

Negotiating Duality: A Framework for Understanding the Lives of Street-involved Youth

by

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B.A. Ryerson University, 2003

M.Ed. University of British Columbia, 2005

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in the School of Child and Youth Care

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Abstract

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In this study, classic grounded theory is used to explore and explain the relationship between street-involved youth and the streets. The main concern of the youth in this study is *negotiating duality*, and at the heart of this negotiation process is *seeking safety* on the streets while *struggling to emerge* into mainstream society.

Data was collected in a mid-sized urban Canadian city through semi-structured interviews, observation, conversations and photography with 52 current street-involved youth, 6 former street-involved youth, and 8 adults who work with this population.

The study led to the development of a substantive theory of *negotiating duality*, the core construct which emerged as the means by which street-involved youth handle their need to both survive in the day-to-day context of the streets while simultaneously working their way off the streets and back to mainstream society. Four domains of duality emerged as significant: dual logic, dual space and place, dual identity, and dual normality. Additionally, three interrelated concepts (social processes) emerged from the data: seeking safety, struggling to emerge, and living outside normal. These processes

were characterized by five bifocal strategies: escaping, provisioning, anchoring, routing, and using (in)visibility.

This theory is a model of person-place interaction, explaining the dynamic relationship street-involved youth have with and between the street and mainstream society. The findings of this study enhance understanding about street-involved youth and their interaction with the streets and mainstream society and provide a framework that can be utilized to inform youth homelessness services, policy development, and future research.

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“... all endings are also beginnings. We just don't know it at the time”
– Mitch Albom

The cement was cold, dampness beginning to soak through my jeans. Light drizzle is almost worse than rain – not bad enough to keep you indoors but miserable enough to turn people’s attention away from helping; heads down, focused on their destination. Sitting on the sidewalk, I watched people walk by. “Spare change?” “Money for food?” Mostly I watched legs walk by – the world and the people within it look different from down here. I’d lost track of how many days, months, years, I had spent *looking up* at the world, passing by me.

Do I really exist in such a parallel universe from everyone else? Do they not see me, or are they just so good at ignoring my attempts at connection, at conversation? Have I actually become a part of the street upon which I sit? Maybe so.

The rain had started again. Not a heavy downfall, more of a constant misting, just enough to get my glasses wet and wilt the papers in my hand. Walking from the bus to the office, I see the group of youth sitting on the sidewalk again. For the past six months that I have been coming to this office they have been there. They are as regular as I am, yet I walk past, and they sit there, staring up at everyone walking by them.

To see them, I have to look down toward the sidewalk. There is no equal, eye-to-eye contact. They are in an in-between space; an invisible barrier exists between them and me, or so it seems.

When did I move out of that space, and into the accepted public place of society? Was the shift even noticeable?

Two perspectives, 18 years apart, but they contain the same sentiment. The spaces we inhabit influence our lives, even if we cannot or do not see it.

Chapter One – Introduction

Every day, adults walk through urban Canadian cities and pass by street-involved youth, yet rarely do they stop to consider how the spaces and places they both occupy have an effect on the health and behaviour of these young people. We see the youths' outward appearance as they inhabit public spaces, appropriating them for their personal use, but we rarely consider how the spaces and places of their lives impact upon their identity, well-being, and behaviour.

Entering the Ph.D. program in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, I had carried questions around with me for almost two decades moulding them through a combination of personal and professional experience. I had the notion that there was more to life on the streets than many people believe or are prepared to credit. What influence did their daily environments have on the lives of street-involved youth? Was it possible that something positive could come from having lived on the streets? This study grew out of an intense curiosity about how physical location affects our choices and our consequent well-being. At the heart of my doctoral study are the two notions – meaningful places and the effect they have on our lives.

Through learning about the lives of street-involved youth, I also came to learn about my own life. My study allowed this former street kid to come to a revised understanding about street-involved youth and their place in our society. I also came to see more clearly the role that all of us have in affecting their lives. This study is an attempt to conceptualize and explain the relationship that exists between street-involved youth and the places they inhabit. In offering a theoretical explanation for how street-

involved youth are placed in a community and exploring how they interact with their daily environments, I hope to inform policy, education, training, practice, and research for child and youth care work with this population.

Research Problem and Context

This study is about understanding the day-to-day lives of street-involved youth and the nature of their experiences of living outside (i.e., on the streets) *as* normal while simultaneously experiencing living outside *of* normal (i.e., mainstream society). While it is the case that all young people live through an adolescence in which they experience a sense of duality (approach/avoidance) toward inclusion in mainstream society, the fact that street-involved youth spend an inordinate amount of time, and are highly noticeable, in public places means that this period of their development has some unique characteristics and challenges.

In this study it is necessary to find a way to distinguish *the streets* from all other environments in society. One way to do this is to contrast *the streets* with *mainstream society*. In speaking of *the streets* I am referring to the spaces and places, and agencies that are frequented by a primarily street-involved population. There are both tangible and ephemeral aspects to the streets. Examples of tangible street places would include shelters, street drop-in centres, soup kitchens, or drug alleys. The ephemeral quality of the streets is harder to identify and describe, but *the streets* also refers to spaces on city sidewalks, parks and green spaces, underpasses, and city pathways that are used by everyone in society, but hold specific meaning to those who are street-involved.

In contrast, *mainstream society* can be understood as the collective of “people who interact, share a culture, and usually live in the same geographic area” (Lindsey, Beach, & Ravelli, 2009, p. 2). While street-involved youth live in the same geographic area as the rest of society, they form a subculture and experience themselves as removed from the culture beyond the streets. There are many nuances and differences within society at large, but for the purpose of this study, given the lived experience of street-involved youth, the term “mainstream” will be used to reflect all that is not “the streets”. It is beyond the scope of this grounded theory study to examine mainstream society and culture as phenomena in their own right; the focus is on the street-youth subculture and the experiences of the youth themselves.

Through the use of the “classic” grounded theory method, I draw from the experience of street-involved youth and those who engage them in order to better understand the elements and dynamics of living a street-involved life. The intention of developing this framework is to better inform our services, training programs, and policies related to street-involved youth.

A review of the existing research demonstrates that street-involved youth encounter daily struggles to survive that test their inner strength and abilities: They must find resources despite facing mental and physical health challenges. They often live in dangerous and stressful environments, all the while engaging in risky behaviours (Karabanow, 2008; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Yonge Street Mission, 2009; Zerger, Strehlow & Gundlapalli, 2008). In general, the research demonstrates that street-involved youth face numerous barriers and live difficult lives. Knowing this, researchers may continue to examine the risks and challenges, or explore the resilience of street-involved

youth and the health-enhancing factors in their daily lives. In this study, how research with street-involved youth is conducted, as well as how such research results are interpreted and used, will include recognition of positive elements of street life.

