

MOTIVATIONS TO GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY ACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF
POVERTY

By

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This document is dedicated to my Father.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT	1
Poverty	2
Social Well-being	3
Community action and well-being	4
Purpose of research	7
Assumptions	8
Limitations	9
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	10
Community	10
Community Theoretical Perspectives	14
Rural Sociology: Field Theory	16
Community field	17
Social field	18
Social Movement	19
Community Agency and Action	21
Community Development	25
Motivations and Barriers to Community Action	27
Motivations for Action	28
Social interaction	30
Community attachment	31
Efficacy	33
Barriers to Action	36
Poverty	39
Distress	40

3	METHODS	42
	Approach.....	42
	Site Selection	44
	Context of Poverty.....	44
	History of Community Action.....	45
	Methods	46
	Sampling.....	47
	Stage 1: Key informant interviews for questionnaire development	47
	Stage 2: Local leaders of neighborhood watch organizations.....	48
	Process.....	48
	Data Analysis.....	50
4	RESULTS	53
5	DISCUSSION	69
	Self-efficacy.....	70
	Community Attachment.....	79
	Community Ecology	85
	Social Support.....	87
	Participants' Resources.....	88
	Perceived Barriers to Action.....	92
	Conclusion.....	96
6	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	98
APPENDIX		
A	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STAGE 2 AND CORRESPONDING THEORIES	102
B	INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	105
	LIST OF REFERENCES	108
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	120

LIST OF TABLES

Table	page
4.1 Data analysis for question three to understand participants' initial motivation for action	55
4.2 Data analysis for question four to understand participants' family social support ..	56
4.3 Data analysis for question six to understand participants' domains of resources for community action	57
4.4 Data analysis for question seven to understand participants' barriers to community action.....	58
4.5 Bar graph of participants' resource level scores and the number of participants who identified with each resource level.....	59
4.6 Data analysis for question eight to understand participants' perceived low level of resources	60
4.7 Data analysis for question nine to understand participants' self-efficacy.....	61
4.8 Data analysis for question ten to understand participants' self-efficacy.....	62
4.9 Data analysis for question eleven to understand participants' perceived level of responsibility for improving community quality of life.....	64
4.10 Data analysis for question twelve to understand participants' community attachment	66
4.11 Data analysis for question thirteen to understand participants' community ecology	68

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	page
5.1 Sources of Community action self-efficacy as predictors for community action	72
5.2 Interaction, perceived needs and mastery experience work together as sources of self-efficacy and as predictors for community action	74
5.3 Feedback loop between mastery experience, social support, psychological state and self-efficacy	76
5.4 Self-efficacy creates four self-efficacy activated processes as predictors for community action.....	79
5.5 Sources of community attachment as predictors for community action	83
5.6 Feedback loop between mastery experience, self-efficacy, efficacy-activated processes and community attachment.....	85
5.7 Interaction and social support increase participant resources and contribute to self-efficacy	91
5.8 Conceptual model of motivations for community action.....	97

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The objective of this research was to uncover the factors that motivate individuals for community action in poor or distressed neighborhoods. Poverty is a significant problem in communities across the United States. Understanding the dynamics of neighborhood grassroots action in poor neighborhoods is important because community action increases social and material well-being in communities. This project used a multiple case study design and a grounded theory approach for data collection and analysis due to the large number of possible predictors of motivation for community action. The study site was a mid-sized University city in the southeast United States. The site was selected based on high poverty rates and a history of community action. Key informant interviews were conducted to identify important leaders of action, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with local neighborhood watch and community association leaders. The most important motivations for community action

among participants in this study were having a high community action self-efficacy and feelings of community attachment. Major barriers to action for the study participants were apathy among other residents, government bureaucracy, and low levels of available resources.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to understand the motivations and barriers to participation in grassroots-level community action within the socioeconomic context of poverty. The role of resident-level action within the context of poverty is of primary importance in understanding the quality of life, the realization of human potential and capacity, community development and social change in poor communities across the United States.

The community has been described as the most important setting for social well-being (Wilkinson, 1991). Communities are where individual, group and other local capacities are realized and pursued through interaction with other residents in the community. Uncovering the actions and interactions of residents of poor communities can provide insight about how we can work with local residents to create programs and policies that use, compliment, and enhance community dynamics, as well as improve the quality of life for the local people.

Residents living in the same locality interact over common issues, and this interaction gives structure to local life (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Yet little of the current research on civic participation has focused on whether neighborhood context influences participation (Stoll, 2001). Since poverty is characterized by a struggle to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, utilities and healthcare, for community members living in these poor areas we need to ask, “What interactions and community actions occur to address basic needs?”

Poverty

This project is placed in the context of poor neighborhoods because poverty is a significant problem in the U.S. today, yet we do not know how the experience of living in poverty serves as a motivation or barrier to participating in the life of the community. Poverty is primarily an indication of an individual's or family's economic status. Distress is a term meant to signify the severely different experiences of communities based on high unemployment, low income, high poverty, unstable economies, population outmigration or other socioeconomic problems (Glasmeier, Wood & Feullhart, 2006). Neighborhoods affected by poverty show symptoms of distress such as dilapidated housing, poor infrastructure, poor schools and decreases in the quality of life in poor areas. Although the poverty rate in 2004 was nearly 10% lower than in 1959, the first year for which poverty estimates are available, both the number and rates of poverty have risen for four consecutive years to 12.7% and 37.0 million people in 2004 from the most recent low in 2000 at 11.3% and 31.6 million people (U.S. Census, 2005). In Florida in 2002, the poverty rate was 12.6%. In Alachua County, FL in 2002, 15.1% of all people lived in poverty.

The family and every individual in it is considered in poverty when a family's total income is less than the family's calculated poverty threshold, determined by the Federal government (U.S. Census, 2005). For example, a parent with three related children under the age of 18 would be considered in poverty if they earned less than \$19,223 in 2004. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U).

Poverty exists in a many settings. Over one-third of the nation's poor live in suburbs (O'Hare, 1996). Contrary to what many people believe, metropolitan areas have

slightly lower poverty rates than rural areas, although rural poverty is less visible. In 2003, 14.2 percent of the population, or 7.5 million people, living in nonmetropolitan (population < 2,500) areas were poor. In contrast, the metropolitan poverty rate was 12.1 percent in 2003 (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2004). The Economic Research Service (ERS) defines counties as persistently poor if 20 percent or more of the population has been living in poverty over the last 30 years, measured by the 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses. Using this definition, there are 386 persistently poor counties in the United States, comprising 12 percent of all U.S. counties and four percent of the U.S. population. The majority, 340 of 386, of the persistent poverty counties are non-metropolitan counties (Economic Research Service, 2004). Among the four geographic regions in the U.S., Northeast, Midwest, West and South, the South has the highest poverty rate at 13.5% (U.S. Census, 2004).

Figueira-McDonough (1995) confirmed the pattern originally described by the National Research Council in the 1980's. While the poverty rate remained fairly constant from 1970 to 1980, there was a 75% increase in the number of census tracts with concentrated poverty. These facts demonstrate that as a nation-wide social problem, poverty has condensed into neighborhoods and communities (Stoll, 2001; Jarkowski, 1997).

Social Well-being

The extensive interactions and actions that contribute to the emergence of community in turn shape the social well-being of local residents (Wilkinson, 1991). Social conditions therefore, play an important, if not an all-powerful role, in individual well-being (Wilkinson, 1991). In fact, high rates of poverty and inequality in predominantly rural areas stand out most dramatically as a factor in community

interaction and social well-being (Joint Economic Committee, 1986). It therefore makes sense that a threshold must be achieved in meeting basic physiological needs for food, safety, and other lower order needs, in order to facilitate social well being (Wilkinson, 1991). At the social level, this demand generalizes the needs for jobs, income, markets, homes and a range of services. Deficits in these components of material well-being give direct evidence of problems of social well-being (Wilkinson, 1991). Interactions, participation or association with others is both of instrumental and intrinsic value to social well-being, and the community is a principal arena of interpersonal association (Wilkinson, 1991).

Understanding the dynamics that occur between meeting basic needs and facilitating community action in disadvantaged communities has not been addressed by current research in community studies. This urgency is illustrated by Wilkinson who makes the point that

where protection and enhancement of material holdings becomes a dominant social activity, community and the human potential for well-being it supports can be said to fade into the background, if not to disappear completely from social interaction. (pp.78, 1991)

It is vital that we understand the successful efforts and constant struggles of individuals and families in poverty so that we can begin to mitigate the sacrifices of well-being that too many poor American people make each day.

Community action and well-being

The local community is the primary setting and point of contact between the individual and society (Konig, 1968; Wilkinson, 1991). Here, large scale social problems are materialized at an individual and group level. The actions of local residents in support of their communities are vital to social and economic viability (Luloff & Bridger, 2003).

Members of disadvantaged groups do engage in collective behavior in order to improve their situation under certain circumstances (Simon et al., 1998). These actions enhance the well-being of those involved when they occur (Wilkinson, 1991). Community action is the process of building social relationships in the pursuit of common community interests (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). These actions are most successful when people act together to improve material conditions of their shared life, which is important in addressing the needs in poor neighborhoods. Collective action will occur because collective action has its roots in the private problems of individuals as long as there are human beings confronting a harsh physical and/or social environment (Summers, 1985). This research aims to understand the true roots of grassroots action.

Action is based on the needs and wants of the community, and motivations serve to stimulate the initial stages of social action (Wilkinson, 1991). A need exists for local community and economic development efforts from government, Extension programs and non-profit agencies to better understand the role of action in dealing with the needs and interests of communities living in poverty.

The concept of community agency, or the mobilization of collective human resources, has not been well addressed in the research done on community development (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). An asset based approach is useful for mobilizing the potential resources in a community. This is when people in communities organize to drive the development process themselves through identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized, assets (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Agency represents the capacity for community action, so this lack of research prohibits social scientists from understanding how we can mobilize the human potential for development in communities

using this asset-based approach. This shortfall has contributed to the struggle of social policy to meliorate local efforts to address social problems (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Additionally, the failure to incorporate community agency into economic development programs has hindered our ability to understand and therefore assist community development efforts (Luloff & Swanson, 1995).

Examining the nature of community action has been previously approached by community sociologists who have addressed the question, “how do communities act?” (Luloff, 1990; Tilly, 1973). Luloff states that this is a necessary area of research in order to make relevant contribution to community studies. The people that live near each other and interact with one another are the molecules which form the matter of community, and are the agents which perform the theoretical acts of community. Observing the motivations for action at the individual level will provide a context for examining the role of human volition in the daily commerce of community (Luloff, 1990).

More specific evidence further suggests that community action is vital to understanding and improving communities in poverty. Community action had decidedly positive effects in communities defined as poor or inadequate in terms of housing, income, population, employment trends and poverty, and community action (Martin & Wilkinson, 1984). Essentially, high levels of activeness in communities with high distress yielded receipt of federal funding for community and economic development. If we can develop an understanding of the motivations and barriers that impact high levels of action in these distressed, poor communities, we can apply these findings to facilitate sustainable development and change in impoverished areas throughout the United States. A further understanding of the nature and motivations of these actions in distressed communities is the primary goal of this research.

Purpose of research

Extensive research is needed to understand how collective cohesiveness and an increased well being for citizens in communities emerge out of community activity (Luloff, 1990). The purpose of this research is to better understand potential social, psychological, physical, cultural and economic motivations and barriers to participation in community actions within a community in poverty. This research will explore the underlying forces and the context within which intervention and development can be planned (Summers, 1986).

While social scientists have long been aware of the importance of group influences and interactions in socioeconomic deprivation, it has been difficult to formally study these interactions, because data have not existed to allow the level of insight that a social science approach can provide (Durlauf, 2000). A community case study of human motivations and interactions in the particular socioeconomic context of poverty will contribute to this understanding.

The objectives of this research are to

1. Uncover how participants describe the factors that motivate individuals to participate in community action in the context of poverty.
2. Describe the barriers that limit or prevent participation of residents in community actions in poor communities.

Definitions

Barrier: any physical, cultural, psychological, or emotional factor which prevents an individual from acting, namely within the community (Luloff & Bridger, 2003).

Community: a natural and ubiquitous phenomenon among people who share a common territory and interact with one another on place relevant matters (Bridger & Luloff, 1999).

Community action: the process of building social relationships in pursuit of common community interests and maintaining local life (Wilkinson, 1970, 1991; Luloff & Bridger, 2003).

Community agency: the mobilization of collective human resources, the local capacity of people, to manage, utilize and enhance resources available to them (Luloff & Swanson, 1995).

Community attachment: the degree to which residents feel a social and psychological bond to a shared space with local inhabitants (Wilkinson, 1991).

Community involvement: participation in community oriented activities (Kaufman, 1977; Wilkinson, 1991).

Distress: the experience of communities based on high unemployment, low income, high poverty, unstable economies, population outmigration or other socioeconomic problems (Glasmeier, Wood & Feullhart, 2006).

Grassroots mobilization: resident-level organization of individuals in a community to collectively act in pursuit of a common goal (Rubin & Rubin, 2001).

Motivation: any physical, cultural, psychological, environmental or emotional factor that contributes to an individual acting in their community (Bandura, 1994).

Poverty: a person or family is considered in poverty if the family's total income is less than the family's threshold (Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14), then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty (U.S. Census, 2005).

Self-efficacy: the belief that one has the capability to perform a particular behavior (Compeau & Higgins, 1995).

Assumptions

This study assumes that people can be classified into two degrees of community action; active and inactive. It also assumes that community residents and key informants will answer the questions thoughtfully, carefully and honestly. Also, residents are assumed to be poor, working poor, or at least living in a poor community because the location of the study is in a geographic

area that falls within the demographic and statistical guidelines of living in poverty and does not distinguish relative poverty between each individual interviewed.

Limitations

A limitation to this study is that by using a case study design, the sample will not be representative to all impoverished communities and will only be able to describe and explain the particular experiences of residents in the community in this study.

Another limitation is that the study of community action has been relatively unexamined within the specific socioeconomic context of poverty and no previously tested methods or instrumentation are available to work with this particular population.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following sections review the current literature about the concepts in the research question. First I will elaborate on the meanings and theoretical nature of community and community action. Then there is a review of previous concepts and research findings that have attempted to explain the motivations and barriers related to community action. There is also a brief review of relevant poverty literature.

Community

Community has been defined in several different ways. The Greek meaning of the word community is “fellowship”. Aristotle argued that people came together in a community setting for the enjoyment of mutual association, to fulfill basic needs, and to find meaning in life (Christenson, Fendley & Robinson, 1989). Today’s concepts are similar to this historical perspective. Sociological definitions emphasize interpersonal bonds, such as a shared territory, a common life, collective actions, and mutual identity (Wilkinson, 1991). However, in both the sociological context (Hillary, 1955) and in ordinary language and thought (Plant, 1974), one common denominator of community substance stands out, social interaction (Wilkinson, 1991).

Schamelenbach (1961) says that community is a natural state of being in relation to others. Wilkinson states that community “simply refers to the fact that one naturally is connected to other people” (1991, pp. 6). Christenson et al. define community as “people that live within a geographically bounded area who are involved in social interaction and have one or more psychological ties with each other and with the place in which they

live” (1989, pp.4). Community usually arises in territorially based relationships within the locality (Wilkinson, 1991). A significant portion of our meaningful interaction takes place in a defined spatial area through local resources such as work, education, driving on roads, or buying groceries (Christenson, Fendley & Robinson, 1989).

Etzioni offers an alternative perspective on the definition of community, denying the need of a locality for a community to exist, and questions the benefits of community (2000). The strength of relationships between individuals who share the same values and norms create an identity that can be defined as a community. These values are established through *moral dialogue* and are maintained by informal social controls rather than laws (Etzioni, 2000). However, laws must reflect these values so that individuals in the community feel the regulations imposed on them are just and will voluntarily subscribe to these laws. Individuals engage in social bonds, but they also maintain a strong sense of self-identity and autonomy (Etzioni, 2000).

New urbanism offers another perspective on the role of the community locality. It stresses that the physical design and built environment can encourage resident interaction and social cohesion to rebuild a sense of community, which some scientist feel is lost (Katz, 1994). This approach tries to build community by integrating private residential space with surrounding public space and careful design and placement of public space (Talen, 1999, pp.1363). Community elements arguably can be built into localities by accounting for them in the planning process. However, Talen criticizes the new urbanist perspective condemning it for its lack of empirical evidence about the relationship between town design and community attachment (1999).

The concept of connectedness and interaction is prevalent in Putnam's social capital theory (2000). This perspective argues that people feel an obligation toward one another in communities characterized by high levels of trust, strong norms of reciprocity, and dense networks of civic engagement (Putnam, 2000). This enables people to work together for the common good (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Some social scientists have defined social capital simply as social networks or institutional relations (e.g., relationships between civic organization and the government) (Caughy, Campo & Muntaner, 2003). However, some research reveals that social capital can have a negative impact due to in-group bias in community associations. Stole (1998) observed that some community organizations that increase trust among their members also make them less trusting of those who do not belong to the association.

Coleman's (1988) rational choice theory claims that a person's actions are "shaped, redirected, constrained by the social context; norms, interpersonal trust, social networks and social organization are important in the functioning not only of society but also of the economy" (pp. 96). Others, like Hawley, include social interaction in their definition of community (1950).

Hillery (1955) and Willis (1977) summarized much of the classic rural sociological community literature and suggest four main components for defining the concept of community (Christenson, Fendley & Robinson, 1989). The first is that a community involves people. Secondly, a place or territory should be an element of community (Hillery, 1955). The third element is social interaction, and the fourth is a psychological identification, or a common attachment with a community (Christenson, Fendley & Robinson, 1989).

Interactions, or association with others is both of instrumental and intrinsic value to social well-being and the community is a principal arena of interpersonal association (Wilkinson, 1991). People who live together tend to interact with one another whether or not they participate in extra-local structures as well (Wilkinson, 1991). Ostrander discusses the key importance of social relationships in both rural and urban communities in ameliorating poverty in her review of the work of Duncan (1999) and Danziger and Lin (2000) about the social contexts of poor people's lives (2001). The research in both pieces captures the way people in poverty understand and create their perceptions of their day-to-day lives. Ostrander (2001) underscores the importance of this understanding in developing effective policies and programs to alleviate poverty. Knowledge of relationships among individuals and organizations in a community provides information to use to predict the range and/or breadth of potential community responses to local problems, both in the short and long term (Luloff, 1990).

We study community because the emergence of community is essential to the satisfaction of human needs, especially the need to not feel alienated from society (Greisman, 1980). Over the last decade, many scholars have argued that the local ecological context is central to understanding the factors that affect such diverse processes as socialization, workforce participation, intellectual development, successful aging, physical and mental health and persistent poverty (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Claude et al., 2000; Hylton, 1995; Tigges et al., 1998; Wilkinson, 1991; Wilson, 1995, 1996). Healy (1998) also argues that the neighborhood is a useful level for understanding everyday social interactions. A community theoretical perspective is appropriate to study the motivations to grassroots action.

