

Community Level Interventions in Child and Youth Care Practice

by

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe how child and youth care practitioners experience their engagement in community level interventions. Five child and youth care practitioners, who identified themselves as engaging in community level interventions in their work, were interviewed and data were analysed using a combined narrative and thematic approach. Eight themes emerged from the data that describe participants' experience with community, community change and community level interventions. Results show how community level interventions have a tendency to target the micro, meso and occasionally exo, rather than macro, levels of communities. Thus, multi-level interventions are recommended as a way to shift child and youth care practice from an emphasis on interventions with individuals, towards greater emphasis on interventions that are aimed at the multiple levels of the child and youth's ecological system. The study identifies implications for post-secondary curriculum, professional practice, agency mandates and job descriptions.

Keywords: child and youth care, community, community level interventions, multi-level interventions, ecological systems, ecological perspective, ecological theory

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Dedication

In loving memory of my brother, Russell,
whose strength and courage inspired me to complete this project.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

“...to significantly influence the quality of human services delivered to children requires a comprehensive ecological approach that can influence each of the environmental systems that impinge on children and affect their lives” (VanderVen, 2006, p. 254).

My interest in this study has developed from the experiences that I have had working with children and youth, for more than twenty years, in a range of settings from non-profit residential care homes and counselling centres to municipal recreation and social planning departments. I have had the opportunity to work with individual children and youth, community based groups, organizations and residents in various communities, and at the organizational level, where I have engaged in organizational development and community change initiatives.

When I first began to work in the field of child and youth care, I worked predominantly with individual children and youth and engaged in interventions that aimed to support their growth and development, and facilitate changes in their behaviour. An important aspect of my work also involved developing an understanding of the ecological context that influenced the youth and children I worked with.

The ecological perspective is evident in the field of child and youth care and Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) ecological theory has influenced descriptions of the field, efforts to prepare practitioners for practice, and child and youth care practice (Derksen, 2010). Mattingly, Stuart and VanderVen (2010) provide a widely accepted definition of child and youth care practice that articulates the ecological focus in child and youth care, when they state “[P]rofessional Child and Youth Care Practice focuses on infants, children, and adolescents, including those with special needs, within the context of the family, the community, and the life span. The developmental ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and their physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings” (p. 2).

In keeping with this definition and during these early days in the field, I certainly appreciated the ecological context that influenced the child, but the focus of my interventions remained on the individuals I worked with. Building on the work of Ratcliffe and Wallack, Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000) attest to the prominence of these individual approaches when they state:

We define, analyse, research, and treat human problems as if they were all within the individual or the micro-system. At best we think also about the meso-system. Rarely do we think about the macro-system (Prilleltensky, 1994b) (p. 90).

Over time, I became dissatisfied with these individualized approaches to care and helping because in my experience these approaches, although important and valuable, were limited in their ability to address the broader issues that impacted the lives of the people I worked with. They were also, at times, misguided because too much emphasis was placed on situating the problem entirely within the child, who was the sole focus for change, while the factors within “...each of the environmental systems that impinge on children and affect their lives” (VanderVen, 2006, p. 254) were neglected. Experience and subsequent research has led me to believe that, “[T]here is much more to ecological theory than simply understanding that children are part of a nested system of ecological contexts” (Derksen, 2010, p. 334), and that an ecological perspective, informed by ecological theory, requires greater attention to the ways in which the environmental contexts that children live within can be influenced (Derksen, 2010).

A number of stories from my experience come to mind that illustrate the sense I had that these individual approaches were inadequate. I recall the children I worked with in residential care and their long and complex histories of abuse and neglect, not only in their homes, but in some cases in the foster care system. I witnessed the struggles of many youth who had been

kicked out of school and were not welcome to return, and remember the girl in our group who never had enough food packed in her lunch for our long days of hiking, climbing or paddling. My role with all of these children and youth was to provide support, nurture their growth and development, and promote individual behaviour change. I have never lost sight of the immense value this work has for individual children and youth; however, I grew increasingly dismayed with the emphasis on individual approaches because, for the most part, where I really saw the need for change was in the multi-layered systems surrounding the child. For example, in the case of the children in the group home, it was the family support and child protection systems that needed to change, for the girl with virtually no lunch poverty was a serious underlying problem that was not being addressed and needed to be, and for many of the youth who had been expelled from school it was the school system itself that neglected to meet their unique learning needs. Despite the integral role these systemic issues played in the stories of these children and youth, intervention efforts were typically aimed at individuals, which limited the possibilities and potential for more substantive change.

These early experiences led to me to work in community and organizational development where I engaged in interventions that were aimed at the ecological contexts that influenced the lives of the children and youth I worked with. For example, in one community I worked in, I facilitated a process with residents, representatives from various organizations, and youth in the neighbourhood, that culminated in a multi-service neighbourhood based youth centre which offered a range of programs and services, such as a health clinic, recreational programs, a youth newspaper and a neighbourhood based location for outreach youth services. I also established collaborative community based processes that secured funding for the development of new facilities, such as youth centres and skateboard parks, and programs, such as late night

recreational programs, a range of programs for youth and their families living in low income housing complexes, and programs designed with specific cultural groups to meet their needs. In addition, I advocated for youth to participate in their communities in meaningful ways, for example, in community planning processes I invited planners to youth meetings and ensured the active involvement of youth in the design of the skate board park and multiple youth centres. I also worked to develop the capacity of organizations in order to enhance the delivery of youth services, for example, in the development of youth service strategies and in my role as Community Youth Development Worker, where I was responsible for supporting four municipally funded outreach youth organizations.

Through my work with communities I began to develop a greater appreciation for the fluidity of the systems within the contexts that impact individuals and began to see that these contexts were not necessarily rigid entities that are fixed and unchangeable, rather they were all aspects of the community that both influence and could be influenced in some way. For example, in one community I worked in there were often conflicts and tensions between the RCMP, youth workers, and youth. Underlying the stories told by many youth and youth workers was the belief that the RCMP was systemically unchangeable and that relationships with the RCMP were ‘naturally’ contentious. I called and facilitated a meeting between the RCMP and Youth Workers which marked the beginning of improved relationships between the parties involved and illustrated the ways in which practitioners can influence community contexts. These new experiences with community felt promising, I was invigorated with the realization that ‘community’ and ‘society’ weren’t rigid entities external to me or the individuals I worked with, rather we shape the contexts that we live within and we could do so by working together within and across the multiple systems that made up the community. I became very committed

to the belief that as a profession Child and Youth Care needed to move beyond understanding that environments influence children and youth, towards greater involvement in influencing these environments; that is, our interventions needed to be aimed not just at individuals but also at communities. As Bronfenbrenner (2005) says,

...to a greater extent than for any other species, human beings create the environments that shape the course of human development. Their actions influence the multiple physical and cultural tiers of the ecology that shapes them, and this agency makes humans-for better or for worse-active producers of their own development (p. xxvii).

My experience in community work was often fraught with uncertainty, rich in learning, immensely gratifying, and left me with many questions about work at the community level for child and youth care practitioners. Throughout my graduate education I continued to reflect on and explore my work in the field and began to wonder how other child and youth care practitioners experience their engagement in community level interventions and it is this question that guides this study.

I believe that exploring the ways practitioners work to influence the environments that help to shape the children and youth they work with is vital because as Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggests environments influence development, and child and youth care practice aims to ‘...promote the optimal development of children, youth, and their families...’ (Mattingly et. al, 2010, p. 2). Additionally, child and youth care is grounded in an ecological perspective (Derksen, 2010; Mattingly et al., 2010), largely informed by ecological theory (Derksen, 2010), which suggests that as practitioners we need to understand not only the ways in which environments influence young people, but also the ways in which we can influence these environments. Exploring how child and youth care practitioners experience engagement in

community level interventions will enrich and deepen our understanding of the ways in which practitioners work to influence the environments that shape the children and youth they work with. This study is intended to stimulate further dialogue about community level interventions in child and youth care practice and potentially open up a new range of possible approaches for practitioners to engage in; approaches that move beyond the emphasis on individuals and influence the systems that impact the lives of children and youth. It is my hope that this study can contribute to (a) curriculum regarding community level practice within post-secondary child and youth care programs, (b) mandates of community based agencies and related job descriptions, (c) professional practice in child and youth care, and (d) identification of areas for further inquiry.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

“Without any presentation of the existing knowledge about the topic of an investigation, it is difficult...to ascertain...what the...contribution of the research is”
(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.107).

Currently, there is no literature specifically on how child and youth care practitioners experience their engagement in community level interventions. Therefore, this review draws on literature from a broad range of professions such as social work, sociology, community planning and psychology in order to explicate current understandings of community level interventions. In addition, it draws on child and youth care literature in order to explore community level work in the field of child and youth care. In this chapter I explain how I conducted my literature review and describe current literature on community level interventions, including related concepts of community and community change. I also discuss community, community change and community level interventions in relation to the field of child and youth care. I conclude the chapter with a summary and discussion of the need for further research.

Literature Search

Key words and phrases such as ‘child and youth care’, ‘community’, ‘community level interventions’, ‘community capacity building’, ‘community development’, ‘community change’, ‘youth work’, ‘ecological theory’, and ‘children, family and community’ were searched in the University of Victoria’s databases, such as Academic Search Premier, ERIC, Social Work Abstracts, Social Service Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstract, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. Table of contents for the journal *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* from 2000 to 2010, *The Journal of Community Practice* from 2006 – 2009, and the *Community Development Journal* from 2006 - 2010 were also searched. In addition, I

reviewed reference lists from articles and texts found through my initial search and accessed any further relevant literature identified in this manner.

As a result of this search I identified a range of literature that describes community development, community and macro practice, youth development and community capacity building, all of which inform my exploration of community level interventions and draws on work from the social work, urban planning, sociology, community psychology and health fields. In addition, for this review I draw on child and youth care literature found through my search that describes the field, explores the history of child and youth care, the role of the practitioner, curriculum and professional competencies in child and youth care, and community in child and youth care.

Community Level Interventions

A Definition of Community Level Interventions

Barnes, Katz, Korbin and O'Brien, (2006) articulate the only definition of community level interventions found in the literature, as follows:

There are a number of different approaches to interventions for communities and the most important differentiation from the point of view of families is between interventions at the *community-level* and those that are *community-based*. Both of these provide services to vulnerable families in the community, and both are geographically based in the community, but they operate from different theoretical standpoints and have different aims and objectives. Community-level interventions are aimed at changing the community itself rather than helping specific vulnerable individuals or families (italics in original, p. 87).

This definition provides a useful distinction between community-based practice and community level interventions. In addition it underscores the centrality of ‘community’ and ‘community change’ in community level interventions. In order to more fully explicate the meaning of community level interventions I begin by exploring meanings of community, I then examine community change and finally I describe various approaches to community level interventions found in the literature.

Defining Community

Defining community level interventions is a complex undertaking because ‘community’, is defined in multiple ways, spoken of but not always defined, and is widely contested (Barnes et al., 2006; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Ledwith, 2005; Sites, Chaskin & Parks, 2007; Skott-Myhre & Skott-Myhre, 2007). As Sites et al. (2007), citing Williams, state: “...to be sure, community has long been seen as an especially slippery signifier, and one whose fuzzy connotations can render it unsuitable for sharp analytical purchase (Williams, 1976, p.66)” (p. 520). Barnes et.al, (2006), Gamble and Weil, (2010) and Weil, (2005) describe the work of German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies who articulated what is now considered to be a classic and essential distinction between community and society. Barnes et al., describe this distinction as,

Groups that form around essential will, in which membership is self-fulfilling, Tönnies called *Gemeinschaft* (which is often translated as ‘community’). In contrast, groups in which membership was sustained by some instrumental goal or definite end he termed *Gesselschaft* (often translated as ‘society’). (p. 5)

According to Gamble and Weil and Weil, community in Tönnies work is understood as informal, close knit, reciprocal relationships that are grounded in a sense of mutual responsibility, and society is understood as more formal, mechanistic relationships and impersonal networks

(Gamble & Weil, 2010;Weil, 2005). As Gamble and Weil and Weil suggest Tönnies work implies that community exists in relation to individuals and the larger context of society. As Weil states, “[M]any of our current questions about community can be traced back to earlier conceptions of what it means to be human and to be part of a social, economic, and political collective” (p. 10). The distinctions between community and society are not clearly and consistently addressed within the literature reviewed. However, the above discussion suggests community is not an isolated entity; rather, it exists in relation to individuals and larger contexts such as social, economic, and political systems.

Shared geography, identity and interest are common elements in descriptions of community (Brown & Hannis, 2008; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Glover Reed 2005). Glover Reed (2005) suggests “[C]ommunity is most often defined in three ways: communities of place (people who live or work together); communities of identity (people who share common circumstances and issues); and communities of interest (people who share common goals or interests)” (p.93). Brown and Hannis (2008) offer similar definitions of community as follows:

A **geographic community** is a group of people living in the same physical area. A **function or attribute community** refers to a group of people who share or possess a common and essential factor, such as gender, race, religion, or social-economic status. An **interest community** describes a group of people who come together to address a common interest of concern” (bold in original, p.5).

Gamble and Weil (2010) also suggest that the notion of place in community can extend beyond the limits of neighbourhood or work environments and into global understandings of community that include “...the interconnections of all living systems on Earth (p.6). Hart (1999) as quoted in Gamble and Weil provides a broad based model for understanding community in her Community

Capital Triangle that conceptualizes community as including natural resources, human and social resources and the built environment. Gilchrist (2009) emphasizes personal, organizational, and collective networks as key to understanding community and suggests that “...community comprises the informal interactions and connections that we use to co-ordinate everyday life” (p.3). As these descriptions of community illustrate, there are multiple understandings of community. With each description the borders that demarcate community shift and as a result what constitutes community changes.

Community is not only defined in multiple ways, it serves many important functions and has the potential to both support and constrain human life. As described in Derksen (2008) and Weil (2005), Roland Warren, a prominent community theorist, identified in his landmark *The Community in America* (1963, 1978), the major functions of communities as: (a) production, distribution, consumption, (b) socialization, (c) social control, (d) social participation, and (e) mutual support. Other authors, as cited in Derksen (2008), such as Evans and Prilleltensky (2007), Mathews (2002), and Maton (2005) also speak to the various functions of community and argue that well-being in children and youth is linked to the condition of their neighbourhoods. Additional authors acknowledge that community has the potential to nourish and support individuals (Caputo, 1996; Gamble & Weil, 2010), and contributes to our survival and progress (Gilchrist, 2009). Community is also considered a basic need and a form of organization that can be found in all human societies (Gilchrist, 2009; Stevens, 1996). As Stevens (1996) states “The need for community and its rituals is an ancient need. It has been built into the human psyche over thousands of generations and hundreds of thousands of years” (p. 42). Community then serves many functions, has the potential to support and nourish human

life and “...is generally regarded as force for good: a means of survival and progress” (Gilchrist, 2009, p.1).

Gilchrist (2009) also acknowledges that community has a downside and is not inherently and universally beneficial for individuals or society. Bauman (2001) and Skott-Myhre and Skott-Myhre, (2007) argue that the general positive regard for community is troublesome because it hides from view the complex web of power relations existing in communities that can contribute to the exclusion and oppression of individuals and groups. Other authors also speak to the tension between individual freedom and the common good, the role of boundaries in defining and determining membership and non-membership in communities, and the dominant norms of strong communities that can all render communities oppressive and exclusionary (Caputo, 1996; Gilchrist, 2009; Shaw, 2008; Sites et al, 2007).

While acknowledging the complex and contested nature of ‘community’ my purpose here is to focus on community level interventions and in doing so I provide a description of community, from a previous literature review that I wrote, that informs my use of the word and frames the discussion. In my earlier work (Derksen, 2008) I wrote, “[G]enerally ‘community’ is conceptualized, using geographical boundaries, shared characteristics among a particular population group, a shared interest or concern among a group or in reference to a collection or network of relationships (Checkoway, 1995; Colclough & Sitaraman, 2005; Fraser, 2005; Homan, 1995; Ricks, Charlesworth, Bellefeuille & Field, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2008)” (p.5).

Throughout this paper then, when I refer to community I am referring to communities as networks of relationships defined by geography, identity, or shared interest. In addition, I acknowledge the various functions of communities and the ways in which communities can support and constrain individuals. Articulating the way in which community is understood is

vital in understanding community level interventions, because ‘community’ is clearly central in community level interventions and it is understood in multiple ways.

Defining Community Change

Like community, community change is integral in community level interventions. There are multiple ways that community change can be understood and our understandings of community change can influence our engagement and experience in community level interventions. Homan (1994) defines community change as “...the process of producing modification or innovation in attitudes, policies, or practices in the community for the purpose of reducing (or eliminating) problems or providing for general improvement in the way needs are met” (p. 15). As Homan’s definition suggests community change can take place at multiple levels, such as individual, organizational, and policy levels and aims to eliminate problems in the community and improve outcomes for individuals. For Homan then, the community is multi-layered and includes not simply networks of relationships that are defined by identity, interest or geography, but rather the individuals, organizations and policy that are embedded in communities.

Theory also plays a central role in understanding the multiple ways community change can be understood and according to Midgley and Livermore (2005) most of the theories that inform social change “...are characterized by the belief that progressive social change can be fostered through systematic social intervention” (p.155). Glover Reed (2005), drawing on Hardcastle, Wenocur and Powers, (1997), Hardina, (2002) and Vago, (1999), has developed a framework of theories about society and social change that are relevant to community change and illustrate the multiple levels that change can take place within and the various ways in which community change can be understood. As Glover Reed suggests, these multiple theories,

although not an absolute list, can facilitate different levels of analysis and invite greater possibilities for change. Some of the theories that are included in her framework are systems theories that emphasize the way structures in society function and relate to other structures or systems, theories concerned with the role that politics and economics play in change and stability, conflict theories that suggest conflict creates opportunities for change, social psychological theories that focus on personal and interpersonal change and co-construction theories that pay particular attention to the ways in which everyday interactions shape individuals and organizations.

Change and stability, planned and unplanned change, working with forces of change, and resistance to change, are all key concepts related to community change that are illuminated and informed by the theories that Glover Reed (2005) has identified. Glover Reed suggests that practitioners draw on several theories in order to better understand change processes and enhance practice. As Glover Reed states, “[M]ultiple forms of theorizing open more potential avenues for change than might be considered otherwise” (p.90). Homan’s (1994) definition of community change and Glover Reed’s framework illuminates the multi-faceted nature of community change and the range of possible ways that community change might be understood, facilitated and experienced.

The way in which we understand community change and underlying assumptions that we hold about community change can significantly influence the ways in which we engage in and experience community level interventions. Therefore, reflecting on and exploring how we think about community change is a fruitful endeavour. As I stated in a previous paper:

As I reflect on my early days as a community development worker I see that change was often conceptualized as being a linear process that could be planned, managed and

externally driven. There was an implicit linear logic at work; there were problems in the community and I was expected to develop and implement strategies to change the community and fix the problems. Underlying this logic was the belief that externally planned change was the appropriate, perhaps the only, course of action. There certainly was an expectation that I work with the community, however an implicit assumption was that I was the one in charge and in control of the change process (Derksen, 2009, p.3).

Over time and through experience, I began to see how these underlying assumptions about community change influenced my work in that they positioned me as the ‘expert’ who could control every aspect of community change initiatives. I began to recognize the influence that these underlying assumptions had and the ways in which they limited my practice, in part because they didn’t attend to change processes that were unplanned. Warren (1971), like Glover Reed (2005), also speaks about planned and unplanned change, and invites us to consider the ways in which we conceptualize change when he states that “[O]n both the international level and the community level we see the confusion raised by the uncertainty of our ability to control change and of how the direction of change shall be established” (p. 275). Other authors such as Gilchrist (2000), Parsons (2007), Sanders, Munford and Maden (2009) and Schensul (2009) also alert us to the importance of considering our notions of change and the ways in which these notions influence intervention efforts aimed at communities.

Sanders et al. (2009), in their discussion of research done at Te Aroha Noa Community Services in New Zealand on the potential of multi-level interventions for enhancing outcomes for children, suggest that complexity theory, which is not included in Glover Reed’s (2005) framework, can enrich our understanding of community change. As they state:

Complexity theory offers new insights into the ways in which social interventions may contribute to good outcomes for families and children because it explicitly focuses on change, uncertainty, unpredictability, contradictions and tension. The emphasis of complexity theory on dynamic, adaptive systems that never quite repeat patterns, and that are more than the sum of their parts, speak to parts of family and community change processes that have historically been difficult to understand (pp. 1086-1087).

Not only do Sanders et al.(2009), suggest that complexity theory is useful in understanding community change processes, they also found that the way in which practitioners understand community change, influences the ways in which they engage with change processes. As they state, “[T]he practitioners at Te Aroha Noa understood change as an emergent, organic process that would be unpredictable and uncertain. Through this process they learned to connect with natural change processes and to attend to opportunities for growth and development...” (p. 1090). As these authors suggest community change, which is central in community level interventions, is a complex matter; there are myriad ways to understand community change and the ways in which we understand change influences our engagement and experience in community level interventions.

Community Level Intervention Approaches

The multifaceted nature of community and community change combined with the fact, as suggested by Barnes et al. (2006), that there are many different types of community level interventions, all of which are embedded in a variety of approaches that aim to change the community itself rather than individuals, make defining community level interventions a complex undertaking. The review of the literature about work at the community level certainly reveals multiple approaches, with myriad theoretical underpinnings and interventions at what has

been termed the community or macro level (Barter, 2007; Chaskin, 2001; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Ledwith, 2005; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000; Rothman, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2008; Sites, et al., 2007). Community development (Barnes et al., 2006; Craig, 2007; Gilchrist, 2009; Ledwith, 2005; Midgley & Livermore, 2005), community capacity building (Chaskin, 2001; Craig, 2007), Rothman's (2008) classic model which emphasizes multi-modes of intervention at the community and macro levels, community practice (Gamble & Weil, 2010), and multi-level approaches that emphasize social interventions (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000) are all predominant approaches that encompass community level interventions found in the literature reviewed. What follows is discussion of the literature associated with each of these approaches, with a particular emphasis on explicating the multiple ways that community level interventions are understood.