Research Question and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical framework for understanding and explaining the lives of street-involved youth. It is within the context of promoting mental and social well-being that child and youth workers practice. From this standpoint, my study seeks to explain the interrelationship between street-involved youth and their daily environments as well as address the need to normalize our understanding of this population. This study also seeks to demonstrate the benefit of approaching child and youth care research from the standpoint of locality and explores the notion that there is value (both negative and positive) in the spaces and places that street-involved youth occupy.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that grounded theory allows for the development of middle-range theory focusing on a substantive area of inquiry. This study, (a) has a focus on the environment of street-involved youth, and (b) seeks to understand the hidden and underappreciated elements of street life.

Rationale for the Study

I want to be especially clear about one thing from the start – setting out to explore the therapeutic potential of the streets is *not* an attempt to romanticize the streets. Nor is it an encouragement for youth struggling in challenging or dysfunctional family environments to leave home to seek a reprieve on the streets. But the reality is that youth

in every major city in North America do make this move either by choice or force and, once there, face all the risk and adversity that the streets have to offer (Benoit, Jansson, Hallgrimsdottir, & Roth, 2008; Karabanow, 2005; Kidd, 2003). Youth are already there, taking up the space of the streets. Gaining an understanding and explanation of the pockets of hope and potential value that exist there can help enrich their street existence and expedite their journey back to mainstream society.

I believe I am well situated to complete this study as designed. As researchers, we necessarily bring ourselves to our work. In my background, there is a former street-involved youth, a frontline child and youth care worker with experience in a homeless shelter and a street-youth service agency, a street outreach worker, and now, a doctoral student exploring the world of street-involved youth through a classic grounded theory method.

Given its open, emergent, and data-driven nature, the grounded theory method can enable the discovery of a theoretical framework that will foster a deeper understanding of how street-involved youth interact with various environments to meet their survival and developmental needs. Grounded theory offers a means to develop a framework that “fits, works and is relevant” to child and youth care practice (Glaser, 1978, p. 13). Such a framework may also contribute to more sensitive and effective interventions and policies, and offer a platform from which researchers, practitioners, policy-makers – indeed, society as a whole – can interact with and assist this population of young people.

It is important to note that there is considerable literature on the epistemological aspects of grounded theory. This study is focused on the development of categories and

theory grounded in the experience of street-involved youth. For a consideration of the relationship of grounded theory to a range of epistemological traditions (such as Critical Theory) the reader is referred to the Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Dissertation Overview

This study is presented in eight chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of how this research interest evolved from a long-standing curiosity to a doctoral study. The purpose of the study and its guiding research question, and topic rationale are described.

Chapter Two previews the relevant literature with the intention of establishing within it a place for this study. Providing the scope of terminology used to refer to the population of interest and the reason why the term *street-involved youth* was chosen is reviewed. A brief overview of the literature examines the dominant themes and research approaches used to understand street-involved youth. Key themes of this study are defined and tied to the existing literature.

Chapter Three presents the research methods used in the study. A brief history of grounded theory is presented, as well as an acknowledgement of the division and debate that has arisen amongst grounded theory researchers in the past few decades. The key tenets of classic grounded theory are described and an overview of spatial and visual research methods used in this study is also included.

Chapter Four explicates the research implementation and the process of data analysis. This chapter relates how the author gained access to the streets and selected the

research participants, collected the data, and the process by which the data was analysed and the substantive theory discovered.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven constitute the core of this study. Chapter Five explains the main concern experienced by street-involved youth, presents the theoretical framework, and discusses the central components of the theory, namely *negotiating duality*. This chapter also includes an overview of the theory. Chapter Six elaborates on the theoretical framework and explains in-depth the process of how and why street-involved youth negotiate dual space and place, identity, logic, and normality. In Chapter Seven, the process street-involved youth go through to seek safety and emerge from the streets back into mainstream society is described. I theorize how five connected strategies can be simultaneously risk-enhancing and health-enhancing depending upon the intent of the youth. These bifocal strategies are enveloped in the wider discussion of the four stages of street life contained within the theoretical framework.

Chapter Eight situates the theoretical framework of *negotiating duality* within the literature and seeks to contribute to, confirm, and challenge our knowledge about this population of young people. It concludes the dissertation and ties together the journey, the study, and the outcome. This chapter outlines the implications of the study for practice, policy, society, and for future research on street-involved youth.

Chapter 2 – Locating the Research Inquiry: A Literature Preview

Preparation for research typically begins with an examination of the literature. It is important to approach research with an understanding of current knowledge and how researchers have previously studied the topic of interest. In most research studies, the researcher undertakes a comprehensive literature review prior to engaging in their own study. The first cast toward the literature is done with the intent of determining a need for this study.

For this study, initial consideration of the literature is divided into three sections. The first section will examine how street-involved youth are defined in the literature and will present an overview of what is known about this population. The second section introduces key notions of environment, space, and place, health and risk enhancing behaviour, and the agency of street-involved youth, in order to set this grounded theory study in context. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a statement of the guiding research question underlying this study. Chapter Eight will provide another opportunity to examine the literature when I discuss the theory that emerged from this study and place it in context within the literature of the field.

Defining the Population

Researchers define and name the population of young people who live a street-involved life in diverse ways. Common definitions generally emphasize two peculiarities about this population: “the *place* they occupy (the streets) and the absence of proper contacts or *links* with adults in the family home and in society” (Panter-Brick, 2003, p. 148, emphasis in original). The frequently used terms *street youth* or *street kid* draws

attention to two concepts: geographic location and the developmental stage of the young person. It firmly places these children in the public domain of the streets and it has connotations of development and behaviour that is often contradicted by their circumstances. The most significant elements of the definitions found in the contemporary literature will be examined as a basis for selecting the definition to be used in this study.

There is much debate about the label *street youth* (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003; Panter-Brick, 2003; Thomas de Benitez, 2003). While the term *street youth* depicts youth who are often homeless, with the streets occupying a major portion of their lives, it also presents a category of young people who are both socially and economically marginalized from their peers and mainstream society. As evidenced in the literature (Mayers, 2001; Panter-Brick, 2003; Robinson, 2000; Ruddick, 1996), various labels are applied to this segment of the population including *street youth*, *homeless youth*, *street children*, *throwaways*, *runaways*, and *squeegee kids*. Many research studies have generated guidelines for inclusion, such as defining age ranges for the youth, the minimum time spent on the street living away from the family home, and the degree of economic activity they conduct on the street (Benoit et al., 2008; Hagan & McCarthy, 1998; Kidd, 2007).

Any definition of street-involved youth will be contentious to some degree because it applies a limited number of dimensions to a very heterogeneous group of children and youth. Robinson (2000) utilized the term *street-frequenting youth* and claimed the term was generated by the youth participants in a research project conducted by Pe-Pua (1996). This term encapsulates youth ages 12 to 24 that spend the majority of their time on the street; however it does not mean that they are living on the street. Pe-

Pua believed the term *street-frequenting* to be a more positive label than *street kids* as it centres on the involvement of young people within the street environment; it is more of a descriptor than a label.