The community is a field of social interaction with the capacity to influence and shape the well-being of participants (Summers, 1986). An examination of community focuses on the social life of people whose behaviors give the territory its social meaning (Wilkinson, 1991). A community theoretical perspective can help us examine social and structural problems. It also provides an arena for applying such knowledge in intervention and prevention to improve individual and community quality of life.

Community Theoretical Perspectives

Warren's "great change" theory discusses the transformation of community life. He argues that communities have become more internally differentiated as they have become increasingly reliant on extra local institutions and sources of income (1963, 1971, 1978). This causes the ties that connected all parts of a community to break. Following World War II, this trend forced local decisions, policy and program creation to extra-community systems outside of the locality (Warren, 1963). Local people had decreasing control over their immediate ecology, but increasing social and economic opportunities with the larger society. This process of creating more vertical (outside of the locality) ties has increasingly attenuated the importance of local relationships and the diverse intra-community (horizontal) interactions and activities in people's daily lives (Luloff & Bridger, 2003).

Warren's concept of a changing nature of community provides the context of the systems theory approach (Luloff, 1990). This approach views the persisting patterns of social relationships among interacting social units as the center of attention. The systems are adaptive entities that minimize changes from outside the community and decrease the impact of these changes on the internal structure of community (Warren, 1978). Systems theory assumes that the community status quo is healthy and provides for resident's basic

needs. This approach does not adequately address the dynamics of a disadvantaged population because it does not consider the necessary changes and actions that can occur within a community.

The massification of society approach also attempts to explain the historic barriers to community agency. Shils's (1972) argument explained the abandonment of a territorial or locality-based community for a larger, mass-societal community. This suggests that larger systems undermine community and individual well-being (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). These processes are viewed as undemocratic because they reproduce the class interests of local elites and do not necessarily represent the majority (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Structural or macro-level forces have an effect on community functioning and well-being. A micro or more individual level approach is necessary to allow the examination of interactions and events that lead to grassroots community action in order to understand individual action.

Macro-level or systematic approaches to understanding community look at the large-scale infrastructure, institutions and societal level trends that can affect community from the top down. They do not focus on the complexities and nature of local dynamics within communities. Therefore they do not permit an examination of the grassroots level social forces that exist on a more micro or individual level. Glennerster et al. (1999) discuss the importance of a neighborhood level focus as well. It is important to *recognize* the horizontal and vertical linkages between local activities and the larger society without *dismissing* local activities as irrelevant (Christenson, Fendley & Robinson, 1989). A community or neighborhood can exist with close linkage to the larger society and still retain its identity and viability because it provides a basis for the local population to

engage in community actions (Meegan & Mitchell, 2001; Christenson, 1982). Grassroots community action can therefore shape the ecology and identity of a community. It would be valuable to know exactly how resident level social forces facilitate the persistence of horizontal linkages in communities, as well as how these forces or actions shape local quality of life.

Two views about the model of community are important. The first has its origins in classic rural sociology and stems out of the struggles of isolated, primarily homogenous, poor rural areas. The second consists of theories that stem from the social movement model, which grew out of the urban experience. This perspective focuses on the ways neighborhood organizations link together to create broad based social networks.

Rural Sociology: Field Theory

Field theory presents a framework for understanding how community emerges through social interaction and participation (Kaufman, 1977; Wilkinson, 1979, Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Community is a natural and ubiquitous phenomenon among people who share a common territory and interact with one another on place relevant matters in the interactional perspective (Bridger & Luloff, 1999). Wilkinson focuses on interaction as the persistent feature of local life, stating that “social interaction delineates a territory as the community locale; it provides the associations that comprise the local society; it gives direction to processes of collective action; and it is the source of community identity” (Wilkinson, 1991, pp., 34). Field theory argues that the interactions of community members are the foundation of community that links the other three elements of a community together, people, attachment and locality. This perspective explores the fundamental organization of interdependence among people and focuses on the ways collective action emerges.

Interaction creates the framework, motivation, and social linkages necessary for action and social participation. It therefore affects the social behavior and organization of people. People behave and act purposively in response to their interactions and the impressions they draw from connecting with others (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Such conditions contribute to action, which is generally seen as purposive efforts seeking social change at the local level (Wilkinson, 1991). A threat from an out-group imposed on a community increases social cohesion. In turn, the opportunity to engage in community action is high when internal cohesion is high (Luloff, 1990). The desired end-state of field theory is that community members engage in associational action (Luloff, 1990). A field theoretical perspective moves beyond the calculation of essential features of a locality, such as institutional structures, to an examination of the dynamic processes of human interaction that are indicative of community (Luloff, 1990).

Community field

From a field theoretical perspective, a community is a dynamic field, a term used in both behavioral and social sciences (Mey, 1972; Yinger, 1965). The use of the field concept is more inclusive and more indicative of dynamics as opposed to arena or stage, which denote the context but not the activity, which is critical (Wilkinson, 1970). It is dynamic because it is in a continuous state of change. The term field also refers to the quality of a community as a complete and integrated whole (Wilkinson, 1991). The community field consists of actors, associations and organizations and its activities are directed toward specific interests (Wilkinson, 1991). It cuts across other organized groups and across other interaction fields in a local population and integrates all of these diverse fields into a generalized whole. The theoretical community field emerges when people interact and facilitate this core element of community.

An important quality of a community field, as defined by Wilkinson (1970), is that its character does not come from the collective properties of its parts, various social fields, but from the outcome of the *interaction* of these parts. Community field is therefore emergent. As the community field arises out of the various special interest fields in the locality, it asserts comprehensive community interests in the various spheres of local activity (Wilkinson, 1991). The key component in this process is the creation and maintenance of linkages and channels of interaction among social fields that otherwise focus on more limited interests (Bridger and Luloff, 1999).

Social field

Wilkinson (1991) defines a social field as an unbounded whole or “an emergent structure in a dynamic process of social action.” They are unbounded because the elements that comprise a field are the acts of people and not the physical or symbolic features that are typically used to delineate boundaries. An act can occur in more than one field at a time because social fields are unbounded (Bridger & Luloff, 1999). Social fields, such as schools, government and community groups, are loosely bounded arenas of interaction. Community evolves as members of these fields interact with each other over issues relevant to their mutual interests (Wilkinson, 1991). The presence of such fields creates opportunities for collective action, but does not guarantee or facilitate the *emergence* of collective action (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Field theory is a non-deterministic view focusing on the dynamics of emergence (Wilkinson, 1970). The nature of the emergence of these actions within the socioeconomic context of poverty is of particular interest in this research.

A field theoretical or interaction approach is receiving more attention in poverty research. Durlauf (2000) presents a new framework for the study of individual behavior

and social interactions. This new approach emphasizes how social context and social interdependencies influence the ways in which individuals make choices. Group-based explanations of poverty have become more important, due to the increasing evidence that individual-level explanations are inadequate for understanding many differences in socioeconomic outcomes. Durlauf argues that socioeconomic outcomes depend upon the composition of the groups which we are members over the course of our lives. Such groups may be defined along many dimensions, including ethnicity, the neighborhoods in which we live, our schools, and our places of work (Institute for Research on Poverty, 2005). Durlauf used community interactions used as measures of social dynamics within local populations. This provides empirical evidence for a memberships-based theory of poverty.

Social Movement

Social movement theory identifies community as a geographic place, the bonds that people share, the shared concerns about specific issues, and a set of obligations and responsibilities people assume (Rubin & Rubin, 2001). From this perspective, community organizing is about solving present day problems (Rubin & Rubin, 2001).

Several theoretical frameworks have emerged from broad social movement theory; including social constructionist and new social movement theories (Langman, 2005). New social movement theories focus on collective identity and participation in collective action (Langman, 2005). These theories tend to value participatory, democratic relations and decentralized forms of organization (Castells, 1997).

Social movement researchers often focus on the factors that motivate people to take part in collective action. Questions of when and how people come to join social movements, or form them in the first place, can be approached from both a macrolevel

and a microlevel perspective (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988). Typically, people tend to associate with people similar to themselves (Klandermans, 1992, pp. 88). From the microlevel perspective, people participate when they are closely linked to the associational movement networks required for action (McAdam, 1994). Face to face interaction is the most effective way of getting people involved in social movements (Clark, 2004).

The voluntary association is the basic social infrastructure of a social movement. When individuals participate in voluntary associations they build social relationships and access to social resources (Stoll, 2001). Their participation also enhances their social and economic prospects (Stoll, 2001). Social movement theory identifies organizations as either expressive or instrumental (Gordon & Babchuk, 1959; Woodard, 1986). Social clubs and sports organizations are examples of expressive organizations. They provide pleasurable interaction among members and participants often participate to increase their self-esteem (Stoll, 2001). Instrumental organizations, such as political and PTA associations, are task oriented. People participate to influence the creation or maintenance of a desired condition (Stoll, 2001).

Empowerment is the core goal of organizing for Rubin and Rubin (2001). Empowerment “is a psychological feeling that individuals have when they believe they can accomplish chosen goals; it is also a political or organizational strength that enables people to collectively carry out their will” (Rubin & Rubin, 2001, pp. 77). Personal and social changes rely on empowerment (Bandura, 1988). Some studies indicate that empowerment operates through the self-efficacy mechanism (Bandura, 1986). People feel empowered when they recognize that their contribution helps the group succeed.

Empowerment grows through a positive cycle where personal and collective successes reinforce one another (Rubin & Rubin, 2001). This cycle can in turn build individual self-efficacy and motivate individuals to act.

Community Agency and Action

Locality orientation is a central theme in most definitions of community action. Locality typically refers to local identification of actors and beneficiaries and to the distinctively local nature of problems or goals (Wilkinson, 1970). Martin's (2003) research confirms that communities regard their locality as a meaningful place for community action to occur. Wilkinson further states that

This interest, which local residents have in common whether or not they experience it consciously, is pursued in social interaction and thus is shared. This particular shared interest that arises in social interaction-the shared interest in things local- gives the elemental bond of the interactional community. (pp. 35, 1991)

Residents living in the same locality inevitably interact over common issues and this interaction gives structure to local life (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Individuals and organizations begin to understand common needs and wants when they interact (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1979; Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Meeting the needs of local people, especially the needs for collective involvement over identified common issues, is the importance of community (Wilkinson, 1991). Community agency is the ability or capacity of local people to organize and enhance their available resources to address local issues and problems (Bridger & Luloff, 1999, Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Luloff & Swanson, 1995).

Community agency as a social phenomenon emerges in the context of a locality's people, their talents, and their ability to learn and work together toward common goals (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Their collective assets and abilities synergize to develop community agency when residents and groups interact. This reflects not only the motivations for social action, but also the collective capacity of the individual or community for social action. Individuals engage in community action when they exercise their potential capacities and participate in the creation of social structures (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1991).

Collective action can be a powerful mechanism in achieving social change (Pratkanis & Turner, 1996). Therefore, fostering community agency is a primary objective of community development efforts (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Community-based action is the practical application of community agency. Community action is the process of building social relationships in pursuit of common community interests and maintaining local life (Wilkinson, 1970, 91; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). This kind of focused action is the foundation of the community development process because it represents deliberate and positive efforts designed to meet the general needs of all local residents (Marcus & Brennan, 2005).

Community agency and development can be seen as the process of building relationships to increase the capacity of and use the full human potential of local people. Mobilization for collective action can generate a sense of communion among those actively involved in pursuing a common cause (Summers, 1986). Efforts to help people understand and actualize their individual and community potential are essential to motivate people and keep them active in both the short and long term. Researchers

uncovered an empirical relationship between the presence of local capitalism and civically engaged localities with increased socioeconomic well-being in an analysis of over 3,000 U.S. counties (Tolbert, Lyson & Irwin, 1998). This demonstrates the potential importance of action in poor communities.

Figueria-McDonough's research shows that organizers must maximize the internal resources that are special to each community (1995). This includes recognizing the untapped strength of groups surviving in deprived communities as a basis for active empowerment (Figueria-McDonough, 1995). Agency is more than the sum of its parts when communities act (Luloff & Swanson, 1995).

Field theory argues that interactions are the building blocks of communities. Interactions contribute to community agency, the capacity to act, which facilitates constructive community action. Community action is measurable and is the primary indicator of the emergence of community in this theory. Community action and development has been examined in past literature. Qualitative descriptions of actions in small communities (e.g. Moxley, 1985; Ploch, 1976; Preston, 1983), statistical analyses of local actions and government programs in samples of municipalities (Hirschl & Summers, 1982; Luloff & Wilkinson, 1979; Martin & Wilkinson, 1984; Wilkinson et al., 1984), and studies of the effects of action programs on community well-being (Johansen & Fuguitt, 1984: 161-82; Krannich & Humphrey, 1983; McGranahan, 1984) are some of the contributions (Wilkinson, 1991).

Community agency may entail strong social solidarity and a sense of common purpose. However, it may also entail uninspiring efforts to organize committee meetings to mobilize local capital for business or structural improvements (Luloff & Swanson,

1995). These efforts do not take into account the shared needs, interests and understanding of the residents that comprise a community (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). The macro-structural characteristics of a community, such as labor force structure, its demographic profile or economic infrastructure, do not in fact reveal the *capacity* of a community to mobilize their human resources through agency (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Micro level approaches often involve the examination of participation by individuals in community-oriented activities providing a more in-depth understanding of interpersonal resources (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Goudy, 1990).

Community depends on interaction, but this does not mean that the interaction must have its roots in positive sentiments (Bridger & Luloff, 1999). For example, a community will act when unusual or adverse events threaten local residents (Wilkinson, 1986). Wilkinson argues that the potential for community action persists and can come into play at crucial moments when people act or react to conditions to enhance their threatened situation (1986).

Wilkinson contends that community has and continues to be an important factor in individual and social well-being. This is evident at crucial moments, when people act together to express common interests in the place of residence (Wilkinson, 1991). Summers (1985) also maintains that there will be community as a form of collective action as long as there are human beings confronting a harsh physical and social environment. This is because mobilization has its roots in the private troubles of individuals. At the base of these problems are needs for necessary material goods for biological survival and security from physical harm (Summers, 1985). Social needs begin to predominate, when these needs are secured (Summers, 1986). Individuals

quickly discover that they are not alone when they share their needs with others who share a common space. Private troubles become public issues around which people are able and sometimes willing to mobilize for collective action (Summers, 1986). Lack of resources and restricted community development efforts cause individuals to interact and begin to understand common needs.

Agency and the interactional perspective recognize that local people have the power to transform and change society when they work together (Wilkinson, 1991). Wide spread interest, support, and participation in a local action indicates the presence of a viable community (Luloff, 1990).

Community Development

Local activity is vital for community development (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). In turn, fostering community agency is central to community development efforts (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). How do we foster community agency to initiate local activity for community development? What are the motivations for these actions and interactions? What may prevent people from fostering agency and utilizing their human potential and capacities? It is important to clearly identify the meanings of the fairly common phrases, community development, development of community and development in community.

Community development is the process of building relationships that increase the adaptive capacity of people who share common territory relationships (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Fields of locality-oriented action emerge out of the interactions among a local population when this happens (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). The development in community is distinctly different from the development of community (Kaufman, 1959). Development in community is cultivating the social processes which take place in a locality and accomplishing other tangible development tasks like

economic growth, modernization, and improved social services (Summers, 1986).

Development of community is the emergence of the theoretical community field (Wilkinson, 1991). However, Wilkinson notes that development in community may facilitate the development of community, and that this is needed to improve social well-being (1991).

Luloff and Wilkinson (1979) and Martin and Wilkinson (1984) found that both the structural components of a community and measures of community solidarity contributed significantly, though independently, to creating community development. Lloyd and Wilkinson's (1985) study highlights the strong relationship between community activity and development of community, but the level of local economic well-being tends to increase with community activity and solidarity.

Hirschl and Summers found that citizen groups, organized for local economic development, were the single most significant determinant of job growth in 44 Wisconsin communities (1983). Their findings show how the foundation of community action and the presence of community can facilitate developments in community. This underscores the dynamic relationship between these two concepts. Economic development tops the list of local officials' perceived needs. There is a strong market for this localized approach to development (Camasso & Moore, 1985; Reinhard & Summers, 1985).

Well-being is directly enhanced when communities exhibit agency and work together to solve common problems and develop community (Bridger & Luloff, 1999, 2001; Luloff, 1998; Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Wilkinson, 1991). Claude et al. confirmed this relationship through a study of rural communities in Pennsylvania (2000). They found that residents rated community well-being higher in communities characterized by

high levels of activity (2000). Community well-being was not correlated with success. Residents were more likely to have higher perceived social well-being than residents in communities with high levels of success and low levels of activity in those places with high levels of activity and low levels of success in community development efforts (Luloff, 1998). The positive correlation between community activity and community well-being underscores the importance of building the capacity for community activity in community development efforts. Community development efforts and community activity can be useful in improving the quality of life in poor neighborhoods.

The collective capacity of volition and choice, however narrowed by structural conditions, makes the notion of community agency important in understanding community well-being. Like individuals, communities make choices and act on them. How they make these choices, how their perceptions of local issues are constructed, and the ability of the members of the community to find and process information are important factors in the use of their economic and social resources (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). The primary focus of this research will be on the motivations of agency and action on the individual level and the concepts that shape these motivations.

Motivations and Barriers to Community Action

Barriers and motivations to participation coalesce and reinforce one another because people are capable of overcoming barriers when they are highly motivated (Klandermans, 1987). The main strategies to mobilize residents for a movement are to maintain and/or increase motivation and/or to remove barriers (Klandermans, 1987). Excluding residents from participation is a barrier. In order to enhance motivation or decrease barriers, research and knowledge of these two factors are needed. Few

longitudinal studies about intended and actual participation limit the discussion of these motivations and barriers to participation (Klandermans, 1987).

Motivations for Action

Klandermans developed a model of social movement participation, based on a comprehensive review of pertinent research examining an individual approach or micro-level participation in social movements. The model includes four steps; (a) becoming part of the mobilization potential, (b) becoming a target of mobilization attempts, (c) becoming motivated to participate, and (d) overcoming barriers to participation (1997 ;Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Research about mobilization and participation during the Dutch peace movement identified that the motivation to participate was primarily a result of collective incentives (Klandermans & Oemega, 1987). This underscores the importance of the forces that shape the third step in Klandermans' model and the objective of this research. In his model, motivation or willingness to participate in a specific collective action is a function of the expected costs and benefits of participation (Simon et al., 1998). The goal of the movement is the collective good. Those who identify with the movement's cause benefit from attaining this goal, even if they individually did not participate in the collective action (Klandermans, 1987). Non-contributors that may ultimately benefit from these actions are termed free-riders.

People derive part of their self-worth and esteem from their membership in groups and communities, according to social psychological theories of identity (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). People will voluntarily participate or join when they feel a social identification with a group or cause. This behavior is an indication of the strong identification (Klandermans, 2002). In a study about group identification and the explanation of participation in protest, Klandermans (2002) found that identification

predicts participation in action efforts and helps to overcome lack of participation in community action (Klandermans, 2002). For example, Simon et al. observed that identification with the gay movement or with unions of the elderly predicted protest participation better than identification with the broader categories of gay and the elderly in general (1998). Similarly, in the context of the women's movement, willingness to participate in collective action directly increased with members' collective identification as women (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995).