Barnes et al. (2006) suggest that community development is the most established approach for community level interventions; therefore, I will begin with a discussion of community development. Community development, can be traced back to the 1950's, (Craig, 2007; Midgley & Livermore, 2005), and is a term that "...is often used to describe participatory interventions that promote self-help and service delivery when the state is unable to satisfy community aspirations" (Gilchrist, 2009, p. 23). The following definition of community development was agreed on in 2004 by representatives from over thirty countries, including, Europe, Asia, Africa and North America, and demonstrates some continuity in understandings of community development (Craig, 2007; Gilchrist, 2009):

Community development is a way of strengthening civil society by prioritising the actions of communities, and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental policy. It seeks the empowerment of local communities, taken to

mean both geographical communities, communities of interest or identity and communities organizing around specific themes or policy initiatives. It strengthens the capacity of people as active citizens through their community groups, organizations and networks: and the capacity of institutions and agencies...to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities. It plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities (Craig, 2007, p. 340).

The above definition suggests that community development aims to empower communities, in particular those that are disadvantaged and vulnerable, develop the capacity of people, institutions and agencies and influence the development of social, economic and environmental policy. Therefore, community development is not limited to interventions that are aimed at communities understood as networks of relationships defined by geography, interest and identity, but also includes a focus on individuals, organizations and policy. The role for the worker in this process is to engage not just with the community but also with institutions and larger macro influences within society such as policy. Gilchrist's (2009) argument that power and politics are integral to community development, also suggests that community development includes engagement with larger macro structures, as she states:

[P]ower is a dominant theme within community development, and in this respect, the role is fundamentally about working with people in communities so they have more influence over decisions that affect them...Community development addresses and seeks to change relations of power within communities and society as a whole and as such it has a strong political dimension. (p.38)

Radical community development is a form of community development practice that pays particular attention to issues of power, discrimination and oppression; and seeks transformative social change through redistribution of power and resources (Gilchrist, 2009; Ledwith, 2005). Ledwith (2005), drawing on Hope and Timmel (1984), suggests that the radical community development process involves work at four levels; the individual level, the community level, the institutional level and wider society which includes the “...cultural, economic, political and social forces that are constantly in dynamic with community...” (p. 94). Ledwith argues that in order for community development to realise its full potential it must work at all four of these levels, not just the community level, as she states “[I]f we fail to take our practice beyond the good work that goes into local issues and local projects, we fail to realise this potential and our work is good but not transformative; it is making local lives easier, tolerable, more pleasant, but is not addressing the root source of the problems that give rise to injustice” (p.7).

While community, in the community development and radical community development approaches, is understood as networks of relationships defined by geography, interest and identity, these approaches require practitioners to engage, not just with communities, but also with institutions and the broader structures that influence the lives of individuals. As Ledwith (2005) notes “...community development embraces the deeply personal and the profoundly political” (p. 61). Therefore, community level interventions within the community development and radical community development approaches aim to change more than just the community, as Barnes et al.’s (2006) definition would suggest, they also aim to create change at the institutional, policy and broader societal levels and they do so in part through capacity building.

Distinct from community development and radical community development approaches, community capacity building approaches emphasize interventions that embrace and develop the

capacities and assets of individuals, organizations and social networks within communities and are given various names such as asset-based community development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mannes, Roehlkepartain & Benson, 2005), youth development (Brennan & Barnett, 2009; Checkoway, et.al, 2003) community capacity building (Barter, 2003, 2007; Chaskin 2001) and models that promote the building of social capital (Ricks, et al., 1999).

Community capacity building is acknowledged as an aspect of community development in the broad based definition of community development discussed in the previous section; however, the relationship between community capacity building approaches and community development is not consistently addressed in the literature reviewed. Craig (2007), argues that community capacity building is essentially a new name for community development, although he does cite studies by Human (2005), Chapman and Kirk (2001) and Banks and Shenton (2001) that suggest that they are not the same but rather "...it might be possible to see CCB (community capacity building) as a narrower aspect of the community development process" (Craig, 2007, p. 343).

Nevertheless, community capacity building is a form of community level intervention because it aims to change the community through capacity building. As Barnes et al. (2006) suggest, community level interventions are grounded in the belief that community capacity building can ameliorate social problems. However, as with community development, the descriptions of community capacity building suggest that within this approach community is conceptualized broadly and therefore, involves interventions that aim for change beyond the relational networks defined by interest, identity and geography that constitute community.

Chaskin (2001), who has developed a capacity building framework for understanding and developing community capacity, suggests that although community capacity tends to be

thought of as generalized or unitary characteristic of a neighbourhood, in actuality it is located within individuals, organizations, relational networks and broader systems all of which are the focus of interventions aimed at building community capacity. According to Chaskin,

[C]ommunity capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing with a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized effort” (p. 295).

Social capital, an aspect of the above definition, is a concept found in much of the literature related to community capacity building and defined in multiple ways (Barnes et al., 2006; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Gilchrist, 2009; Ricks et al., 1999). According to Gilchrist (2009) social capital was first coined in 1916 by Hanifan and several decades later it has been revived by a number of authors from a range of disciplines. Gilchrist, quoting Lin, suggests that “[B]roadly speaking, social capital can be defined as a collective resource embedded in and released from informal networks (Lin, 2002)” (p.9). Essentially social capital is conceptualized as resources that exist within and can be accessed through networks of relationships and is measured by the level of networks, trust, participation, and norms that are found in and available from social networks (Barnes et al., 2006; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Gilchrist, 2009). Gamble and Weil (2010), citing Couto and Guthrie (1999), suggest that social capital is not limited to the norms, trust, and networks within communities; that is the ‘moral resources’ (p. 147), but also includes those resources and services that are available through government policy and programs such as health care, education and housing.

According to Barnes et al., (2006) Gamble and Weil (2010), and Gilchrist (2009) social capital is often distinguished in three ways; bonding social capital is those relationships and

connections that can be found and built *within* more tightly knit social networks of families, friends and groups; bridging social capital is found and built *across* communities or networks of social relationships; and finally linking social capital is found and built in the linkages *between* networks that cross boundaries associated with class, status and similarity “...enabling people to gain influence and resources outside their normal circles”(Gilchrist, 2009, p.12). Social capital then is conceived of as an aspect of community capacity that resides within, across and between the social networks that constitute community and can be understood to include resources available to communities through government policy and programs.

According to Chaskin (2001) community capacity can be built through strategic interventions such as leadership and organizational development, community organizing and fostering relations among organizations. These interventions are targeted at the individual, organizational, social network, professional practitioner, and community levels and aim to influence broader macro level factors such as social, economic and political systems (Barter, 2003; Chaskin, 2001; Checkoway et al., 2003; Mannes et al. 2005). However, similar to the arguments posed by Ledwith (2005) regarding the effectiveness of community development in creating change within macro level structures, the same questions exist with regard to community capacity building. Within Chaskin’s framework macro level factors such as the economy, resource distribution and racial segregation are identified as conditioning influences that can either facilitate or hinder efforts to build community capacity and these influences, according to Chaskin, are typically not amenable to neighbourhood level interventions strategies because they require policy action at levels beyond the local community. However in his 2009 article Chaskin reports on a preliminary theory of change model, developed from an exploratory case study of a community-based organization, that suggests that through opportunity,

participation and skill development for individuals change at broader community and policy levels can take place. Although the literature suggests that community capacity building aims to influence macro level systems there is lack of clarity regarding how it does so and whether or not community capacity building is an effective approach for influencing macro level structures (Barter, 2003; Chaskin, 2001; Checkoway, 2003; Mannes et al., 2005).

As cited in Checkoway (1995), Jack Rothman's (1968), classic model of community level intervention approaches has been influencing community work since he first published, and is prominent with the literature reviewed (Checkoway, 1995; Homan, 1994; Kettner, Daley & Nichols, 1985; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). Rothman continues to research and publish, and his 2008 model, which he describes as, a 'multidimensional formulation of community interventions' (p.11), includes three "basic strategies of change at the community and broader macro level" (p.12), which are: (a) community capacity development, (b) planning and policy and (c) social advocacy. These strategies aim to create change in communities through interventions aimed at the community level through capacity development, at the policy and government level, and at the individual and institutional level through social advocacy.

Again, as I noted with respect to the literature on community development and community capacity building, community is also not clearly defined in Rothman's (2008) model, but is conceptualized as multi-layered in that the focus of change is on the community and the intervention approaches involve engagement with the community and beyond into macro structures such as policy and government institutions. Rothman suggests these three modes of intervention be combined in multiple and varied ways, rather than considered as distinct forms of intervention that, can provide a range of possibilities for understanding and intervening at the community and macro levels. In addition, Rothman suggests that by combining intervention

approaches, the merits of both community driven grass roots efforts and more formalized planning processes are amplified. Thus he states:

[B]oth rationalistic planning in formal organizations and participatory/grassroots forms of problem solving have merits, and these can be magnified when linked (Litwak & Meyer, 1966). Yet theorists and adherents of each side often take separate tacks, either ignoring or disparaging the other. That kind of separation is mostly counterproductive, even damaging. (2008, p.36)

Community practice, like Rothman's model (2008), identifies multiple intervention strategies and is described as an integral method in the profession of social work that aims to strengthen communities and services, rather than individuals (Weil, 2005). Weil describes community practice as follows:

In its grassroots organizing, interagency planning, and social action aspects this method of practice engages citizens in problem solving, works to improve the quality of life for vulnerable groups and communities, and enacts the profession's social justice mission through a variety of practice models from policy practice to political action...the essential purpose to strengthen communities and services, and to press for access, equality, empowerment, and social justice.... (p. xi)

As this definition suggests, community, in community practice is conceptualized broadly in that community level interventions within community practice involve engagement with individuals, communities, agencies, political structures and policy.

Gamble and Weil (2010) have developed a framework that differentiates eight community practice models and suggest that community practice occurs through four major processes; "...organizing, planning, sustainable development and progressive change in order to

improve opportunities for all community members as well as to limit or eliminate factors that contribute to community degradation and disintegration” (p. 10). The eight models are: (1) neighbourhood and community organizing; (2) organizing functional communities; (3) social, economic and sustainable development; (4) inclusive program development; (5) social planning; (6) coalitions; (7) political and social action and (8) movements for progressive change. Each of these models differs in their “desired outcomes, systems targeted for change, primary constituency, scope of concern and community practice roles” (pp. 26-27). Gamble and Weil’s framework is comprehensive, illuminating the range of intervention strategies and roles for practitioners and the multi-layered nature of community and community level interventions. For example, the scope of possible systems targeted for change include but are not limited to governments, the general public, laws, donors, perspectives of leaders and groups, elected officials and political, social and economic systems that are oppressive and require practitioners to take on the primary roles of advocate, leader, organizer, planner and, researcher/assessor.

Gamble and Weil (2010) also emphasize the significance of theories in intervention strategies, and related roles for practitioners in community practice and identify a range of theories that illuminate the multi-layered nature of community level interventions from micro to macro level theories among them theories about personal and interpersonal, group, organizational, and community intervention that practitioners can draw upon.

For Gamble and Weil (2010), strengthening community involves community level interventions that take place at multiple levels with individuals, groups, organizations, to political and economic systems. “Community” in community practice, similar to community development, community capacity building and Rothman’s (2008) model of community and macro practice is not clearly defined; however, all of these approaches suggest a broad

conceptualization of community as networks of relationships that are defined by geography, interest, and identity and are multilayered in that they encompass individuals, organizations, institutions, and macro structures such as political and economic systems and policy. The borders and distinctions between community and these broader macro structures are not consistently delineated within the literature reviewed and community is conceptualized broadly.

As a result, community level interventions within these approaches involve engagement with the multiple levels that constitute this broad conceptualization of community. Gamble and Weil (2010) suggest that knowledge of the multiple approaches to community level interventions open up a range of possibilities for practitioners and can bolster efforts aimed at strengthening and changing communities and the larger macro factors that influence communities. As Gamble and Weil state “[H]aving a more detailed understanding and more specific knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings, basic processes, roles, and skills required of a community practitioner, you are better able to engage in the important work ahead”(p.430).

Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000) describe a framework that promotes child and family wellness and like Rothman (2008) and Gamble and Weil (2010), advocate for a combination of interventions at multiple ecological levels. Prilleltensky and Nelson argue that despite abundant evidence that socio-economic, cultural and contextual factors impact the wellness of children and families our current priorities in interventions cater to individual goals while neglecting broader social dimensions, as they state:

It is well known that health is determined by multiple factors, but interventions often focus on single solutions and take place after the health problem has developed.

Population health frameworks show that health outcomes depend on five key determinants: social and economic environment, physical environment, personal health

practices, individual capacity and coping skills, and services needed for health (Canadian Public Health Association, 1996; Hamilton and Bhatti, 1996; National Forum on Health, 1996). Yet despite our sophisticated ecological notions of health, interventions typically focus on the person and his/her family and fail to change pernicious environments (e.g. Albee and Gullotta, 1997; IOM, 1994; Weissberg et al., 1997). (p. 86)

Prilleltensky and Nelson's (2000) framework suggests: (a) a more balanced approach between individualist and collectivist values, (b) an understanding of the prevention-intervention continuum and greater emphasis on preventative approaches and (c) use of an ecological perspective in analysis and intervention efforts aimed at promoting wellness. Prilleltensky and Nelson also differentiate between psychological interventions, that emphasize micro levels of analysis, and social interventions that focus on meso and macro levels of analysis. Drawing on empirical research they provide a number of examples of social interventions, such as community-based multi-component programs that emphasize self-help, community development and social support and policy level interventions. Overall, they suggest a more balanced approach and argue for interventions that more actively reflect our knowledge of child and family wellness. They suggest that this approach requires a shift from a paradigm of individual responsibility to one of social responsibility, and greater emphasis on social interventions.

Community Level Interventions: Summary

In summary, the only definition of community level interventions found in the literature comes from Barnes et al. (2006), who tell us that community level interventions are those that are aimed at "...changing the community itself rather than helping specific vulnerable individuals or families" (p. 87). This description is useful in distinguishing between interventions aimed at individuals and those aimed at community; however, it lacks clarity because of the multiple

meanings of community, community change and the many forms that community level interventions can take. As the literature reveals, community is often described as networks of relationships defined by interest, identity or geography; however, in the various approaches discussed interventions that aim to change the community tend to be rooted in the community, emerge from the community, involve change within the community, and also move beyond the community and into engagement with organizations, institutions and larger macro structures that influence communities.

The literature reviewed on community level approaches captures a continuum of community level interventions, from those that aim to intervene at the micro level to those that pay greater attention to interventions at the macro level of communities. Combined approaches are advocated for by Rothman (2008), Gamble and Weil, (2010) and Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000). As well, numerous authors such as Chaskin (2001) emphasize community capacity building which reaches beyond the community, and Ledwith (2005) argues for interventions that move beyond the local level of community and into macro systems. Clearly the literature reveals a range of possible frameworks, with varied underlying theories, strategies and roles for practitioners to draw on in engagement in community level interventions.

In order to capture the multi-level nature of community and the range of possible frameworks to draw on for engagement in community level interventions I propose the following framework, which extends the definition offered by Barnes et al. (2006) and draws on the literature reviewed, in particular ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) which is prominent in child and youth care (Derksen, 2010). The framework that I suggest for understanding community level interventions is: Community level interventions are distinct from individual, family focused interventions and community based practice. Community level

interventions aim to change various dimensions of the larger contexts that we live within and that influence our well-being. Use of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is helpful in conceptualizing these various dimensions and levels of intervention as follows: micro-system level interventions are aimed at social networks of individuals, families and groups; meso-system level interventions are aimed at the interactions between various systems; exo-system level interventions are aimed at organizations, agencies and neighbourhood; and macro-system level interventions are aimed at policy changes, economic, social and political systems (Phelan, 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000; Schensul, 2009).

White (2007) in her work on a praxis orientated approach to child and youth care practice adapts Bronfenbrenner's model using the web as a metaphor to reflect the dynamic nature of the range of influences on child and youth care practice such as; political and institutional, community, interpersonal, organizational and socio-cultural factors. These factors not only influence practice, but as suggested by the community level intervention approaches reviewed, they are also significant sites for community level interventions.

This brings us to the link between the literature just discussed and child and youth care work and raises a number of questions: What are the implications of this literature for child and youth care practice? How are community level interventions situated in the field of child and youth care? In what ways do these models influence child and youth care practice? The next section explores these questions.

Community Level Interventions in Child and Youth Care

Community in Child and Youth Care

The literature reveals that community has and continues to play a central role in child and youth care practice. Community based recreation has historical roots in the field of child and

youth care and over the last two decades the field has expanded its role in community based programming (Charles & Garfat, 2009; Gabor & Kuehne, 1993). In addition, there is a long standing and vital link between child and youth care and ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), where the influence of community contexts on child and adolescent development and child and youth care practice has been acknowledged (Derksen, 2010; R. Ferguson, personal communication, November 3, 2008; Ferguson, Pence & Denholm, 1993; White, 2007a). A developmental-ecological perspective, community engagement, and participation in systems interventions are elements of widely accepted definitions of the field of child and youth care and core competencies required for practitioners (Krueger, 2002, Mattingly, Stuart, & VanderVen, 2010).

Clearly community and an ecological systems perspective are central in child and youth care; however, none of the child and youth care literature reviewed specifically explores how practitioners conceptualize, engage in and experience community. I would argue that neglecting the significant role of community in CYC is counter to the ecological perspective, informed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), that the field of child and youth care claims to embrace. As I noted in a previous paper,

...Bronfenbrenner (1988) points out that his earlier emphasis on the significance of the phenomenological nature of development neglected salient objective conditions and events occurring in the developing person's life...This shift in thinking is evident when Bronfenbrenner (1979) adds to Thomas' dictum that "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p.23), a companion principle to "Real situations not perceived are also real in their consequences" (Bronfenbrenner, 1988, p.xiv). (Derksen, 2010, p. 328)

Thus, if child and youth care as a field is going to embrace an ecological perspective, CYC practitioners need to attend to the objective conditions in the lives of the children and youth they work with because the consequences of these conditions are real.

Community Change in Child and Youth Care

Change, transformation, development and planned change are also integral in child and youth care practice (British Columbia Child and Youth Care Education Consortium, 2009; Krueger, 2002; White, 2007a). The value of community or systemic change in support of children, youth and families is widely supported (Bellefeuille, McGrath & Jamieson, 2008; Radmilovic, 2005) and also aligned with socially just practice (Newbury, 2009). As Artz, Nicholson, Halsall and Larke (2010) state: “[Y]oung people’s needs are dependent upon context and resource. Meeting these needs invariably involve working with contexts and even changing contexts rather than merely changing individual behaviours” (p. 127). In addition, The British Columbia Child and Youth Care Education Consortium, in its articulation of provincial post-secondary curriculum objectives, has identified the need for curriculum in planned change theories in CYC practice with communities, and in the application of interpersonal skills in planned change approaches with communities (British Columbia Child and Youth Care Education Consortium, 2009). Although, the literature about child and youth care practice supports the value of change in community and systems contexts, none of the child and youth care literature reviewed explored the ways in which practitioners conceptualize, experience, or engage with community change.

Community Level Interventions in Child and Youth Care

Historically, the literature reveals some ambivalence about the role of child and youth care practitioners in community level interventions. There appears to be a slow and gradual shift

taking place from child and youth care workers working on individual and family interventions within the ecological life-space of the child and community based contexts (Anglin, 1999; Ferguson, et al., 1993; Gabor & Kuehne, 1993), to expanded roles in community capacity building and macro level interventions (Barter, 2003; Gharabaghi, 2008; Krueger, 2000; VanderVen, 2006).

Beker and Maier (2001), in an article originally written in 1981 and re-released as part of a special issue in *Child and Youth Care Forum* on unfinished business in the field, suggest that practitioners need to move beyond working with the child as an individual and shift their efforts to community contexts and even more broadly into social and political advocacy efforts.

However, in an article written over ten years later than the original publication of Beker and Maier's article, Anglin (1999) suggests that the underlying paradigm dominant within child and youth care practice is the need to influence change within the individual, as Anglin states "...child and youth care is not focused so much on managing the political dynamics as on facilitating personal growth, development and the learning of life skills" (p. 148). Anglin goes on to argue that social service systems, and ultimately the people that they serve, would benefit from a combined approach that includes an emphasis on facilitating personal growth, as found predominantly in child and youth care practice, with efforts to influence political change, which is predominantly found in social work practice.

The literature reveals that as early as the 1980's, there was a movement in the field of child and youth care for practitioners to broaden their attention from a primary focus on facilitating change within the individual, to facilitating change within community contexts and engaging in political and social advocacy. However, during this twenty year period from 1981 to the 2001, as Beker and Maier and Anglin suggest, despite arguments for shifting the underlying

paradigm within child and youth care to include greater emphasis on community and macro level practice this shift was slow to take hold and remained unfinished business in the field.

More current literature continues to advocate for broadening child and youth care practice from an emphasis on individual level work to community level work and indicates a particular emphasis on community capacity building approaches (Barter, 2003; Gharabaghi 2008). Gharabaghi (2008) and Barter (2003) both advocate for child and youth care workers to take on expanded roles in community capacity building. Gharabaghi suggests that by engaging with communities in a proactive way through community capacity building efforts, practitioners can enhance the community contexts that influence the well being of youth. Barter and Gharabaghi point out that CYC practitioners are well positioned to engage in community capacity building because of the congruence between many of the values and perspectives of CYC, such as the emphasis on life space interventions, strength based practice, and the emphasis on developing the capacities of individuals, organizations and communities in community capacity building approaches. In addition, The School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria has recognized community capacity building as a core competency in practice (S. Artz, personal communication, Nov. 25, 2008).

Gharabaghi (2008) also suggests that given the focus on youth in community capacity building efforts, the involvement of youth workers in community level interventions is well justified. As Gharabaghi states, “[G]iven the focus on youth within the evolution, development, and implementation of community capacity building initiatives, there is increasing justification for the deployment of *child and youth workers as capacity builders* rather than only as *service providers* within a capacity building program...” (emphasis in original, p. 273). Gharabaghi’s argument extends the inquiry into the literature on youth development (Checkoway et al., 2003;

Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Gambone, Yu, Lewis-Charp, Sipe & Laco, 2009), where many themes emerge that are congruent with community capacity building approaches, for example, viewing youth as resources, emphasis on strengths-based and capacity building approaches and creating opportunities for youth participation and engagement in communities. Similar to Beker and Maier (2001) and Anglin (1999), Gharabaghi's (2008) and Barter's (2007, 2003) work suggests continued interest and a need for child and youth care to broaden its foundation from primarily individual approaches to include interventions that focus on community and macro level systems. Gharabaghi and Barter also suggest that community capacity building, because of its congruence with child and youth care practice, is a promising approach for the field as it continues to develop towards this expanded vision of increased engagement in community level work for practitioners.