Discussion continues in the literature on the use of *street youth* and *street children* as labels to describe a population of marginalized young people (Benoit et al., 2008; Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003; Hecht, 2000; Panter-Brick, 2003; Thomas de Benitez, 2003). In defining a population of street-involved youth we are doing much more than simply applying a label. It can be argued that the label has become so emotionally charged, that it no longer serves to describe the young people in question and, in fact, further alienates them from a valued position in society. Some are concerned that labelling provides a negative connotation and “neither gives consideration to the experience or testimony of the children in question nor to other facets of their identity, which do not necessarily have any relevance to the street” (Panter-Brick, 2003, p. 151).

It can be ascertained from the literature that defining this group of young people is important, but challenging. The decision to use the term *street-involved youth* throughout this study warrants clarification. This term, while not predominant in the literature, was chosen deliberately. The use of the adjective *street-involved* captures the meaningful interaction of the youth with their environment, and their involvement in a street-based lifestyle. With a focus on street involvement, there is less concern placed on defining the population based on their current sleeping arrangements or their *home* status. This term depicts young people who are marginalized both socially and economically from non-street-involved youth and mainstream society. It allows the emphasis to be placed squarely on their involvement in a street context.

What We Know about Street-Involved Youth and their Relationship to the Streets

The body of literature on street-involved youth is diverse. A review across disciplines and specialties is necessary to get a holistic sense of the lives of street-involved youth. The literature illustrates how research has generally taken a compartmentalized approach to understanding this population. The main themes found in the literature can be categorized as follows: (a) health; (b) risk-taking behaviour; (c) daily lives and work; (d) activities; (e) involvement with services; (f) perceptions of self and life; (g) history/family of origin; and (h) societal interaction. Few studies examine more than one of these components at a time.

Youth and their relationship to the city has been a topic of interest for social scientists for over a century. Before the social sciences discourse introduced us to *street youth*, there were simply youth in the city. In the pre-1960 social science literature, Addams (1909), Minehan (1934), and Whyte (1943) provided (a) detailed sociological perspectives of youth in the city, and (b) an account of the way their interaction with the social and physical environment developed their sense of identity, social roles, and life course. Such classic sociological studies have noted the importance of the interaction between the young person and his or her environment.

Addams' (1909) study, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, was a sociological examination of adolescence as a developmental stage. Rather than describe it as a time rife with problems, Addams examined the needs and challenges of this age group and sought to normalize their behaviour through a greater understanding of their experiences. As Hamington (2007) observes, Addams' research with marginalized youth was an

inceptive ethnographic study seeking to give voice to a segment of the population that did not presently have one.

Minehan's (1934) study was one of the first qualitative explorations of youth in Depression-era America. Minehan lived among the travelling youth and homeless men, hoping to learn "what the man who is down and out thinks of us and of our civilization" (p. xi). Minehan's covert participant observation included living in railroad yard camps, hobo jungles, and shantytowns alongside homeless men and youth. Through such first person involvement, this author aimed to "associate with as many homeless persons as possible under conditions of social equality, to experience their life, to record their stories, to ascertain in as scientific a manner as possible their opinions, ideas, and attitudes" (p. xiv). Minehan's study was a rich description of the home lives of the young people, the relationships they developed while travelling the rails, and their ability to adapt to desperate conditions on a daily basis.

Like Minehan and Addams, Whyte (1943) conducted a detailed *street corner* ethnography of young adults living in a Boston community. Whyte's research objective was "to get as complete a picture of the community as possible" (p. 291). To do so, he determined that he would need to "live in the community . . . spending a lot of time day after day" (p. 293) with the community residents. Whyte could not simply drop in and out of this type of study. Sharing in the lived experiences of those he sought to understand contributed to the quality of data he was able to collect.

In the post-1960 era, researchers continued to explore how youth interact in urban environments and how their daily lives are influenced by where they are and what they

are doing (Hagan & McCarthy, 1998; Mayers, 2001; Robinson, 2002a, 2005; Ruddick, 1996). In the past two decades, studies of street-involved youth often concentrate on the precipitating factors, indicating that the majority of street-involved youth have “run from” something rather than “run to” a life of change, excitement, or rebellion (Butt, de Gaetano, & Thompson, 2004; CS/RESORS, 2001; McCreary Centre, 2001). Street-involved youth have a multitude of reasons for leaving home or coming to the streets. In the past five years, virtually every major metropolitan centre in Canada has engaged in research with street-involved youth, many taking the form of environmental scans and gap analyses. Studies conducted in Vancouver (McCreary Centre, 2001), Toronto (Butt et al., 2004; Toronto Youth Cabinet, 2005), Winnipeg (Higgitt et al., 2003), Calgary (Sellers, 2000), and Halifax (Koeller, 2005) indicated features common to the home life and families of origin of street-involved youth. Sexual, emotional and physical abuse, neglect and maltreatment by a parent, problems at school, lack of support of sexual identity, substance abuse, and an overwhelmingly high involvement in the child welfare system are reasons given by youth for leaving home and moving to the streets or shelter system.

Previous research has found that, compared to their at-home peers, street-involved youth are more likely to have dropped out of school, found temporary or regular employment, and experienced a significantly higher number of household moves and family-life changes. This higher degree of instability is a leading contributor to the profile of street-involved youth. Research has suggested that on the basis of this pattern of early instability, youth who gravitate to the streets are at higher risk of exploitation and vulnerability (Gaetz, 2004). As Higgitt et al. (2003) suggest, “Youth become homeless

because of the failure of multiple systems, including family, school, community, child protection agencies, and youth corrections systems. They become alienated from these systems that normally keep youth anchored in mainstream society” (pp. 1-2). With fewer personal coping skills and social resources, street-involved youth are easily targeted by others involved in street-life activities. A number of studies point to societal factors that contribute to youths’ street-involvement. Poverty, lack of affordable housing, and high rural youth unemployment are factors that contribute to youth leaving their home communities and entering urban street life. Kraus, Eberle, and Serge (2001) showed how provincial economies and unemployment rates affect youth transitions, leading to increased street-involvement for rural youth. They note that, “increasing numbers of young people facing economic pressures are moving to urban centres such as Halifax and westward to Montréal and Toronto. When they arrive in these cities, youth often find themselves without resources and can easily become homeless” (p. 2).

