities. Paradigmatic analysis and application may not wholly eliminate complexity, but they can facilitate greater synergy than using mixtures of multiple less aligned eclectic approaches that do not take into account worldview, knowledge, values, and social change assumptions.

It is critical for practitioners and scholars to know the consequences, trade-offs, and benefits of using one intervention approach or model over another, along with having knowledge of those models that might be complementary or incongruous with chosen interventions in the field. For example, ABCD may not be as aligned with rational approaches to economic and community development. Due to the dynamic nature of communities and diverse goals of practice, prodigious benefits come from understanding what practice interventions paradigmatically align. Rational, collaborative, and critical community practice intervention approaches and models all have significant strengths and limitations. Choosing, utilizing, and effectively harnessing them regularly involves a series of trade-offs often made by practitioners at an unconscious level based on practice wisdom, personal values, practice contradictions, or misalignment among goals and paradigmatic orientation. This framework is useful in clarifying and identifying practitioner goals, strategies, and values, while also enabling practitioners to explicitly recognize the dominant knowledge-based, value-based, and social change-based assumptions which may be embedded within a given practice context. Often, as practitioners, students, and scholars, we may not choose the context in which

we practice, but identifying a specific community practice paradigm based on context can bring power to choose among various theories, models, and approaches appropriate for unique practice settings. It also holds potential for further developing new paradigmatically aligned interventions, and, more broadly, the community practice knowledge base as a whole.

Thorough analysis of applied social science paradigms exposes dominant ideas, knowledge, and practices. Formalized economic power, knowledge, and practices dictate how community-based organizations, community development corporations, and professional activities structure their organizations and services (Dominelli, 2010; Sawyer & Coles, 2020). Presently, academic systems, training programs, resource allocation, and knowledge development are centered in a rational paradigm (Brady et al., 2019; Fook, 2002). These rational approaches taken to the extreme perpetuate multiple social problems, particularly in communities in which more informal knowledge and subjective, context-bound approaches are pertinent, relevant, and appropriate.

Scholars and practitioners need to work diligently to develop the knowledge base to incorporate informal theories, approaches, and models through embracing interventions and research within collaborative and critical paradigms. These offer advantages that rational community practice does not include, such as democratization of knowledge and activities, incorporation of diverse perspectives, and analysis of and application of power (Brady et al., 2014; Fisher & Shragge, 2000). The knowledge driving collaborative and critical approaches continues to fall outside the mainstream of prototypical planning, and is often considered "novel" and less rigorous by more rationally-driven practitioners and scholars (Netting et al., 2008; Rothman, 2008; Shemer & Agmon-Snir, 2019). Expanding relevant evidence means incorporating more community-based participatory research methods, acknowledging local intelligence as valuable, and equalizing power among all stakeholders (Sawyer & Coles, 2020).

Diverse ways of approaching community work and knowledge development benefit professional practice and social science; however, it is imperative that community practice scholars, practitioners, and educators begin working collaboratively towards developing consistent terminology and definitions for practice tools. In this way, professionals across disciplines better understand which models and approaches will best serve

the needs presented in their practice context. Perhaps to bridge the interdisciplinary gap, consistent language can be cultivated through developing shared discourse and study of applied social science paradigms. This praxis framework helps build consistency, understanding of key concepts and terms, and interdisciplinary solidarity without exerting hegemony in favor of one overarching worldview regarding the best way to practice, or build intervention tools.

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