Work by authors such as Phelan (2004), Blanchet-Cohen and Salazar (2009) and Martin and Tennant (2008) resonates with the work of Barter (2003, 2007) and Gharabaghi (2008) and also speak to community and systemic interventions in child and youth care practice. All of these authors advocate for work at the systemic or community level and the interventions they describe tend to be focused at the micro and meso levels of communities. Phelan speaks to an eco-system perspective in CYC practice and suggests that systemic interventions enable a practitioner to take on the role of coach or facilitator, mediating between the various systems in a youth's life.

Systemic interventions in Phelan's (2004) argument are conceptualized as targeting the micro or meso system only, with no attention paid to interventions at the exo or macro system level. Martin and Tennant's (2008) example of a youth community development initiative, where CYC practitioners worked with the community in order to address the issue of car thefts

by connecting youth who steal cars to alternative peer networks, is targeted to micro and meso levels. Similarly, Blanchet-Cohen and Salazar (2009) argue that supportive, collaborative relations between marginalized youth and adults can lay the groundwork for healthier communities and systemic change. Underlying this argument then, is a suggestion that micro system change leads to macro system change.

The underlying assumption in these capacity building and youth community development approaches, that are garnering attention in CYC, is that systemic change can take place through micro and meso level interventions. However, as Ledwith, (2005), Ohmer and Korr,(2006) and Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000) suggest, by staying local, which is at the micro and meso levels, transformative change is difficult to achieve.

Mann-Feder and Litner (2004), VanderVen (2006) and Bellefeuille et al. (2008) call attention to the need for pedagogy, curriculum and skill development in community level practice in CYC. Bellefeuille et al., suggest that given the ecological context of practice has changed dramatically over the past few decades, a more globally informed pedagogy in child and youth care is needed and they argue that “...while the profession also ascribes to an ecological perspective, there exists a rather sharp fault line between the attention the curriculum places on the development of micro-level child-centered practice-based skills and macro-level critical thinking and problem-solving skills”(p. 720).

This fault line is evident in Mann-Feder and Litner’s (2004) discussion of the Human Relations program at Concordia University. This program, which prepares child and youth care practitioners for work in the field, acknowledges the centrality of a systems perspective in CYC, purports that while supporting individuals is important social change necessitates dealing with the underlying causes of problems and as such trains their students to be ‘social

interveners”(p.282). In order to accomplish this, normative re-education strategies are used where socio-cultural influences and social psychological factors are recognized and the practitioner works collaboratively with the client and those in the client’s system. So despite an emphasis on social interveners attending to underlying causes there still appears to be an emphasis on the individual client, as Mann-Feder and Litner, also quoting Anglin, state “[C]hild and youth care practice, like normative re-educative intervention, ultimately contributes to social changes in that “influencing young people while there is maximum opportunity for personal change is likely to be the most effective strategy to achieve the profession’s goals and aspirations for society” (Anglin, 1999, p. 148)” (p. 285).

Summary

In summary, it is clear from the literature reviewed that a number of theories, approaches and frameworks contribute to our understanding of community level interventions. The frameworks discussed highlight multiple ways of thinking about community level interventions, various targets for intervention efforts, and the range of roles practitioners can play in work with communities. Rothman (2008) and Gamble and Weil (2010) both offer comprehensive models that map out a range of possibilities for community level interventions that, include community capacity building and radical community development approaches. Ledwith (2005), Glover Reed (2005) and Gamble and Weil draw our attention to not only the significance of theory, but also to the range of theories that practitioners can draw on in order to enhance their practice. It is also clear from the literature reviewed that multi-level interventions, that is interventions that target individuals and broader community, organizational and policy levels, are most effective in promoting individual wellness and systems change (Barter, 2003, 2007; Goldsworthy, 2002; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000; Schensul, 2009; Sanders et al., 2009). As well, a number of

authors argue that practitioners need to be adaptable and strategic in using mixed models of intervention at the community level (Checkoway, 1995; Rothman, 2008; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Mizrahi, 2001).

Additionally, the child and youth care literature written since the 1980's reveals a movement in the field towards broadening the scope of practice from an emphasis on interventions with individuals to include interventions that are also aimed at communities and systemic change. Despite this climate of change within the field of child and youth care, the range of possible frameworks that exist for community level interventions and arguments for multi-level interventions the CYC literature reveals that efforts to broaden the scope of CYC practice have been slow to take hold.

There is continued emphasis on individual approaches in child and youth care practice and in post-secondary CYC education programs (Bellefeuille et al., 2008; Blanchet-Cohen & Salazar, 2009; Martin & Tennant, 2008; Phelan, 2004; Mann-Feder & Litner, 2004). In addition, the literature suggests that primarily, community capacity building approaches are garnering exclusive attention in CYC practice (Barter, 2003, 2007; Gharabaghi, 2008) to the neglect of other models and approaches, such as radical community development (Ledwith, 2005), a networking approach to community development (Gilchrist, 2009), social planning and political and social action (Gamble & Weil, 2010) that provide a range of possibilities in our efforts at community level interventions.

The literature also reveals that there are a number of ambiguities, complexities and contested issues that as child and youth care professionals we must grapple with as we develop our understanding of community level interventions in child and youth care practice. Community and community change, which are complex and contested concepts, are integral to

understanding community level interventions and not directly explored in the child and youth care literature. In addition, language used to describe community level interventions varies, is not always specifically defined and contains terms that are used interchangeably and communicate slightly different meanings. For example, community practice, community development, social interventions, practice that targets macro, meso, micro and exo systems are all language found in the literature and used in various ways, with multiple and in some cases conflicting meanings (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Ledwith, 2005; Martin and Tennant, 2008; Ohmer & Korr, 2006; Phelan, 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000; Rothman, 2008; Schensul, 2009; Sites et al., 2007).

Need for Further Research

Despite the shifting climate in CYC, the centrality of community, a systems perspective and value placed on system or contextual change in CYC practice, the CYC literature reveals a lack of attention paid to understanding the ways in which child and youth care practitioners conceptualize, engage in and experience community, community change and community level interventions. In addition, the voices of practitioners are not highly visible in the literature; their experiences with community level interventions have not been explored and their voices are not well represented in any of the literature reviewed. What is particularly striking is that Krueger (2000) is the only author who explicitly calls for further research regarding community level interventions in child and youth care. Krueger, in his exploration of the challenges and struggles of community youth work identified working at micro and macro levels as a major theme for youth workers. He stresses the need for further research with youth workers in order to deepen our understanding of the role and challenges of community youth work, including their experience working at both micro and macro levels.

However, additional authors speak to the need for enriching our understanding of community level practice. Gharabaghi (2008) argues that child and youth care has failed to keep pace with new developments in service delivery that integrate community development and community capacity building frameworks and calls for CYC practitioners to engage more reflectively, actively and consciously with communities that they work within. He argues for an expanded role for the child and youth care practitioner to incorporate community capacity building and suggests that through community capacity building practitioners can “substantially enhance the impact of their profession” (p.276), which will not only benefit the profession but also children, youth and families.

Barter (2003, 2007) in his examination of the Canadian child protection system argues that research and experience proves that the current child protection system is flawed and suggests that socio-political interventions such as interventions with organizations, professionals and communities are equally vital as family interventions. He argues for a community capacity building approach and like Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000) suggests that it is not a matter of not knowing what to do but rather doing it. As Barter (2007) says “enough is enough” (p. 37).

White (2007b), similar to Ledwith (2005), cautions the use of community capacity building approaches as a panacea for complex historical, social, cultural and political conditions within Indigenous communities and suggests qualities of curiosity, collaborative meaning making, joint knowledge construction, and ethical engagement as valuable resources for practice at the community level.

VanderVen (2006), using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, argues for a comprehensive ecological approach in child and youth care practice and a need for ecological interventions at all levels of the child’s eco-system.

Bellefeuille et al. (2008) argue that CYC education is not keeping pace with dramatic changes that have taken place in the ecological context of families and that child and youth care needs to be taught within a globalized ecological context and as an ethical and caring profession needs to respond directly to structural inequalities. As Bellefeuille et al., state “...*child and youth care education should have the twofold goal of advancing the individual and advancing society*” (italics in original, p. 720).

Ohmer and Korr, (2006) in their review of the literature of community capacity/asset-based approaches found that in the studies they reviewed community practice interventions had a positive impact on the psychosocial aspects of communities; that is the effects of citizen participation on participants. However, results were mixed with regards to asset-based approaches improving physical, social and economic conditions of communities. The authors argue that “...more research is clearly needed on the factors that contribute to effective community practice interventions...” (p. 143).

In the midst of this shifting professional landscape within CYC it is imperative that we explore community level interventions within child and youth care practice. I echo Krueger’s (2000) argument that research with practitioners is needed and I am left with a desire to explore how child and youth care practitioners experience their engagement in community level interventions. This is the question that frames this study and my approach to exploring this question is mapped out in the following chapter on methodology.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

“What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning”
(Heisenberg, 1959, as quoted in Riessman, 2008).

Research Aims and Questions

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of child and youth care (CYC) practitioners in engagement in community level interventions. It is my aim to give prominence to the voices of CYC practitioners because so far, their voices are virtually absent in the literature about community level interventions. The central question guiding the study is:

*How do child and youth care practitioners experience their engagement in
community level interventions?*

Defining Community Level Interventions

An exploration of the above question requires an approach to the study of community level interventions that not only describes and frames the study, but is also broad enough to invite and capture the potential multiple meanings of community level interventions. In order to accomplish this I have used the following definition, as discussed in the literature review:

Community level interventions are distinct from individual, family focused interventions and community based practice. Community level interventions aim to change the various dimensions of the larger contexts that we live within and that influence our well-being. The target for change can take place at multiple levels as follows: micro-system level interventions are aimed at social networks of individuals, families and groups; meso-system level interventions are aimed at the interactions between various systems; exo-system level interventions are aimed at organizations, agencies and neighbourhood and

macro-system level interventions are aimed at policy changes, economic and political systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Phelan, 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000; Schensul, 2009).

Methodology

In order to explore and describe the experiences of practitioners and give prominence to the voices of practitioners I chose a qualitative research method, because a qualitative form of inquiry draws on data in the form of words, descriptions and narratives (Monette, Sullivan & DeJong, 2008). In addition, qualitative research is typically informed by interpretive and constructionist paradigms, both of which contribute to understanding experience (Spector-Mersel, 2010). An interpretive perspective suggests that social reality is not an entity ‘out there’ to be discovered but rather one that is created through the subjective and personal meanings that people have about themselves and their experiences (Monette et al., 2008). The constructionist paradigm suggests that we are active agents in the construction of social reality and that understanding the ways in which we construct our experience helps us to understand and make sense of the world (Palys & Atchison, 2008).

In choosing a methodology for this study it seemed to me that a qualitative form of inquiry, grounded in interpretive and constructionist paradigms, would enable me to explore and understand how child and youth care practitioners experience their engagement in community level interventions, including the contextual influences that shape the work and the meanings that practitioners hold of their work at the community level (Creswell, 2007). However, as a novice researcher it soon became apparent to me that the world of qualitative research was vast and incredibly complex and that I needed to determine which form of qualitative research would best enable me to explore the experiences of practitioners.

A narrative approach which is interpretive and constructionist, while placing particular emphasis on the role of stories in shaping and interpreting our realities, facilitates this form of inquiry (Spector-Mersel, 2010). In his argument that the narrative method be considered a distinct paradigm Spector-Mersel acknowledges that this method draws on constructionist ideas, but is also distinct in that "...the narrative paradigm is more specific, in its focus on the storied nature of human conduct (Sarbin, 1986), maintaining that social reality is primarily a narrative reality" (p.211). As Moen (2006) points out narrative research is "...focused on how individuals assign meaning to their experiences through the stories they tell" (p. 5). Moen suggests that underpinning a narrative approach are the claims that narratives are (a) a primary way that people organize their experience, (b) constructed from the person's experience and values, and (c) influenced by social context, cultural settings and the audience. A narrative approach, which is grounded in the qualitative tradition and informed by interpretive and constructionist paradigms guided the initial design of this research.

Methods

Participant Selection

Given the inductive and exploratory nature of the study and the fact that the study does not aim to generalize findings from a representative sample to a larger population, a non-probabilistic sampling method, purposive intensity sampling, was used (Palys & Atchison, 2008) and two key criteria guided the selection of participants. First, I needed participants to be rooted in the field of child and youth care; therefore, they were required to have completed undergraduate or graduate degrees in CYC. Second, participants needed to identify themselves as engaging in some form of community level interventions in their work.

In order to recruit participants emails were sent out to the University of Victoria's, School of Child and Youth Care graduate student and alumni list serves. The email included *An Invitation to Participate in a Research Study* (Appendix A), which summarized the *who, what, why* and *how* of the research project, and the more detailed *Participant Consent Form* (Appendix B).

Interested individuals were invited to contact me directly at which time we arranged a brief telephone or Skype meeting in order to determine suitability for the study, clarify questions, and arrange for receipt of the signed consent forms for those individuals that agreed to participate. Eight individuals expressed interest in the study and five participated. Reasons for not participating included lack of time, and limited experience or opportunity in their work with engagement in community level interventions. For some of those that did participate determining whether or not their experience constituted engagement in community level interventions required some discussion. My approach was to clearly describe community level interventions using the above definition and to invite participants to determine for themselves if they have engaged in some form of community level intervention in their work. Once I received signed copies of the consent forms I worked with each participant to determine the time and method of the interview.

Participants

The five participants have rich and varied experience working across Canada and internationally and all identified themselves as engaging in some form of community level intervention in their work. Using pseudonyms I will introduce each participant briefly and identify how we conducted the interview.

Mary has undergraduate education in Child and Youth Care and drew on her experiences working in community-based, non-profit youth, child and family support organizations in a small Canadian town. I interviewed Mary over approximately two hours using Skype.

Alex, who has graduate level education in CYC, drew on experiences working in the role of a community development worker in a publically funded organization in a medium size Canadian city. Due to Alex's schedule our interview was just an hour and was conducted over the telephone.

Chris, who has graduate level education in CYC, drew on an early childhood education back ground, experiences working internationally, and as an Outreach Worker working in an impoverished neighbourhood of a large Canadian city. Chris and I met in person and the interview was two hours.

Sue, who has graduate level education in CYC, drew on her experience of an organizational change initiative while working for a community-based non-profit agency. Sue's interview was done in person in just under two hours.

Neila, who has undergraduate education in CYC, drew on her experiences in international development working in India and Africa, and as a community educator working in a non-profit environmental organization. Due to Neila's schedule our interview was done in two, one hour sessions over the telephone.

Data Collection

Interviews are a well-established method in qualitative and narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2007, Riessman, 2008, Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest "[T]he qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific

explanations” (p. 1). In narrative methods there is a particular emphasis on eliciting detailed storied accounts during the interview, as Chase (1995) suggests “If we take seriously the idea that people make sense of experience and communicate meaning through narration, *then in-depth interviews should become occasions in which we ask for life stories*. By life stories, I mean narratives about some life experience that is of deep and abiding interest to the interviewee” (italics in original, p. 2). As a qualitative narrative study my intent then was to engage in a conversation with my participants and to elicit detailed storied accounts. Guided by Riessman (2008) I viewed the interview as a conversation, as Riessman states “The model of a “facilitating” interviewer who asks questions, and a vessel-like “respondent” who give answers, is replaced by two active participants who jointly construct narrative and meaning” (p. 23).

In order to prepare for the interviews I developed an interview guide (Appendix C) that was organized around key content areas in my research question: community, community change and community-level interventions. As noted above, my key interview questions were structured to elicit detailed storied accounts (Chase, 2003), for example one of my questions was ‘can you tell me about a time when you engaged in a community level intervention’ invites participants to speak about particular experiences and to tell stories about those experiences. I also identified prompting questions that I could draw on to support my efforts during the interviews, such as “...can you remember a particular time...” (Riessman, 2008, p. 25) and “...what led to that and what happened next...” (Weiss, 1994, p. 75). My aim was to invite storied accounts and drawing on Weiss’s (1994) concept of visualizabilty, I aimed to “...call up the scene and imagine who is there in the setting being described and how the participants relate to each other...” (p. 80).

During the interviews I used the interview guide and my list of prompting questions and generally began the interviews by asking participants about their experiences with community,

then moved on to explore their experiences with community change, and finally asked about times when they engaged in community level interventions. My interview with Chris tended to flow more freely between these content areas, and my interview with Alex was only one hour long so I focused on the question about community level interventions.

After conducting and transcribing my interviews, consulting with my supervisory committee and reflecting upon the data that I generated I discovered that my interviews generated two kinds of data; storied accounts, as described above, and reports which are responses that are disconnected from the experiences of research participants (Chase, 1995, 2003). Despite my intent to elicit detailed storied accounts, some of the questions that I asked invited participants to speak in generalities and were oriented to my interests rather than maintaining a focus on participants' experiences and their life stories. In addition, some of my questions were complex in their phrasing and lacked clarity which may have interfered with my efforts to elicit storied accounts (Berg, 2007). As a novice researcher I have certainly learned that "...asking for and attending to another's story in the interview context is not a simple matter..." (Chase, 1995, p. 2).

Transcription

Once all the interviews were completed, I needed to determine how to best represent the voices of my participants in written transcripts. In keeping with a constructionist perspective and the conversational style of the narrative interview, I chose to transcribe the interviews in such a way to capture the co-constructed nature of the dialogue. Using Riessman, (2008) as a guide I indicated any vocal expressions made by either me or participants, such as *yes, uh hum, hmm, and laughter*, break-offs, and pauses in a consistent manner throughout each of the transcripts. As Riessman suggests this approach to transcription "...reveals how a 'personal' narrative...is

composed jointly, crafted in a collaborative conversational interaction” (p. 31). By transcribing in this manner, I was attempting to represent as closely as possible the voices of participants’ and the co-constructed nature of the stories that were told. As I analyzed my data, I paid attention to the ways in which these vocal expressions, break offs and pauses may have influenced the stories and reports that participants told and the ways in which I interpreted the data. In instances where these vocal expressions, break-offs and pauses have influenced the analysis, I have included them in the data excerpts found in the results chapter.

Analysis

Given that my interview questions generated a combination of storied accounts (Riessman, 2008; Riessman & Quinney, 2005) and reports (Chase, 1995) my data necessitated an approach to analysis that combined both thematic and narrative methods. From an epistemological perspective thematic analysis is flexible enough to be compatible with constructionist paradigms (Braun & Clark, 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As Riessman (2001, 2008) suggests narrative methods, which emphasize analysis of extended accounts or cases, can be combined with methods such as inductive thematic coding which emphasize thematic categories. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest in their discussion of interview analysis and bricolage, which refers to using diverse analytical methods, “[T]his eclectic form of generating meaning-through a multiplicity of ad hoc methods and conceptual approaches-is a common mode of interview analysis...”(p.233). This combined approach enabled me to examine both thematic categories and stories while maintaining an overall emphasis on “...a more detailed and nuanced account of one particular theme, or group of themes, with the data” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 83).

In order to analyze my data, I drew on Braun and Clark's (2006) and Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) steps to thematic analysis, combined with a thematic narrative approach, which is an approach to narrative analysis that "...interrogates 'what' is spoken (or written), rather than 'how' (Riessman, 2008, p.19). As Riessman (2008) states in her discussion of thematic narrative analysis:

[D]ata are interpreted in light of thematics developed by the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory, the concrete purpose of an investigation, the data themselves, political commitments, and other factors). There is minimal focus on *how* a narrative is spoken or written, on structures of speech a narrator selects, audience (real and imagined), the local context that generated the narrative, or complexities of transcription. (p.54)

In addition, Riessman points out that thematic narrative analysis pays attention to the macro contexts in which stories were produced, in discussing a number of thematic narrative exemplars she states "...there was considerable attention to macro contexts, as the authors make connections between the life worlds depicted in personal narratives and larger social structures-power relations, hidden inequalities and historical contingencies" (p.76). Within this context my analysis proceeded as follows.

First, I immersed myself in the data by actively reading each interview transcript in order to get a sense of the whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). During this phase I noted, directly onto the interview transcript, initial ideas, meanings and patterns and identified which sections of the transcripts led to these initial ideas. In addition, I expanded on some of these initial ideas in my journal and drawing directly from the transcripts and my journal notes I wrote a summary of these initial ideas. I then revisited these notes throughout the

analysis process in order to ensure full consideration of these initial ideas and to check for alternative interpretations.

Second, I worked through each of the transcripts and identified both natural meaning units (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and storied accounts, which are essentially segments of data with particular characteristics. I used the following definitions to guide me in identifying these data segments. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) define a meaning unit as "...words, sentences or paragraphs containing aspects related to each other through their content and context" (p. 106). In selecting meaning units I also drew on Graneheim and Lundman and worked to identify meaning units that were neither too broad, with potentially multiple meanings, nor too narrow, which could potentially fracture the data.

A storied account is essentially a segment of data that is about experiences of engagement in community level interventions that take the form of a story. In order to identify storied accounts within my transcripts I looked for segments within my data where the "...respondent/narrator sets the scene for us, introduces characters and describes their actions, specifies event and their relations over time, explicates a significant conflict and it's resolution, and tells us the point of the story" (Mishler, 1986, p. 74). As Riessman, (2008) and Riessman and Quinney (2005) suggest, I looked for sequence, plot, consequence, characters and setting and in keeping with a thematic narrative approach the stories I analyzed were "...brief, bounded segments of interview text, rather than an extended biographical account" (Riessman, 2008, p.61).

In keeping with a narrative approach, where the stories remain intact, I created a new document for each transcript which enabled me to sequentially input, directly into these new documents, both meaning units and storied accounts. In addition, I included on these documents

the content area: community, community change or community level intervention, which generated the meaning units and storied accounts that I identified. I also developed columns for themes in these documents and tracked initial themes that came to mind for both types of data. In addition, I copied comments from the step one reading for the whole into the theme columns. My focus in this step though was on identifying the meaning units and storied accounts and tracking which content area generated these two forms of data.