In addition to these societal factors, ethnicity appears to be a contributing factor to youth street-involvement. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation study conducted by Kraus et al. (2001), as well as those done by Higgitt et al. (2003) and Koeller (2005), indicate that there are disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal youth among the street-involved population. Kraus et al. (2001) note that 18.5% of the Ottawa street youth population were Aboriginal. This figure is certainly high given that Aboriginal groups make up only 1.5% of the Ottawa population. Similar statistics are apparent in research conducted in Vancouver (McCreary Centre, 2007) and Winnipeg (Higgitt et al., 2003). Few studies of youth street-involvement have concentrated on cultural aspects and “the findings on the relationships between Aboriginal street youth

and their families point to the importance of considering ethnic or cultural traditions in the experience of – and response to – street-involved youth” (CS/RESORS, 2001, p. 3).

In sum, these reports indicate that street-involved youth in Canada have a number of similar characteristics. This information is the basis of applying prevention and intervention programs to families and youth before the young person becomes entrenched in street life. Lack of social support, weak or non-existent extended family or peer networks, and early conflict with the law are factors identified by Kraus and her co-authors in their 2001 environmental scan of factors which contribute to the street-involvement of youth. The findings on antecedent risk factors contribute to the development of appropriate services and intervention for youth. A report by CS/RESORS (2001) indicates that “in reference to service use, there is consistent documentation of a lack of culturally sensitive services and resources for Aboriginal youth involved in street life” (p. 4). Immigrant youth may be on the rise among the street-involved youth population (Butt et al., 2004); however, they too seem to present a challenge to service providers. It has been suggested that street-involved immigrant youth use services less often due to their lack of familiarity with the social service system (Yonge Street Mission, 2009).

While a significant proportion of street-involved youth literature deals with the conditions that propel young people to street life, an alternative viewpoint is also presented in the literature, one focusing on their current experiences and opportunities for transition in the future. Much of this literature, rooted especially in criminology, urban studies, and sociology, takes a deficit/risk perspective, examining trajectories of street-

involvement, risk behaviours, economic barriers, and physical and mental health challenges (Hagan & McCarthy, 1998; Higgitt et al., 2003; Koeller, 2005; Sellers, 2000).

Substance abuse and addiction problems are common among street-involved youth and are considered forms of coping. Substance use is described by Kidd (2003) as a means of self-medicating and forgetting about the harsh realities faced by the youth on a daily basis. While drug use is a dominant topic in street-youth literature, several authors (Kidd, 2003; McCreary Centre, 2007; Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC], 2006) present this as an underlying, symptomatic issue of street-involved living and an important risk factor to address through intervention and education.

Studies have found high rates of depression, suicidal tendencies, HIV and hepatitis infection, dental-care issues, and pregnancy among street-involved youth (Barry, Ensign, & Lippek, 2002; Boivin, Roy, Haley, & Galbaud du Fort, 2005; Rew, Taylor-Seehafer, Thomas, & Yockey, 2001). A cross-Canada survey of street-involved youth recognized that while this population suffers from poor health, further research is needed on their risk-taking and decision-making behaviour (PHAC, 2006). Clatts, Davis, and Atillasoy (1995) posit that the combination of vulnerability and ineffective social services contributes to poor health outcomes “including repeated exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancies (often with inadequate prenatal care), untreated tuberculosis, [and] HIV infection” (p. 118).

In connection with drug abuse, prostitution, inconsistent safe-sex practices, and other physical health concerns, youth are at an increased risk for a number of mental health conditions including depression and suicide. Rates of attempted suicide are much

higher among street-involved youth than their at-home peers, and while many studies mentioned suicide, few suggested it was a key issue. In a 1999 study, Kidd explored the problem of suicide among street-involved youth in Canada and reported that 73.5% of respondents were suicide attempters. While the numbers were lower in other studies, Molnar, Shade, Kral, Booth, and Watters (1998) found that 48% of female youth had attempted suicide. These figures indicate that a large segment of this population have attempted to end their lives or perhaps used self-harm as a cry for help.

Much of the literature on street-involved youth examines their criminal activity and illegal economic pursuits (Caputo, Weiler, & Anderson, 1997; CS/RESORS, 2001; Higgitt et al., 2003; McCreary Centre, 2001). Street-involved youth have a sense of immediacy, with much of their daily activities taken up by the search for food and shelter (Kidd, 2003; Mayers, 2001; Sellers, 2000). Several authors stress the challenges and dangers inherent in their means of acquiring money (Higgitt et al., 2003; Karabanow, 2004; Kidd, 2003; PHAC, 2006; Ruddick, 1996). This is illustrated in the study conducted by Mayers (2001) which noted the frequency of assaults endured by youth while panhandling. A similar awareness is shown by Parnaby (2003) in his research on squeegee kids in Toronto. Street-involved youth interacting with motorists to earn money put themselves in a position of vulnerability from negative attitudes and verbal assaults aimed at them.

Within the literature on street-involved youth are studies that focus on the risk-taking behaviours, victimization, and street-involved youth's negative contribution to urban centres. Because of this emphasis on negative, risk-taking, unhealthy behaviours (survival strategies), it can be said that a negative stereotype of street-involved youth is

being perpetuated in research as well as in the media. But this view is shifting, “partly due to the intervention of geographers in street-children research, bringing with them ideas of time and space to inform a discourse that was previously dominated by ideas of dysfunction, pathology and psychological breakdown” (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003, p. 2). Research with the street-involved population is most appropriately done ““where the kids are at’ – both in the geographic place and world and ‘in their heads,’ their metaphoric place” (Baizerman, 1999, p. xvi). Baizerman points out that researchers interested in these related geographies of everyday street life concern themselves with how the physical realm of buildings, plazas, and other built places become “lived-space and the life-worlds of site, venue, and locale” (p. xvi).

Additional literature examines the trajectories of street-involvement, risk behaviours, the research methods best utilized with this population, and service and intervention strategies (Karabanow, 2005; Koeller, 2005; Sellers, 2000). The research I conducted is, in part, a response to the emphasis on marginalization and risk-focused behaviours that dominates street-youth studies and literature. The numerous sources of these negative stereotypes include the current literature, media accounts, and public perception. Personal experiences with individual youth may contradict the stereotypes, but “When the facts don't fit the frames, the facts are rejected, not the frames” (Bales, 2001, p. 1). Our current societal view – that street-involved youth are a blight on urban life – is ever so slowly being changed. Over the last two decades, an increasing number of studies examining resilience, coping skills, self-care attitudes and behaviours, survival, personal strengths, and resources have been conducted with street-involved youth (Bender, Thompson, McManus, Lantry, & Flynn, 2007; Fisher, Florsheim, & Sheetz,

2005; Kidd, 2003, 2007; Panter-Brick, 2003, 2004; Raffaelli et al., 2001; Rew, 2003). It could be argued that this shift from risk to resilience is a necessary first step toward changing media portrayals of street-involved youth, and society's perspective on this group of young people.