Ideological and social incentives were also primary motivations to act in the peace movement. The increased interactions of participants and the importance of informal social networks created incentives in these situations (Klandermans, 1987). The authors relate their findings to Azjen and Fishbein's theory of reasoned action (1989). The collective motive and the potential rewards of the action determine together the attitude toward participation in collective action (Azjen & Fishbein, 1989). Attitude and subjective norm codetermine the intention or willingness to participate in collective action.

High social support conditions act as a motivation to grassroots action and provide a means by which residents can fulfill their neighborhood responsibilities in a satisfactory way (Vasoo, 1991). Social support refers to the degree of cooperation of leaders, degree of participation by residents, degree of assistance from government, and the financial ability of the grassroots organization (Vasoo, 1991). Therefore, inadequate social support adversely affects citizen participation.

Researchers found that the majority of people were motivated by community concern in a study of motivations to volunteering with AIDS victims (Omoto & Snyder,

2002). People also volunteer to express personal values or humanitarian duties, or due to the influence of other participating members in their community. This model describes the community as providing a backdrop for groups, organizations and individuals to participate in community volunteer activities. The goal is to promote some form of social change while potentially increasing societal cooperation and civic participation (Omoto & Snyder, 2002).

In field theory research, both macro-level structural forces, as well as interactional factors were found to have independent influence on participation in a flood insurance program (Luloff & Wilkinson, 1979). Community involvement is defined as participation in community oriented activities (Kaufman, 1977; Wilkinson, 1991). Individual level participation, memberships, and activity with community groups are measures of involvement (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Sampson, 1988; Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995).

A variety of factors influence community action. This review has revealed the following factors that can motivate individuals to participate in community action: Social attachment, ideological attachment, collective incentive, social support, community concern and humanitarian duties. Additional research about motivations for action suggests that the most significant predictors are social interaction, community attachment, and self-efficacy.

Social interaction

Participation in community based organizations and groups facilitate social interaction. Interaction between and among social groups promotes community development and identity (Wilkinson, 1991). Knowledge of the relationships among individuals and organizations in a community provides information for predicting the

range and/or breadth of potential community responses to local problems, both in the long and short run (Luloff, 1990). Interaction with community members is a factor in the literature about community action (Kaufman 1977, Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Connections and interactions within the community increase communication between community members. This provides support and consensus for solving local problems and overcoming barriers to effective action (Simon et al., 1998).

Community attachment

Attachment transcends the simple sharing of space by local inhabitants, and provides a social and psychological bond that serves as the basis for social interaction (Wilkinson, 1991). Previous research suggests a linkage between community attachment and community action because attachment influences the extent to which residents are willing to interact and participate in community based efforts (Hummon, 1990; Wilkinson, 1991; Theodori, 2000; Theodori & Luloff, 2000). Attachment may also affect community action as an outcome (Wirth, 1938; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974). Martin (2003) emphasizes the importance of “place-framing” or neighborhood identification in initiating community action in his study of 4 grassroots associations in St. Paul Minnesota.

Empirical studies have examined factors related to community attachment. These include duration of local residence (Austin & Baba 1990; Goudy, 1990; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; St. John, Austin, & Baba, 1986; Theodori & Luloff, 2000); home ownership and race (Austin & Baba, 1990); income and number of children living at home (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981); age and level of education (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Stinner et al., 1990; Theodori & Luloff, 2000); social interactions (Theodori & Luloff,

2000); and marital status, presence of children, children's ages, and religious status (Stinner et al., 1990).

Relevant research about individual's community attachment is important for understanding participation in communal and civic activities and general mental health (Davidson & Cotter 1989, 1991; Pretty, 1990; Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler & Williams 1996; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991; Prezza & Constantini, 1998). Individual sense of community references a specific place or geographic identity (Pretty et al., 1996). People are more likely to improve their local conditions and the conditions of their fellow community members when they feel that they are a part of a community (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). The increased resources, confidence and esteem that come from the experience of community reinforce individuals' psychological empowerment (Corrigan, Faber, Rashid & Leary, 1999).

Community provides a source of collective self-esteem and valued social identity for individuals when they identify with and connect to their locality (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990). Community members develop increased feelings of efficacy and accomplishment when a community is successful in organized action (Hughey et al., 1999).

Community based volunteer associations grew out of attempts to change aspects of the locality in a study of locally oriented volunteer activity in working with AIDS issues (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). This is because participants lived near each other and shared community identity characteristics such as minority status, job classification or housing block (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). These community action structures were created, developed and maintained to serve the purposes of community change (Omoto & Snyder,

2002; Hughey, Speer & Peterson, 1999). Identity coupled with a locality creates a sense of community attachment.

Other research points to the powerful effects of a shared community attachment. In a laboratory study, researchers stressed a common fate among a group of unrelated individuals and cooperation was cultivated from of this social dilemma (Brewer & Kramer, 1986; De Cremer & Van Vugt, 1999). Individuals begin to see that what is good for the collective community is also good for them. Additionally, the presence of a common feature, even if trivial, among a group of people will foster group cooperation (Ellemers, Wilke & Van Knippenberg, 1993). The closer people feel to an issue, category, identity or other group distinction, the more likely they are to participate in actions to better their quality of life.

Efficacy

Bandura (1986) defines self efficacy as “People’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has, but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses.”(pp.11). Self-efficacy, the belief that one has the capability to perform a particular behavior, is an important construct in social psychology (Compeau & Higgins, 1995). Self-efficacy perceptions influence decisions about what behaviors to undertake (e.g. Bandura et al., 1977; Betz & Hackett, 1981), the effort exerted and persistence in attempting those behaviors (e.g. Barling & Beattie, 1983; Brown & Inouye, 1978), the emotional responses of the individual performing these behaviors (e.g. Bandura et al., 1977; Stumpf et al., 1987), and the actual performance attainments of the individual with respect to the behavior (e.g. Barling & Beattie, 1983; Locke et al., 1984, Schunk, 1981; Wood & Bandura, 1989). The broad

application of self-efficacy across diverse domains of behavior contributes to its popularity in contemporary motivation research (Graham & Weiner, 1996).

There are four main influences on self-efficacy. The most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences (Bandura, 1994). Individuals “gauge the effects of their actions, and their interpretations of these effects help create their efficacy beliefs.” (Pajares, 1997, pp.3). This concept relates to community involvement. Researchers found that the best predictors for community action and participation in a flood insurance program for low socioeconomic status residents were previous experience in community action and previous experience handling floods (Luloff & Wilkinson, 1979). The second way of creating efficacy is through vicarious experience. Seeing similar people succeed by “sustained effort raises observers beliefs that they too possess the capabilities” to succeed at the given task (Bandura, 1994, pp.72). Verbal persuasions from others also are a source of self efficacy beliefs. They are a weaker source of efficacy beliefs than the two former sources, but persuaders can play an important role in the development of these beliefs (Bandura, 1994). The final source of efficacy beliefs in Bandura’s model is one’s psychological state. Anxiety, stress, arousal or fatigue can alter individual thinking and efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 1997).

Self-efficacy influences choices about which behaviors to undertake, the effort and persistence exerted in the face of obstacles to the performance of these behaviors, and ultimately the mastery of the behaviors (Compeau & Higgins, 1995). There are three distinct but interrelated dimensions of self efficacy. (1) Magnitude refers to the level of task difficulty an individual feels is attainable (2) Strength refers to the level of conviction one has about their judgment (3) Generalizability indicates the extent to which

perceptions of self-efficacy are limited to particular situations (Compeau & Higgins, 1995).

An important factor in accomplishing change is a sense of self-efficacy, or a feeling that something can be done (Bandura, 1989). Pratkanis and Turner examined the failure to achieve widespread change during antinuclear activism in America (1996). The failure was apparently due to the widespread belief that the problem was so immense, it would be pointless to try (Pratkanis & Turner, 1996). Belief in the impact of one's actions is an indicator of self-efficacy. However, additional research found that peace workers who were highly active in the movement had high levels of personal and group efficacy (Edwards & Oskamp, 1992).

Bandura identifies four major efficacy-activated psychological processes (1994). Cognitive processes include personal goal setting, visualization of success, problem solving, task orientation and resiliency. Individuals with a sense of efficacy "will set challenging goals and use good analytic thinking which pays off in performance accomplishments." (Bandura, 1994, pp. 73). Motivational processes occur when people form beliefs about what they can do, they anticipate likely outcomes of their actions, and plan courses of action to realize their future plans. People with a strong efficacy exert greater effort when they do not master the task at hand. Their strong perseverance contributes to task achievement. Affective processes include peoples coping capabilities and how much stress, anxiety and depression they feel in threatening or difficult situations. Perceived self-efficacy helps regulate anxiety arousal. The stronger the sense of self-efficacy, the more courageous an individual will be in taking on taxing and threatening activities. Selection processes influence the types of activities and

environments people choose. People may avoid tasks that they deem too advanced for their capabilities, but they will “readily undertake challenging activities and select situations they judge themselves capable of handling” (Bandura, 1994, pp.77).

Pajares concisely describes the effects of high self-efficacy

Self-efficacy beliefs help determine how much effort people will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will prove in the face of adverse situations- the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence and resilience. (1997, pp. 4).

Additionally, Pajares states that individuals with a strong sense of personal competence and efficacy

have greater intrinsic interest in activities, set challenging goals and maintain a strong commitment to them, heighten their efforts in the face of failure, more easily recover their confidence after setbacks, and attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which they believe they are capable of acquiring.” (1997, pp.4).

I will examine the levels of self-efficacy of community members living in poor neighborhoods. By understanding their efficacy, I can understand how this may shape community members decisions to perform community actions in the face of poverty. Community action stems out of one’s potential or capacity to act. A further understanding of the person’s belief in their capacity to act should provide insight about the motivations for community action.

Barriers to Action

Action episodes cannot occur without human involvement. It is important to develop an understanding of how such actions evolve (Luloff, 1990). The political openness of a community’s democratic structure may encourage and facilitate local participation across diverse fields of interest (Luloff, 1990). Martin and Wilkinson uncovered the important interactive effect between socioeconomic status and

participation in a public affairs program (1984). Community members with low income had low participatory skills and low community activity as well. These barriers disenfranchise entire segments of a community population, who in turn become excluded from community processes, and can adversely affect community development activities (Martin and Wilkinson, 1985).

Isolation in rural areas poses a serious threat to the well-being of its residents (Wilkinson, 1991). In a study of different poor neighborhoods, Figueria-McDonough confirmed information originally reported by the National Research Council (1993). Poverty rates have remained fairly constant, but poverty has become increasingly spatially concentrated (1995). She found that segregation (racial isolation, essentially) is one of three key indicators of social disorganization strongly associated with poverty levels over time (Figueria-McDonough, 1995). In rural areas, the principal barriers to community interaction are deficiencies in resources for meeting needs and inadequate social infrastructure for services (Wilkinson, 1991). Wilson and others point to the causal role of social isolation in producing large-scale socioeconomic problems (1987, 1996; Anderson, 1999).

Luloff and Swanson discuss community participation and the barriers to activity in their 1995 article "Community Agency and Disaffection: Enhancing Collective Resources." They argue that the relationship between community participation, local democratic institutions, and the degree to which citizens feel a sense of community ownership reflects the degree to which citizens believe they are a part of the local decision-making process. Citizens are then willing to accept and act on local decisions, and this allows the community greater access to its human resources (Luloff & Swanson,

1995). This enhances community agency. A redistributive effect of community development activities will likely occur when efforts are made to enfranchise those formerly removed from the decision making process (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Periods of social and economic crisis can enhance the potential for community action (Ravitz, 1982). Additionally, when democracy, choice, and information are maximized, the potential for the expression of individual and community agency is highest (Luloff & Swanson, 1995).

Frequently, the barriers to community action arise from lack of resources to meet needs and inadequate social infrastructure of service, associations, and channels for collective action (Wilkinson, 1991). Rothman (1975) found that the inverse relationship between poverty and formal networks of social interaction was due mostly to lack of resources, reinforced by lack of experience and task orientation among the impoverished population. Klandermans identified potential barriers to action as “perceived inefficacy of collective action, distrust of the behavior of others, or costs of participation that are not outweighed by benefits.” (Klandermans, 1987, pp. 529). A low sense of community action self-efficacy can be a barrier to action.

Racism, sexism, ageism, uncritical acceptance of authority, and other social characteristics that are reproduced through agents of socialization create serious barriers to community agency (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). The quality of life improves when the barriers to community interaction are reduced in either rural or urban settings (Wilkinson, 1991). Culture is independent of economic and social structures, but it interacts with these structures and therefore is of great importance in making sense of community development processes (Luloff & Swanson, 1995).

Poverty

The poverty rate in 2003 was 12.5%, up from 12.1% in 2002 (U.S. Census, 2005). This translates to about 35.9 million people living in poverty, up 1.3 million from 2002. If we include the “near poor”, the percentage of the population whose income is .01 to 25% more than the poverty threshold increases 4.5% or by nearly 13 million people. These trends place increasing pressures on national and state legislators to become more responsive to the practical problems of society (Summers, 1986)

The lives of Americans have become increasingly socially complex the 1970's due to the loss of 10 to 15 hours per week of leisure time (Harris, 1987). Making a living demands more time and energy and takes local citizens away from grassroots action (Flacks, 1988).

In his book *The Politics of Poverty*, Donovan very clearly articulates the experience of poverty in America.

Poverty in the United States, if it means anything, decrees that its victims shall not participate in the diverse opportunities which the world's richest economy provides almost as a matter of course for those millions of its citizens who are not poor. As a social phenomenon, poverty in this country means poor schools, bad neighborhoods, some of the worst housing in Western industrialized civilization, poor health, and extraordinarily poor prospects for effecting any fundamental change in the system. (1967, pp. 93-94).

In the 1960's the Lyndon Johnson administration recognized the problem and created a “War on Poverty”. One of the most important pieces of Lyndon Johnson's administration was the creation of the Economic Opportunity Act. This legislation established the Community Action Program (CAP) to encourage local communities to define their own priorities in solving local problems. The act stated that agencies must be “developed, conducted and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups being served.” (Economic Opportunity

Act 1964; Adler 1994). In a testimony before Congress to encourage passage of the Act, Attorney General Robert Kennedy explained the requirement of “maximum feasible participation” as

The institutions which affect the poor-education, welfare, recreation, business, labor- are huge, complex structures, operating far outside their control. They plan programs for the poor, but not with them. Part of the sense of helplessness and futility comes from the feeling of powerlessness to affect the operation of these organizations.

The community action programs must basically change these organizations by building into the program real representation for the poor. This bill calls for, “maximum feasible participation of residents.” This means the involvement of the poor in planning and implementing programs: giving them a real voice in their institutions. (1964).

This act, and Kennedy’s comments, frames the contemporary approach to community development.

Distress

Although poverty might seem as an easily understood concept, researchers use a variety of methods to define poverty. Roosa and colleagues identify measures used to study the poverty experience (2005). One is an income-based approach, like the federal government’s definition of the poverty threshold (Roosa et al., 2005). Economic distress is economic pressure or hardship that results in psychological distress from financial difficulties (Barrera et al., 2002). Other distress measures are hunger and food insecurity, and social exclusion (Roosa et al, 2005).

Distress is defined as the different experiences of communities based on high unemployment, low income, high poverty, unstable economics, population outmigration and other socioeconomic problems (Glasmeier, Wood & Fuellhart, 2006). However, there currently is no universally accepted measure of distress. A survey of agencies in 1995 suggested that a diverse set of agencies at the federal and state levels makes

distinctions among locations based on the severity of economic circumstances (Fullenbaum & McNeill, 1995). In a study on community distress, researchers used three different measures to understand the severity of this concept. They found that regardless of the measure used, there is a core pool of long-term economically distressed counties in the United States. (Glasmeier et al., 2006).

Crowder and South (2003) discuss the most common measures of distress. These focus on census tract poverty rates and poverty population concentration within and across tracts of individual cities or metropolitan areas. Other indicators of distress are disproportionately high rates of poverty, joblessness, female-headed families, teenage school dropout rates and welfare receipt (Ricketts & Sawhill, 1988). Hughes calls these tracts “deprivation neighborhoods” (1989). Severely distressed neighborhoods are those tracts that have all characteristics of distressed tracts plus exceptionally high teenage school dropout rates (Crowder & South, 2003).

Crowder and South (2003) conducted a study on the relationship between neighborhood distress and academic achievement. They found that the detrimental impact of neighborhood socioeconomic distress on school dropout increased significantly over the past quarter-century. They suggest that this is a probable repercussion of the increasing geographic concentration of urban poverty.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures of the research. First I describe my research approach and design and site selection. I then describe the methods of data collection which include sampling, and the two stages of data collection. Lastly, the data analysis methods are described at the end of the chapter.

Approach

Grounded theory approaches facilitate the examination of a wide range of conceptual possibilities in community action research. In this approach, the researcher selects participants based on an identified outcome variable and then gathers data that is used to describe, conceptualize and relate the data through a theoretical lens to better understand the phenomena in question. The phenomena under study in this project were potential motivations for community action.

The wide range of concepts and relationships possible in a community action dynamic should be understood holistically, then inductively grounded into theoretical relationships to attain the individual-level insight required to address the research question. This is because, “When theory is derived from data, it is more likely to resemble the raw social reality, rather than using theory to speculate reality.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 24).

This epistemological approach creates a methodological coherence. This is when the research question matches the components of the data collection methods and methods of analysis (Morse et al., 2002). Scientific rigor is achieved through this and

other verification strategies outlined in this section in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the data and analysis for this study (Morse et al., 2002). Case studies can be used to obtain “the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 11). Understanding people’s thoughts and motivations behind their community actions requires this kind of data.

A multiple case study design is appropriate for this research question because I selected the dependent variable (community activity) a priori and this design lets me focus on cases of interest. Additionally, a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (Yin, 2003, pp. 13). Case studies permit researchers to include a large number of variables in order to understand the way in which they interrelate (de Vaus, 2001). A qualitative approach frequently uses this design because it allows the inclusion of a large number of variables.

Theory building case studies, as defined by de Vaus (2001), are used to help develop and refine the relationships that exist within a case and create a theory that articulates the observed social phenomena. This is where we begin with a basic inquiry, look at real cases and then establish a more specific set of propositions after data collection and analysis (de Vaus, 2001). In this case, the researcher will ground the data to relevant, empirically tested community science theory.

Yin (1989) distinguishes the difference between holistic and embedded units of analysis. There is no holistic unit in this study; the comprehensive context is a community in a mid-sized southeast University city. This level of abstraction permits me

to gather a variety of information in order to fully understand and describe the community as a whole. The units of analysis are the individual residents who live in the community. Individual residents provide the data based on their interactions within the community. These cases are then compiled to create a comprehensive perspective of the community. The selection of units provides a strong foundation for the case study design because as described earlier, people and their interactions are the core elements of community.