Third, I identified themes within each of the meaning units and storied accounts that I identified in step two. To determine what constitutes a theme I began by using Braun and Clarke's (2006) suggestion that "...the 'keyness' of a theme is...dependent on...whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question" (p. 82). In this step I continued to work with and develop the documents I created in step two, which identified content areas, meaning units, storied accounts and corresponding initial themes for each transcript.

During the first phase of this step I began by working through each document and focused solely on identifying the central and explicit theme within each of the natural meaning units (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that in this phase "...the theme that dominates a natural meaning unit is restated by the researcher as simply as possible, thematizing the statements from the subject's viewpoint as understood by the researcher" (p.206-207). The emphasis then during this process was on identifying the explicit meaning of the data, or on what is called semantic themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A second phase in this step involved working through the storied accounts and identifying both semantic and latent themes within these stories. Analysis at the latent level, as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, "...starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas,

assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (p. 84). Consistent with a thematic narrative analysis I paid close attention to macro contexts and the connections between personal stories and larger social structures (Riessman, 2008). In addition, the following key questions framed my reading of the storied accounts: What is the thematic meaning and function/point or moral of the story? What act does the narrative report? What does the story accomplish and what resources does it draw on? (Ewick & Silbey, 2003; Riessman, 2008; Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Upon completion of this phase I had one document for each transcript that sequentially listed meaning units with themes, storied accounts with themes, and identified the content area, community, community change or community level intervention, which generated the data. In the theme columns I identified the data source for that theme with both transcript and line numbers for future reference.

Fourth, I continued to analyse the meaning unit and storied account themes in order to identify common themes found across the data. Continuing to work with meaning units and storied accounts separately, I began step four by reviewing, analyzing and checking meaning unit themes to see if the themes worked in relation to both the meaning units and the purpose of the study. I copied and pasted all of the themes into one document and for the data generated from Mary, Sue and Neila’s interviews, organized these themes according to the content areas. My interviews with Alex and Chris didn’t follow the content areas as tightly, so the themes generated from their interviews were included but not organized according to content areas. My next step was to write all of these themes on to sticky notes and then using flipchart paper and the content areas to structure my work, I clustered, categorized, refined and defined five preliminary themes from across all of the meaning unit data.

I then turned my attention back to the narrative work and began an iterative process where I returned to steps two and three refining both my initial storied accounts and the identification of themes within each story. In keeping with a thematic narrative approach (Ewick & Silbey, 2003; Riessman, 2008) I focused my attention on more clearly delineating my storied accounts and as a result of this refinement process I identified 25 stories within the data. I then returned to step three in order to identify and refine themes within each of these stories. I mapped out each story on flipchart paper with themes from within each story attached, which enabled me to identify themes across stories. As I worked with these themes I grouped and refined them searching for alternative interpretations, identifying which stories embodied each of the themes and identified five preliminary themes from across all of the narrative data.

I then considered the five preliminary meaning unit themes in relation to the five preliminary narrative themes, looking for connections and linkages with the themes derived from both forms of data. At this stage, with help from my supervisory committee, I worked to distinguish between content areas (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) and themes, and throughout the process continued to review my data and revise and refine my overall themes, ultimately identifying eight themes.

Trustworthiness

There is much debate and lack of clarity in the literature surrounding the words validity and trustworthiness and the terms are often used interchangeably (Riessman, 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Polkinghorne, 2007). Given that validity is a concept more closely associated with the quantitative approach (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), I have chosen to use the word trustworthiness, to describe the believability, correctness or strength of the claims I make (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Polkinghorne, 2007). Angen (2000) suggests that an evaluation of

trustworthiness takes place through a process of validation, which encompasses actions we take as researchers throughout the research process to strengthen the claims we make. As Angen states, “the term *validation* rather than *validity* is used deliberately to emphasize the way in which a judgement of the trustworthiness or goodness of a piece of research is a continuous process...” (italics in original, p.387). Angen and Polkinghorne (2007) both suggest that in order to judge claims made in research, researchers must provide convincing and sound evidence for their arguments. Angen states, “...validity does not need to be about attaining positivist objective truth, it lies more in a subjective, human estimation of what it means to have done something well, having made an effort that is worthy of trust and written up convincingly” (p.392).

Assessing the trustworthiness of this study begins with articulating the nature of the knowledge it claims to produce. As a study grounded in interpretive and constructionist epistemologies I am not aiming to unearth or measure an objective and true ‘reality’; rather, my aim is to understand and describe the multiple ways in which practitioners construct their realities or more specifically their experiences in engagement in community level interventions. As Polkinghorne (2007) states “narrative research issues claims about the meaning life events hold for people. It makes claims about how people understand situations, others, and themselves” (p. 476). Given this framework then the question of whether or not the study has discovered, measured and reported on the truth about an essential reality becomes irrelevant, what is relevant is whether or not the claims I have made are trustworthy.

Issues of trustworthiness exist on two levels in interview studies and narrative inquiry, one is in the story told by research participants and the other is in the story told by the researcher (Riessman, 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Polkinghorne, 2007). With regard to the first level, or stories told by research participants, Riessman (2008) argues that “[F]or projects

relying on social constructionist perspectives, the correspondence of reported events in a personal narrative with other kinds of evidence is not as relevant as in realist tales, sometimes even beside the point”(p. 187). What is relevant then is to understand the meanings expressed by participants and in order to do so I worked to actively listen to participants during the interviews and have attempted throughout the study to give prominence to the participants’ voice’s, rather than my own. In addition, I invited participants to provide feedback on transcripts in order to ensure that they accurately reflected our discussions. Three of the five participants chose to receive a copy of their interview transcript, all three confirmed receipt of the transcripts, with one participant subsequently responding to indicate that the transcript was fine.

In order to address the second level of trustworthiness, the interpretation of the data or the story told by the researcher, I took a reflexive stance; that is, I worked to be aware of the ways in which my own values, biases and actions contributed to the research process (Creswell, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Byrne, 2004) and as Berg (2007) suggests I attempted to have an ongoing dialogue with myself about what I know and how I know it as I engaged in the analysis. Throughout the research process I have attempted to develop sensitivity to any potential bias on my part and I have done this by keeping a journal in order to track decisions I made, questions that emerged and interpretations that I form. In addition, I worked continuously, closely and directly with the data throughout the entire research process being careful to distinguish between my thoughts and what the participants have told me.

I also worked to accomplish theoretical coherence as a way to strengthen the trustworthiness of the interpretation of data, Riessman (2008) describes theoretical coherence as follows, “...validity can be strengthened if the analytic story the investigator constructs links pieces of data and renders them meaningful and coherent theoretically” (p.191). In other words,

I worked to link and cluster my data and identified where and how themes fit together and diverged, all in an effort to produce a logical and sound interpretation of the data. I have also heeded the advice of Riessman when she suggests that "...persuasiveness is strengthened when the investigator's theoretical claims are supported with evidence from informant's accounts, negative cases are included, and alternative interpretations considered" (p. 191).

In summary, I have worked to strengthen the trustworthiness of the inquiry by maintaining a reflexive stance, giving prominence to the voices of research participants, making visible the questions that have framed my reading of the data, aimed for theoretical coherence and considered negative and alternative interpretations. As Kvale and Brinkman (2009) suggest validity is a quality of craftsmanship of the researcher and they state that "[T]he quality of the craftsmanship in checking, questioning, and theorizing the interview findings leads ideally to transparent research procedures and convincing evident results" (p.253). To assist me in this endeavour I have been intentional in my efforts at establishing trustworthiness, have sought supervision from my thesis committee, and have continued to study narrative inquiry, thematic analysis and community level interventions throughout my inquiry. In keeping with the constructionist perspective I have worked to construct a trustworthy interpretation of the data, as Polkinghorne (2007) suggests "[T]he claim need not assert that the interpretation proposed is the only one possible; however, researchers' need to cogently argue that theirs is a viable interpretation grounded in the assembled texts" (p. 484).

Limitations

Acknowledging and making transparent the limitations of the research also contributes to establishing trustworthiness and in this study two key limitations are evident. First, a tension exists between my efforts to explore and understand multiple meanings of community level

interventions and my efforts at framing and describing the study. Drawing on the literature I developed a description of community level interventions that was intentionally broad and included intervention efforts aimed at multiple systems. However, the use of this description in my approach to participant selection may have limited potential participants whose understandings of community level interventions didn't fit with this description. In addition, the description I provided may have influenced the stories and experiences that participants shared during the interview. My intent was to provide a broad enough description to invite multiple meanings and when participants asked if their experience 'fit' I reiterated the description and worked to create the space for them to decide.

The second key limitation of the study is as a strictly narrative inquiry. As discussed, I initially determined that my research questions necessitated a narrative approach but my interviews generated both storied accounts and reports. As a result, I have done two forms of analysis that account for the different kinds of data that I generated. Clearly, the study unfolded in a different way than I initially intended, however; the combined narrative and qualitative thematic approaches enabled me to explore and describe the experiences of practitioners in rich and varied ways. The results of this exploration and analysis are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 – Results

*“...in the traveller metaphor the interviewer is a traveler on a journey to a distant country that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home
(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.48).*

As Kvale and Brinkmann suggest, I have viewed the inquiry as a journey where I have had the privilege and opportunity to explore together with my fellow travellers; Mary, Sue, Chris, Alex, and Neila, experiences of engagement in community level interventions. Throughout this journey I have listened to, learned from, and interpreted the stories and ideas shared by participants. The intent of this chapter is to report on that journey, to describe the eight key themes that I have identified through analysis of both the storied accounts and reports that participants shared. In sections where I draw on storied accounts, I identify the story by italicizing the name that I have assigned to the story. In some cases I include the entire story and in other cases I include excerpts from the stories.

As indicated in the literature review and methodology chapters, exploring how child and youth care practitioners experience their engagement in community level interventions requires some understanding of how practitioners experience community and community change. As such, all three of these content areas: experiences with community, community change, and engagement in community level interventions, have shaped the interviews and the presentation of the results.

Experiences with Community

I began each interview by asking participants about their experiences with community, and through analysis of both storied accounts and reports identified the following two themes (a) community as a collection of people, and (b) community as helping to make a difference. I begin this section by sharing *The Food Co-op, A Community in India* and *A Community in Latin*

America, which are stories that reveal both of these themes. I then discuss each theme individually in order to explicate the themes more fully and describe variations in the themes.

When I asked Mary to tell me about an experience she has had with community she told *The Food Co-op* story, which describes how she worked with a group of people developing a food co-op, in order to help people in the community with their groceries. Mary tells the story like this:

When I was with (agency name) we noticed in the community that people were having a hard time with their groceries and we started thinking ...having a co-op would help...I start having ideas from friends, and all the people how do we do a co-op, how do we set this up? I felt very interested and I got a lot of ideas so we start by asking permission and providing idea to my boss and she really like it and she offer her support and also even the board... they also gave me their support...so I started working on it...we made brochures, and got some people volunteering and also I made myself part of the food co-op by paying a membership for it. We were paying a membership once a month and we were buying things in bulk and we were dividing among how many people we have...so I was able to organize everybody to the point that they knew what to do and it was really great because we have already we found a place a church that I went and talked to because someone told me why don't you ask some of the churches so I started going to the churches and one of the churches let us use their basement...it was unbelievable. It was beautiful to see everybody helping each other... It was beautiful I found it like it was not only me working it was a lot of people I couldn't believe the scene all the people we had at one point and like I say I also make myself part of it by being a member.1-75-112

In the story, Mary describes how she works with 'friends and all the people' and 'organizes everybody' making visible the central role that this collection of people, and Mary's engagement with them, plays in her experience. Also visible is the way in which Mary and the others work together, she says 'it was not only me working it was a lot of people', to develop the co-op because 'having a co-op would help'. Helping is a particularly salient aspect of Mary's experience with community as she says 'It was beautiful to see everybody helping each other'. Her story illuminates the way in which a group of people is constituted as community when they work together to help make a difference.

Chris, in speaking about her experience with community in Latin America, talked about the ways in which Latin American culture embodies her ideas around community. Chris tells the story like this:

A few things that really resonated with me was that the importance of relationships and trust and so in [Central America Country Name] where I was any project or initiative unquestionably would include elders, young people, everybody was expected to participate and-I worked in a make shift school...part of this program was to...get more involvement from- cause children were often not sent to school because they needed...to work at home and so there were little initiatives of how can we include family and so attending these meetings with the school and the staff and I use the term school loosely. I mean our room was a cupboard; it was a storage space we had to keep the door open there was no windows... it was right on the street but it was great. So what struck me was how-p-how the focus of the group umm and the group meaning the teachers I guess and how they-it was just a default understanding that the whole community would come out to support - if there was a meeting you know kids, babies would always be there and somebody would say you know I can't go because...my grandmother so I'll go feed her and you can go to the-so it was-p-I guess it was a cooperative but I don't want to romanticize the notion it was really a practical solution to their lives. 3-65-112

In the story Chris emphasizes the significance of 'relationships' and how community as she experienced it 'would include elders, young people, everybody', including 'kids', 'babies' and 'elders'. For Chris 'relationships' and the inclusion of 'everybody' are central in her experience with community and again the emphasis on community as a collection of people becomes visible. Inclusion is a particularly salient aspect of Chris's experience with this group of people as she describes how it was a 'default understanding' that people of all ages, the 'whole community would come out'. For Chris, this 'collection of people' is recognized as community when it is inclusive of all community members. The theme of community as helping to make a difference becomes visible as Chris describes how the community 'comes out to support' and when someone needed help with their grandmother others were there to help. For Chris, community is experienced as an inclusive group of people that help one another, 'come out to support' the school; essentially help to make a difference.

Neila describes her experiences with community in *A Community in India*, and similar to Chris, relational networks with and between families, students and the organization she works for are central in her experience with community. For Neila, community is experienced as this collection of people ‘all banded together’ offering space in their homes to develop the school and help make a difference. Neila describes her experience as follows:

... the Sikh community...invited this organization to come in and create a school in this community and the organization worked with the community to create this school and so that meant both physical both in terms of the physical infra-structure and the more abstract structure and so they kind of all banded together and created an actual physical school building and as the school expanded all the kids in the community started to attend this school then they needed more classroom space so then there were classrooms all throughout people’s houses their front patio, their bedroom, their kitchen- they pushed their furniture aside and used that as their classroom. I was just kind of following all these teachers around and attending classes and then the teachers also take one block every day to do community contact where you basically just go out into the community and visit families and check in and visit students that are home sick and find out why their students weren’t in class and just kind of build those relationships and ongoing communication with the community. 5-39-57

As these stories reveal participants experience community as a collection of people helping to make a difference. In addition to these stories, which illustrate the two themes in experiences with community, participants also shared a number of reports and additional storied accounts that reveal each of these themes and variations within the themes. What follows is a fuller explication of each theme drawing on both storied accounts and reports.

Community: ‘A Collection of People’

Participants described their experiences with community as primarily experiences that take place within networks of ‘relationships’ and ‘groups of people’. As Sue says, community is ‘a collection of people’. Experiencing community as ‘a collection of people’ becomes visible as the participants describe how they engage with and between networks of relationships, in the

stories and reports that they shared. Variations in their experiences become evident as they describe what brings these groups of people together.

While discussing what community means to her, Mary emphasizes community as ‘a group of people’ and pivotal in connecting these people together are their ‘similar’ ‘interests’, ‘needs’ and ‘goals’. For Mary, it is the similarities that groups of people share that bring them together to form community.

...that’s what I see it [community] is a group with the people with same interest, similar needs, and people with similar goals. 1-148-155

In a series of reports that followed her telling of *A Community in India*, Neila describes how she experiences community as a collection of people who live in ‘close quarters’, have similar ‘identities’ and a sense of ‘belonging’. In the following excerpt Neila, emphasizes that ‘community is really about belonging’ and belonging is described as ‘a sense of being in it together’ that results from ‘living in such close quarters’. As Neila states:

...when you are living in such close quarters there was a sense of being in it together...I would say that to some people this is probably true to me what community means is really when I think about community even my own community is really about belonging. 5-79-86

Later in our discussion Neila describes the way in which similar cultural, historical and social experiences connect communities together and how the community ‘banded together’ based on a similar ‘identity’. Neila states:

...part of it was about identity I think partly because the cultural and historical and religious background of the residents of the community was distinct from the majority population in the city. There was a sense of kind of banding together based on that identity...in India what it means to be part of community is often still very based on kind of caste and social role and with that your occupation and so probably 90% of the men in the community are metal workers and that is traditionally the work they do and for most communities in India that’s true that there is one occupation that is taken on by members of that community. 5-94-11

Both of these excerpts describe how similar identities and close geographic proximity are predominant in Neila's experience with community, which suggest that for Neila, like Mary, homogeneity is a salient aspect of communities.

Chris's experience differs from Mary's and Neila's in that diversity within groups of people, not homogeneity, is central in Chris's experience with community. Chris describes how diversity, in the form of multi-age groupings and ability, within two different groups she worked with contributed to a sense of community. When speaking about the diversity within the early childhood education program she worked in, Chris says 'when I was working there I felt more like I was part of a community'. Chris describes the experience as follows:

-there were two sort of pivotal points when I connected more on a conscious level...with community...I was very much aware that when I was working with kids I wasn't the only person involved in their life and to facilitate more growth and experiences and activities for them I was always advocating for...multi-age grouping. So the daycares were very much set up in society very age segregated schools, seniors have their place, young kids have their place and I've always been more interested in a multi-age grouping ...Had an amazing ECE program that combined 50% disabled with 50% non and it was an amazing really rich program and again I felt like it was a more-when I was working there I felt more like I was part of a community and I was fostering more community relationships with families. 3-15-31

Similar to other participant's experience Alex describes community as 'a grouping of people' and suggests that 'at the most basic level', community means 'bringing together'. The emphasis on community as 'bringing together' suggests that community for Alex is experienced not only as a pre-existing 'group of people', but as a process of bringing people together. Thus, for Alex, community can be created by bringing groups of people together. For Alex, neither diversity nor homogeneity are central in connecting these groups of people, rather it is 'what they create together' that constitutes community. As Alex says, community is 'a bringing together of people and the space...they create together'. Alex 'differentiates between place and space', describing the influence of geographical place on understanding community, but emphasizing the

notion of 'space' or what people create together in experiences with community. In Alex's words:

...community means different things to me I mean at the most basic level I think it (community) means bringing together which is just really simple...I think too often community gets equated with your geographic location...so that's the difference for me is that I don't equate community with a geographical location I equate community with a grouping of people...the grouping may be together because they live in this geographical location but to get it away from community to often is tied to a physical place...I really differentiate between place and space and I think that makes a difference for community too often I think people tie community to a place so a physical location...whereas now I really see it more as a space so it's not tied to a physical location it's tied more to a bringing together of people and the space can be what they create together 4-560-570

Sue, similar to Alex, describes community as 'bringing individuals together', emphasizing the process of developing community rather than simply identifying community as a pre-existing group of people. For Sue, 'a community is created' and in describing her work with foster parents she says 'we don't automatically become community for foster parents, we needed to create that'. She goes on to state that 'once clients take it up...they don't need you anymore to create that', suggesting that community is more than a static group of people that the practitioner joins, but rather is something that the practitioner can engage in creating. For Sue, what brings these individuals together is, 'a common purpose', so like Mary and Neila, it is similarities that bring people together to create community, and for Sue 'a common purpose' is the central element that brings people together in community. As Sue says:

I would define it as...bringing individuals together for a common purpose... and the common purpose a very broad common purpose because everybody will have a different kind of agenda or intent for being there.2-192-199

Community: 'Helping to make a difference'

Not only is community experienced as 'a collection of people' that are tied together by various factors, the act of 'helping to make a difference' also makes this collection of people recognizable as community. Community then is a 'collection of people' that is recognized as a

community by what brings it together, as discussed above, and by what it does, that is ‘by helping to make a difference’.

In *Getting Involved*, Mary and other members of her church make a shift from ‘just attending’ to being ‘part of it’, as Mary states ‘so we can help people’. Collectively the church community helps to make a difference by organizing ‘donations to people who need them’. The story illuminates the way in which community is not solely ‘a collection of people’, but rather it is a collection of people helping to make a difference. In Mary’s words:

Well I work with....it’s a charity organization...we have in church... I was always attending the church but I never was part of it. So one day I decided to make a change and said you know what if I am here why not being part of it seeing that people needed help.....and then more people participated in the church...so that was a very positive change that I saw seeing that somebody is getting involved giving people more responsibility, giving people opportunity to get involved in helping the church rather than just attending and that’s it. So that was a very positive change...for me like I said I feel more connected with the church...so we can help people within the furniture because we get donations from people...and we provide these donations to people who need them. I see a change in myself because now I feel more active rather than just sitting there. 1-360
– 379

For Mary, being responsible or ‘taking more responsibility’ was central in her experience and contributed to the shift that she made from ‘just sitting there’ to ‘getting involved’ which ultimately enabled her to help. In addition, helping to make a difference involves becoming ‘part of it’, that is the larger church community, and as she does so she ‘feels more connected’ and ‘feels more active’ suggesting that community is recognized not only by what it does, that is helping make a difference, but also by how it feels and for Mary, community is experienced as community when she feels ‘active’, ‘connected’, and ‘part of’, in essence a sense of belonging, to the larger group that is helping to make a difference. As the story unfolds it reveals the way in which a collection of people with similar interests and a common purpose work together to help make a difference and in doing so is experienced as community. Community then becomes

recognizable by its capacity to help make a difference, which illuminates the way in which community becomes constructed as a “...force for good...” (Gilchrist, 2009, p.1).