Factors identified as fundamental to coping were primarily internal resources such as personal determination and strength, a strong drive to survive, and independence (Lindsey, Kurtz, Jarvis, Williams, & Nackerud, 2000). External contributors to coping were support networks of friends and family and connections to agencies and services. Kidd (2003) noted the invaluable nature of street friends "in teaching them the 'rules of the street' and in supporting them until they learn how to cope with street life" (p. 245). Coping, in this reference, is one survival skill. Mayers (2001) also noted the importance of peer guidance in a youth's ability to cope with the realities of street life: "You learn the rules because rules make sense. They're practical; they help you survive" (p. 51).

Resilience, a concept often seen in child and youth care literature, appears in the scholarship examining street children and youth. "For homeless youth, resilience can be an important moderating process at times of stress such as acute illness, victimization, lack of housing and food, or loss of family or friends" (Rew et al., 2001, p. 34). Previous research studies have attempted to identify the protective factors that lead to positive results for street youth (Alsbury, 2006; Bender et al., 2007; Karabanow, 2004; Kidd, 2003). "Maintaining a positive attitude was identified as essential in continuing to meet the day-to-day challenges of life on the streets" as were characteristics such as motivation and a sense of humour (Bender et al., 2007, p. 33). Not surprisingly, another source of strength and resilience was seen in those youth who had pets with them on the street. The

added sense of responsibility and stability provided by a pet “increased their sense of well-being, and motivated them to continue trying to meet basic needs and survive on the street” (Bender et al., 2007, p. 33).

A beneficial trend described in the literature is inclusion of street-involved youth in the research process as co-researchers or participants in community change. In addition to shifting our perspective from adult-oriented processes to collaborative ones, we need to see street-involved youth not only as clients but also as citizens. Koeller (2005) maintains that “researchers who engage street youth highlight the importance of empowerment approaches and working with youth as *citizens* rather than ‘clients,’ involving them in the design, development, and evaluation of policy and programming meant to address their needs” (p. 4, emphasis in original). This shift requires more than simply changing our vocabulary. To popularize the notion of street-involved youth as citizens requires researchers, governments, agencies, and society as a whole to begin to see them “as they are” and accept the places that they occupy in our cities. The contested realms of public space affect how we see street-involved youth. To view them as citizens is to recognize their self-agency and responsibility for their lives (Karabanow, 2005; Koeller, 2005; Thomas de Benitez, 2003).

Recent literature has begun to establish links between youth and their daily urban environments as a factor in their behaviour. In addition, the studies discussed here examine how street-involved youth have been conceptualized and positioned in society.

Societal Perceptions

The lived realities of street-involved youth are not well known or understood, even by many researchers. Baizerman (1990) stated, “Street kids are part of the background of city life for some adults, while for others they live in the foreground . . . their visibility to adults depends upon their place in the everyday life of these adults” (p. 4). The difficulty in developing policies and programs for this population is captured in Baizerman’s statement. Whether street youth are even visible to those around them depends on *how the adults are looking*, and not on what the youth themselves are doing.

Society’s propensity to make the problem of youth homelessness disappear is another source of tension identified in the literature. As Thompson and Servage (1998) noted, the negative view of street-involved youth goes beyond stigma and has an effect on their ability to sustain a healthy livelihood, such as obtain a job or find appropriate places to relax and socialize. Legislation, such as the Safe Streets Acts in Toronto and Vancouver (Parnaby, 2003), has been implemented under the guise of what is best for the whole community, yet it only serves to divide society through the encouragement of an “us versus them” mentality.

Popular perceptions of street-involved youth as lazy, happy to live on the streets, but with some level of family availability if they want, erect obstacles for youth (Kelly, 2005; Kidd 2007). “It is the concern of the researchers that the sensationalizing of issues affecting street youth act as a catalyst for the estrangement of street youth from mainstream society” (Thompson & Servage, 1998, p. 32). These myths perpetuate the

idea that street-involved youth lack agency, rather than being active and responsible decision-makers in their own lives.

Despite the perception that street-involved youth choose to live at the margins of society, alienating themselves from mainstream life, urban street-involved youth are not unaware of what is taking place around them. They have insight into their own lives and society in general (Mayers, 2001). Through their research, Kidd and Davidson (2007) learned that many of the youth “have had opportunities to look into themselves and our society very deeply, based in their view of culture from the outside, as a function of their having to adapt into and out of the streets” (p. 235). Qualitative studies provide an opportunity to show the flexible and sophisticated manner in which street-involved youth view personal and societal situations (Karabanow, 2003, 2006; Kidd, 2004; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Mayers, 2001; Robinson, 2002a), yet this concept of street-involved youth as interested and active citizens is rarely taken up in public discourse.

As has been noted, a number of scholars have called for research to problematize *street youth*, to examine how we are dealing with a group of young people in our research and the implication our approaches have for knowledge added to the field. As de Oliveira (1997) realized through his exploratory study of street children in Brazil, “It is important to see the ‘normalcy’ of homeless children’s everyday experience and that, independent of the problem situation, there will always be the need to let children be children” (p. 173). With this realization in mind, this study will aim to conceptualize the whole experience of being street-involved – negative and positive, normal and extraordinary. Having considered the holistic views of select samples of literature on street-involvement, the next section will focus on articulating key themes relevant to the study.

Defining the Central Themes of this Study

Extrapolating from the literature, key notions will be specifically addressed in this study. Concepts forming the foundation of this study are: (a) environment, space, and place; (b) health-enhancement/risk-enhancement; and (c) agency of street-involved youth. What follows is a discussion of these broad notions or concept clusters so they can be understood and contextualized with respect to the existing literature.

Environment, Space, and Place

Environment is not an easy term to define in a singular statement. It is a term that is a part of everyday language and which has an assumed meaning in normal discourse. Environment is “the built settings such as homes, offices, schools and streets. . . natural settings, natural resources, national parks and wilderness areas, and the atmosphere” (Gifford, 2007, p.2) as well as “the ecological context in which behavior was embedded” (Krupat, 1985, p.5). There are various environments that street-involved youth interact with in their daily lives: physical, social, cultural, psychological, legal, and institutional. Many of these have been taken up in the literature (Beazley, 2003; Cahill, 2000; Robinson, 2002a; Ruddick, 1996; Ungar, 2004a). While an environment is comprised of numerous elements, two spatial components of the environment that are especially relevant to this study are space and place.

In this research *space* and *place* will be examined as complementary concepts. “Place has physicality. . . . It is a compilation of things or objects at some particular spot in the universe” (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465). Massey (1996) conceptualized space not as “something we live in . . . but rather it is something which is socially created by the way

in which we live our lives; we create space through our interactions” (p. 36). Space cannot be captured on a map, unlike places that are sites. Space is how that site fits, relative to other sites. A place is a physical location, whereas space is an interpretation, or perceived understanding of a location. Duncan (2000) asserts that “Space is organized into places often thought of as bounded settings in which social relations and identity are constituted” (p. 582). Place and space are inextricably tied together. We create space through our interactions. Recognizing and studying the environments of marginalized or hidden populations is an important step toward integrating their lived experiences into programs and public policies.