Site Selection

The most important need for a successful case study is to find cases that will provide a valid and challenging test of theory (de Vaus, 2001). The community for the study was selected for a variety of reasons including a history of community action in the context of poverty.

Context of Poverty

The community meets all of the qualifications of a community plagued by persistent poverty. Community action increases social and material well-being. It is therefore important to understand how these actions occur in poor neighborhoods to address the needs of residents.

A study conducted by CACI Marketing Systems in 2000, as well as ESRI Business Solution in 2004 provided a comprehensive sociodemographic analysis of the county in order to restructure and focus the county's strategic plan. This yielded valuable descriptive information about the population of the study and articulated the level of poverty in some parts of the county. The area under study has the lowest per capita income of the county at \$12,512 and a median household income of \$26,241 which is

72.6% of the state's median income. The geographic area for the study was identified by local government zoning and planning maps as a community redevelopment area.

Of the adult population of 10,523, 31.7% of individuals and 29.2% of families live below the poverty level (Census Bureau, 2000). Forty-four percent of children (age 0-17), 26.6% of adults (18-64) and 16.4% of senior citizens live in poverty in the area.

The population has a relatively high concentration of African-American residents (77%). Twenty-one percent are white, .2% are Asian-Pacific Islander, and 2% are other races. Nearly half the population is between 25 and 64 years of age. Thirty-seven percent of all families are female headed families (FHF). Fifty-nine% of all FHF live in poverty and 73.5% of these families have children under the age of five. The area also has the highest percentage of people without a high school diploma in the county, 30%, well above the national percentage at 19.6% (Census Bureau, 2000).

History of Community Action

The fact that they community is poor does not fully justify its relevance to the study. Preliminary research and experience in the locality under study uncovered important community action history. Community organization and activity at the grassroots level has increased in this community over the past quarter century. The subsequent increased attention to this area from the rest of the city might be due to the residents taking initiative, becoming aware of what is going on, and expressing the situation and needs of the community to the city and county commission.

One of the most striking examples of community action is the increasing number of neighborhood crime watch groups and community associations within the past ten years; indicating the manifestation of community activity. Within the area there are seven

identified active neighborhood associations/crime watch groups represented in this study. There are about 20 formal and informal neighborhood organizations.

Methods

The research occurred in a two-stage process. The first stage consisted of interviews with community key informants. The second stage was personal interviews with the leaders of the 15-20 existing neighborhood watch organizations identified in the locality.

Key informants can play a crucial role in providing detailed information about actions and events across a community (Bridgeland & Sofranko, 1975; Clark, 1968; Claude et al., 2000; Krannich & Humphrey, 1986). If selected carefully, key informants provide insight into community processes that are not available from other sources (Schwartz, Bridger & Hyman, 2001). Key informants such as elected officials, planners, business leaders, community organizers, non-profit agency representatives, neighborhood representatives and religious leaders are essential to gather the community wide information needed to fully explain the context of this community (Schwartz, Bridger & Hyman, 2001).

The accessible population of key informants was people living or working in the community under study who are knowledgeable of, or involved in, local grassroots community development efforts. The sampling frame included leaders or representatives of the local neighborhood groups, as well as people from various institutions and programs that work directly with the community under study. The names of key informants were obtained through public lists from the local police department and the community resource center at the University. Some key informants were identified through snowball sampling wherein key informants were asked at the end of their

interview if they could recommend any other people in the community who could provide information.

Sampling

Based on the information and understanding of the community gained from stage one, one of the prominent themes which recurred in the data was that the best asset or resource in the community was its people, more specifically, the leaders of community groups. I decided to focus on the motivations to community action of only *active* members in the community so that the research focus could be the important resources of local leaders. The most important group of local leaders is the organizers of the grassroots neighborhood watch and community associations, the sampling frame for the second stage. Many of the key informants pointed to the neighborhood watch and community association leaders as the most important leaders in the community. They associated these leaders with community activity and community development. Key informant data helped to select neighborhood watch leaders as the sample for stage two.

Stage 1: Key informant interviews for questionnaire development

I completed 15-20 key informant interviews over a two-month period for the first phase of research. The information collected from key informants provided context and insight into the community, the holistic unit of analysis, and also served to tailor the tone, content and personalization of the semi-structured interview questionnaire that utilized in the second phase of data collection. Some examples of what key informants were asked during this procedure are:

- How important do you feel that the participation of local individuals is to community development efforts?
- What is likely to happen to the local quality of life during the next five years?
- What programs or policies have been implemented in the past five to ten years to improve the quality of life in your community?

The full interview protocol is in appendix A. General probes (i.e. “tell me more about that”) and specific probes such as “why do you think these problems exist,” were used to obtain the depth needed to more fully explore the research questions.

These interviews helped clarify language, history, culture and common phrases in the community, increasing the reliability of the instrument used in stage two. The response patterns that emerged from these interviews led to a better understanding of important topics in the community and served to guide the development of the items included in the interview used in the second stage of the data collection process.

Stage 2: Local leaders of neighborhood watch organizations

This stage of data collection consisted of 15-20 focused interviews with the leaders of the neighborhood watch organizations in the community. Focused interviews suit a case study design. The goal of case studies is to understand a phenomena in its real life context, which can be done through interviews since the primary focus is, “to generate data which gives an authentic insight into peoples experiences” (Miller & Glassner, 1997, pp. 126). Researchers use “qualitative interviewing because it provides us with a means for exploring the points of view of our research subjects, while granting these points of view the culturally honored status of reality” (Miller & Glassner, 1997, pp. 127).

Process

I first contacted participants with a letter describing the purpose of the research project. I made a follow-up phone call to each potential participant to set up interviews at their residences or in public establishments such as the downtown library or community centers.

I conducted personal interviews, which lasted from 30-100 minutes at a location identified by the subject. Semi-standardized interviews use a number of predetermined

questions and identified topics (Berg, 2004). The interview style was conversational, but followed a specific set of questions based on the key informant interviews from the case study protocol (Yin, 2003). I typically asked these questions in the same order, but “interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers” to the prepared questions (Berg, 2004, pp. 81). I wanted to allow for the free flow of information and description of the participant’s experience using an open response format, but also ask specific demographic information making the design semi-standardized.

The protocol for stage two used some of the questions from the key informant protocol, and new questions were developed to address the nature and scope of the motivations to grassroots community action. I developed questions from a multistage development process as recommended by Berg (2004). First I created a list of concepts and theoretical frameworks from the community action literature that I wanted to empirically test. I developed several questions for each concept. An expert panel reviewed the draft questions to develop the final questions. The questions and their corresponding theory are available in Appendix B. I put the questions in order through discussion with the expert panel and assembled them into the schedule in Appendix A. The theoretical basis for each question probes into the concepts under examination as predictors of and motivations to community action.

An additional theory was used to develop the semi-structured questionnaire for the second stage to focus more closely on predictors and motivations for action. An ecological framework of citizen participation relates participation to the physical, economic and social environmental contexts as predictors for participation in grassroots

community organizing (Perkins et al., 1996). (Complete protocol of stage 2 can be found in Appendix A).

Precision is an important standard for research. The questions used in this study did not provide highly precise data, but they provided detailed understanding of the dependent variable. Interviewing is useful for investigators who are interested in understanding people's perceptions to learn how people come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, pp. 98). Open response questions in a semi-structured schedule in a personal interview venue was the best method for understanding peoples reasoning and logic behind the concepts, and therefore precision was not a priority in this study.

The principal investigator was the only person conducting interviews in order to increase reliability. The principal investigator advised the participants concerning consent to participation at the start of the interview. The investigator answered any questions before the participants signed the statement of consent. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to allow for an in-depth analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis consists of content analysis of the verbatim interview scripts (Travis et al., 2000). This allowed me to make valid inferences from the semi-structured interview data (Weber, 1990). This is a technique for systematically describing the form and content of written or spoken material and is frequently used to codify the responses to open-ended questions (Weber, 1990). Strauss and Corbin divide data into four levels of abstraction starting with codes, the basic cues taken verbatim from the data (1998). Codes are placed into categories, and then placed in themes which compose the larger central phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The central phenomenon is

community action for this study. Throughout the process the researcher relates the themes and categories to one another and the central phenomenon.

Data analysis also used the comparative technique of constant comparison, or systematic comparison. This technique compares phenomena in the data with other experiences, concepts from the literature or in the data to suggest categories, properties and propositional statements about the subject under inquiry (Glaser & Strauss, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process helps the analyst understand the phenomena through its properties and dimensions in order to see how this concept emerges from the data in varying conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The constant comparison method helps to create close connections between the data and theory in an inductive process because the analyst is forced to consider the scope of diversity in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1995). Glaser and Strauss delineate four stages of the constant comparison method; (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory (1995).

Pyett describes the role of the researcher in the analysis process as follows

The researcher's task is not to distinguish between reliable and unreliable informants but to apply sociological theory, together with additional historical and contextual information, to develop an understanding that reaches beyond the perspective of the participants. The theoretical insights that the researcher brings to the interpretation should be not only of academic interest but also, he or she hopes, ultimately of benefit to the participants or their community. (2003, pp.1173).

Following this type of analysis philosophy, I allowed the concepts to emerge from the interview data, and then grounded the phenomena into the theories described in the review of literature. This yielded important information about the facilitation and cultivation of grassroots participation in poor communities.

Data analysis was concurrent with data collection because the I transcribed and coded data after each day of interviews. This “forms a mutual interaction between what one knows and what one needs to know.” (Morse et al., 2002, pp.12). The iterative process of data collection and analysis occurring at the same time is very important to reliability and validity (Morse et al., 2002). Two other research colleagues reviewed the data and my content analysis of codes and categories to enhance reliability (Huberman & Miles, 1994). There were few disagreements about the content analysis and the final analysis is described in chapter four.

The primary data analysis was conducted with the Stage 2 interview data of the neighborhood watch group leaders. I conducted and transcribed 16 interviews. The lengths of the transcripts ranged from three pages to eight pages (single spaced, 12 pt. font). I went through each transcript, question by question, and following the content analysis method, coded each datum onto an index card. I labeled the cards on the upper right hand corner with the question number and subject number to organize the data by question (or concept), as well as for easy reference to the original transcript for quotes and clarification. Approximately 450 codes emerged from the data. I placed codes into categories, and then organized categories into themes. I describe the findings through the question number and order of the interview schedule.

The following chapters will explain and describe the data in the context of relevant theory. This will complete the grounded theory process and enhance our understanding of the community action phenomenon.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

I will describe the results and analysis in this section. Table 2 presents the results in summary form. First, I will restate the question I asked the participants. Then I will state the concept under investigation in the question and list the emergent themes and categories describing the phenomena. I used codes to illustrate participants' responses. I present the findings in the order in which I asked the questions and list the emergent themes and categories in descending order.

Question one (1) provided data about participants' length of residence in their neighborhoods. Mean length of residence was 35 years, the median was 38 years, the range was seven to 55 years, and the standard deviation was 14.7 years. One participant's length of residence was relatively short, seven years, compared to the majority of the participants. The median may be more representative of the sample than the mean because of this outlier.

Question two (2) asked participants how long they had been the leader of their neighborhood watch or community association. The mean length of their leadership role was nine years, the median was 6 years, the range was one year to 40 years and the standard deviation was 10.4 years. Most leadership positions were one-year commitments, but many of these participants were serving for an extended period. The median time may also be more representative than the mean because one participant had been involved for 40 years and was an outlier.

Question three (3) asked, “What originally inspired you to become involved with your community work?” This question explores participants’ initial motivation for involvement. Three themes emerged, perceived needs (59%), sources of efficacy (26%), and increasing human resources (11%). Percentages indicate the proportion of codes for each question that fall under each category and theme and not the percentage of participants.

Perceived needs included three categories of initial motivation to action; *problems in the neighborhood*, *need for local leadership*, and *meeting general needs* in the neighborhood. Problems in the neighborhood comprised over one quarter of the results, 26%. Problems included drugs, crime, dilapidated housing, and safety concerns. Under meeting general needs, 23%, initial motivations were items such as, “I wanted to address needs,” and “the old neighborhood was going down.” In general, participants expressed their desires to meet the great needs that exist in their neighborhoods. The need for local leadership, 12%, emerged through items such as addressing the bad reputation of the area, the need for a community spokesperson, low neighborhood participation, and a desire for more government participation.

Sources of efficacy contained two categories. The first was *previous experience*, and the second was *psychological state*. Under previous experience, 12%, participants mentioned concepts like “I’ve always been involved,” “I was socialized from my parents,” and “you can see immediate change when you act.” They also referenced experiences in other social movements or actions like the civil rights movement. Psychological state, 14%, included codes for humanitarian interests and stubbornness.

Participant responses included “I have a concern for people,” “I want to help out,” and “It makes me feel good to do something for other people.”

Participants wanted to mobilize the human potential that they saw as stagnant in their neighborhoods. The increasing human resources category, 11%, represented participants desires to “motivate others,” “inform others to bring change,” “give people ownership” and “rally people to the cause.” They discussed a general desire to empower other neighborhood residents to work for the betterment of the community.

Table 4.1- Analysis results of participants’ responses to the question, “What inspired you to become involved in your community work?”

Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#3 What inspired you to become involved in your community work?	1. Drugs, crime, poverty 2. Neighborhood representation, increased participation 3. Address basic needs 4. Always been involved, worked in Civil Rights movement 5. Humanitarian interests, stubbornness 6. Inform others to bring change, motivate others to act	1. Problems in the neighborhood 2. Need for local leadership 3. Meeting general needs 4. Mastery experience 5. Psychological state	Perceived needs Sources of efficacy Increase human resources	Initial motivation for action

Question four (4) asked, “How does your family feel about your leadership role in the community?” Two categories emerged from this question: *Supportive* and *concerned/no interest*. A majority of the responses (75%) were supportive and included “They are supportive,” “They’re ok with it” and “Very proud.” Concerned family

members (25%) thought participants “did too much” or were uninterested in community action work.

Table 4.2-Analysis results of participants’ responses to the question, “How does your family feel about your leadership role in the community?”

Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#4 How does your family feel about your leadership role in the community?	1. Supportive of me, O.K. with it, very proud 2. Do too much work, not interested	1. Supportive 2. Concerned/no interest		Family social support

Question five (5) inquired about participants other forms of volunteer work. The percentages for this question indicate the proportion of participants and not codes. Nearly two-thirds, 63%, of the participants were involved in volunteer and civic endeavors outside of their community watch work and responsibilities. They listed a variety of organizations including churches, local schools, various public community programs, local nonprofits, workers unions and political involvement. The remaining third of participants, 37%, were only involved in their neighborhood work. Neighborhood watch work consumes a great deal of time. Almost half of the participants still worked full-time and did not have enough time and energy to devote to other endeavors.

Question six (6) asked, “When you are working as a community organizer, who else do you count on or work with to get things done?” This question uncovered the domains of resources participants use. Two themes emerged from the data. Resources were accessed through participants’ community environment (68%) and personal environment (32%). These percentages indicate the proportion of codes and not proportion of participants, in each category and theme.

More than two-thirds of the resources participants' access was in their community environment. This theme contained three categories, *government agencies*, *non-profit agencies* and *resource-type dependent agencies*. Government agencies (42%) included entities such as codes enforcement, the local police department, public works, city planning and the school board. Non-profit agencies (15%) included churches and a county environmental preservation organization. Resource-type dependent agencies (12%) developed from such responses as "whoever has the resources we need to get it done," "depends on the project" and "whoever is accountable." Participants' personal environment contained two categories of human resources, *neighbors/crime watch members* and *family*. Neighbors and crime watch leaders were one quarter, 24%, of the responses and family members were 7%.

Table 4.3- Analysis results of participants' responses to the question, "When you are working as a community organizer, who else do you count on or work with to get things done?"

Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#6 When you are working as a community organizer, who else do you count on or work with to get things done?	1. Codes enforcement, local police department, public works 2. Churches, environmental groups 3. Whoever has the resources, depends on the project	1. Government agencies 2. Non-profit agencies 3. Resource-type dependent agencies 4. Neighbors/crime watch members 5. Family	Community environment Personal environment	Domains of resources

Question seven (7) asked, "What are some of the things you've had to overcome to get things done in your community?" Three prominent barriers emerged from this data with six categories overall. The most prominent barrier, which composed one-third of the

responses, was *apathy*, 33%. This category included items such as lack of participation, people “don’t want to change,” complacency, and the fact that they have “Been trying to do so long, nobody care.” Another important perceived barrier to action was the *bureaucracy of government agencies* composing one-quarter, 25%, of the responses. Participants mentioned concepts like the length of time required for the bureaucratic change process, slow communication and “not knowing where the buck stops” to make a request to get something done. One-fifth of the responses were concerned with the *lack of resources* (19%). This describes both a lack of financial resources, such as grants and subsidies, as well as a lack of human resources in the form of participation and levels of activity.

Table 4.4- Analysis results of participants’ responses to the question, “What are some of the things you’ve had to overcome to get things done in your community?”

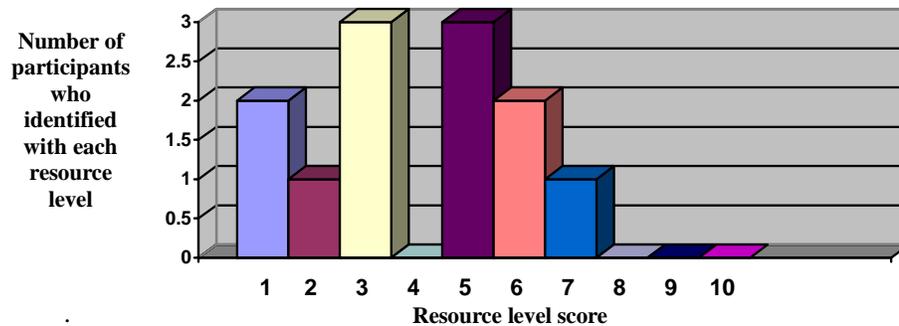
Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#7 What are some of the things you’ve had to overcome to get things done in your community?	1. People don’t want to change, lazy, don’t care 2. Slow communication, not knowing where the buck stops, red tape 3. Financial resources, human resources 4. Historical neglect 5. Antiquated attitudes 6. People only help when something happens	1. Apathy 2. Bureaucracy of government resources 3. Lack of resources 4. Bad perception 5. Racial barriers 6. Reactive participation		Barriers

Bad perception of the locality and the historic neglect of this locality by the government and the rest of the community were barriers (11%). These attitudes developed over time and are slowly decreasing, but still impose detrimental effects.

Perceived *racial* (6%) barriers and *reactive participation* (6%), or activity initiated solely by a negative event in the community, were the last two barriers identified.

Question eight (8) asked participants, “On a scale from one to ten, one being the lowest and ten being the best, how much do you feel that you have the resources needed to get things done?” The mean was 4, the median was 4, the mode was 5, the range was from 1 to 7 and the standard deviation was 2.0.