In sharing a number of reports about her experiences with community, Sue describes how her sense of community is not about a ‘traditional view of relationships’, but rather relationships or ‘a collection of people’ that is focused on ‘working on something together’. For Sue, community is experienced as ‘community’ when ‘everybody is contributing’ and ‘creating something together’, suggesting that community is ‘a collection of people’ working collectively to ‘create something’; to help make a difference. As Sue says:

...it’s come to mind just how my sense of community-p-is not really about relationships. If that makes sense, like it isn’t about a traditional view of relationship in that we are you know connected and close it’s more that we are working on something together. Like we are creating something together, so I don’t need to be best friends with you, I don’t need to have you over for tea or something but that’s my sense of community, that it’s a –p- it’s a collection of people and everybody is contributing but you don’t have to have -I guess perhaps the social aspect isn’t part of how I would define community 2-833-842

Sue, like Mary, also talks about responsibility when describing her experiences with community and suggests that when ‘creating community’, ‘it’s everybody’s responsibility’. As Sue says ‘we are all in this’, ‘we can all do something’. ‘Doing something’, helping to make a difference then requires a sense of shared responsibility, as Sue says ‘it’s not just one person’. In Sue’s words:

Well when you are creating community you are not locating ownership of anything anywhere...It’s everybody’s responsibility...I could have taken up that persona as well [as expert] I just don’t think that’s how I practice. Where it feels good to say oh I am the da da specialist and blah blah blah. The ego is stroked; right- but I think that when you are creating that community is shared like we are all in this and we can all do something it’s not just one person we are not just going to locate it within this role, this person, this whatever. 2-580-588

Chris in *The Workshop* story tells a narrative about participating in an exercise, while attending a workshop on community activism, where she witnessed conditions that created a struggle for an individual and neglected to help. Chris is ‘shocked’ that she didn’t do anything

and asks ‘Why didn’t we jump in?’ essentially, why didn’t we help make a difference? As the story unfolds Chris’s neglect to help make a difference and resulting ‘shock’ are made visible, which reveals the salience of helping to make a difference, in what constitutes community. In effect it is a story about the antithesis of community. Chris describes her experience:

Somebody had to go through this sort of labyrinth this path and there were obstacles and so there were some witnesses partly audience and partly workshop participants were there watching and there were two groups one were helpers, one were hinderers so they would put logs or things in the path....we could see the guy was having a lot of problems and we could see the people in the audience that weren’t participating -we could see what was happening that the others couldn’t...so after the exercise finished and the facilitator from Nicaragua...who were sitting and watching and saying Why didn’t you do anything? We were shocked. It was so wonderful right because it replicated you know real life...we felt outside of the exercise so we created this boundary in our minds and yet were witnessing some struggle...“Why didn’t we do anything?” “Why didn’t we jump in and say hey you know you can use this to get over”...3-331-379

For Chris, ‘feeling outside the exercise’ created a ‘boundary’ which resulted in her witnessing the struggle, rather than contributing to its resolution. This would suggest that a sense of belonging would have enabled Chris to help make a difference. Chris’s experience is similar to Mary’s in that belonging is revealed as a central element in being able to help make a difference.

In summary, participants described their experiences with community as experiences with ‘a collection of people’, who become recognized as community by what brings them together and by what they do together. Additionally, for Mary community was also recognized by how it feels. Participants described various factors that connect a ‘collection of people’ together to form community; such as similar interests, goals and histories and conversely diversity within groups. Alex and Sue both emphasized the process of bringing people together and what they create collectively as central in community. Chris spoke about inclusivity and Neila about belonging as being central factors in connecting groups of people in community.

Experiences with community were all centered on engagement with ‘a collection of people’; however, for participants various and sometimes contradictory factors bring these people together in community.

Community is not only recognized as such by what brings it together, but also by what it does and for participants, the act of helping to make a difference was central in their experiences with community. A ‘collection of people’ being responsible, working on something together, contributing, being active and helping to make a difference in the lives of the people that they work with constituted community.

Experiences with Community Change

The second content area that I explored with participants was their experiences with community change and through analysis of storied accounts and reports I identified the following three themes (a) change driven by needs, (b) community as a site and tool for change, and (c) resisting and shifting power. All three of these themes are visible in *The Housing Story*, which is about Chris’s experience working with a group of residents who tried unsuccessfully to reclaim a large vacant building for affordable housing. Chris tells the story like this:

...the local residents were saying...there is so much homelessness in the area...it was an amazing year...it was tangible and it was close by and there were things in the works so I think residents who were very disenfranchised and were dealing with often you know challenges with mental health or substance use really saw it as an opportunity...I was an Outreach Worker so I was getting the buzz on the street so a few of us from different agencies said ya we can do something here what can we do and how great this is their community they live here how can we kind of mobilize the people...so...in this year we had meetings, we had demonstrations...the local residents wanted to reclaim it [the building] because it’s in their neighbourhood... a lot of us went there and washed the windows and painted them, did murals and such a simple thing but the people the residents felt they wanted to claim it and also have a voice...and be visible often you know local area residents were not respected so there was media coverage and it wasn’t you know breaking windows it was a very positive...so that...was a catalyst for saying okay what else can we do? It developed into going to city hall...for the meetings so there would be twenty people from the neighbourhood who had never been to a-I mean I had never been either-to a city council meeting just to voice opinion. It was beautiful...it was

incredibly rich...there was room to actually do something in a tangible way that was meaningful to them...at the end of the year then...and so everybody said that little project of painting the windows and going to city hall I think umm-p-umm (T-empowered...) I don't want to say empowered (T-I know, what else do you say, motivated) motivated laugh. So anyway at the end of the day that fell through, they backed out. 3-191-220

In this story the impetus for the community change process is the individual resident's need for shelter, but as the story unfolds the need for residents and workers to 'do something', also becomes visible as a factor that propels the change process. As Chris says 'we can do something here', and the significance of 'doing something' is illuminated when Chris says it was 'beautiful' and 'rich' because there was 'room to actually do something in a tangible way'. This 'need to do something', to contribute in some way, is also visible in the experiences with community as helping to make a difference, discussed previously. The story shows how the individual's need for shelter, and the worker's and resident's need to help drive the community change process.

The story also illuminates the way in which community change is experienced as change both within and through relational networks; in essence the community is a site and tool for change. Community as a site for change is revealed as Chris describes changes that occurred within the community as she brings the group together and they become 'motivated' through the activities they are involved in. Later in our discussion she states that the project was a 'success' because of the 'relationships that were built', essentially because of the changes that took place within the 'collection of people' that are experienced as community. There is also an effort to create change through the relational network as Chris says 'how can we mobilize the people' and the group engages in a variety of activities in order to increase the availability of affordable housing for residents; the community then becomes a tool for change.

The effort to shift power becomes visible as the story unfolds and Chris describes how she created opportunities for the residents, who were 'disenfranchised' and generally 'not

respected’, ‘to do something in a tangible way’. Chris’s efforts at shifting the balance of power are illuminated as she describes how residents began to seize opportunities to ‘be visible’, ‘have a voice’ and to ‘voice opinion’, in particular during council meetings which residents ‘had never been’ to before.

Change Driven by Needs

As *The Housing Story* reveals participants experience community change as a process that is driven by needs. In the following report Chris underscores how community change is driven by need. The need for affordable housing for residents is the ‘specific issue’ that brings people together; however, as the story unfolds it makes visible how needs beyond the ‘specific issue’ also drive the community change process. Chris’s experience with community change is centered on witnessing ‘people who had been shit on for most of their lives’ coming together, ‘finding an outlet’ and ‘consolidating a sense of community’, which suggests that it’s not simply an individual need or ‘specific issue’ that ‘builds momentum’ in change processes but also the need to doing something and to strengthen the ‘collection of people’, that is experienced as community. Perhaps in ‘consolidating a sense of community’, the process also meets meet some needs for belonging. Chris says:

..the momentum was growing and it was so wonderful for me to witness that you know people who had been shit on for most of their lives and were finding an outlet and I think they were also consolidating a sense of community that people you know were coming together around a specific issue that they could all relate to 3-226-229

Alex, in the following excerpt from *The Park Story*, describes working with a group of youth in the community to secure lighting for a neighbourhood park. The story shows how community change is driven by needs. Alex tells the story like this:

So we had one neighbourhood that-in terms of the city it’s definitely one of the neighbourhoods that has the lowest socio-economic status there is a lot of poverty there is a lot of substance use and abuse that occurs in the community there’s-it’s just a

neighbourhood that is struggling with a lot of challenges. Traditionally it's a neighbourhood where only a lucky few get out...I mean if these kids graduated from high school as opposed to dropping out that was going to be seen as a big success. So we figured you know they are going to be living there a while so how can we start to make this a community that you're comfortable in?...I mean it's a huge park it's almost the centre of the community and it had almost no lighting and there was sections of the park that once it was dark they were pitch black but there were ironically the play park area was in the section that was pitch black so the kids said one of the big things is we need light in the park...4-18-123

Alex describes the neighbourhood as 'struggling with a lot of challenges' a place where 'only a lucky few get out', and the park in particular as 'pitch black' and uncomfortable. As the story unfolds it reveals a certain acceptance with particular 'traditions' within the neighbourhood, like 'dropping out' of high school and the reality that 'only a lucky few get out'. For Alex, the emphasis is on making the youth 'more comfortable' as they live in the midst of the 'poverty' and 'challenges'. As Alex works with the youth to secure lighting, so youth can be more 'comfortable' in the park, the story shows how the desire to meet the safety needs of the youth drive the community change process. It also shows how community change driven by need, by a desire to make individuals 'comfortable', has the potential to sustain structural conditions that create the need, such as poverty, crime and other 'challenges'. As Alex engages in the work and aims to create change the emphasis is on mitigating the impacts of 'challenges' within the neighbourhood by making individuals more 'comfortable'; in effect it is change that sustains.

Another particularly salient aspect of this theme is the reciprocal nature of the client's and practitioner's needs. For clients, the emphasis tends to be on meeting basic needs such as the need for food and shelter. For practitioners the emphasis is on their needs for helping, developing professional competencies and on meeting their needs for pursuing professional interests. As Sue says in describing the resources she draws in when engaging in community change processes, 'Well I think it was...it's a passionate interest'.

In *The Sport Organization* story, Mary describes a community change process that involved the development of a new organization in her community that helped low income families with the costs associated with involvement in sport. The story reveals the reciprocal nature of client and practitioner needs in driving the community change process. In Mary's words:

I remember there was this single mom she had three kids and two of the kids were involved with hockey but they couldn't afford it...they found out we were...helping at least with the registration so...we submit the application and she got approved and we were able to pay for both of the kids then the person from...told us that (local business) was willing...to help a family with their whole equipment free. Immediately I thought about this family so I told them about their stories and they told me that they wanted to know about the family and how to contact them and I talked to the mom told her what was going on so she contacted them and they made all the arrangements and she got all the equipment for both of those boys. I could not believe the mom she was so happy because it was one of the few ways that she could have them from being angry or fighting all the time or being upset about not having money or that kind of stuff...So we have people even offering doing the fundraising we would like to choose (the program name) because you guys are helping the community so people come in to the office offering to do that for us. It's unbelievable to see the big change that happen to a lot of people and the impact that this had—1-496-515

This story makes visible the way in which the needs of both the clients and the practitioners drive the change process. For the mom in the story hockey was 'one of a few ways she could' prevent her children from 'being angry or fighting' or 'upset about not having money', which suggests that through hockey some of her and her children's needs are being met, but 'she 'can't afford it'. The mom not only needs her children to play hockey, she also needs financial assistance for them to do so. The professionals involved have a need to help, which becomes visible when Mary states 'we were helping the community'. The need to help continues to be illuminated as Mary emphasizes the difference that helping made when she states 'mom...was so happy' and 'it was unbelievable to see the big change that happened to a lot of people' and 'the impact' their helping had. Essentially both parties need one another, the client needs help with

funding and equipment and Mary and her colleagues have a need to help, a desire to make a difference, and these needs drive the community change process.

Mary also talks about the ‘beauty’ of a special prayer that ‘reminds’ her that we ‘need to help others’ and we ‘need to provide to people’ and how this need to ‘help’ is a ‘spiritual thing’ that she fulfills through her work. As Mary says:

That is just beautiful and when I read it and I even found it in a little gift that a friend gave me and I kept it in my office to remind me that ...we don't need to be selfish, we need to provide to people, we need to help others...we have to give to others. So it's kind of a spiritual thing for me so I like it. 1-966-969

Community: A Site and Tool for Change

As indicated in the previous section, participants experienced community as primarily collection of people comprised of networks of relationships; therefore, it is not surprising that experiences with community change were described as taking place within and through networks of relationships. In effect then the community becomes both a site and a tool for change.

In the following report about her experience with *The Housing Story*, Chris describes the housing project as both a ‘success’ and a ‘failure’. It’s deemed a ‘success’ because of the ‘level of bringing people on board’ and ‘the relationships that were built’ with ‘residents, workers and government people’. The project is deemed a ‘failure’ because ‘technically’ they ‘didn’t reach their desired outcome, which was more affordable housing in the neighbourhood. As Chris says:

... we didn't reach our outcome so technically...it was a failed project however after a year a year and a half I would say it was a success because of the level of bringing people on board and the relationships that were built you know with residents, workers and government people- it was amazing, like it was rich in that way. So to me that represents more of a community involvement and the potential for change. I mean because community is a tool for change right and it's a social space to enact that so even though we...weren't successful quote in or objective the process was so much more valuable because that's what's going to bring us forward...to another project...or to reach other goals. 3-170-179

Community as a site for change is visible as Chris describes ‘the level of people bringing people on board’ and ‘relationships that were built’; however, Chris doesn’t acknowledge the change at this level as community change, rather she describes change at this level as representing ‘community involvement’ and the ‘potential for change’. The ‘potential for change’ emerges then from change in the relational networks that make up community or ‘community involvement’; which suggests that it is through change within the relational network that community can become ‘a tool for change’. There is hope that the community can increase the amount of affordable housing in the neighbourhood, in effect be a tool for change; however, when that dream isn’t realized change at the relational level is still deemed a ‘success’. Despite the ‘failed project’, it is deemed a ‘success’, ‘rich’ and ‘more valuable’, because change *in* the relational networks that constitute community creates the ‘potential for change’ *through* the relational networks that constitute community.

Alex distinguishes between ‘abstract’ change and ‘concrete’ community change. Abstract community change is described as a desired form of change that is ‘mental’ and ‘emotional’, and difficult to see. Concrete change is described as change that is more visible and Alex uses the lights as described in *The Park Story* above as an example of concrete change. As Alex says:

...I think that there is two different ways you can look at community change one is like a concrete like physical change that you can see like the lights example and then the other kind of community change is more of the-p- abstract mental...the abstract emotional...changes that quite often we hope we are making... like we hope we are affecting change at that abstract level the problem is it’s hard to know 4-446-573

In the *Invisible Walls* story ‘abstract’ change, that Alex describes above, becomes visible and can be seen as change within the collection of people that constitute community. In this story Alex describes the ‘invisible walls’ that existed between different groups of youth in the community and how these walls kept these groups apart. Alex describes the presence of the walls when

stating' there is certain streets like the kids don't want to cross they don't want to go into that section of the neighbourhood' and how over time and through a number of community projects 'they would get to know each other', they would be 'working on something together' and 'there was a lot less of that'. The walls began to dissipate as change within the collection of people that represent community occurred. As Alex says:

... in school they would never talk to each other they probably don't even go to the same school but then in youth group...they are together they are side by side they are working on something together...but just the idea that they were getting to work with people that they didn't have the chance to work with...you are... addressing issues of stereotypes all those things naturally just come out because you have such a mixed and diverse group of young people. It took like a really long time though, like initially when I was working in the community... there is certain streets like the kids don't want to cross they don't want to go into that section of the neighbourhood because 'No that section is where the Vietnamese live 'and 'No we're not going there because that's where all the drug addicts are' and 'I'm not allowed to go over there' so in the first few years there were huge invisible walls in the neighbourhood so-like I literally ran the same group three nights a week because you couldn't bring the kids maybe four blocks away from each other because they wouldn't come they wouldn't cross that street...but you know nine years in there was a lot less of that. I mean you figure how many hours of doing different activities and I would every once in a while do something at the center and I'd have kids from all of my groups there and so then they would kind of get to know each other...I mean it was really gradual...4-308-336

Chris in *The Summer Festival* story describes 'problems' between two different ethnic groups in the community and a 'beautiful park' that people didn't want to use' because of 'needles in the sand' and people 'drinking on the benches'. Chris, residents in the neighbourhood and a variety of agencies organize a summer festival in an effort to address the 'problems' and 'reclaim the park'. In the story community as a site for change becomes visible as change happens in the community as people come together and 'stereotypes may be broken down a bit'. Community as a tool for change becomes visible as Chris describes how change happened through the community, in the form of a 'tangible event'. In Chris's words:

...so there was sort of these two ethnic groups and they were clashing-different values, different history, you know different cultures-so there were problems...there was a lot of

violence around that ...and so the idea was proposed why don't we have a summer festival part of it was also re-claiming the park. The park was beautiful there was a playground and there was a senior's centre across the street from the park and they didn't want to use the park because there were needles in the sand and people drinking on the benches. It wasn't a safe community park and so we were trying to reclaim it because you know subsidised housing with families next door-so you know we had these people and they weren't accessing the park so we thought okay how can we reclaim the park? I had gone to talk to the manager of the seniors centre to see what things they wanted lawn bowling like what would bring them out right. I don't know where the idea even came from to have a summer festival a cultural festival where you would ask elders to come do some drumming also have some Latin American music in the park and of course free food cause that brings people...there was (name of agency) people, there were lots of the women's centre, the native centre...it ended up being an annual-p-(T-event)...and to have people also in part of the organizing you know there were first nations, Latin American and Latino there as well...the richness and in that case there was an actual tangible event...but the richness was in the processing of doing it-right? That stereotypes may be broken down a bit that they had you know everybody felt that they could more like in Latin America where they felt like this is our community...3-496-538

For Chris, the 'richness was in the process' as 'stereotypes' are 'broken down' and people began to 'feel like this is our community'. In a report that follows the story Chris describes the change that took place as 'shifts in relationships' that occurred as people 'who don't have any experience of each other' are 'working' with one another 'towards' the summer festival. In the story change happens both within and through the relational networks that make up community but for Chris change within the community is a particularly salient aspect of her experience.

...there had to be shifts in relationships as well right. I mean there was still huge issues in the area but how can you not if you are working with somebody towards this and you are sitting on opposite fences maybe to start with you know after four months of meetings-p-I think ya you develop relationships with people and it breaks down a lot of stereotypical ideas especially when they are coming from different cultures and they don't have any experience of each other..3-619-639

As participants described their experiences with community change the possibilities for change within communities was not only valued, change at this level was experienced as achievable. For example, in *The Housing* and *Invisible Walls* stories change within the relational networks that make up community was doable and achieved. Creating change through the network was not always as achievable; for example, in *The Housing Story*, the change process

didn't result in increased social housing although it was deemed a success because of the change that occurred in the relationships within the community. In some cases participants expressed frustration over their lack of ability to enact broader change through relational networks. Chris experienced change primarily within relational networks, 'the shifts I saw were more interpersonal', and expresses frustration at not being able to create change at broader systemic levels. As Chris states:

...but umm oh man I didn't realize it [change at systemic levels] was so grim laugh it's true though ya what's one example of really shifting-p-I mean I guess ya the shifts I saw were more interpersonal and not- I mean for things change at a level I would like to see you need to change policy right 3-733-738

Neila shares some frustration with Chris about the potential to create broad systemic change, but her experience is somewhat unique in that she is working to stimulate community change through an urban agricultural program for youth that is primarily educational in orientation. Her goal is to increase the amount of food being produced in the city and she attempts to do this by bringing youth together, giving them skills and inspiring them to make changes in their lives. The goal then is to stimulate community change through education and inspiration aimed at the individual; however, the degree to which this approach is able to achieve 'grandiose' change is uncertain. Neila says:

I guess what we were hoping to change was the amount of food being produced in the city I mean that was kind of a long term goal... I think that we won't know that right now that was more of a long term thing and you know I think that I look at the amount of food that was produced was small it was very small it was still more and so in that sense I think that...on the shorter term and more tangibly and more realistically what we were looking to do was to give these youth inspiration and skills once again I don't know if we achieved it on that scale that we were grandiosely hoping for but I think that's generally true about change 5-427-443

Resisting and Shifting Power

Resisting and shifting power is the final theme in participant's experience with community change. As relationships form and develop between different sectors of the

community the balance of power within the relational network shifts and changes, contributing to the community change process. Part of the experience with power was also centered on the practitioner's resistance to power and persuasion was a common approach in efforts to shift power.