Le Heron, Murphy, Forer, and Goldstone (1999) noted, “The ‘where’ of something tells us quite a lot about the ‘what’ of something” (p. 90). A strong connection exists between street-involved youth and the streets – the public domain that they appropriate for personal living. Such descriptive terminology alone demonstrates that place is a pivotal component of their lives, yet one that is often overlooked or subsumed into another category. Hecht (2000) asserted that spatial processes cannot be separated from an examination of street children, because through an alliance of children with street we are already providing a spatial context for this group of young people. In addition, at both the research and the policy/practice level, it is being recognized that street-involved youth are significantly affected by locality as well as the relationship they have as active agents in the community (O’Kane, 2003; Panter-Brick 2003; Shanahan, 2003; van Beers, 1996).

Thus far, social science researchers have been instrumental in exploring how structure, agency, place, and sense of space correlate with the personal health and well-

being of various population groups. Research (Clatts et al., 1995; Gillespie, 2002; Robinson, 2000) has provided added evidence that these groups are shaping their local environments just as their environments are shaping them, and for this reason, other social science disciplines need to take notice of the contributions of spatial research.

So far, much of the concern in child and youth care research has been on the social relations and interactions of young people and their identity-formation processes. Relatively little attention has been paid to the qualities of the places where these were occurring and the effect of place on the young person's life.

Health-enhancement/Risk-enhancement

While the most basic definition of health refers to an absence of disease or injury, "health" is a word with many meanings. It has been suggested that the child and youth care field needs to begin broadening its understanding of health and the meaning of client well-being (Hutchinson & Stuart, 2004). The past few decades have seen the emergence of a holistic view of health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being" (World Health Organization [WHO], 1986). Gatrell (2002) challenges the widely accepted WHO definition as too unrealistic, arguing that the majority of people would not be able to achieve a *complete* state of well-being. Instead, Gatrell states that health can be interpreted as the "availability of resources, both personal and societal, that help us achieve our personal potential" (p. 4).

A number of researchers focus on contributors to overall health. White (1981) considered health to be a derivative of the interactions between a person and his or her environment. Similarly, Raphael (2004) suggested the social determinants of health are

the most significant indicators for evaluating an individual's health. These include income, food, housing, education and literacy, employment, health care, social supports and services, education, and personal coping skills.

Within the literature focusing on street-involved youth, discourses about health have often stemmed from deficit-focused research (Barry et al., 2002; Boivin et al., 2005; Panter-Brick, 2003; Rew et al., 2001). Despite this, a recent trend redefined health in relation to this population. Researchers such as Ungar (2004a), Rew (2003), Hagan and McCarthy (1998), and Kidd (2003) bridge the gap between risk and resilience among street-involved youth. Rew (2003) examined self-care and the health-promoting behaviours of street-involved youth, while Ungar (2001) studied the health-enhancing deviance of at-risk youth. The study of resilience and positive outcomes for street-involved youth can be undertaken even from a starting point that examines many "negative" aspects of their lives.

Ungar's (2004a) research on resilience and marginalized youth suggests an alternative view of health. Viewing the streets as holding therapeutic potential for youth requires a shift in thinking because we are so aware of the dangers and risks associated with street life. Ungar claims that a narrow view of at-risk youth's attitudes and behaviours ignores the "healthy" occurrences and opportunities that street-involved youth encounter. Accordingly, health may not be just a state or an outcome; it may be a path or a process regardless of whether we are describing social, mental, physical, or spiritual health.

In the literature, well-being is almost always inextricably tied to health. The concept of well-being is a socially constructed notion and is therefore influenced by

personal, cultural, organizational, political, and temporal factors. According to Hutchinson and Stuart (2004), the notion of well-being informs what it means to be healthy in our society. Well-being can be understood as the holistic, positive, interrelational concept that focuses on healthy human development (Westgate, 1996, as cited in Miller, 2007). Well-being has been articulated as a holistic term, often intertwined with the notion of wellness (Miller, 2007). Well-being has been defined as a positive state (Dunn, 1977, as cited in Miller, 2007), a process of being (Jonas, 2005), and an ability to satisfy needs and cope or adapt with one's environment (WHO, 1986). Hutchinson and Stuart (2004) suggest that well-being is a "socially and personally constructed notion" (p. 7). The relevance of using this notion to understand health allows us to acknowledge that street-involved youth may identify factors that contribute to their health that are not traditionally constructed as enhancing health.

In the last decade, emerging literature has stressed the resilience and abilities of street-involved youth while revealing the structural and societal barriers facing them. However, the literature has not identified a way of working with such youth using their street experience to enhance their well-being. Implications for action are currently focused on service interventions, policies, and the youth themselves (Karabanow, 1999; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Robinson, 2002b). Recommendations rarely suggest how the spatial quality of the streets can be used to provide a beneficial experience for street-involved youth. Existing models and explanations of the well-being of street-involved youth, such as those offered by Barry et al. (2002) and Kelly and Caputo (2007), often fail to take into account "*who* defines what is healthy and what is unhealthy" (Ungar, 2004a, p. 69, emphasis in original). This bias ignores a fundamental element enhancing

the well-being of street-involved youth – that their everyday context can be a positive force in their lives. In contrast to this, models developed by McCormack and MacIntosh (2001) and Rew (2003) integrate the youth's perception of their well-being and what it means to be healthy on the streets as a core category of their theory.

A different perspective emerges when one assumes that youth use their situation to its best advantage. In accepting Ungar's (2001) portrayal of multiple pathways to health – some conventional and widely accepted, many others marginal – we can widen primary health-care research with marginalized youth to include a range of normalized behaviours. Frankish, Hwang, and Quantz (2005) called for a broader conceptualization of *homeless* and *health* and claimed current research lacks appropriate operationalized definitions for this population. In addition, they called for further research on measures that could be applied to policy and practice.

Understanding potential street-based wellness

To understand the relevance of well-being in the context of street-involved youth, we can examine the work of researchers studying the social and physical environments of this population (see Clatts et al., 1995; Robinson, 2000, 2002b, 2005; Ruddick, 1996). These studies found that the youth were attracted to particular places because of the *therapeutic value* afforded by them. As described by Kearns and Smith (1993), places with therapeutic value are those which prove to be “beneficial to both body and mind” (p. 267) even if only temporarily. Robinson (2005) noted the importance of examining spaces of street-involved youth in “their search for places in which they felt they belonged and in which they felt ‘at home’” (p. 50). Youth develop a sense of belonging

and attachment to these places because they afford “opportunities for connecting with key support people (friends and youth workers), as well as for reflection on past and present issues” (Robinson, 2005, p. 55). Street life involves stress and risk, yet these studies reveal that the potential for positive exists in the daily environments of street-involved youth. Adding to this, Smyth (2005) stated that “the physical, social and symbolic landscapes of therapeutic environments (including places, spaces, and networks) serve to regulate and normalize certain kinds of behaviour and serve to include as well as exclude” (pp. 494-495). Made evident through this study, the ability to *normalize* street-involved youth will add to the knowledge we have of this population.