Table 4.5-Bar graph of participants’ resource level scores and the number of participants who identified with each resource level



Participants also provided justification for the relatively low scores on their ratings of resource-level. *Low government resources* (55%) was the largest factor in their low scores. This category, capturing more than half of the responses, included items like low funding, not enough grants, and the government not making the poorer neighborhoods a priority. A complimentary explanation of the low resources is the *low access to resources* (27%). This refers to events when resources are only found when something adverse happens, when people are not aware of available resources, or when participants cannot mobilize the human resources in their neighborhood through participation in local action. Additionally, one participant mentioned the importance of knowing and contacting the right people to coordinate necessary resources.

Table 4.6- Analysis results of participants' responses to the question, "On a scale of one to ten, one being the lowest and ten being the best, how much do you feel like you have the resources you need to get things done?"

Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#8 On a scale of 1-10, one being the lowest and ten being the best, how much do you feel like you have the resources you need to get things done?	1. Low funding, not enough grants, poor neighborhoods not a priority 2. Not knowing about resources, other residents will not participate, resources are only found when something bad happens	1. Low government resources 2. Low access to resources		Perceived low resources

Question nine (9) was a two-part question about participants' perceived level of self-efficacy. First, participants were asked, "How much of an impact do you feel you work in the community makes?" They were asked to choose from an ordinal scale with the options of (1) a lot of impact, (2) some impact, (3) a little impact or, (4) no impact. Almost two-thirds of the participants (63%) thought that their work had *a lot of impact* in the community. Fifteen percent said that their work had *some impact* and 23% said that their work had *a little impact*. No participants felt that their work had no impact at all.

Secondly, participants were asked to give three examples of times where they felt that they had made the impact they previously described. The events that illustrated these impacts were composed of two themes, mastery experience and verbal persuasion.

Mastery experience was the prominent predictor of participants self-efficacy containing 86% of the responses for this question. Three categories emerged under this theme, reported in decreasing order. More than one-third of these mastery experiences, 38%, were expressed through the various *tangible physical changes* in the neighborhood.

These were improvements to the neighborhood infrastructure, such as removing condemned housing, building more sidewalks and streetlights, attaining new playground equipment, and increased police patrol. For *individual and incremental changes* (24%), participants discussed various examples of individuals in the neighborhood who have benefited from community efforts. Participants stated that, “The impact is big on an individual level.” In the third category, *seen overall change*, 19%, participants talked about how they have seen the neighborhood improve over time, and that “We took care of problems so, I know we’ve made a difference.” The second theme, verbal persuasion (14%), included things such as “people tell me” and “talking to old students.” No categories emerged from this theme.

Table 4.7-Analysis results of participants’ responses to the question, “How much of an impact do you feel your work in the community makes?”

Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#9 How much of an impact do you feel your work in the community makes?	1. Getting rid of condemned housing, new sidewalks, playground equipment 2. Individual anecdotes 3. I know we’ve made a difference, seen change happen 4. People tell me we’ve made a difference	1. Tangible physical changes 2. Individual/incremental changes 3. Seen overall change	Mastery Experience Verbal Persuasion	Self-efficacy

Question ten (10) asked, “What keeps you energized to keep working in your community when times are hard or others don’t participate or help?” The central phenomena I examined through this question were the effects of self-efficacy and the

factors that helped participants maintain their motivation for action. Three themes emerged, motivational, cognitive and affective. The first theme, motivational (61%), included three categories, described in descending order. *Humanitarian motivations*, 40%, played a significant role and included concepts like the love of the people and love of the area. Participants said that, “It’s fulfilling when people are mobilized” and cited a “desire for the betterment of others.” *Reciprocity motivations*, 11%, were motivations that come from another person who helped the participant in the past, or having a role model and ideas such as, “When you have, you give.” The last category, *responsibility*, 10%, is illustrated in the following quote. “If I don’t do it, it ain’t gonna get there.” The essence that there was work to be done and someone has to do it created the participants’ perceived sense of responsibility as a motivational factor.

The second theme, cognitive factors, 24%, contained only codes which described participants’ *stubbornness and perseverance* in the face of obstacles. Nearly one quarter of the answers referenced these concepts and many responses were stubbornness and perseverance verbatim. Their responses also included items such as, “I don’t accept no,” “I don’t give up,” and having an “unforeseeable drive.” From the third theme, affective factors, 16%, two categories emerged. *Optimism* (8%) represents the potential participants see for the future of their neighborhood. The last category for affective factors was *belief in God* (5%) and one outlying code for guilt.

Table 4.8- Analysis results of participants' responses to the question, "What keeps you energized to keep working in your community when times are hard or others don't participate or help?"

Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#10 What keeps you energized to keep working in your community when times are hard or others don't participate or help?	1. Love of people, love of area 2. Role model, someone gave to me in the past 3. If I don't do it, it won't get done 4. I don't accept no, I won't give up 5. See future potential, it may get there	1. Humanitarian motivations 2. Reciprocity 3. Responsibility 4. Stubbornness/perseverance 5. Optimism 6. Belief in god	Motivational Cognitive Affective	Self-efficacy

Question eleven (11) was a two-part question. The first part asked, "How responsible do you feel for the quality of life in your community? How responsible do you feel for being a leader?" Four answer categories emerged from this question and answers were split evenly over the categories. Percentages for this question represent the proportion of participants who identified with each category and not the proportion of codes for each category. Participants said they felt either (a) *responsible for the community* (25%), (b) *not responsible* (19%), (c) *responsible for myself* (19%), or (d) *I don't know* (25%).

The second part of question eleven sought an explanation for their answer and asked, "Why do you feel responsible?" The data was divided into two themes, personal influences and environmental influences. Many categories emerged from this data because the levels of felt responsibility were evenly distributed. Percentages indicate proportion of codes for each category and theme. Personal influences was the most

prominent theme, 69%, and categories will be listed in descending order. In *desire of positive outcomes*, 29%, respondents said things like, “I want the community to look nice,” “I want to see change,” and “I will do whatever I can to make things better.” *Self-efficacy beliefs*, 14%, were items such as, “I have so much to offer,” “He who has much, much is required” and “people look up to me.” Commitment to their neighborhood as *home* (9%), participants’ *upbringing* (9%) and the feeling that *everyone is responsible* (9%) were the last three categories in the personal influences theme. Pride and the empowerment of others were two codes that did not fall into a designated category under the theme of personal influences.

One quarter of the data fit under the environmental influences theme, 26%. Two categories emerged. *Physical environment*, 17%, includes items that express the need in the neighborhood locality. *Interpersonal environment*, 9%, represents the support of other people or leaders in the neighborhood.

Table 4.9-Analysis results of participants’ responses to the question, “Why do you feel responsible for the quality of life in your community?”

Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#11 Why do you feel responsible for the quality of life in your community?	1. I want the community look nice 2. I have so much to offer, people look up to me 3. I live here 4. Brought up this way 5. Everyone is responsible 6. The neighborhood needs it 7. People support my actions	1. Desire of positive outcomes 2. Self-efficacy beliefs 3. Home 4. Upbringing 5. Everyone is responsible 6. Physical environment 7. Interpersonal environment	Personal Influences Environmental Influences	Perceived level of responsibility

Question twelve (12) also had two parts. The first part asked participants, “How much do you think that people feel like they are a part of this neighborhood?” This question provided information for understanding the concepts and indicators of community attachment as a motivation for community action. Four answer categories emerged from this question. Participants identified their fellow residents’ belongingness to the neighborhood with (a) *feel a part of this neighborhood* (46%), (b) *homeowners feel a part of this neighborhood* (9%), (c) *people do not feel a part of this neighborhood* (27%), or (d) *I don’t know* (18%). Participants perceived other residents’ to be relatively attached to their neighborhood.

The second part of question twelve asked participants, “What do you think leads them (other residents) to feel like they belong?” This question uncovered the indicators of community attachment. Several categories emerged that describe the reasons, according to the participants, that people come to feel a part of the neighborhood. *Involvement/participation*, 25%, was the most prominent indicator of feeling a part of the community. *Duration of residence* (18%) correlated with a sense of belongingness or attachment. Many of the resident’s families had lived in the neighborhood for multiple generations, and many were born and raised in the neighborhood and have since raised their children and grandchildren there. *Community pride*, 14%, included things like wanting the community to look nice, having a love of the area and “valuing their community and home.” *Homeownership* (12%) was a component of attachment. *Communication* (8%) included things like knowing what is going on around the neighborhood and community and being knowledgeable of the resources available.

When people have *shared experiences* (6%) together, these experiences were indicators of their attachment to the community.

The closely related final category was having *interactions*, 6%, with other members of the neighborhood. Miscellaneous codes mentioned were having self-worth, trust of others, feeling safe, the common thread of living together and being a caring person as reasons to feel a part of the neighborhood.

Table 4.10-Analysis results of participants' responses to the questions, "How much do you think that people feel like they are a part of the neighborhood? What do you think leads them to feel like they belong?"

Question	Codes	Categories In descending order	Themes In descending order	Phenomena
#12 How much do you think that people feel like they are a part of the neighborhood? What do you think leads them to feel like they belong?	1. Active in community activities 2. Lived in locality for a long time 3. Want area to look nice, valuing the community 4. Homes are investments in community 5. Being knowledgeable of resources, know what is going on 6. Go through good and bad times together, work on projects with other residents 7. Talk to other residents	1. Involvement/participation 2. Duration of residence 3. Community pride 4. Homeownership 5. Communication 6. Shared experiences 7. Interaction		Community attachment

Question thirteen (13) asked participants, "If you could have any three things in the world for your neighborhood, what would you wish for? Perhaps within the physical, social and economic environment?" Three themes emerged from this data, wishes for the social environment, physical environment and economic environment. The most important theme was the social environmental wishes, which included more than half of the participants' responses, 55%. The first category in this theme was *participation*,

21%, which referred to people participating more in community and neighborhood events and issues, as well as people becoming empowered and taking more responsibility. The second category was *resources for the youth and elderly*, 14%. These were things like recreation programs, community centers and after-school programs. *Education*, 11%, included things like vocational programs, parenting classes and improved public education. *Cultural programs*, 5%, included theatre, dance and more African-American cultural activities. A stronger faith base and more family time were two outlying codes for this theme.

Four categories emerged under physical environmental wishes, 39%. The categories are listed in descending order. *Beautification* of the neighborhood, 16%, included things like picking up trash, planting flowers and having nicer yards. *Infrastructure improvements*, 9%, included items such as speed humps, street lighting and informational signs. *Safety* (7%) from crime and drugs and *environmental protection* (7%) were also wishes for the physical environment.

The economic environment (7%) was the least important theme. People wished for more money for improvements and more local business. Two miscellaneous codes were political leadership and preservation of older homes.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to understand the factors that motivate people to act at the grassroots level in the context of poor communities. Action is a vital component of community development. Social scientists, extension professionals and other community practitioners need to know what can be done to foster community action in order to enhance local quality of life and well-being (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). Another research goal was to explore the barriers that prevent people from taking local action. This chapter will connect the results from the participant interviews to relevant concepts and theoretical framework, and complete the grounded theory process.

This study was placed in the context of poor, distressed neighborhoods. However, economic disadvantage did not emerge in the data as a factor of community action. Participants may be in a more fortunate economic situation than other neighborhood residents and are not necessarily living in poverty, but living in a neighborhood where poverty *rates* are high. Since poverty or distress have never prevented the participant's from being active, it would not emerge in their response as a factor for community action.

Additionally, Klandermans (2002) discusses the importance of individual identification with a group or cause as a motivation for grassroots action. Identifying yourself as a member of an active group of poor residents may not produce uplifting or motivational attitudes. Therefore, participants would not associate being poor with their motivations for being active or involved in the neighborhood association.

Participants discussed problems such as speed humps, playground equipment, streetlights, crime and drug dealing as community needs or concerns. Concerns about decaying infrastructure and other related problems are probably indicators of distress. This is because these problems may represent the different experiences of communities that have high unemployment, low income, high poverty, unstable economics, and other socioeconomic problems (Glasmeier, Wood & Fuellhart, 2006). Distress and a concern for the community's needs may therefore be predictors of community action. However, I found no clear connection between poverty and community action in this research.

Self-efficacy

The participants are highly efficacious individuals. I found that they have a high sense of self-efficacy, and consequently possess the adaptive benefits of self-efficacy. This is a principal motivator for grassroots community action. The concept of self-efficacy is useful for understanding motivations to community action and for interpreting the findings of this study. According to Bandura's theory, every individual has an internal system which allows them to, "exercise a measure of control of their thoughts, feelings, motivation and actions." Efficacy is defined as

people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. (Bandura, 1994, pp. 1)

Efficacy plays an important role in the explanation of these data. Self-efficacy is a task-specific characteristic. When I refer to self-efficacy in this discussion, it is in reference to participants' community action self-efficacy. Three questions were designed to directly test this theory. I propose a model to fit all of the study's concepts dynamically and collectively.

Question nine yielded very important evidence about participants' self-efficacy. Individuals gauge the effects of their actions, and their interpretations of these effects help create their efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 1997). All of the participants were aware of the impact of their work. Nearly two-thirds, 63%, felt that their work had a lot of impact, the highest rating possible on the scalar response. The participants are aware of their capabilities as grassroots community leaders because of the high rates of perceived success. Outcomes interpreted as successful raise self-efficacy and contribute to high participant self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994).

The emergent themes from the second part of the question, mastery experience and verbal persuasion, were the justifications for participants' evaluation of the impacts they have. These results also support the self-efficacy model. Bandura identifies mastery experience as one of the four sources of efficacy, and as the most effective way of building self-efficacy (1994). The data support this model because 86% of the answers fit into the mastery experience theme. "I think I feel like most of the time it's just that I can look back and see a lot of things we have accomplished. The things that stand out I guess are the GED classes we have, the computer classes we have." This was how one participant described one of their impactful events. Participants' past experiences with community work, including seeing projects come to fruition, accomplishing change in their neighborhoods, and actions reaching back to the civil rights movement, are primary sources of their beliefs.

The following quote captures the model well, "I certainly feel like I made an impact because if I didn't, I wouldn't be here spinnin' my wheels for such a long time." Accomplishing tasks along the way and the development in participants' communities

provides the endurance to pursue development of community (Wilkinson, 1991, Summers, 1986).

We will see later that efficacy also appears to be a source of enduring and perseverant motivation for community action. Additionally, verbal persuasions are one of the four sources of efficacy established by Bandura (1994), and this also emerged from the data.

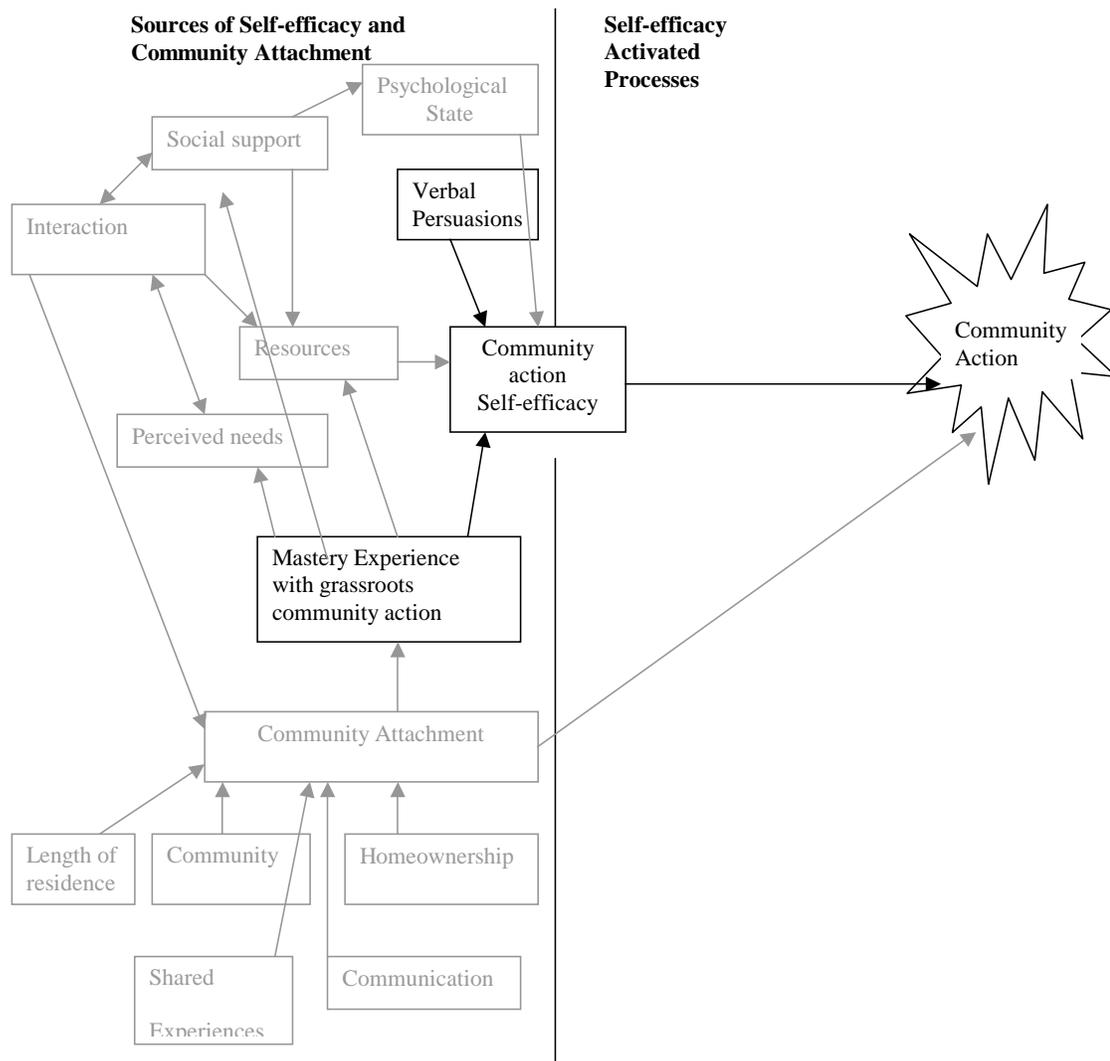


Figure 5.1: Sources of Community action self-efficacy as predictors for community action

Question three also substantiated participants' high self-efficacy. Participants described what had initially motivated them to become involved in community crime watch work. Perceived neighborhood needs were an important predictor for action, corroborating research findings that community concern motivates residents to act (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). These include all neighborhood problems that were either recognized by the participants, or recognized and discussed with other neighborhood residents. People behave and act purposively in response to their interactions and the impressions they draw from their connections with others (Brennan, 2005). Such conditions contribute to action (Wilkinson, 1991). Participants heard concurring attitudes regarding the needs of the neighborhood through interactions with other residents. These interactions then enforce the perception of these needs. Additionally, participants' mastery experience in solving problems allows them to see neighborhood needs more clearly.