In *Going to a Council Meeting*, which is told in connection to *The Housing Story*, Chris describes going to a council meeting with the group of residents that she is working with and how through this process there is 'room for' people to 'go and sit with city councillors', have a 'voice' and take their power. Chris witnesses a 'tangible shift' for one resident, who is so 'taken by the idea that he is important', when he accesses his power, as she says 'he took it'. For Chris, 'power is relational' and as she brings residents to a council meeting she is creating 'room' for them to access their power. She tells the story like this:

... I remember once at City Hall at one of the meetings one area local resident was so taken that anybody can go to these meetings I mean some-they are open right city council meetings-he you know it's just nothing he would have ever considered given his you know (T-life history) ya and so I can still see it. It was just umm-p-so taken by the idea that he is important, he has dignity, he has worth and he can go and sit with city councillors and he has a voice and to me he-you know-he's- I don't know power is relational so there was room for him to do that and he took it and -p-and from that day not from that day I don't want to be so dramatic but it really fostered in him a visible and tangible shift in how he talked in meetings, he came to more meetings...3-306-315

Later in our discussion Chris notes how 'shifts in power between rules or relationships', although 'subtle', were prominent in her experience with community change, when she says:

...I guess what I witnessed was smaller-I don't know if it's smaller but you know subtler changes in relationships between people...and shifts in power between rules or relationships 3-674-676

In a report that she shares, in relation to *The Housing Story*, Chris describes how she experienced 'a definite shift in the balance of power' which is 'directly tied to' both 'community change' and 'personal change'. Chris is uncertain how to explain the relationship between personal and community change and shifts in the balance of power but is clear that 'it's all related'. For Chris,

the 'definite shift in the balance of power' that took place is significant as she says, while trying to describe her experience, 'no no this is a big one'. If community is experienced as a collection of people, it's not surprising that Chris experiences shifts in power within these groups of people as community change. In her words:

...I don't think you can talk about community change unless you talk about power and often that doesn't come in anywhere...there was a shifting in power-which I think you know facilitated peoples change and changed relationships in the sense that okay-p-local area residents were sort of you know were often treated as bottom-p-you know not respected...so in this process-p-I think they-p-okay how do I say this not reclaimed it but kind of came-how do you explain it-there were definite shifts in the balance of power it shifted in the sense that umm-p-even agency you know Executive Directors of agencies who were perhaps not as accessible-p-became more malleable, more attentive, perhaps because it was a hot topic and they wanted to be seen a certain way but-p-there was more of a willingness-p-oh god okay, no no this is a big one... there was a definite shift in the balance of power umm ya which is directly tied to ya community change and personal change and it's all related...3-285-300

Sue also speaks to community change as a process that is situated in networks of relationships and is about creating a 'sense of shared responsibility' where everybody 'has a part' and because it requires 'agreement' and 'giving up something' it really becomes a process about power. The process, as she experiences it, is dependent upon collaboration and there can be resistance to that, as Sue says in some cases 'they aren't going to share with you', because there is a sense that by 'collaborating they 'are giving up something we own'. For Sue, community change is about 'creating a sense of shared responsibility' and in order to accomplish this 'people need to give up something they own'; in essence power needs to shift. As Sue says:

Well I would say that you know as far as community change...I would define it as...creating that sense of shared responsibility, you know, everybody has a part...I'd also kind of say that it's not always going to happen...because it's shared it is about everybody coming to some agreement as to how they are going to participate and then being okay with that..I have tried to kind of foster those collaborative relationships and people like 'no that's ours' and they aren't going to share with you or by collaborating with you means we are giving up something we own or a portion of what we own. 2-627-638

Participants experience shifts in power within relational networks as an element of community change and see the value and influence these shifts have, in particular for the clients that they work with who are typically disenfranchised. However, there is also some resistance to power in community change processes, in particular in the use of power to change others. As Chris suggests, in discussing *The Workshop Story*, our experience with power has perhaps ‘corrupted’ our view of power, leading us to believe that power is ‘bad’ and to not wanting power. As she describes her experience she goes on to wonder how to change her ‘framework’, the way she thinks about power, and how she might ‘create’ and ‘use’ it. In Chris’s words:

I remember the facilitator she put these words on the board and we had to respond to them and say which ones we in community work, which ones were bad, which ones we wanted and which ones we didn’t want and one of them was power and we all said no... we all had a really negative view of that...because our association was that it was bad power is bad because it’s been corrupted right...so changing our framework to ya we want that because like how do we create that and how do we use that 3-331-346

Neila talks about her ‘struggle’ as an ‘instigator of change within a community’ because in taking on this role she thinks that she is ‘positioning herself’ or she is ‘finding herself’ in ‘a position of power’. For Neila, power is not experienced as relational, which is how Chris experiences it, rather power is understood as being possessed by those people who are initiating change in the community and it is something that she resists. This role, as an instigator of community change, creates a struggle for Neila because she sees the need for change, as she says ‘communities have access to resources’ through these change processes, but she ‘struggles’ with the power associated with this role. As she says:

...when I talk about these kind of things I feel like I’m often putting myself in a position of privilege or finding myself in a position of privilege of this society of how a community should be changed and who am I to make that decision? I hated that element of international development that I was an outsider with power to make decisions and yet I don’t know that international development is always detrimental...a lot of underprivileged communities have access to resources that they wouldn’t necessarily have access to through that. I really struggle with the power dynamic in being an

instigator of change within the community I think that even if you are initiating change within your own community you are initiating that change inevitably putting yourself into a position of power and deciding how you are going to make that change happen and I struggle with that.5-463-494

Despite the resistance to power, participants' experiences with community change did involve efforts to influence and change others, often using persuasion to shift the balance of power and create change. In the following report Neila's resistance to and ambivalence about using power in order to change the other can be seen when she talks about changing someone's beliefs, as she says 'it's not our job' and then she says 'it is to a certain extent'. In order to facilitate this change 'education' and 'positively motivated' change seems to be preferred over 'preaching' and 'forcing' change. As she says:

...you know we are not...we are obviously not here to preach and this person is very set in their beliefs and it's probably not gonna change their beliefs and it's not our job to do that ...I mean like it is to a certain extent but it's not our job to force that upon them and so I think that's where we are not a political organization so we are not we are not dogmatic and that's kind of the real important piece of our organizational culture and I really try to emphasize that when I am training volunteers is to kind of you know encourage them to find ways to create change in the community through education through either really positively motivated way....5-615-656

Sue's use of persuasion is evident when she describes how she 'creates a picture' that the desired change is of 'value' in order to get people 'on board' and 'convince' them to 'take it up'. She speaks to the need to be tenacious in her efforts, 'you have to keep doing that with these people' and ultimately they begin to see the project as 'important too'. Through persuasion Sue has managed to shift the balance of power and garner support for her project. As she states:

You know I am looking at it now, those conversations were started you not only just okay I had an interest in this, but I was able to convince others to take it up and they did, right. They saw it as important too 391-398...creating a picture that this is of value like you just have to keep doing that with these people. Get on board this is of value, it's not going to cost you anything. 2-505-515

In summary, three themes capture participants' experience with community change.

First, participants' own needs, primarily to help, combined with the needs of the individuals they

work with drive the community change processes that they are engaged in. A particularly salient aspect of this theme is the way in which an emphasis on meeting individual needs can mitigate the conditions that people live with in communities, but doesn't necessarily change the conditions that create the need.

Second, as participants described their experience with community change they talked about engaging in activities that resulted in change in the 'collection of people' that is constituted as community and this 'collection of people' becoming a 'tool' for change. Thus, community was experienced as both a site and a tool for change. Community as a site for change was experienced as achievable, while participants were less hopeful about the potential for community as a tool for change. As a site for change, participants spoke about the value of changes that take place within individuals and their relational networks, as they engaged with communities, and how these changes strengthen community. In addition, there was a sense of confidence in the possibility for change taking place at this level. Participants were less confident, although hopeful, about the possibilities for effecting change through the relational network into larger systems.

Third, shifting and resisting power was also central in practitioners' experience with community change and persuasion was seen as a means to leverage change. The stories and reports participants shared reveal how practitioners work to create opportunities for different sectors of the community to come together, shifts in power within these groups takes place and this shifting of power is experienced as community change. For Chris, power is relational and she works to create 'room' for people to access their power. Whereas for Neila, power is bestowed upon people who are working as instigators of change and she resists this form of power. Resistance to power may in part be due to the notion of power becoming corrupted, as

Chris suggests, which leaves her wondering how she might change her thinking about power in order to ‘create’ and ‘use’ it. For participants community change is experienced as change driven by needs, it takes place both within and through relational networks and occurs as power, although in some ways resisted, shifts within groups of people.

Experiences with Community Level Interventions

Community level interventions were the third key content area framing the interviews and in order to explore this content area I began by asking participants if they could tell me about a time when they engaged in a community level intervention. Three themes capture the experiences of practitioners as they engage in community level interventions: (a) ‘pulling people together’: making connections; (b) ‘giving them the skills, confidence and leadership’: building capacity; and (c) needing freedom. Alex, who worked as a Youth Community Developer for a community centre, tells *The Fire Story*, which is about a group of youth who organize a large memorial event for three boys that died in a tragic fire in the community. *The Fire Story* reveals all three themes that are central in experiences of engagement in community level interventions.

...the Cambodian grocery store had literally burned to the ground.....The father, the son in-law and the one year old baby got out. The three boys, the daughter, and the mom did not, so this community now had been racked with this tragedy...of the three boys one of them was in my youth group... one of the girls that had been in the youth leadership group for five or six years she said “we are having a youth only memorial”...we have already talked to the director of the recreation center we can have the gym..... they had talked to the principals of these two schools...and then I am like still well what do you need me to do? Well first of all manage the media, get them the hell out of our face...keep them away from us it’s youth only plus the teachers from these schools...I said “Okay I can do that “and they said oh and bring Kleenex laugh-okay I am in charge of Kleenex...then the kids are telling me we are going to march parade style to the memorial site and we are all going to leave an offering. I’m thinking okay that is going to require crowd control and one of the kids said ya but we went and talked to the community police and they are actually going to block traffic...and the day comes-there were 330 youth who attended this memorial it was crazy plus the teachers and the principals of the boys schools, they did the slide show, they did the speeches then they asked if anyone in the audience wanted to come up and share a story or something...I fully believe that had those group of girls not been part of the community projects for all of those years before

none of that would have happened, they couldn't have done it. So that community of youth in that neighbourhood that for me was the outcome of five years worth of work. I saw the change that had been in that community through that one week of the tragedy because those kids wouldn't have had the skills, the confidence, the leadership...4-349-435

As the story reveals, Alex facilitated a number of connections between the youth and others in the community; for example, with the recreation centre manager and the police. These connections are highly visible in the story and play a pivotal role in the unfolding of events. The capacity of the youth and the broader community is illuminated in the community's response to the fire and Alex attributes the development of this capacity to the community work that has taken place over the years. In addition, the story reveals the freedom Alex had and needed in order to engage in the work. Alex's role as a Youth Community Development worker gave Alex the freedom to respond to the needs of the youth as the events of the week unfolded and take on the role of bringing Kleenex. As Alex says in a related report '...you become background you get assigned Kleenex...it took me five years to get to that point where my role was to bring Kleenex and I saw that as a huge achievement'. The freedom Alex experienced enabled Alex to not only 'become background' but to celebrate 'becoming background' as an 'achievement'. The story is centered on events that unfold over the course of a week, but as Alex suggests it epitomizes years of community level intervention work. Alex states '...it was just a way of seeing the community that I had never seen before and they had made so many changes that had been sort of imperceptible up to that point, so because of this tragedy it became glaringly apparent'.

'Pulling People Together': Making Connections

As *The Fire Story* reveals, and as Sue states, community level work is about 'pulling all these people together'. As practitioners described their experiences in engagement in community level interventions they spoke about how they 'pulled people together' by making

connections with and between people, and the ‘richness’ that emerges from the process of making connections.

In a report that follows *The Fire Story*, Alex describes the connections that were made between the youth and fireman, through the community level work Alex did and the pivotal role these connections played in *The Fire Story*. Alex organizes a tour of the fire hall and through this event builds ‘neighbourhood connections’ between the youth and the fireman, two groups who typically may not know one another. As Alex says, as a result of touring the fire hall the youth ‘even knew the fireman’.

...I mean they even knew the fireman because the fire hall was directly across the street from the recreation centre and we went and toured it one day so they invited the fireman they were allowed to come to the memorial so it was all like these neighbourhood connections...4-349-435

Chris, in *The Housing Story* describes the experience of bringing residents to a council meeting and how this experience created the opportunity for people that ‘wouldn’t normally’ have ‘access to’ or ‘interest in’ one another to connect. Similar to Alex’s experience, described above, Chris points to the seemingly simple, yet powerful act of creating opportunities for people to connect, especially those who wouldn’t typically do so. For Chris, the emphasis is on creating opportunities for ‘people to speak to people’, rather than on the political process itself, and the ‘benefits of the process’ are described as ‘incredibly rich’. As Chris says:

...the benefits of the process were incredibly rich in the sense that people were speaking to-p-to people that they wouldn’t normally have had access to or interest in speaking to. 3-243-244

When I asked Chris if she could tell me more about the people who wouldn’t normally speak to one another, she went on to describe connections across multiple levels of the community that took place during meetings that Chris organized. Chris describes how these meetings became opportunities for ‘local residents talking to police’, and residents, police and city councillors

getting to know one another. Chris points out that relationships between the police and residents were ‘always a very adversarial kind of relationship’, suggesting that the connections that were built during the meetings provided an opportunity for these relationships to be less adversarial. For Chris, the meeting is an opportunity to build connections between people in the community, with particular emphasis on the residents, the police and council members and the relational network between these groups, as she states ‘they would get to know individuals on both sides’.

As Chris states:

Well local residents talking to police...and of course that’s always been a very adversarial kind of relationship so they would come to meetings and they would get to know individuals on both sides right and also with city councillors they ended up coming to some of the meetings with area residents....3-248-251

The Park Story reveals how Alex connects with youth, connects youth to other youth, and connects the youth to the adults in the community, essentially ‘pulling people together’, in order to meet the safety needs of youth in the community. Alex tells the story as follows:

... I had about 15 youth that were regularly attending the weekly youth group...they raised a lot of safety issues around the neighbourhood. So we said okay well first of all we are going to deal with the lights...one of the older girls I said do you want to try and write this up in terms of why the lighting is a problem and what you would like and so she wrote it up and I said okay we are going to mail this to the city councillor for this neighbourhood and they actually thought that was hilarious ... his staff assistant called us and invited us to go to one of the planning committee meetings.....so they did the presentation to the planning committee and they were like okay nothing is going to come of that, you know really hesitant to believe that anyone was going to give value...and then a few weeks later got a letter at the centre and it was addressed to me and them and they said that the city in the next budget cycle was going to add lighting to their park... from my perspective one of the things that stuck out for me on that was really working with youth that even when I am trying to empower them to-p-just do the activities and participate and have their opinions heard and- you know when everyone else in their life is telling them you have no voice this is stupid that it’s really hard to convince them to get over that so it definitely started out as a fun thing and then it did get a lot more serious when they realized okay...we are going to stand in front of a committee and talk laugh but it was really like- the level of-p-other adults-p- in terms of viewing young people especially from that neighbourhood was one of my hardest challenges was actually convincing people no no their point is valid 4-18-123

The story not only reveals the connections Alex develops between the youth, the council member and the committee, but also the inequalities between the youth and adults in the story. These inequalities are visible when Alex suggests that they send the letter to the council member and the youth ‘thought it was hilarious’. Alex also, describes the challenge of ‘convincing people’ that the youth have a ‘valid’ point. As the story unfolds, Alex continues to build and develop connections between the youth and the adult decision makers through the letter and attendance at the committee meeting. The story makes visible the way Alex uses these connections to shift the balance of power, a theme discussed earlier, between the youth and the adult decision makers in order to address the ‘safety issues around the neighbourhood’. Factors contributing to the safety issues are not highly visible in the story; rather, the story illuminates the way in which interventions are aimed primarily at making connections between youth and decision makers, and ‘empowering’ youth in order to create change in their community.

In *The Food Co-op Story*, Mary also describes the connections that she builds ‘in different levels’, between various people and organizations within the community and the way in which these connections result in ‘everybody helping’, essentially helping ‘people with a lot of needs’ access affordable food. Paramount in Mary’s experience is building these connections across the multiple levels of the community, starting with friends and families, and then building the connections in and between the agency, organizational and city levels. Mary ‘realizes’ that by making these connections across different levels, ‘we try and make it in different levels’, she can ‘get everybody helping’.

We had people living in the community and people from the churches referring people ...and we were situated at the town office at the time so even the ladies at the town office they could refer people. We also had an inter-agency meeting once a month for everybody and that was a time that we talk about it...we were providing a lot of information for everybody and that really helped because in the interagency meetings we have people from school, from family services...from mental health you name it and a lot

of places where people with a lot of needs-were low income were coming...we were able to liaison between everyone in the community...we tried to make it in different levels because I realized we start with a little group and this group is circling their friends, their families and then start getting involved with another association churches and then you went to the town level ...even the town office knew and everybody was helping.1-114-135

Participants also spoke about connecting individual clients to resources in the community and for Mary in particular this kind of work was central in her experience in engagement in community level interventions. Mary speaks about feeling ‘more power’ because she can ‘connect...be a liaison’, as Mary says:

I took this job as an Outreach Counsellor I felt a big change because now I can go out, I can connect, I can be a liaison between two people or a person and an agency. So I can see-it makes me feel more power! More power you know but it’s not crazy it’s not a power that I am going to control you power...1-179-182

In the following segment of *The Rent* story, Mary draws on her connections in the community and works to develop connections between her client and various community resources in order to help her client secure housing. In Mary’s words:

She was staying with friends on the couch with her two kids and then I asked her to come over to the office and I know [Provincial Government Agency] a lot because I work with them and I know a lot of the workers. So when she came she said that she had found this place I said well the thing is if you want us to go to [Provincial Government Agency] you need to have a rent report ready...while we were talking to the worker he was kind of reluctant to help her...and then she said I have this place and I say **listen** [she says with emphasis], because I knew this guy-so I said...I know that she failed on making these contacts but you know what I am going to help her I am going to make sure she attends these meetings. We can provide the child care for her...and I make sure she has these connections... She has a place, can you help at least getting this place...and he is like well I am just going to do a onetime issue...but we are going to have another meeting he said and if she hasn’t followed up with my suggestions I won’t be opening her file...Okay! So she needs to attend this and this then no problem. I made sure she heard. So he gave us the money for the place.... so we have to make sure that all the things that he asked you to do you have to do it...1-710-833

The story illuminates the way in which Mary draws on her connections, “I work with them and I know a lot of the workers” and aims to make connections between the worker and the client and other community resources, as Mary says ‘I make sure she has these connections’. Through

these connections Mary persuades the worker, as she says to him with emphasis ‘listen’, to help the client. She also works with the client do what is necessary to get the help, as she says ‘I am going to make sure she attends these meetings’. The story reveals the way in which Mary’s intervention, although described as a community level intervention, is aimed at the individual client and the worker, the connection between them, and the individual client’s goals. As Mary engages in the work she is focused on ensuring that both parties comply with policies and procedures that govern the allocation of funds, but the policies and procedures themselves or the conditions that created the need for the funding are not the target of the intervention. Visible in the story is the emphasis on the individuals need to change, while the conditions that have led to the clients need for help with rent money are invisible, and the act of connecting the client to the community resource is what renders the intervention a community level intervention. As the story continues all parties in the story, including Mary, comply with the requirements of the funding organization, the worker opens the file, and the client’s individual needs are met. As Mary says:

We went to the meeting and... I said to him even though she hasn’t found a job she has been doing everything you asked so are you able to help her? He checks and says “yes I will open the file”. 1-807-814

‘Giving them the skills, confidence and leadership’: Building Capacity

Capacity building is the second theme in experiences in engagement in community level interventions. The stories that practitioners told about community level interventions reveal how they work to build the capacity of individuals, organizations and the relational networks that constitute community and the possibilities and limitations of these community level interventions.

In *A Youth Gardening Program*, Neila tells a story about developing a program that aims to build the capacity of individual youth, giving them ‘skills’, ‘mentors’ and ‘inspiration’ to live ‘more sustainably’. The story illuminates a link between the theme of making connections and capacity building, which becomes visible as Neila describes how she draws on ‘various connections to other organizations’ in order to both ‘recruit’ individual youth and develop ‘ideas’ for the program, as she says ‘we got a lot of feedback and ideas’. Neila tells the story as follows:

...program for youth that gave them the skills to grow food and live more sustainably... we had this huge proposal and giant budget because we got the grant... I think the hardest thing was the recruitment...through various avenues-going out to schools, contacting key teachers, student contacts- making connections like that- going and doing presentations for various clubs, some classrooms and getting on various online networks... we tried to involve as many kind of community partners as we could so we kind of had various connections to other organizations in the community who were working in related field... we had this really great brainstorming session where we basically got a lot of feedback and ideas generated from them so that was really exciting. Then the program itself...sometimes it was us teaching and sometimes we were bringing in other guest speakers to teach on the topic...so that was kind of the main program...it was incredibly successful. What was frustrating about it was that we only ever had five youth who regularly came...and they were amazing and we had our kind of debriefing and a couple of them really expressed how much the program had changed the course of their lives...well especially for a couple of the kids who were graduating and... trying to decide what their path was going to be and it really steered them in a direction that they were obviously very passionate about already but kind of gave them the mentors and the inspiration and the skills to move in that direction seriously and so I think that was really really gratifying 5-258-319

Neila describes the *Youth Gardening Program*, as a community level intervention, but what the story reveals is an emphasis on interventions that aim to build the capacity of individual youth, which is illuminated as Neila talks about ‘how much the program had changed the course of their lives’ and how ‘gratifying’ it was to give the youth the ‘skills’ to ‘move’ in a direction that ‘they were obviously very passionate about’. The emphasis on targeting individual youth is also visible as Neila describes the struggles that she experiences around ‘recruiting’ youth, as she says ‘what was frustrating about it was that we only ever had five youth who regularly came’. While maintaining an overall emphasis on targeting individual youth, Neila and her colleagues

engage in interventions *with* the community, as she says ‘we tried to involve as many kind of community partners as we could’, while engagement at the broader macro level, for example with policies related to food security and environmental sustainability, is non-existent in the story. As the story unfolds it illuminates the way in which interventions that aim to build the capacity of individual youth, that take place in the community, and are organized with the community are storied as community level interventions.

In telling *The Sport Organization* story Mary begins by stating that ‘people need help’ and as the story unfolds the way in which Mary works to develop the capacity of the community becomes visible. Mary describes how she organizes individuals and groups within the community and that they ‘start with nothing’ but over time they start ‘growing, growing and growing’ until they are able to ‘help a lot of people’. Mary tells the story:

...people need help here...So we had a talk with (name of sport organization)... and we had a lady come and do a presentation and we invite key people in our community that would be interested in participating...so they came to the meeting and they liked it so we decide to set up the group. We start like almost with nothing ...but I was able to get the town office for the meetings and mostly what we needed to provide information to the schools and people in the community so that’s when we started growing...so we start printing brochures and also applications and I did presentations at the different schools with the school council...and some other places...I had other people doing presentations as well sometimes when we were doing fun fairs or something we will ask permission to provide information. So we started growing you know, people started knowing about the services and so we started applications we start growing and growing and growing you know to the point that we had to have someone who was in charge of taking applications so it wasn’t me anymore...Then we had more people taking more responsibility...and I remember that we help a lot of people with that and they were so thankful. 1-476-496

The story reveals the way in which the capacity of the community is developed as Mary engages with individuals and organizations ‘providing information’, developing program materials, and securing resources, like the use of the town office for meetings. As Mary engages in the work ‘people started to take more responsibility’ and the capacity of the community to ‘help a lot of people’ is developed. The story reveals how Mary and her colleagues develop and offer the

program in their community in order to better meet the needs of individuals, a theme discussed earlier, and as they do the conditions that created the need remain invisible while the capacity of the community to ameliorate individual problems is illuminated.