The Agency of Street-involved Youth

Researchers often impose adult-designated purposes on the places and spaces inhabited by street-involved youth. Recent research with street children has shown that they identify and appropriate urban environments “as potential habitats, regardless of adult designations” (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003, p. 6) as well as construct space for socialization, work, and learning (Beazley, 2003; Malone, 2002). Studies have examined the place of street children and youth, and described their natural resourcefulness and creative use of urban environments to construct safe and accepting places to be (Young, 2003).

This utilization of environmental resources has been recognized as an almost automatic action among street-involved youth yet little research has been done on the dynamics of the *process* of negotiation (Cahill, 2000; van Blerk, 2005). To negotiate their way through urban environments, street-involved youth come to “‘read’ the environment in specific ways that are at once personal, cultural and social” (Cahill, 2000,

p. 251). This experiential process has been named *street literacy* by Cahill and goes beyond being street smart, capturing the ability of youth to use sophisticated coping strategies to maintain their existence in a tenable location (Anderson, 1990). In the research by Mayers (2001), the ability to read not only the streets but also the political climate is important. This place-making through resistance is an example of how street-involved youth acknowledge and mediate the power and structural dynamics in urban environments (Ruddick, 1996).

Robinson (2000) claimed that the ways in which street youth construct their spaces has not been given the focus it deserves in the literature. In Ruddick's (1996) study of street-involved youth in Hollywood, she identifies the importance of recognizing the shift from a strategic control over space to tactical place-making. Such tactics of place-making "express the *negotiation* of the assigned meaning of space for purpose other than those intended" (Ruddick, 1996, p. 57, emphasis in original). The exploration of "how and why spaces become important and meaningful to street frequenters and how daily spatial organization may reflect and intertwine with important elements of self-identity and self-control are important issues" (Robinson, 2000, p. 430). Robinson's research shows that street youths' spatial meanings have been examined from the point of view of their social identity construction, and Ruddick suggests that the value of such research brings to light the "conscious and strategic uses of space employed by the homeless in their daily survival" (p. 58). The outcome of such research is that the construction of identity, and the behaviour and presentation of self is related to how one understands and interacts with one's daily space.

Young (2003) noted that some street children, through a process of nonconformity and resistance to their position as marginalized, are empowered:

[Thus] allowing them to create their own places and to survive the city. This has led to the creation of street children's niches, which are receiving legitimation to the point where street children's presence on the street is gaining acceptance in some instances. (p. 611)

Studies have illustrated youths' position in the city (Beazley, 2003; Ruddick, 1996; Young, 2003) and placed them on the margins of society. Research on street-involved youth is expanding beyond their micro-geographies, however, and into the larger realm of social, spatial, and structural connection (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003; Parazelli, 2000; Young & Barrett, 2001a). Robinson (2000) emphasized the need to explore the ways in which street youth are "creating resistant spaces and identities for themselves" (p. 433). Further, there is a need to examine street-involved youths' behaviour and well-being as seen in relation to their understanding and construction of space and place.

Understanding how we fit into the world is a key component of our identity. Much of the spatially-oriented literature on street-involved youth has focused on identity construction (Robinson, 2000; Ruddick, 1996; van Blerk, 2005). This is an important construct, but not the only one. Research is needed to build on this foundation and add knowledge of how street-involved youth fit into, and negotiate their way through and between, the streets and mainstream society.

Positioning the Research Question

The research study focuses on both the individuals and the relationship they have to the streets and mainstream society. It is evident that the insights and new perspectives found in some recent research on street-involved youth are, at least in part, the result of adopting a new approach to research inquiries. What we come to know is a function of how we come to know. Grounded theory has been the method of choice for several researchers (e.g., Conticini, 2008; Kidd, 1999; McCormack & MacIntosh, 2001; Rew, 2003; Robinson, 2002b) in this area of study as it allows for the development of a framework grounded in the data rather than prior concepts and understandings of street-involved youth. Ungar's (2004b) research has led to the development of a framework of resilience as "an outcome from negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse" (Ungar, 2004b, p. 342). Robinson (2002a) observed in her grounded theory research study:

rather than assuming a priori the category of "homeless youth" or a condition of structural displacement, I talked with young home(less) people about their ways of being home(less), of inhabiting inner Sydney, as a way of thinking both home and home(less)ness as emerging concepts. (p. 28)

This review of research on street-involved youth demonstrates the breadth of knowledge pertaining to this population of young people. It also speaks to the opportunity for further research and the need for (a) keeping an open mind when approaching studies of this population, (b) exploring understandings from the youths'

own points of view, and (c) developing frameworks that highlight and help us to understand the hidden and underappreciated elements of street life. It is not my intention to perpetuate a deficit-based, fragmented view of street-involved youth. This has not been a study of risk, antecedents, or of singular attributes defining street-involved youth. Rather, it is an exploration of the holistic environments of a segment of society.

The literature discussed in this chapter informs the study's general research question. To re-state the overarching question at the outset of the study: How can we holistically understand the environments of street-involved youth and explain the relationship between them.

Summary

This chapter presents a brief review of the literature on street-involved youth, their interaction with the environment, and how we have come to understand their lives. It identifies the need to explore the connection between street-involved youth and the environments they negotiate, as well as the need to normalize our understanding of this population.

Popular perception is often fuelled by media accounts that paint a deceptively negative picture of North American street-involved youth. Research shows far less dysfunction and a greater capability to succeed than would be expected. There is a false dichotomy between the ideas of being *housed* as safe and positive but being *on the streets* as negative and risky. This distinction needs to be de-emphasized and a more holistic view of street-youth environments accentuated.

While the body of knowledge on street-involved youth is impressive, it does not yet provide a clear explanation of how youth create and interact with the environments in their daily life. It is suggested that the use of the grounded theory method, given its open, emergent and data-driven nature, can enable the discovery of a theoretical framework that will foster a deeper understanding of the way youth construct space to meet their survival and developmental needs. This study will contribute an explanation of street-involved youths' relationship to the streets, and help explicate how street-involved youth experience living outside of normal. Such a framework can also contribute to more sensitive and effective interventions and policies.

Chapter 3 – Research Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research method used in this study, classic grounded theory with the inclusion of visual/spatial methods, and address how the study fits with a child and youth care approach to research. The chapter is divided into four sections.

The first section will provide a background to the study. The second section provides the rationale for using grounded theory for this research, clarifies my understanding of theory, provides an overview of the grounded theory method, and discusses the central tenets of classic grounded theory. The third section provides a brief overview of visual and spatial methods of research with respect to this study. The chapter concludes with a fourth section describing ethical considerations and the ethics approval process.