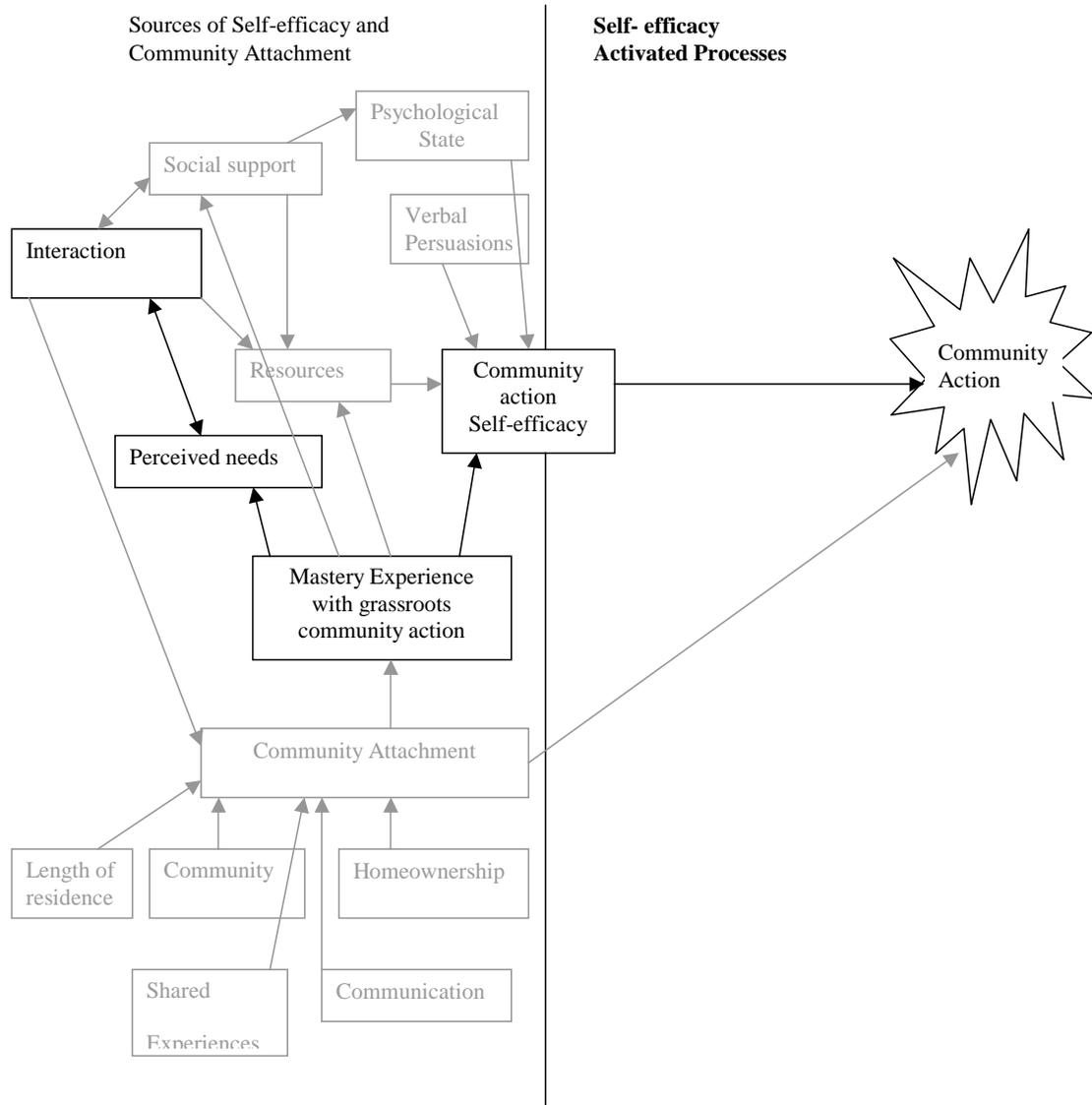


Figure 5.2: Interaction, perceived needs and mastery experience work together as sources of self-efficacy and as predictors for community action

Participants cited two other categories as motivations to initial action in the neighborhood watch, previous experience and psychological state. These categories fit Bandura's model of self-efficacy (1994). Some of the participants' previous experience dated back. For example

Well, when civil rights in the 1950's, I was very much involved with that. I went up to the second march in Alabama. We did picketing here, I was arrested in two or three places right here in Florida. We did sit ins and all stuff. I was the first

black who got a card to the library here. I was the first black who integrated the United Way board. I was the first black to join the democratic club at the time.

Such intense and powerful experiences afforded the participants a solid foundation of self-efficacy. People learn that they are a powerful and capable agent of change when they have seen the effect and impact their individual actions can make. Previous experience was the strongest source of efficacy in this study, in accordance with Bandura's model.

Humanitarianism was the primary component of psychological state. There may be an interesting feedback loop that cyclically motivates individuals to act. People receive positive messages from individuals when they participate in a positive action. The positive message lets the participants know that what they were doing was successful and is valued by others. This social support influences their psychological state because participants feel better about themselves knowing that their actions have a positive effect on others. Participants continue to be motivated to act in order to maintain that positive feeling. Participants' awareness of their positive effect on people builds self-efficacy.

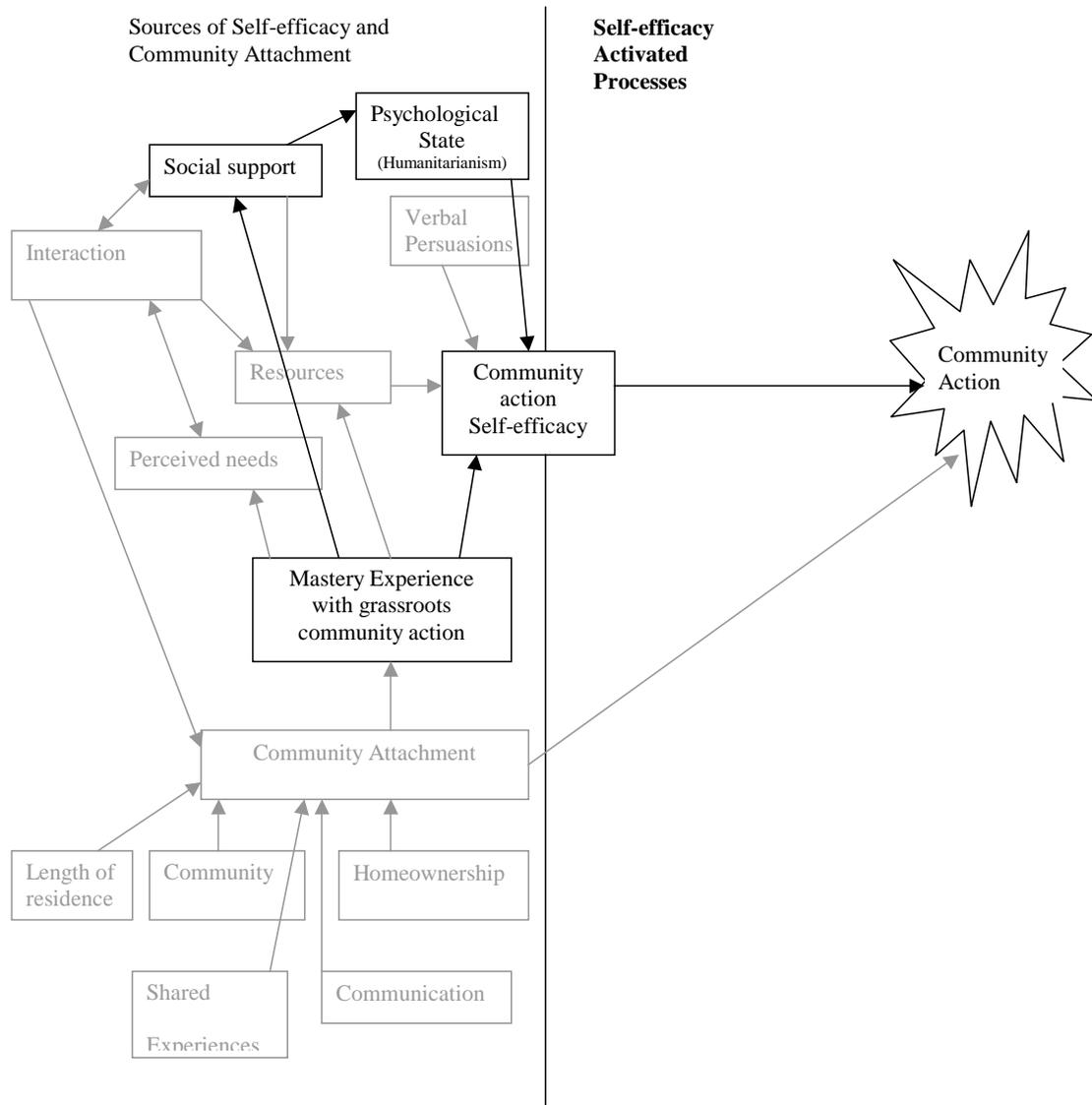


Figure 5.3: Feedback loop between mastery experience, social support, psychological state and self-efficacy

Some participants expressed a desire to empower and enable other residents to act as their motivation for initial action. They wanted to mobilize the untapped human resources available in the neighborhood. One of the barriers participants faced was the lack of participation from other residents. Social reformers, like the participants, can see the long and intermediate-term benefits of mobilizing human potential (Bandura, 1994). Participants' motivation to mobilize the local human resource potential may also

motivate them to overcome the barrier of low participation. This motivation in the face of apathy is one of the benefits of high self-efficacy.

Question 10 was similar in nature to question three. It asked participants what kept them energized to do their work, especially in the face of the many barriers they cited. The themes that emerged from this question, motivational processes, affective processes and cognitive processes match three of Bandura's four major efficacy-activated psychological processes (1994).

Humanitarianism is a psychological motivation for community action. One participant described the motivation as

What keeps me energized is the need, and knowing that whenever someone is being helped its quite rewarding to be able to assist them when they are in need. That's the thing that energizes you.

These finding concur with those of Omoto and Snyder's (2002) because people participate in action to express humanitarian interests. The rewarding feeling of helping a fellow resident provides more social support and feedback to one's motivational processes.

Participants directly expressed their innate stubbornness and unyielding strength to accomplish tasks in their community no matter what the obstacle. This was an indicator of participants perseverance and resiliency in their community action work, and therefore to their self-efficacy. Perseverance and resiliency are the most common indicators of the efficacy activated cognitive and motivational processes (Bandura, 1994). One would not be willing to give up on accomplishing a task if they have a strong belief in their capabilities to accomplish that task. "Oh, I don't like for folks to tell me no. I don't accept no. I just immediately think of a way to get around the no because I do always think there's a way." Self-efficacy beliefs determine how much effort people expend and

how long and in what ways they will persevere in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1994). These neighborhood watch leaders knew that their community's needs were valid and reasonable. Additionally, they felt that if they weren't the individuals initiating the process, the solutions would never come to pass. One participant talked about her resiliency in dealing with government bureaucracy

Sometimes just getting frustrated with the red tape and going to one agency and saying, no, not this agency. And how 'bout you? Not you, who then? So just going through that sometime frustrate people and people just give up, but I don't care. I stay on the phone until you say fine. I'm persistent. You know they say the old squeaky wheel gets the oil. I'm one of those people that I will worry you until they say ok. Sometimes you gotta just be there and just keep doing it until somebody says alright.

Three or four participants used the same "squeaky wheel" metaphor, demonstrating their shared characteristics of perseverance and self-efficacy. Also, a few participants talked about how a role model had inspired them to keep going in the face of obstacles. The vicarious experiences of leaders from participants' pasts served as a source of efficacy, as indicated by their strong perseverance.

The third theme and component to Bandura's efficacy activated processes were the affective processes. Participant's optimistic views and their beliefs in God helped to develop their coping capabilities in the face of barriers (Bandura, 1994). Their optimism shows that they see the potential that can be realized in their community through continued action, and this fuels the vision they have for their neighborhood. "When I look around me and I see that need, and maybe for a while longer something might click." The adaptive benefits of affective processes help reduce stress and anxiety, allowing participants' motivation to remain relatively high (Bandura, 1994).

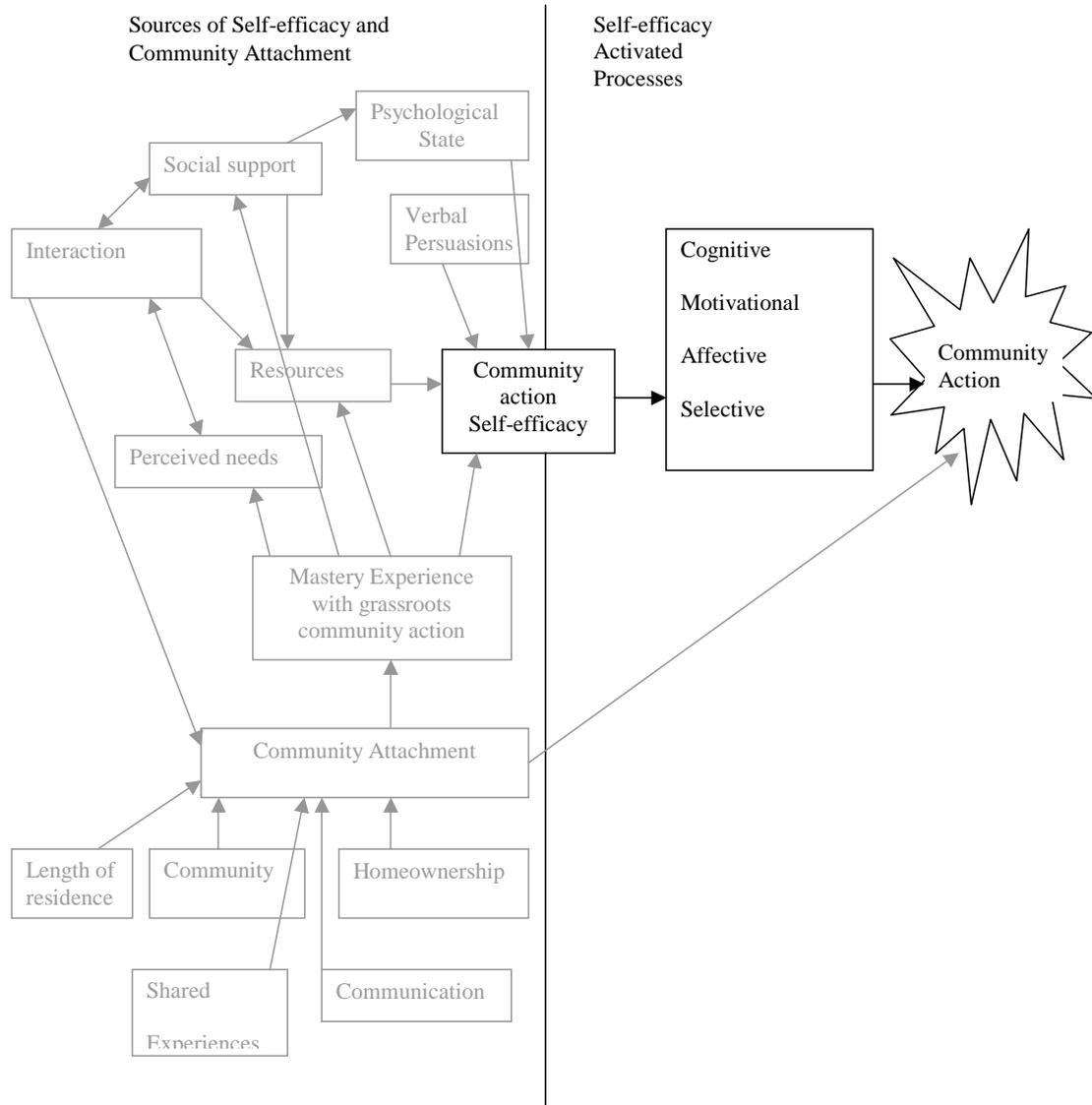


Figure 5.4: Self-efficacy creates four self-efficacy activated processes as predictors for community action

Community Attachment

Attachment to community emerged as a significant motivation for action. People are more likely to improve their local conditions and the conditions of their fellow community members when they feel like they are a part of a community (Omoto & Snyder 2002). Question two provided information about participants' attachment to their neighborhood. The median for years of leadership was 6, showing participants'

commitment to their leadership role in their neighborhood associations. The leadership position in most cases is a one-year commitment, but I found that (a) no one else was willing to step up to the role and/or (b) residents were pleased with the work that was being done in many of the cases. Many participants were so strongly attached to the purpose and mission of the neighborhood watch groups that they had little to no desire to relinquish their leadership responsibilities. One participant said, “This is what I want to do, this is what I am. Not gonna give up.”

Question twelve examined the role of community attachment in motivating grassroots action. Duration of residence was a primary indicator of community attachment or belongingness, which corroborates previous findings. Previous studies have found that length of residence correlates strongly to community attachment (Austin and Baba 1990; Brown 1993; Goudy 1990; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; St. John, Austin, and Baba 1986; Theodori and Luloff 2000). A median residence period of 38 years is a long time by any standards, a strong testament to the high level of community attachment among participants, which in turn led to a high investment of time and energy in their neighborhoods. When this participant was asked what made her feel connected to the community she said, “Question one; [I’ve lived here for] Forty-nine years. My father was raised there, I was raised there, my aunt still lives there, my grandmother lives there. I mean, it’s home.”

Several other categories that emerged under this theme corroborate the literature about attachment and community action. Homeownership was the third most important indicator of community attachment. Austin and Baba also found that homeownership was

a predictor for community action (1990). The psychological difference between renting and owning a home can affect one's motivation to act.

I think that homeowners feel so much a part. We have a lot of rental property in our area and sometimes folk may not care that much about rental property, it's not the same. Renting and owning are just two different things to most people. I'm not saying that all people aren't taking care if they're renting. But homeownership gives a sense of pride and a sense of worth, and when they own that home they want to take care of it and get involved and feel a part in the neighborhood so we have a lot of that going on.

The investment in a home can motivate residents to engage in activities that enhance and protect their investment. "The pride of ownership, the learning that goes into maintaining property, and the sense that a variety of basic problems have been solved are all empowering to community residents." (Rubin & Rubin, 2001, pp. 79). One participant said, "It's like people have an investment there in terms of their lives and that's why when something comes up, [drug dealing], they feel like hey, this is mine, you don't have a right to come in here." Pride in ownership, can build esteem and efficacy in residents' community action efforts.

It was kind of like we had to deal with [drugs] 'cause we basically, its not [wealthy area of town] folks! And you get that feeling like well, you've got to put up with that stuff. And finally it was like, you know, no, we don't have to put up with that stuff. Just because we're not living in five hundred thousand dollar homes doesn't mean we have to live with drug dealers next door. And you know, I think people have seen that they *do* have a voice in that and they can make something happen.

Community pride was another category under the attachment theme. Residents stated that people feel a sense of belongingness when they take pride and care about their neighborhood. One participant describes this as a source of motivation: "You have to have pride and feel a part of something in order to keep things neat and in place. You have to feel a part of it." This creates a valued social identity for individuals as they identify with and connect to their locality (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Turner, Hogg,

Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). People will voluntarily participate or join when they feel a social identification with a group or cause (Klandermans 2002). This behavior is an indication of their strong identification. A sense of pride and belongingness is an indicator of attachment, and a predictor for action.