In *The New Service* story, Sue describes her experience initiating a community level intervention that involves developing individual, organizational, and the community's capacity to respond to suicide. In the following excerpt Sue describes how she proposes a plan to her supervisor and Executive Director for a 'suicide resource person within the agency' that could be a 'resource for all programs, all staff' and would involve 'training' to develop her capacity to take on this role. The excerpt reveals how Sue first intervenes at the level of her own organization in order to develop a structure, or the capacity, of her agency to initiate and develop the project, as she says 'to get this off the ground'. As she says:

...saw the need even within our own agency because there was someone who hung themselves at one of the group homes... a young person and there was a number of situations where like counselling type situations where the staff had really felt paralyzed of what to do...And so...I proposed to my supervisor...then we went to the Executive Director that we have a suicide resource person within the agency in a sense...that could be a resource for all programs, all staff, you know to either debrief after an incident or umm-p- you know be there to support...and one of the things that I put in there was that I wanted to do the [name of training] , so a little bit on my part you know incentive right to get this off the ground 2-309-322

Sue then describes how she connects, a theme discussed earlier, with other trainers to coordinate staff training events, arranges for community member involvement in the training, organizes advertising and secures resources such as the facility, as she states 'all this bartering', takes place in order to develop the agencies capacity to initiate the project. As Sue says:

... created a like a schedule of training events...it's a co-facilitated workshop so I had to connect with another trainer in town and the agency had to pay him, right...they didn't really like that idea so then somewhere along the way I met one of the coordinators in [organization name] and she was a...trainer so we got together and coordinated our staff training events together and then also offered community seats to foster parents, other service providers or community... each organization would contribute the cost of the

materials, right for their respective staff and then we would have these seats floating around that we could either sell or if it was two days before and they weren't full I would just call people do you want to come for free cause they allowed me to do that and we would advertise cause we were non-profit on the you know the cable TV, the radio. We got the like the facility for I don't know \$25., or something, it was really really cheap because it was a facility through the school district that we you know said okay we will give you seats in exchange for-like all this bartering right...2-334-351

Sue's story reveals how she works within and between multiple levels of the community, building capacity as she goes. Ultimately she develops her personal capacity through additional training, the capacity of her organization by securing internal support and resources, and the capacity of individuals through training, which enabled her to develop a program that 'had a huge influence on the community'. As Sue says:

-it's had huge influence on that community... the feedback was increased confidence 'now I know what to do' right and I think that goes a long way in people not feeling lost or feeling like okay you know we have somebody to talk to even if we never use it, it's there and that's often the thing that shifts peoples and creates such an awareness around suicide and that's far reaching right 2-370-377

The Band-Aid story, as told by Chris, is a story about taking a group of street involved youth camping that reveals Chris's experience with both the benefits and limitations of individual capacity building approaches. As Chris says:

I organized youth camping trips...you know free food and everything...I took some street involved youth camping for four days and they needed to cook...**great** (sarcastically) anyways it was fantastic but-at night they would say wow listen it's quiet there is no ambulances you know it was amazing but coming into town you could physically-on the last day coming home and dropping them off you could feel the energy shift in these youth. So someone would say hey who stole my cigarettes and it starts right and that's when I started to feel like everything I have done for the last five years-ugh-you know kind of was it worse?... I felt like I'm bringing these kids on four day camping trips...so what? This is I feel like...I think and I believe deeply where change is needed and I am not doing it. I am giving them a...band-aid right they get fed for four days they come back and they're still sleeping in their flea infested single residence occupant housing. Nothing changes really. 3-645-658

Chris describes the camping trip as 'amazing' and 'fantastic' and as the story is told it reveals the potential of the camping trip to develop the individual capacities of the youth through new

experiences, like the ‘quiet’ of ‘no ambulances’, and skill building, as Chris says, ‘they needed to cook-**great**’. However, the story also reveals the limitations of capacity building that Chris experiences, as she describes the opportunity to cook as ‘**great**’ with some sarcasm, as if teaching them to cook just isn’t enough. As she says ‘I’m bringing these kids on four day camping trips...so what?’ Chris’s story reveals how interventions aimed at individuals, like the camping trip, makes the structural conditions that impact these youth, like housing, invisible. As Chris says, ‘they come back and they’re still sleeping in their flea infested single residence occupant housing’. As the story is told it exposes a sense of futility with individual capacity building approaches, because ‘nothing changes’, as Chris says ‘I am giving them a band-aid’. The band-aid, building the capacity of the youth through experiences like camping, covers up the real injury, or site that needs attention which is the conditions that these youth live in.

Participants also shared a number of reports that speak to capacity building in their experiences in engagement in community level interventions. Alex reveals the link between the theme of making connections and building capacity, when talking about ‘community building’ as an ‘abstract ability’ to ‘bring people together’ and ‘help them develop skills’. As a result of this connecting and capacity building the community is then able to ‘work together’. As Alex says:

[Community building] is having this abstract ability to bring people together and to help them develop the skills to then work together without them even realizing that they are doing it... when it becomes something beyond a project or an organized you know community task... 4-470-473

Neila speaks to the importance of being able to determine the level of capacity in a community when engaging in community level interventions. As she states, ‘there isn’t always the capacity within the community’ to create access to ‘things that we consider everyone should have’ like ‘health care’, ‘basic education’ and ‘human rights’. Neila also comments on the importance of being able to recognize the level of capacity that exists within a community, as she

says ‘it is also a huge error to assume that there is not capacity within the community’. In

Neila’s words:

...health care, basic education things that we consider that everyone should have access to like human rights and so there isn’t always necessarily the capacity within the community to create that fully in any community whether-wherever that is...but I think that it is also a huge error to assume that there is not capacity within the community...5-471-474

Needing Freedom

As participants described their experiences in engagement in community level interventions they spoke about the need for a sense of freedom in order to do the work, this need for freedom is evident when Alex says ‘you had the freedom to work with the community’. Without this sense of freedom participants described feeling ‘stifled’ and constrained which interfered with their ability to engage in community level interventions. Participants described needing freedom from the ideological constraints of human service work that targets individuals, restrictive work environments, and expectations to engage in community level interventions at the macro and global levels.

In *A Story about Dave*, Chris’s frustration with the constraints of human service systems that focus on the individual, as she says ‘it’s the individual-the way we compartmentalize all the services’ and don’t address the ‘whole problem’, is revealed.

I had the benefit of getting to know people after five years right on the streets somebody comes and is in really rough shape from a bad night or something from using and I would say Dave you know you look like shit. Is today your day? I can make the call you know if it’s somebody that has been saying ya ya I should try to get clean or whatever, I know them well enough...so anyway good old Dave maybe goes into 30 day rehab-great he is not using, he is eating properly and then he comes out and then what right? He maybe lasts a week sitting in his room alone but they have the same needs as we do, they want to belong so ya he goes down to the bar and hey Dave your here (T-that’s where his friends are) ya so again it’s the individual the way we sort of compartmentalize all the services I mean it’s a systemic problem so how can we think we are going to be dealing-p-with the problem’s if we are not addressing the whole-the whole problem? 3-658-668

As Chris goes on to describe her experience there is a sense that she feels constrained by human service delivery systems that are grounded in individualistic approaches as she says, 'I don't think our work stops there'; in some ways these approaches stop or constrain her from working to address 'broader issues'. Chris is seeking or needing freedom from these ideological constraints, as she says 'I don't want to be part of the problem....so I left'. For Chris then engaging in community level interventions requires a sense of freedom from the constraints of 'dominant ideologies' in human service work that are 'still very much focused on the individual'.

As she says:

...this is the bedrock this is where potential lies in community change and in effecting broader systemic changes right and so how-why isn't this taken up in school? Out of all of our classes we're mostly, well still in counselling human change process is still very much focused on the individual right and to me that's problematic! If we keep doing individual work and that work is important-but I don't think our work stops there so don't we all want to address the broader issues of why people are marginalized...I mean I get it in the sense that it's not part of our ideology, it's not the way funding is set up it's the way models of agencies- it's just counter to the dominant-p-(T-ideology)-yaa, I left because I said you know what for me to effect change I don't want to be part of the problem -I am getting a good living here. I am the real beneficiary...out of all these services and I didn't feel like it was umm-ya what I said is I need to get into policy I need to change the system, so I left.... 3-374 & 680

As mentioned in the previous discussion of *The Fire Story*, engagement in community level interventions was integral in the mandate of the organization and job description that directed Alex's work. As a result Alex 'had the freedom to work with a community', rather than with young people who had been 'identified', which Alex suggests is more typical in CYC work. The structure of the work environment provided a sense of freedom that was vital in order for Alex to engage in community level intervention work, as Alex says:

...you had the freedom to work with a community where quite often like before this job I came from residential and you know most of the time CYC practitioners we work with the young people that have been identified or that are really struggling with behaviour or we are doing family support with the community based jobs it's incredible because the only qualifications for someone to become your client you know we never called them

that...was that they lived in the neighbourhood...and it's amazing to have the freedom to do whatever the kids in the community want.4-176-189

Unlike Alex's experience, agency mandates and the job descriptions of other participants didn't always include engagement in community level interventions as an aspect of practitioners' work. However, in some instances practitioners saw the possibilities of community level work, had flexible work environments, and the support of supervisors, all of which contributed to a sense of freedom that enabled practitioners to engage in community level interventions. For Sue, who wasn't hired as a 'community development facilitator', a sense of freedom enabled her to engage in agency and community level work, as she says, 'if I had tight reins around how I had done this at the agency and community level then it wouldn't have happened'. Sue's need for freedom to engage in the community level intervention work is evident when she says, 'if my supervisor was more restrictive with me.....it couldn't have happened' and 'I would feel stifled and that's never a good place for me'. As Sue says:

If my supervisor was more restrictive with me and had me on a leash laugh I wouldn't last with her-laugh-you know-it couldn't have happened. Even around when I was describing initially building those communities around the foster families if I had tight reins around that and then if I had tight reins around how I had done this at the agency and community level then it wouldn't have happened. It wouldn't have happened. Then I would feel quite stifled by that and that's never a good place for me. I love those types of things, so then I would have just left. I can't do anything here...I just didn't really realize it was community until it was after the fact in a sense you know. I wasn't I didn't get hired as a community development facilitator or coordinator...2-644 & 926-964

Neila also experiences a need for freedom in order to engage in community level interventions and for her the freedom that she needs and ultimately grants herself is freedom from the expectation to engage in community level interventions 'in the public eye' and on a global scale. Neila describes in detail her 'journey', which began with her work in international development, and an expectation that she felt to be initiating large scale global change. Over time Neila realizes that she prefers to work at more local and personal levels, which is counter to

the expectation that she feels, as she says in a whisper, ‘I wasn’t supposed to feel this way’. At the end of her journey, she grants herself the freedom from the expectation to engage in community level interventions on a global scale and finds a way that fits for her, as she says in ‘making change happen where I am’. Neila describes her journey this way:

...after reading Stephen Lewis’s book I went and saw him speak and I definitely went through a few years off and on...like wanting to be a Stephen Lewis and wanting to be that much in the public eye... so when I got back from Africa one of the realizations that I came to was-p- okay in all of this huge big picture, this huge big political mess the only opportunity I have to create change and the most important avenue for change that I can initiate needs to come from Canada...from North America and so what I am going to do where I can be most effective is not trying to teach pre-school in Malawi but instead living those experiences and bringing that global perspective into classrooms in Canada... so that was a really really important journey and yet I wasn’t quite done with that with the international element of it and so I did that fellowship in India...and I felt like that was a really good trial for me you know do I want to be initiating global change, do I want to be working on community level change...I just went I really like the community I am from (in a whisper) and I felt like I wasn’t supposed to feel that way...so I really feel like through all of that is really my priority is really about creating change you know even on a global level has become community level and has become the personal level and it’s really just become about the daily choices I am making and the daily interactions that I am initiating and really about making change happened where I am...5-900-987

The pivotal role that practitioner’s play in making connections, the work that practitioners do to build the capacity of individuals, organizations and the relational networks that make up community, and the freedom they need to carry out work with communities are all central themes in the experiences of practitioners’ as they engage in community level interventions. As practitioners engage in community level interventions they draw on and develop connections across multiple levels of the community, in particular between individuals and groups that wouldn’t typically connect, and use these connections to shift the balance of power and ensure that the needs of individuals are met. The emphasis for participants as they ‘pulled people together’ was on making connections between themselves and others within

relational networks (micro), between relational networks (meso) and between organizations (exo), rather than with larger macro structures such as policy or political processes.

The stories and reports that practitioners shared show how practitioners engage in community capacity building interventions with individuals, organizations and the community. Some of the stories told reveal how individual capacity building approaches are storied as community level interventions and how practitioners experienced both the benefits and limitations of these individual capacity building approaches. The stories also reveal a tension between individual and community level approaches as they illuminate the way in which practitioners attempt to build community capacity through individual interventions and how these approaches can shadow the larger macro level conditions that contribute to the individual need driving the change process.

Practitioners described a need for freedom in order to engage in community level interventions and this need for freedom was experienced in various ways. Practitioners needed freedom in their agency mandates and job descriptions and in some cases were granted this sense of freedom even if community level intervention work was not formally part of their jobs. Chris, in particular spoke about the need for freedom from the ideological constraints of human service systems that target individuals, to the neglect of larger structural conditions. Neila, needed to grant herself freedom from the expectation to initiate large scale global change. In essence, practitioners described a desire for a sense of freedom from human service delivery systems that don't support their efforts in engagement in community level interventions.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The stories and reports that child and youth care practitioners shared reveal eight salient themes in relation to experiences with community, community change and community level interventions. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the significance of these findings, and in order to do so I first discuss the results of the study in relation to the literature reviewed. Next, I explore the overall implications of the results to the field of child and youth care and finally, I pose questions for further inquiry.

Results in Relation to Relevant Literature

Experiences with Community

Practitioners' experience with community as 'a collection of people' that are tied together by various and sometimes contradictory factors; such as, common interests and purpose, shared geographical boundaries, and historical, cultural and social similarities, and diversity is fairly congruent with common definitions of community found in the literature. Similarly, community is commonly defined in the literature as communities of place, identity and interest (Glover Reed, 2005). The emphasis on this common definition though is the factors that tie communities together and for practitioners' engagement with collections of people and the act of helping to make a difference was most salient in their experiences with community. Practitioners experience with community was most congruent with Gilchrist (2009), who draws on complexity theory, and believes "...that experience of community is generated by and manifest in the informal networks that exist between people, between groups and between organizations" (p. 1). The emphasis on relationships in community is not new and can be found in early work, such as Tönnies's, on communities (Gamble & Weil, 2005; Gilchrist, 2009). Gilchrist states "[T]he idea

that the ‘essence’ of community is to be found among relationships...(p. 41), certainly reflects practitioners’ experience with community.

This focus on relationships in practitioners’ experiences with community is not surprising given the centrality of the relational perspective in child and youth care practice (Garfat, 2008; Garfat & Fulcher, 2011; Gharabaghi, 2008; Mattingly & Stuart, 2002). Within the field of child and youth care this relational perspective has evolved from an emphasis on “having a” relationship to “being in” relationship, which is a shift in thinking that emphasizes the role that not just the individual practitioner plays, but all of those involved in the development of relationships (Garfat, 2008). Current literature within the field articulates relationship as the space in between self and other and it is within this space that child and youth care practice is enacted (Garfat, 2008; Garfat & Fulcher, 2011). As Garfat and Fulcher state “[W]e often call this co-created space between us *the relationship* and this involves more than just ‘having a relationship’...it means that the Practitioner is constantly attending to the co-created space between us...” (italics in original, p. 8). As practitioners describe their experience with community as experiences with ‘a collection of people’ the emphasis on relational work is illuminated. In descriptions of experiences with community, not only do practitioners focus on relationship development between themselves and others, in ‘pulling people together’ they also attend to the co-created space between others.

Given the relational perspective in child and youth care it is not surprising that community is viewed predominantly as a ‘collection of people’, rather than as economic and political systems that are influenced by policy, or even built or natural environments. This relational perspective, combined with an understanding of community as primarily networks of relationships, is significant because it both enhances and limits the community level intervention

work that practitioners engage in. The relational focus enhances practice as it enables practitioners to engage in relationships and facilitate the development of relationships between people in communities, which as the stories told reveal can strengthen a sense of community and contribute to shifting the balance of power. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) attest to the significance of relationship building in their asset-based community development approach, as they state “...one of the central challenges for asset-based community developers is to constantly build and rebuild the relationships between and among local residents, local associations and local institutions” (p. 9). Conversely, it can also be a limitation because as practitioners focus their attention on community as ‘a collection of people’ their interventions tend to be aimed at individuals, while the structural conditions that impact individuals remain out of view and as a result are not considered a target for interventions. Consequently, community level interventions are in fact limited to interventions that are aimed at individuals or a ‘collection of people’, rather than at the macro level factors that influence people such as economic, social and political systems.

For participants though community as ‘a collection of people’ alone didn’t constitute community, rather community was experienced as a collection of people, being responsible, working on something together, contributing, being active; essentially, helping to make a difference in the lives of the people that they work with. For a ‘collection of people’ to be recognized as community then they needed to be engaged in the act of helping to make a difference, which illuminates how community becomes constructed as a mechanism for good deeds and a place of comfort. Consequently, romantic notions of community become threaded through the stories that we tell and part of a larger narrative about community as a “...force for good...” (Gilchrist, 2009, p.1). As a result community, like a half eclipsed moon, is only partially

seen. As practitioners it is easy to get caught up in these romantic notions of community, I speak from personal experience here, as our social services systems; for example, mission statements, funding criteria and strategic directions, are drenched with language about community and underlying this language is a general feeling or belief that community is a good thing.

Embracing community for the good it can do is not completely misguided, as the literature reviewed suggests there is general agreement that community has the potential to support and nourish human life. However, when community is only seen for its ability to help make a difference and in the words of participants, for its 'beauty' and 'richness' the problematic nature of community remains hidden from view and the potential for community to oppress and exclude remains unacknowledged. Additionally, the macro factors, such as political, social and economic systems that can contribute to oppression and exclusion and impinge on communities are obscured from view and the emphasis on the individual in child and youth care interventions persists. As Janet Newbury (2009) states in her recent discussion about socially just practice in child and youth care:

...if we truly are working towards the well-being of children and youth then attending to other dimension of their lives (beyond their own behaviour, development, and psychology) is a socially just approach to doing so. Otherwise, we are not practicing ecologically, as we claim to do. (p. 26)

It is somewhat paradoxical then that in our efforts to practice ecologically, to work at the level of community, we weave stories that celebrate the capacity of community as a collection of people helping to make a difference and in doing so foreground individuals, relationships and romantic notions of community while macro level dimensions that influence the lives of children and youth fall from our view and consequently from our intervention efforts.

Experiences with Community Change

Practitioners' experience with community change, as change driven by need is congruent with Homan's (1994) definition of community change discussed in the literature that suggests the purpose of community change is to improve the way needs are met. Indeed, many of the stories participants shared show how practitioners engage in community level interventions in an effort to improve the way the needs of individuals are met. For example, in the *Food Co-Op Story*, Mary works to better meet the individual's need for food. In *The Housing Story*, Chris works to meet the individual's need for housing and in the process of doing so 'consolidates a sense of community', suggesting that the client's need for belonging is also met, at least in part, through community change processes that bring people together.

The results of this study represent a departure from Homan's (1994) definition of community change in that they make visible not only the client's needs, but also the practitioners' needs, and the reciprocal nature of these needs in driving the community change process. For example, in *The Sport Organization* story, the practitioner's need to help and the client's need for help drive the change process. In addition, the practitioners' need to not only 'help', but also to pursue professional 'interests' and to 'feel connected', in essence to belong, is evident in a number of the stories told; for example, in *Getting Involved* Mary speaks about 'feeling connected' and more 'part of' the church as she gets involved and helps people. As practitioners take on professional roles in community level intervention work, just as in individual work, it is critically important to pay attention to whose needs are being met and who benefits most from the interventions that we engage in.

This study also shows how a focus on meeting individual needs has the potential to mitigate the impact of larger structural conditions, as Alex says making people more

‘comfortable’, but in some ways sustain the conditions that created the need. This finding is consistent with Ledwith’s (2005) argument that for change efforts to be transformative they must move beyond the good work that takes place at the local level and also aim for change at the institutional and societal levels. As many of the stories participants told reveal, for example *The Housing Story*, *The Band-Aid Story* and *The Park Story*, the focus on meeting individual need limits our possibilities to engage with larger structural conditions and on some level causes us to accept what Alex described as ‘traditions’ within neighbourhoods. As we engage in interventions that focus on the needs of individuals, we run the risk of accepting what could be argued is unacceptable; for example, to accept that poverty is an inevitable reality and therefore focus our exclusive attention on making people who live with poverty more comfortable. As Gharabaghi suggests, in Gharabaghi and Krueger (2010):

[H]omelessness happens, as does malnourishment, school failure, institutional abuse, and so many other things that one might consider extraordinary were it not for their persistent presence. We do recognize that these features of contemporary North American society are undesirable, perhaps even embarrassing, given the relative wealth of our continent, but there are no serious attempts to eliminate them. Instead, there are always initiatives to mitigate their impact.... (p. 29)

Homan’s (1994) definition of community change and a number of the approaches to community level interventions discussed in the literature review (Chaskin, 2001; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Ledwith, 2005) suggest that community change takes place at the individual, organizational and policy levels and within broader social, economic and political systems. However, for participants community change, although experienced as both a site and a tool for change, was more likely to be experienced within individuals and the relational networks that

make up community than within these broader levels and systems as suggested in the literature reviewed. Consistent with Ohmer and Korr (2006) and Ledwith (2005), practitioners were more confident and hopeful about the potential for change at this relational level than they were about the potential for change beyond the relational network, that is in the communities capacity as a tool for effecting change in larger social, economic or political systems, as Neila describes it, 'grandiose change'. This view of community as both a site and a vehicle for change is a unique perspective, not found in the literature reviewed, that may reflect a way to distinguish between community and society and for practitioners community as a site for change is experienced as achievable but community as a tool to enact change in society, that is in broader macro systems, is a more difficult proposition.

Resisting and shifting power was the third theme in relation to experiences with community change and these findings are consistent with Gilchrist's (2009) and Ledwith's (2005), assertions, as discussed in the literature review, that community development is fundamentally about changing relations of power. The findings that practitioners resisted power were not reflected in the literature reviewed and is an aspect of practitioners' experience that is worthy of further investigation, especially given the pivotal role that power plays in community change and community development (Gilchrist, 2009; Glover Reed, 2005; Ledwith, 2005).

Experiences with Community Level Interventions

Given the emphasis on understanding communities as 'a collection of people', it is not surprising that making connections was a central theme in practitioners' experience in engagement in community level interventions. The significance of making connections is echoed in the social capital literature (Barnes et al., 2006; Gamble & Weil, 2010; Gilchrist 2009), and in Gilchrist's (2009) networking approach to community development. As discussed

in the literature review, social capital is seen as existing within, across, and between networks. Of particular relevance to making connections in community level intervention work is bridging social capital, which is developed through connections between groups of people and communities, and linking social capital which is developed through connections between people and organisations that cross boundaries associated with class, status and similarity. Bridging and linking social capital was seen in a number of the stories and reports that participants shared; for example, in *The Housing Story*, Chris develops bridging social capital as she provides opportunities for residents to connect and work together on a number of projects, and she develops linking social capital as she creates opportunities for residents to connect with council members. Networking is articulated as a core competency in community development work (Gilchrist, 2009) and involves making connections which as argued by Gilchrist, citing Hastings (1993), is the “more hidden work” (p. 45) of community development. Gilchrist speaks about the significance of connecting, in her description of meta-networking, which she describes as:

In community development good networking is about developing and managing a diverse array of contacts and relationships. Workers make judgements about how best to initiate and support useful links between themselves and others, and more importantly, use these to help people make and maintain connections with each other. This later function I have termed ‘meta-networking’ to indicate that it is about the work involved in supporting and transforming *other people’s* networks. (italics in original, p. 105)

The point that networking is the ‘hidden work’ of community development is important to acknowledge and related to the theme of needing freedom. As Alex indicated in *The Fire Story*, years of community level work that Alex engaged in almost becomes invisible as the youth in the

story organize the memorial and Alex gets assigned the role of bringing Kleenex. Alex is fortunate to have the ‘freedom to work with the community’, which is articulated in Alex’s mandate and job description, enabling Alex to celebrate the seemingly minimal role of bringing Kleenex. Making connections is an important aspect of engaging in community level interventions and one that CYC practitioners, given the emphasis on relational practice, are well positioned for. However, as Alex’s story suggests making connections, although central in participants’ experience, is often not highly visible, thus requires organizational structures that acknowledge the value of making connections and grant practitioners the freedom to engage in the work.

Although it’s important to acknowledge the role that making connections can play in community level intervention work, it is equally important to also acknowledge the limitations visible in the theme of making connections. Making connections within the networks of relationships take place within the collection of people that is understood as community, once again foregrounds interventions that take place at the individual and perhaps organizational level while attention to macro level dimensions fall from our view and subsequently our intervention efforts.

Building capacity was the second prominent theme in experiences in engagement in community level interventions. The results of the study reveal how practitioners work across multiple levels of community aiming to build the capacity of individuals, organizations and the relational networks that constitute community and the possibilities and limitations of these community level interventions. These results are congruent with the literature reviewed that articulates community capacity building as an approach to community level interventions that aims to leverage and build the capacity of the community, which is constituted as individuals,

organizations and the social networks that tie them together, and influence broader macro level influences such as economic and political structures and policy (Barter, 2003 Chaskin, 2001; Mannes et al., 2005). Evident in practitioners' descriptions about their engagement in capacity building is Chaskin's (2001) findings that community capacity can be built through strategic interventions; such as, leadership and organizational development, community organizing and fostering relations among organizations.

The results also indicate emphasis on individual interventions in the name of community capacity building; for example, in *The Gardening Program* story, and some question regarding the effectiveness of community capacity building in creating systemic or macro level change, which is congruent with the literature reviewed. For example, *The Band-Aid Story* reveals questions about the effectiveness of community capacity in influencing macro systems, as the literature suggests community capacity building aims to influence macro level systems; however, there is lack of clarity regarding how it does so and whether or not community capacity building is an effective approach for influencing macro level structures (Barter, 2003; Chaskin, 2001; Checkoway et al., 2003; Mannes et al., 2005).

As the literature review revealed, since the 1980's there has been growing interest within the field of child and youth care to move beyond an emphasis on individual interventions to include interventions that are aimed at communities and systemic change and to this end community capacity building is garnering a great deal of attention within the field. The results of this study, which reveal the limitations of community capacity building, would suggest that as a field it would be wise to proceed with caution; that is to acknowledge what community capacity building can accomplish and what it can't. As a field we run the risk of embracing romantic notions of community and seeing community capacity building as *the* way to expand

intervention efforts, which given the limitations of community capacity building may be a shift in the wrong direction.

In order to engage in community level interventions participants spoke about needing freedom in their work settings, from their own expectations to create change at macro and global levels, and from ideological constraints of human service work that targets individuals. The need for freedom from the ideological constraints of intervention approaches that target individuals is reminiscent of the child and youth care literature reviewed that advocates for a shift in child and youth care practice to include interventions that move beyond individuals (Anglin, 1999; Gharabaghi, 2008; VanderVen, 2006) and in the work of authors such as Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000), Sanders et al, (2009) and Barter (2003,2007) that advocate for multi-layered interventions in human service work.

Implications for Child and Youth Care

Curriculum and Practice

The results of this study show how practitioners experience community as primarily a ‘collection of people’ and as such community level intervention efforts tend to target the micro, meso and occasionally exo, rather than macro, levels of communities. The emphasis on individuals as a target for intervention efforts in the name of community level interventions is troublesome, especially in light of movements within the field to expand intervention efforts, because even as we claim to engage in community level interventions our focus on changing the individual persists.

How then do we as field develop beyond understanding that children and youth are part of a larger ecological context to engaging in interventions that are aimed at the various dimensions within that context? Community capacity building has garnered a great deal of

attention in the child and youth care literature as a way to move beyond the focus on individuals, and based on the results of this study I would urge caution and suggest that we may want to reconsider our enthusiasm for community capacity building and instead focus our attention on multi-level interventions.

As I contemplate the results of this study I believe that much of the problem lies in language, in particular in language about community and what it is and isn't. Community practice, community development and community capacity building are all approaches discussed in the literature review that presume some agreement or at least clear understanding about the term community and all articulated some hope for change in macro level factors, suggesting that macro level factors are understood as being part of community. However, as the results of this study show and the community level interventions approaches reviewed in the literature suggest, mechanisms for creating change at the macro level were not always evident. Sites et al (2007) echo this finding when they state "Those who consciously state their work as 'community practice' often embrace a definition of community that disconnects their strategies from larger structures and processes (e.g. Johnson, 2001) or that gestures toward 'macro' forces in only the most generic terms" (p. 520). The term community would suggest something perhaps broader than 'a collection of people'; however, as the results of this study revealed community as 'a collection of people' was central in practitioners experience. In addition, it is a term that is often imbued with romantic notions and these factors all contribute to the fuzzy connotations associated with community, that Sites et al (2007) citing Williams points out.

The ambiguity surrounding the term community is problematic because the way in which community is understood influences engagement in community level interventions. I am concerned that community capacity building, which is garnering a great deal of attention within

the field of child and youth care, is going to become a panacea for what we are truly aiming for as a profession, which is change in the multiple levels of the child's ecological system, part of which is community. I believe that focusing our attention on multi-level interventions, rather than community level interventions, would assist in providing some clarity around what community is and isn't and be more congruent with the ecological perspective that we claim to embrace in child and youth care practice. A focus on multi-level interventions would not only capture individual approaches, it would also capture community level approaches and more clearly capture macro level approaches.

To this end, I would first suggest revising the label that I assigned to the definition of community level interventions proposed at the onset of this paper, to a definition of multi-level interventions, which is in keeping with the language used by Sanders et al (2009) and VanderVen's (2006) comment that "...to significantly influence the quality of human services delivered to children requires a comprehensive ecological approach that can influence each of the environmental systems that impinge on children and affect their lives" (p. 254). A multi-levelled approach that draws on language found in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory is not only congruent with the ecological perspective already prominent within child and youth care but could lay the groundwork for a shift in thinking in child and youth care practice; from simply understanding the child in context to considering ways in which to influence context in our interventions efforts. Essentially, a multi-level approach to intervention planning would more robustly capture ecological theory and strengthen efforts within the field to practice from an ecological perspective.

I would also suggest that descriptions of the child and youth care field and the Competencies for Professional Child and Youth Work Practitioners (Mattingly, Stuart &

VanderVen, 2010) need to more vividly reflect the shift taking place in the field from child and youth care workers working on individual and family interventions within the ecological life-space of the child and community based contexts (Anglin, 1999; Ferguson, et al., 1993; Gabor & Kuehne, 1993), to expanded roles in community capacity building and macro level interventions (Barter, 2003; Gharabaghi, 2008; Krueger, 2000; VanderVen, 2006), and as suggested these interventions be considered multi-level interventions. The current competency document does speak to the need for foundational knowledge in understanding and working with communities. In addition, it outlines professional competencies in community engagement as accessing information, developing relationships with organizations and people, and connecting clients to community agencies, which I would suggest reflect competencies required for community based practice rather than community or multi-level interventions. A competency document for child and youth care professionals that more vigorously reflects this shift in the field and is more comprehensive in its attention to the ecological perspective and multi-level interventions is significant because of its influence on both post-secondary curriculum and practice within the field.

The results of this study point to the need for greater attention to and further investigation about multi-level interventions in child and youth care practice, which would include both community and macro level interventions, in CYC curriculum at the graduate and undergraduate level. My vision would be for curriculum development work to take place at least at the provincial level in an effort to see comprehensive change take place within child and youth care curriculum and ensure work in this area is done collaboratively with all of the post-secondary institutions in British Columbia that offer child and youth care programs. I would recommend

the following factors be taken into account, based on the results of this study, as work in this area progresses.

First, review and develop more robust curriculum centred on the ecological perspective, and ecological theory to ensure it reflects not just an understanding of the child and youth in context, but also engagement in interventions that are aimed at context.

Second, work to link current curriculum to curriculum about multi-level interventions. In doing so, examine both the strengths and limitations that the current curriculum offers as we work to develop competencies in engagement in multi-level interventions. It is important to build on the curriculum that the study found participants are drawing on, like the relational perspective, in their engagement in community level interventions. This work is important because as the results of the study indicate perspectives within CYC, like the relational perspective, influence how practitioners understand community and therefore impact how we engage in community level interventions.

Third, I would suggest that multi-level intervention work be captured in curriculum about needs assessment and intervention planning in child and youth care. In doing so, when students are learning about intervention planning they are not only learning to understand the child and youth in his or her context, and to intervene accordingly, but are also exploring how they might intervene at the community and macro levels as part of their intervention plans. Multi-level interventions then become integrated into child and youth care intervention planning.

Fourth, there is a need for curriculum that invites thorough explorations of community, community change, community level interventions, and multi-level interventions in child and youth care practice. Although a number of models and frameworks for community level interventions exist, as discussed in the literature review, results reveal particular emphasis on and

limitations with capacity building approaches. Therefore, I would suggest that curriculum be expanded to include not just community capacity building, but also a fuller range of community level approaches, as discussed in the literature review, including related theories and roles for practitioners.

In addition, I would concur with much of the literature reviewed that advocates for practitioners to have a solid theoretical understanding of the various theories that inform and can contribute to community level intervention work and to be strategic in the intervention approaches they engage in (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Glover Reed, 2005; Ledwith, 2005). Given the fuzzy connotations associated with the meaning of community and disconnect between community and macro factors discussed previously, I would suggest that as students are exploring various community level approaches, they are continuously delineating between community and macro factors. Some of the frameworks reviewed such as Gamble and Weil's (2010) are comprehensive in that they capture a full range of intervention approaches that include macro level work, for example their political and social action approach, however, not all approaches are as comprehensive or clearly map out strategies that are aimed at macro level factors. Given a multi-level approach, the models presented in the literature review may need to be augmented with additional curriculum that more clearly addresses macro level influences, for example curriculum around advocacy work would complement the models presented in the literature review.

It is my hope that the findings of this study and subsequent recommendations with regards to curriculum development that I have outlined above will not only contribute to post-secondary education in child and youth care but ultimately to child and youth care practice. I envision a practice model that expands current perspectives, frameworks and models about child

and youth care practice to reflect multi-level interventions, rather than individual and family focused interventions. This approach involves building on the strengths of the field in relation to multi-level interventions, such as the relational perspective, while also recognizing the limitations that current frameworks pose as we shift our emphasis in child and youth care practice from interventions aimed at individuals to interventions that are aimed at the broader contexts which influence the lives of children and youth. Pivotal in an enhanced practice model for child and youth care, that integrates multi-level interventions, is additional curriculum on community and multi-level interventions, integration of multi-level interventions into needs assessment and intervention planning curriculum, and fuller attention to ecological theory, which informs the ecological perspective in child and youth care practice and in its truest sense calls for multi-level interventions in human service work.

The suggestions I have articulated above offer some ways forward; however, a number of questions linger that deserve further investigation (a) what and how are child and youth care students currently learning about community level interventions?, (b) what are the most effective approaches for learning about multi-level interventions in child and youth care practice?, and (c) how do child and youth care students and practitioners engage with and resist power as it relates to multi-level intervention practice?

Mandates and Job Descriptions

Another significant finding of this study, with implications for child and youth care practice, is the need for organizational structures; such as, mandates, job descriptions, and funding guidelines that support multi level intervention work. Results of the study indicate that some participants, like Alex, worked in environments where community level interventions were formally part of their work; while others, like Sue, discovered the value of community level

work and were fortunate to have supervisors that supported them despite the work not being formally articulated in their job descriptions. If the child and youth care profession is serious about efforts to shift the scope of interventions from an individual focus to one that also includes community and multi-level interventions then we as a profession must advocate for mandates and job descriptions that provide us with the freedom to engage in the work.

However, we must proceed with caution because as the results of this study indicate the needs of practitioners' play a role in driving community change processes, so it is imperative that mandates, job descriptions and funding formulas first and foremost meet the needs of children, youth and communities and enable practitioners to engage in interventions aimed at macro level factors that can contribute to the creation of need. As we work towards formalizing our role as practitioners in community level work we must ensure that our desire to help does not undermine the integrity and capacity of communities to support individuals and help make a difference. By establishing ourselves as professional practitioners engaged in community level work we run the risk of entrenching our stake in what Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) call "client neighbourhoods", that is communities that are defined by the problems they have and the risks they pose to individuals, because as professional community development workers we need client neighbourhoods in order to justify our professional roles and meet our needs to help. So as we move forward in our efforts to create greater opportunities to engage in multi-level interventions, we must proceed with caution in order to ensure that our need to help, doesn't interfere with the needs of the people that we work with. This is no small feat giving funding criteria that often emphasizes deficits and a focus on individual work.

Thus, we as a profession need to proceed with caution as we advocate for the resources and supports necessary for engagement in multi-level interventions, which capture interventions

aimed at individuals, communities, and macro level factors the impact individuals and communities. I would suggest that this work needs to be carried out by individual child and youth care practitioners, agencies and professional associations.

Conclusion

Exploring how child and youth care practitioners experience their engagement in community level interventions with Mary, Sue, Chris, Alex and Neila, has enriched and deepened my understanding of community level interventions in child and youth care in multiple ways. One of my aims was to give prominence to the voices of the practitioners that participated in this study and it is their voices that are captured in the results, which reveal significant implications for child and youth care curriculum and practice, organizational mandates and job descriptions, as described above.

Results of this study show how the problematic nature of ‘community’ influences engagement in community level interventions and how community level interventions have a tendency to target the micro, meso and occasionally exo, rather than macro, levels of communities. It is for this reason that multi-level interventions, which would include community level interventions, are recommended as a way to shift child and youth care practice from an emphasis on interventions with individuals, towards greater emphasis on interventions that are aimed at the multiple levels of the child and youth’s ecological system. A focus on multi-level interventions, rather than individual interventions, would be more congruent with the ecological perspective that we claim to embrace in child and youth care practice.

Since the 1980’s, there has been a shift in the field of child and youth care to engage in interventions which are aimed, not just at individual children and families, but at the multiple levels of the ecological systems that influence the lives of children and youth. It is my hope that

this study can not only contribute to, but perhaps stimulate this slow and steady shift that is underway in the field of child and youth care.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Who?

Are you a Child and Youth Care practitioner, with a Bachelor of Arts and/or a Master of Arts Degree in CYC? Does or has your work involved community-level interventions?

- Community level interventions are distinct from individual, family focused interventions and community-based practice. Community-level interventions aim to change various dimensions of the larger contexts that we live within and that influence our well-being. The target for change can take place at multiple levels as follows: micro-system level interventions are aimed at social networks of individuals, families and groups; meso-system interventions are aimed at the interactions between various systems; exo-system interventions are aimed at organizations, agencies and neighbourhood and macro-system interventions are aimed at policy changes, economic and political systems.

If yes, this is an invitation to participate in a research study that aims to describe the experiences of Child and Youth Care practitioners in relation to their engagement in community-level interventions.

What?

Your participation will involve a brief initial telephone conversation and one interview, either in-person, over the phone or with the use of Skype. Participation is voluntary, confidential and you may withdraw from the research project at any time.

Why?

Your participation will contribute to valuable knowledge regarding community-level interventions in child and youth care practice.

How?

If you are interested please see the attached Participant Consent Form for more detailed information and contact Teri Derksen at 250-755-7359, 250-216-8103 or tderksen@uvic.ca by September 17, 2010.

Appendix B

School of Child and Youth Care
University of Victoria

Participant Consent Form

Community Level Interventions in Child and Youth Care Practice

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled *Community Level Interventions in Child and Youth Care Practice*, which is being conducted by Teri Derksen, graduate student in the department of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. The research is part of the requirements for a Masters of Arts degree in Child and Youth Care. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sibylle Artz.

Please contact me, Teri at 250-755-7359 or teriderksen@uvic.ca if you have any questions. You may contact Dr. Artz at 250-721-6472.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to describe, using a narrative approach, the experiences of child and youth care practitioners in relation to their engagement in community-level interventions. The study is concerned with the experiences of practitioners and the ways in which they construct and enact their roles in community level interventions. While ‘community’, ecological and systems perspectives, and a growing interest in community capacity building are evident in child and youth care, the literature reveals numerous complexities, contradictions, challenges and opportunities inherent in work at the community level. The study is intended to stimulate further dialogue in the field of child and youth care in order to enrich and deepen our understanding of community level interventions in child and youth care practice.

My interest in studying community level interventions has emerged from over 20 years of professional experience working with children and youth in a variety of settings, including community development work, initial results of a review of the child and youth care curriculum at the University of Victoria that I have been involved in, and an inquiry into the literature; all of which have led me to believe that more attention needs to be paid to the vital role that child and youth care practitioners can play in community level intervention efforts.

Importance of this Research

The research is important because it will enhance our understanding of community level interventions in child and youth care practice.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have post-secondary education in child and youth care and your work involves community level interventions. Community level interventions are distinct from individual, family focused interventions and community-based practice. Community level interventions aim to change various dimensions of the larger contexts that we live within and that influence our well-being. Community level interventions are interventions aimed at “...changing the community itself rather than helping specific vulnerable individuals or families” (Barnes et al, p. 87). The target for change can take place at multiple

levels as follows: micro-system level interventions are aimed at social networks of individuals, families and groups; meso-system interventions are aimed at the interactions between various systems; exo-system interventions are aimed at organizations, agencies and neighbourhood and macro-system interventions are aimed at policy changes, economic and political systems (Phelan, 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000; Schensul, 2009).

What is involved?

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a preliminary telephone conversation to answer questions, arrange for receipt of the signed consent form and to arrange the interview. There will be one interview that will last from 1 to 2 hours. Your permission will also be requested to contact you once after the interview, by a method of your choice, in the event that I require clarification or have further questions. This additional contact would require no more than one additional hour of your time. The interview will be audio-taped, written notes may be taken during the interview and a transcription of the interview will be made. You will be invited to see the transcription and if you choose to will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the representativeness of the transcript.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, primarily in terms of your time. Interviews will be scheduled according to your availability and will take place at a mutually agreed upon location.

Risks

The only anticipated risks to you by participating are risks to your anonymity and confidentiality. See the appropriate sections below regarding assurances in these matters.

Benefits

By participating in this research you will be contributing to knowledge in the field of child and youth care.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. In addition, you may decline to answer any question during the interview with no consequence for doing so. If you do withdraw from the study any data collected from you will be destroyed.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality will be assured as follows:

- I will be the only one accessing the data.
- Your identity will remain anonymous with the use of pseudonyms.
- Any individual or organization that you refer to during interviews will remain anonymous with the use of pseudonyms.
- All identifying information will be destroyed once the research is complete.

Dissemination of Results

Any written work or presentations based on the research will not contain any identifying information of participants, individuals that participants refer to and/or any organizations that participants work for or with.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study that identifies participants will be disposed of once the study is completed. Electronic data will be erased and paper copies will be shredded.

You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Are you willing to be contacted after the initial interview as outlined above? Yes No

If yes, how would you like to be contacted? Phone Email Other_____

Are you interested in seeing the transcript? Yes No Undecided*

*If undecided, I will ask you again after the interview

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Researcher</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix C Interview Guide

Community

How did you come to work with ‘community’?
 Can you tell me about a particular time when you worked with ‘community’?
 From the beginning, what happened?
 What was it like for you?
 Who was involved?
 What does your work with ‘community’ mean to you?
 What does ‘community’ mean to you?

Community Change

Can you tell me about an experience that you have had with ‘community change’?
 From the beginning, what happened?
 What was it like for you?
 Who was involved?
 What does your work with ‘community change’ mean to you?
 How would you describe community change?

Community-level interventions

Can you tell me about a time when you engaged in a community level intervention?
 Starting from the beginning, what happened?
 What were you hoping would happen?
 What was it like for you?
 What were the roles, or duties and responsibilities of the other people you worked with?
 What were their styles of working with you and with each other?
 What resources did you draw on and/or resist during this experience?

Can you tell me about a time when you felt you have done really effective work in a community level intervention?

Can you tell me about a time when you felt you didn’t experience success the way you had hoped to as you engaged in a community level intervention?

How has your understanding of and engagement in community level interventions changed over time and how might it continue to change?