The last component that emerged as an indicator of community attachment was having common experiences. One participant described this sense of camaraderie vividly

In think when they see each other. Feel each other's concerns. When they are with each other through trials and tribulations. When they are with each other through death, through births, through hard times. When they know that somebody is watching out for them. When they can just stand in their yards and talk and share a moment that is common to them. When they feel safe enough to feel a part, to move around. When they're asked, and when they're listened to. When they speak up and when we follow through.

Here, the link between sharing common experiences and length of residence is present. Both are significant indicators of attachment.

These common experiences may also be memorable interactions and communications between residents, both of which appeared as indicators of community attachment. Attachment influences the extent to which residents are willing to interact and engage in activities together (Hummon, 1990; Brown, 1991; Fischer, 1991; Wilkinson, 1991; Theodori, 2000; Theodori and Luloff, 2000). Interaction and common experiences breed communication. Connections and interactions within the community increase communication between community members providing support and consensus for solving local problems and overcoming barriers to effective action (Simon et al., 1998; Simon et al., 2002). These basic interactions are the building blocks of community (Wilkinson, 1991). The data show that these concepts are indicators of community attachment, and are most likely not mutually exclusive. Common experiences, communication, and interaction may all have dynamic interactions with each other. I did

not examine these interactions well enough in this study to make a prediction about the strength and direction of these relationships.

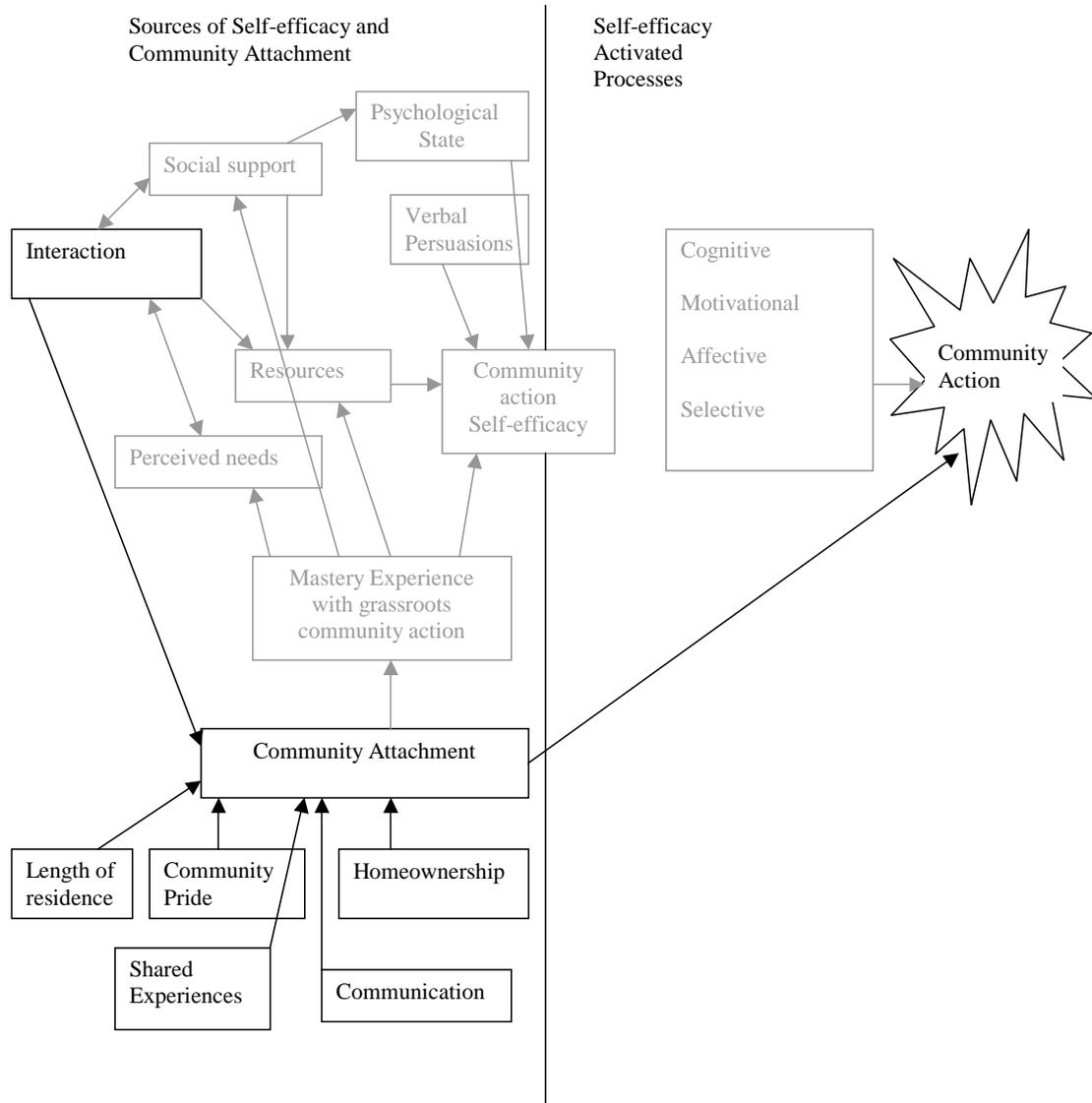


Figure 5.5: Sources of community attachment as predictors for community action

The last category that emerged as an indicator of attachment is an interesting finding of this study. The data suggests that involvement and participation in community activities lead residents to feel they are a part of the neighborhood. How can participation be an indicator for community attachment if community attachment is a motivation for participation in community action? A cyclical relationship may be present

between participation in community activities and attachment. Participation generates positive feelings of attachment. This leads residents to continually participate in order to maintain those positive feelings, creating a positive feedback loop. The participants exhibit behaviors that indicate the presence of this feedback loop (high attachment) in their motivational processes.

When participants have had a positive *mastery experience* in community activities, that experience confirms participant's beliefs in their attachment because it acts in a feedback loop. Mastery experience is the most important source of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1994). Previous experience in community action raises participants' self-efficacy. This experience generates the efficacy activated selection processes by influencing the types of activities and environments in which participants choose to act (Bandura, 1994). Participants will select environments they judge themselves capable of handling. By selecting to participate in more community activities based on previous experience, participants further cultivate their interest (or attachment) in their neighborhood, as well as the social networks that surround them (Bandura, 1994). Therefore, participation in community action increases self-efficacy, which then increases community attachment. In sum, attachment previous experience and self-efficacy are inter-related. A feedback relationship exists between participation and community attachment.

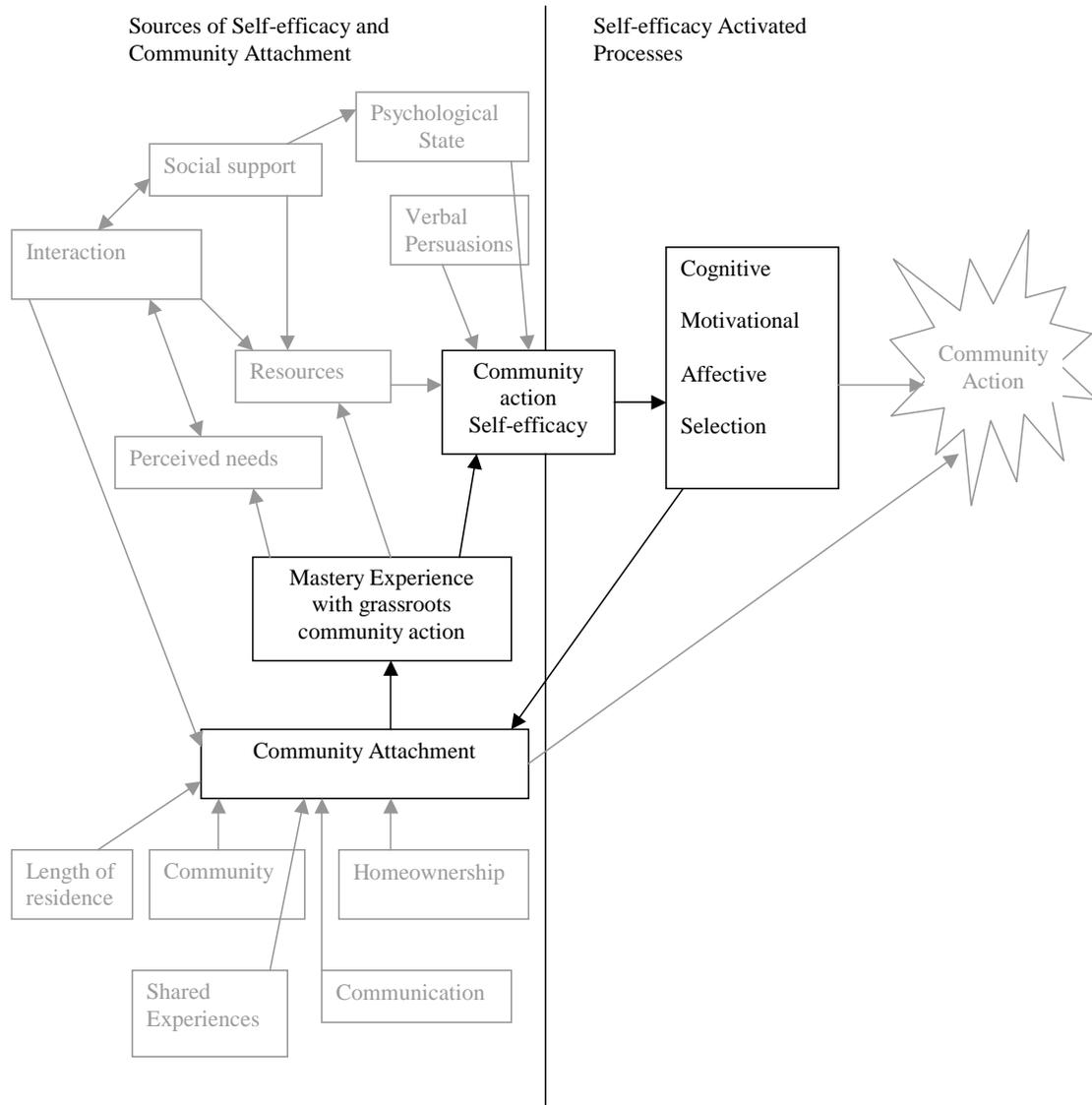


Figure 5.6: Feedback loop between mastery experience, self-efficacy, efficacy-activated processes and community attachment

Community Ecology

Question thirteen examined the ecological framework of citizen participation. This relates participation to the physical, economic and social environments as predictors for participation in grassroots community organizing (Perkins et al., 1996). The data support the model. Participants identified “wishes” for neighborhood improvements. Most of these existed within the social environment, physical environment, and a small

percentage discussed improvements for the economic environment. It was expected that economic improvements would emerge as a larger theme because of the poor socioeconomic context of this study. Participants may possess positive adaptive perceptions about their neighborhood. Living in a poor area has not prevented them from being active, so they would not need economic improvements to make their neighborhood perception better.

Over half of the “wishes” for participants’ neighborhoods were social in nature, mostly that other residents would participate in community action. Social reformers strongly believe that they can mobilize the collective effort needed to bring about social change (Bandura, 1994). It therefore makes sense that the largest category for this question was participant desire for increased levels of participation. Participants also wanted to empower others to act in their community. Personal and social changes rely extensively on methods of empowerment (Bandura, 1988). Vasoo (1991) contends that over the long run, grassroots mobilization and citizen participation should encourage people to become more self reliant in social and economic activities and participate more in neighborhood and community activities. Various governments use this mechanism to encourage local residents to take an active interest as volunteers (Vasoo, 1991). Many local problems which cannot be solved without the cooperation of grassroots leaders and the capacity of its residents (Vasoo, 1991). Participants were not involved in these endeavors to accomplish everything on their own. Many of them suggested that they were merely a “catalyst” for action by informing participants of what resources were available and wanted their residents to be independent so they knew how to act on their own. One participant ingeniously described this process

A lot of times I think education and educating people to what's out there, and what they can do is something that gives them- that empowers them. It's like if I know about the guy in the codes office, I know the guy, I've met him. I've sat down next to him at meetings, I know what he looks like so if I have a problem, I don't mind picking up the phone and saying, 'Walter, here's what the problem is and if you don't know the answer, who might? Who can I call'. So ...again, education is the key for me because if I know how this thing is supposed to work then if I have a problem, I don't feel intimidated about calling.

Education can be a powerful tool in motivating others to act. It empowers residents by informing them of the resources they can use to make a difference, and likely build their community action self-efficacy. Studies indicate that methods of empowerment operate through the self-efficacy mechanism (Bandura, 1986). Education and awareness of community resources emerge as a source of self-efficacy. I will continue this discussion later in the chapter.

It was interesting that beautification and infrastructure improvements were the largest categories under the physical environment theme. These improvements are both very tangible effects of change: It provides comfort, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment to local residents because they can actually see the difference they made. Tangible change also emerged as an indicator of participants' self-efficacy. The visibility of change is very important for participants' belief in the process of community change, as a testament to their actions and as reminders of their previous experiences. Tangible reminders are helpful in times of frustration and fatigue because there has to be a reason to keep "spinnin' your wheels".

Social Support

High social support appears to be an important contributor to community action motivation. Three-quarters of the families of participants were supported their participation. This finding corroborates Vasoo's study, which suggested that high social

support conditions act as an incentive or motivator to grassroots action (1991). This is important for the sustainability of community action tasks. According to ecological theory, one's family is their most immediate and intimate social environment, followed by their neighborhood, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Six of the participants mentioned that their spouses were also involved in community activities. Approval by people who are important to the participant make it easy for them to devote their time and energy to their community work. This is because social support can eliminate potential barriers to action like guilt from not spending more time with family. Social supporters therefore contribute to participants' belief in the purpose of their community tasks, as well as their abilities to accomplish them.

However, lack of social support from an intimate partner was the cause of one participant's divorce. During the interview, this participant was describing the support she currently receives from her family, and then said, "That's one of the reasons how come I don't have a husband today. He didn't like my going out bit and I knew back then it wasn't gonna work and you know it was time for him to hit the door." This participant has high attachment and devotion to her work in the community which allowed her to overcome negative social support.

Participants' Resources

Nearly two-thirds of the participants were active in organizations and programs outside of their neighborhood watch work. When I asked participants about what they were involved in, many had difficulty recalling all of the organizations and causes they had belonged to throughout the years. Seven of the participants were retired and had enough free time to devote to community work. The other participants worked full time and could not afford to commit to other activities than the neighborhood watch group. I

concluded that these participants interact across diverse social fields and cultivate the emergence of a community field, according to field theory (Wilkinson, 1991). Their tasks and actions focused on development in their community, which theoretically lead to the development of community (Summers, 1986). Participants can be identified as theoretical agents of community development because of their varied interactions and task accomplishments in their neighborhoods.

Another implication of the extensive and diversified community involvement of participants is that their interactions lead to increased communication and networking. Through these interactions, participants develop an understanding of what to know, and most importantly, who to know in the community in order to get tasks accomplished. These interactions put leaders in contact with many human, financial, infrastructural, social and political resources, enabling them to fill the needs of their neighborhoods. The increased resources, confidence and esteem that come from the experience of community and community action further develops participants' psychological empowerment, in concurrence with previous research (Corrigan, Faber, Rashid & Leary, 1999; Rogers, Chamberlin, Ellison & Crean, 1997; Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz & Checkoway, 1992). More resources and higher efficacy in community action can contribute to individuals' motivation to action.

The awareness of available resources is important to discuss with respect to participants' perceived barriers to action. The bureaucracy of government agencies was one of the primary perceived barriers. Bureaucracy is easier to maneuver when you know which person or office you need to contact, as well as when you personally know the person you need to contact to get a permit, or get updates on new grants and

programs. One participant described it as, “we try to establish partnerships with some of those [agencies] so they can be ongoing, not just for the moment, ongoing.” Another participant, who had worked in the community all her life, said that, “you need to know how to keep your hand on the pulse with the activities and reactions, and pro and actions and nonactions and everything else.” Participation in diverse activities and interactions increases community knowledge, and therefore increases access to resources by virtue of awareness.

I continue the discussion about community resources using data from question six. This concerned who the participants count on to accomplish tasks for their neighborhood, or essentially, the accessible resources they use to accomplish these tasks. The resources from participants’ personal environment, family and fellow neighborhood watch members, provide the positive effects of high social support as a motivation for community action. The people in participants’ personal environment exist in the same geographic area, or locality as them. They interact with these people frequently (Luloff, 1990). Consequently, participants’ personal environments facilitate positive interactions that lead to social support and become a resource for community action, as well as a source of community action self-efficacy.

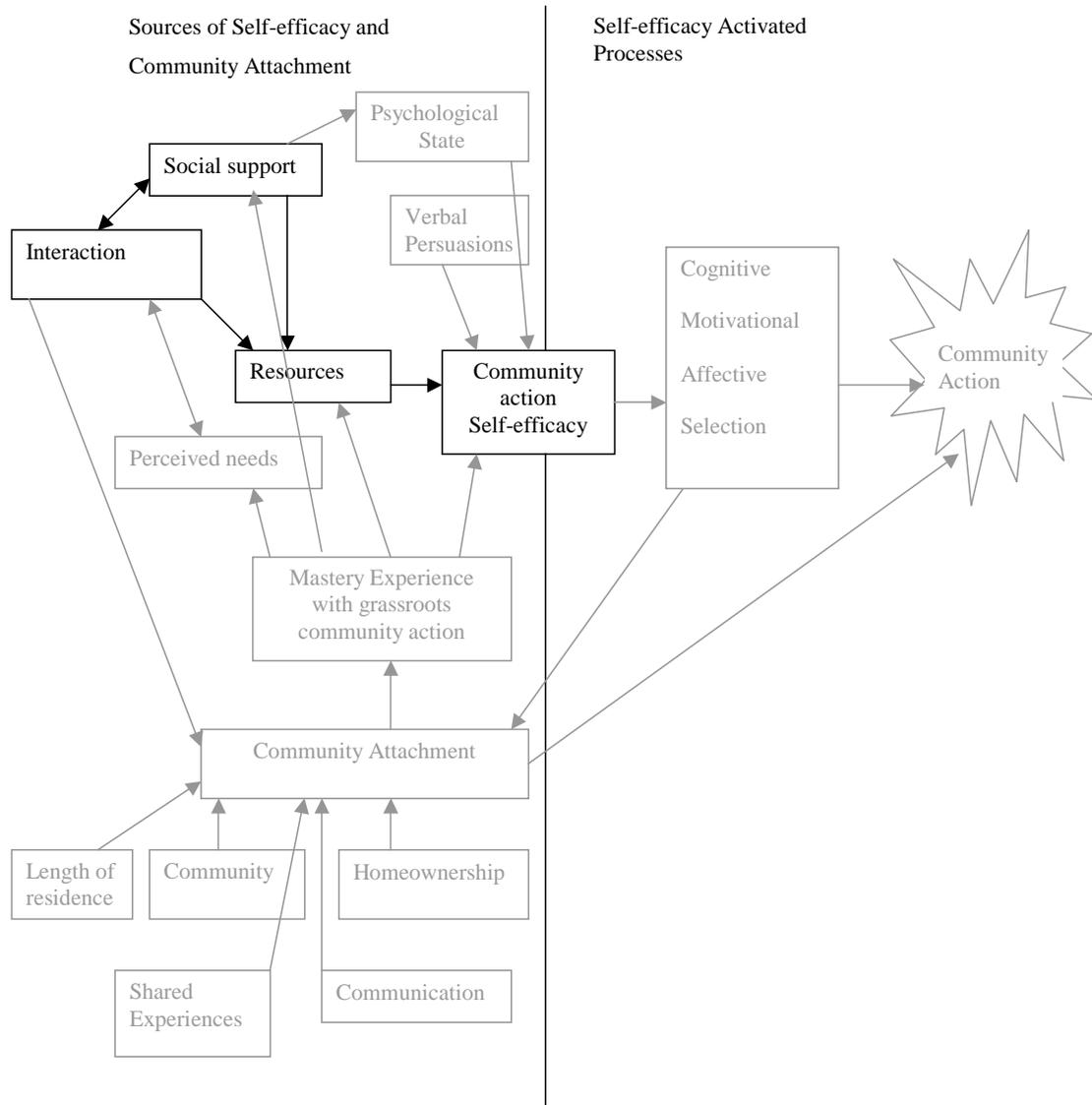


Figure 5.7: Interaction and social support increase participant resources and contribute to self-efficacy

Government agencies were the most important resource in participants' community environment (42%). They work very closely with the police department because most of the organizations are crime watch organizations. The majority of the issues the neighborhood groups deal with (removing condemned housing and old cars, fighting drugs, making infrastructure improvements, etc.) are responsibilities of government agencies. The government plays an important role in the execution of community action.

Perceived Barriers to Action

Government bureaucracy is also a primary barrier to community action. One participant described it as, “sometimes the biggest setback is not knowing where the buck stops. You know, you call an agency and they give you someone else, who give you someone else, who give you someone else.” Another participant said, “I think there is a common fear in the government, in the city, that one person is always afraid to say yes because I think they don’t want to be accountable for it.” As a community leader, government bureaucracy can get in the way of action, but government resources are often necessary for facilitating these actions. How can a community leader act strategically if government agencies are both a resource and a barrier to accomplishing tasks in the community? Inability to carry out a needed task in the neighborhood is frustrating and disappointing and can discourage leaders from achieving their goals.

Resources continue to emerge as an important theme in the rest of the discussion about perceived barriers to community action. Nearly twenty percent of the identified barriers to community action were a lack of resources. Responses to question eight corroborated these results when participants were asked to rate their level of community resources on a scale from one to ten, the mean rating was four, relatively low.

The main reason participants cited as the cause of their low resource level score, were the low government resources available. According to the data the government is the most important community resource, one of the largest barriers to action, as well as an insufficient community resource. It therefore makes sense that the institution that plays the largest role in community change has the largest number of complaints. However, it does not change the fact that many of the needs of these neighborhood watch groups are the responsibility of the local and county government. The historical neglect

of this neighborhood (another identified barrier) leaves much to be desired, even though an increasing amount of these needs have been met over the past few years that the crime watch movement has grown. One participant describes her view of the situation

You know, I know what they say. 'Oh, that's east _____, we'll get to it'. But see, we pay taxes over here too. Look, I don't care what you get on the west side. All I ask is that you bring some of that over to the east. We all pay taxes.

Historic neglect refers to the bad reputation or perception of the neighborhood and the poor allocation of resources to this neighborhood, compounded over time. This barrier can be extremely damaging because it lowers the esteem of the residents living in this area, decreasing any positive attitudes or participation aimed at social change. The most significant perceived barrier faced by participants was apathy, or a lack of neighborhood participation. For participants trying to overcome this barrier, it can seem like, "We've been trying to do this stuff for so long nobody don't really care, and you have to try to work through that stereotype." These psychosocial barriers also affect decision makers and have prevented resources from being allocated to this side of town.

The only barriers, like I say, is the whole stigma of east _____, whatever. But I say that a lot of people that make decisions or don't come out to do what they need to do has never really been in east _____ and never really took a look at what's here and what's available and what can be used. So growth has been on that side of main street for a million years so finally I think, a little bit, we're seeing a little drift here and here and that's ok, its growing.

Resources are not simply monetary, but can also be human, political, or intellectual. For example, apathy and lack of participation were the largest perceived barriers participants faced. Neighborhoods fail to benefit from the human resources they have when there is little to no participation from the people who live in these areas. Almost every participant complained about situations similar to the example provided by this subject

Yea, the major thing is getting people to participate. Because, the more bodies you got, the more you get listened to. We have a hard time convincing neighbors that it's worthwhile. We probably could have had speed bumps a few years back if we had more residents at the city commission complaining about it.

In these instances, leaders who have the desire for improvement and social change are a minority. This frustration is illustrated in the following quote

I realized they don't want nothin' out of life, they don't want their community to look decent. Because I feel like this community could look just like [wealthier communities]. You know, if everybody pulled together and sticked together. We gave 'em a choice. Everybody just keep your own unit clean. They don't even want to do that.

The cognitive and motivational processes that stem from a high sense of efficacy allow these grassroots leaders to be visionary, set challenging goals, and persistently work at achieving these goals (Bandura, 1994). They have a perspective about community action that others do not. Grassroots actions may not be possible without these adaptive benefits, as Bandura describes

Social reformers strongly believe that they can mobilize the collective effort needed to bring social change. Although their beliefs are rarely fully realized they sustain reform efforts that achieve important gains. Were social reformers to be entirely realistic about the prospects of transforming social systems they would either forgo the endeavor or fall easy to victims of discouragement. (1994, pp. 78).

Efficacious social reformers see long and intermediate-term benefits that mobilizing human potential can bring. Their affective processes give them the courage to pursue these large tasks (Bandura, 1994). It is difficult to overcome the barrier of apathy. A leader must be able to share the benefits of action with their fellow residents in order to raise residents' self-efficacy. Otherwise resident's cognitions will not change. It is fortunate that our participants have high self-efficacy. Bandura explains this valuable effect of efficacy

Ordinary social realities are strewn with difficulties. They are full of impediments, adversities, setbacks, frustrations, and inequities. People must have a robust sense

of personal efficacy to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed. (1994, pp. 77).

The tasks and responsibilities of a community leader pose many barriers, as identified by the participants. Their perseverance, persistence and devotion to their duties in spite of these challenges attest to their strong sense of personal efficacy.

Resources contribute to self-efficacy. However, when there are barriers to accessing resources, participants do not get discouraged about achieving their goals because their high self-efficacy forces them to persevere. A resource in participants' community or personal environment is not necessarily a motivation, but the awareness of resources contributes to higher self-efficacy which is a motivation for community action.

Question eleven was deemed invalid. The results were erratic and I feel that the participants misunderstood the question. The wording of the question may have been unclear, and did not get specifically at the concept in question. One's feeling of responsibility is too subjective to operationalize in an open-ended question. There appeared to be no pattern or emergent themes in the data, it was quite erratic and therefore was not considered in this discussion.

I can distinguish two prototypes of community leaders based on field observations and analysis. The first is the textbook-type, committed, dedicated, community leader. They are in it to create change, pursue social justice, and improve the quality of life in their community. This type of leader is very attached to their role. They choose to lead and empower others, even if it takes away some of their personal resources and liberties.

Secondly, we have the leaders who "fell into the role". They were perhaps the only person in their neighborhood who showed up to the watch meeting, the only able-bodied energized resident amongst a neighborhood of senior citizens, or they just wanted to

change something for the benefit of their family, and wound up representing the entire community. They did not aim to become the leaders, but they accepted the responsibility and take it seriously.

Conclusion

Community attachment and self-efficacy were the most important predictors for community action in this study. Involvement in community activities, duration of residence, community pride, homeownership, communication, shared experiences and interaction all emerged as indicators of community attachment (Figure 2.1). Previous experience was the most important predictor of self-efficacy, and tangible reminders of these experiences increase self-efficacy as well. Having high social support, an awareness of community resources, diverse interactions with residents, and a concern for the community needs were also predictors to self-efficacy.

Participants demonstrated the adaptive efficacy-activated processes through their perseverance and resilience in the face of many barriers. Their stubbornness, optimism and humanitarian feelings also demonstrate these beneficial processes. The participants have strong beliefs in their capabilities to accomplish important changes in their neighborhoods, as well as a high level of attachment to their neighborhoods. This explains their motivation for grassroots action. A comprehensive conceptual model is presented in Figure 5.8

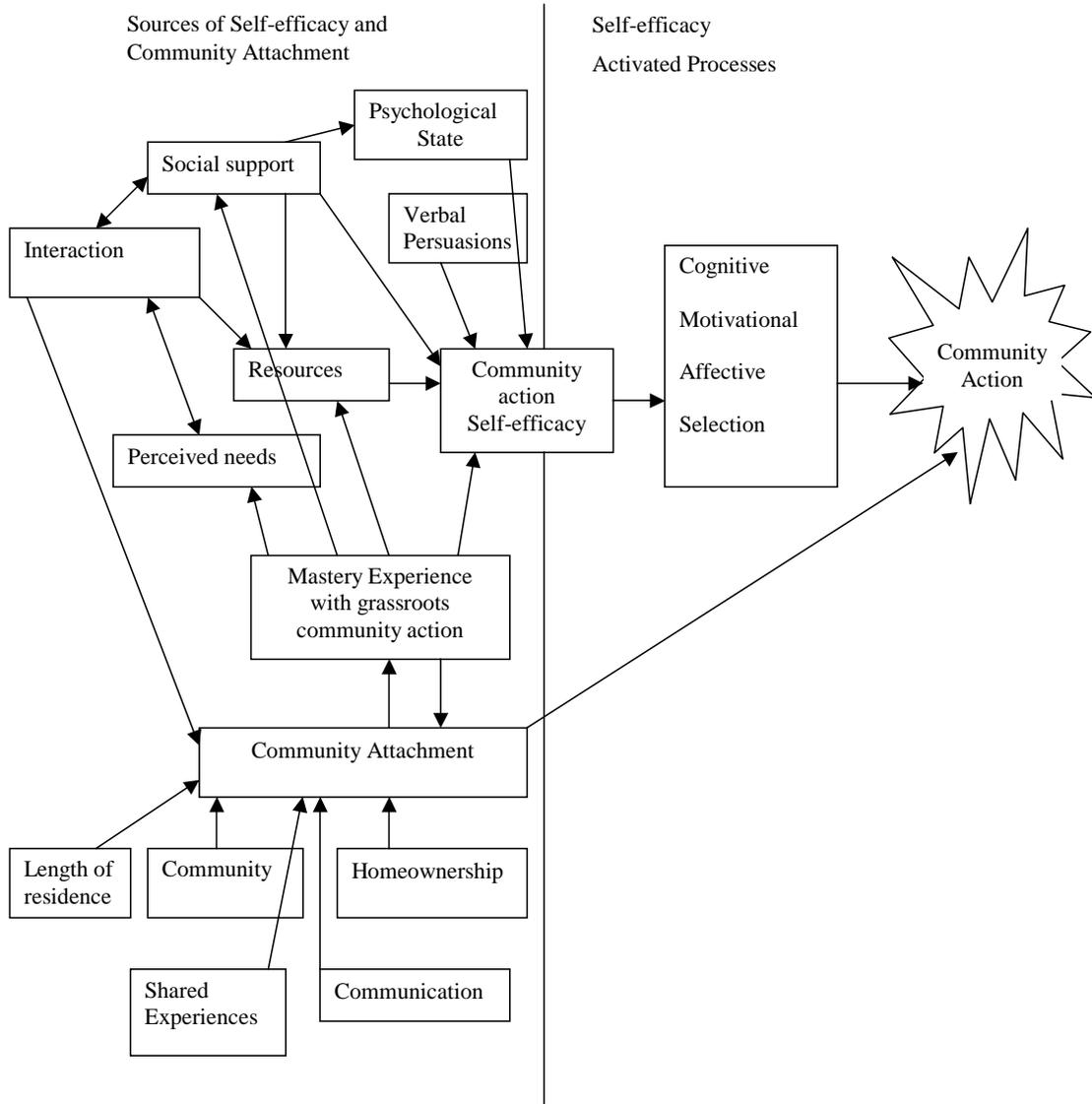


Figure 5.8: Conceptual model of motivations for community action in the context of poverty

CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the motivations behind this research was to better understand ways in which grassroots leaders, community leaders and other community practitioners could cultivate and enhance grassroots action as a means to develop communities. Self-efficacy played a major role in motivating community action. To apply this in communities, organizers could create community projects that are guaranteed to be successful. The projects should be visible and the results should be easy to see so that participants can look at the changes they have made after they have contributed. Seeing tangible change will give participants evidence of their ability to make a difference, increasing their self-efficacy. Good projects could be things like painting over graffiti, refurbishing a playground or community park, building handicapped ramps for older citizens, or a neighborhood cleanup. Citizens with moderate to high community action self-efficacy and who have a sense of attachment to the community will likely join the effort.

The difficulty lies in motivating those who are not attached and do not possess high community action self-efficacy. If we could further understand the apathetic and unattached resident, perhaps we could develop new strategies to recruit more of these uninvolved citizens. However, community scientists must accept the fact that there will never be one hundred percent participation: There will always be “free-riders”. People are different and not everyone will see the benefits of community action. However, even a small increase in grassroots level action allows community organizers to tap further into this powerful potential.

The participants and potential participants I have discussed in this research are adults. If we are going to develop the kind of active adults we want for our communities, we have to incorporate the youth into projects and activities. They are a valuable resource for the present and involving them in action now creates sustainable action for the future. In addition, youth benefit socially, developmentally, and emotionally from participating in volunteer work. Youth are more likely to incorporate it into their lifestyles down the road if they learn about the importance of community work during their formative years. Involving youth in community action efforts can contribute significantly to the sustainability of the community.

The leaders of the community watch groups in this study, and all grassroots leaders for that matter, have a very difficult job. This paper identified the many barriers they face in their communities. They often do not receive much recognition for their work. Also, it is easy to fall victim to organizer burnout, even if an individual is highly efficacious. Perhaps local government agencies or even non-profit organizations could recognize, encourage, and show their gratitude for these leaders in some manner. An event, a kind letter, or even a personal visit may do a great deal to keep leaders energized and appreciated.

A more citizen-friendly government is an improvement which could facilitate more community action. People would also feel more empowered to use this system if an effort was made to educate all citizens about the processes and resources in the government system. Just having the knowledge of available resources could build citizens community action self-efficacy, and increase their understanding of the roles of government, and the roles of citizens in a community. Making significant changes to the

bureaucracy of government may be difficult. A compromise could be made between the education of citizens regarding local government processes and creating a more standardized and seamless access to the system. This would enhance community action.

The community context of this study was in a mid-sized University city. It is a land-grant university and is therefore state Extension headquarters. I would like to see more university involvement in creating opportunities for low-income families and neighborhoods. The academic knowledge, institutional and human resources that a university could and should share with its community would make a significant impact on residents. Residents may begin to see their individual and collective potential and may start to mobilize that potential once they see that the greater community values their neighborhood and the well-being of fellow citizens.

Uncovering the role that social support plays in the lives of community citizens would be a valuable research finding. I found that social support is a source of efficacy and a valuable personal resource. Diverse interactions may increase social support. I examined very basic relationships between social support and other concepts, but the extent to which social support effects individuals' actions is likely to be a very complex and interesting dynamic. Understanding these dynamics could be quite valuable to community organizers.

Grounded theory epistemology fits the grassroots community action research inquiry very well. The justification for this approach is thoroughly explained in the methodology section, but I would like to add how important I found this approach to be when attempting to understand individual motivations. When participant responses are understood holistically and in their real context, the science and theory emerge from the

data. All research approaches are important to achieve a robust understanding of this phenomenon. I found this methodology particularly enlightening and helpful for scientifically capturing grassroots action.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STAGE 2 AND CORRESPONDING THEORIES

Question	Theoretical and Conceptual Basis
How long have you lived in this neighborhood? How long have you been the leader of your neighborhood watch group? How does your family feel about your leadership role in the community?	Ecological
What inspired you to become involved with your community work in the first place?	Social Movement, Ecological
How do you benefit personally from your community involvement? How does your involvement benefit the community?	Efficacy
When you are working as a community organizer, who else do you count on or work with?	Field Theory
How do you think the changes, both the good and the bad in the community over the past couple of years, have affected the lives of the residents here?	Ecological, Efficacy
Why do you think other people participate in neighborhood watch?	
If you could have any three things in the world, what would you wish most for your community? Perhaps within the physical, social and economic environment?	Ecological
How much do you think people feel a part of this neighborhood? What do you think leads them to feel like they belong?	Field Theory, Ecological
On a scale of 1-10, one being the lowest and ten being the best, how much do you feel that you have the resources needed to get things done?	Efficacy, Ecological
How much of an impact do you feel your work in the community makes? Would you say a lot of impact, some impact, a little impact or no impact? Can you share with me 3 examples of times where you made that impact?	Efficacy
What keeps you energized to keep working in your community when times are hard or others don't participate or help?	Efficacy, Social Movement

Question**Theoretical and Conceptual Basis**

What are some of the things you've had to overcome to get things done in your community? (Barriers)	Field Theory, Social Movement
What other types of volunteer work do you do?	Field Theory
How responsible do you feel for the quality of life in your community? How responsible do you feel for being a leader? Why do you feel responsible? Do you think other people in the community feel this kind of responsibility?	Social Movement

7. What are some of the things you've had to overcome to get things done in your community? (Barriers)... ... (write)

Are there economic barriers?

Barriers about race or cultural differences?

Are there barriers that come from the local government?

Barriers with people's attitudes about how things should or have been done...

8. On a scale of 1-10, one being the lowest and ten being the best, how much do you feel that you have the resources needed to get things done?

9. How much of an impact do you feel your work in the community makes?

a. Would you say a lot of impact, some impact, a little impact or no impact?

b. Can you share with me three examples of times where you made that impact?

10. What keeps you energized to keep working in your community when times are hard or others don't participate or help?

11. How responsible do you feel for the quality of life in your community? How responsible do you feel for being a leader?

b. Why do you feel responsible?

12. How much do you think that people feel like they are a part of this neighborhood? What do you think leads them to feel like they belong?

13. If you could have any three things in the world, what would you wish for your community? Perhaps within the physical, social and economic environment?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I grew up in Rockville Centre, NY, where I received an International Baccalaureate diploma from high school. I received a bachelor's of Science in family, youth and community sciences from the University of Florida in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. I entered the combined bachelor's and master's program in the Family, Youth and Community Sciences Department. My academic focuses have been community development, grassroots community action and service learning. I will receive a Master of Science in August 2006 from the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.