Background to the Study

Much of the research concerning street-involved youth furthers our knowledge of individual risk factors that challenge or threaten their lives but largely ignores the holistic experience of actually living a life on the street. Studies often focus on the trajectory of youth into and out of the streets, crime or substance use, and mental or sexual health (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002; Karabanow, 2008; Kidd, 2003; Rew, 2003). In recent years there have been grounded theory studies which developed frameworks explaining aspects of street-involved youths' lives including their process of grieving home (Robinson, 2005), taking care of oneself on the streets (Rew, 2003), and how street youth perceive health and their own health status (McCormack & MacIntosh, 2001).

A wide range of literature spanning several disciplines explores the dynamic relationship between persons and place. This study explores the spatial structure of youth homelessness, and the engagement of street-involved youth with the various environments they encounter. While elements of such encounters are captured in the literature, there is limited scholarship that theorizes the spatial relationship street-involved youth have with both the streets and mainstream society. This grounded theory study was undertaken to examine the elements and dynamics of living a street-involved life in order to contribute a broader understanding and grounding to the literature that already exists.

To address the initial research question, a methodology was sought that would facilitate the development of a theoretical framework explaining the interrelationship between street-involved youth and the streets, as well as effectively exploring the spatial relations of street-involved youth and their environments. The best means of achieving this appeared to be a qualitative grounded theory study incorporating a spatial methodology. A theoretical understanding of how street-involved youth relate to the streets and mainstream society broadens our understanding of this population and contributes an explanation of how they experience their world and their place in it.

In a grounded theory study, the researcher has the flexibility to begin with a curiosity, to know that everything is data (Glaser, 1978), to follow the lead of study participants, and to arrive at a place of understanding what their main concern is and how they resolve it. Grounded theory is a challenging, but structured, trustworthy, and effective means of developing theory. The resulting study provides a theoretical framework explaining the phenomenon under examination, namely the life of street-

involved youth. With a focus on theorizing, this study will go beyond a description of street-involved youth and their interaction with the streets and mainstream society to provide a theoretical framework for future research and theory development. The ultimate purpose of this theoretical framework is to inform street work, programming, and services offered to street-involved youth, to promote policies geared toward addressing youth homelessness, and to create increased awareness among adults, those both close to and on the periphery of street life.

Rationale for Doing a Grounded Theory Study

Classic grounded theory is well suited for this research interest because it allows for the discovery of a theoretical framework of the relationship between street-involved youth and the spaces and places of their lives. This study contributes a theoretical framework explaining the relationship between street-involved youth and the environments they encounter and negotiate.

There are two reasons why grounded theory was selected and applied as the research method in this study. First, the method, as originally outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and elaborated upon by Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998), is a systematic method that fits my own qualities and preferences as a student and a researcher. Secondly, my supervisor is a classic grounded theorist and experienced in using the method. Grounded theory is an especially valuable method in areas of limited scholarship (Glaser, 1992), and the field of child and youth care qualifies in that it still uses a predominance of theories developed from other disciplines. A key aspect of professionalization is a field's ability to generate its own theories, models, and literature (Gaughan & Gharabaghi, 1999). A

further benefit, therefore, of conducting a grounded theory study from a child and youth care perspective is that it contributes to the continued professionalization of the field:

As the practice of child and youth care evolves into a discipline, it is making unique theoretical contributions to work with children and youth that other disciplines have not previously considered. The contribution is primarily in the area of the context and environment surrounding children and youth and how elements of context and environment are part of the developmental change process. (Stuart, 2006, para. 4)

In a practice-based discipline such as child and youth care, there needs to be a narrowing of the divide between academia and practice. Clare Winnicott (1964, as cited in Beedell, 1968) discussed the value of theory for practice by assuming that when a professional has a theoretical framework, she is not starting from a blank page in facing an unknown task or situation:

Theory can save time by helping us to see more quickly what is significant. The point about theory is that it does not have to be complete or final, and it does not necessarily have to be right, but it does have to exist . . . as something to catch hold of so that we can meet what comes without panic. (p. A7)

As Lewin (1947) stated, “there is nothing so practical as a good theory and the best place to find a good theory is by investigating interesting problems in everyday life” (p. 149). Child and youth care and grounded theory are a natural fit. “The grounded theory approach is a systematic attempt to discover or uncover the intrinsic patterns and

relations embedded within the domains of everyday human and social life” (Anglin, 2002, p. 47). The discovery of a theory pertaining to the relationship between street-involved youth and their socio-spatial environments – a theory that is “fits, works, and is relevant” (Glaser, 1978, p. 13) for youth workers, policy-makers, youth homelessness service providers, and the young people themselves – is the main reason for using the grounded theory methodology in this study.

But First, What is Theory?

The term *theory* can be variously defined as “an integrated set of principles that describes, explains, and predicts observed events” (Oskamp & Schultz, 1998, p. 23), “an explanation of observed regularities or patterns” (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p. 3) or as playing “a critical role in our understanding of reality and in our ability to cope with problems” (Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2008, p. 26). Despite these common articulations, the term holds different meaning across disciplines and academics. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described theory as a means of handling data, enabling prediction, describing behaviour, and offering understanding for practitioners. They also noted theory is a “*process*; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not a perfect product” (p. 32, emphasis in original).

Tacit knowledge is what we use to develop informal theories based on experience and intuition (Steckely, 2009). These informal theories are the explanations we create for behaviour, situations, and phenomena encountered in our daily lives. Beyond this implicit form of theorizing, theories can be formal or substantive, two types of theory often associated with social science research. Formal theories such as Piaget’s theory of

cognitive development, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, or Bandura's social learning theory are at the foundation of our learning as child and youth care practitioners. Such formal theories have been developed most often by scholars in the fields of psychology and sociology and subsequently adopted by other social science disciplines.

Substantive theory can be developed in either a hypothetical-deductive or an inductive manner. The former is preceded by hypothesizing, and then aims to either prove or disprove the starting hypothesis (Seale, 1998). An inductive method of theory development "constructs theories from empirical data by searching for themes and seeking to make meaning from the evidence" (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 346).

Grounded theory is an example of an inductive process of theory development. Glaser and Strauss (1967) pointed out that hypotheses can be created from the data during the course of the research and are not a prerequisite for initiating the process.

Substantive theory is the form of most interest to grounded theory researchers. This form of theory encompasses a substantive area of inquiry such as residential group care for children (Anglin, 2002), the personal health of street-involved youth (Rew, 2003), or transcending suicidality among young men (Gordon, 2009). Grounded in the data of the study, grounded theories seek to make sense of the area of study and provide a framework for guiding action for those most interested in the phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In grounded theory, the focus is on theorizing, rather than describing or evaluating. This focus allows the researcher to go beyond describing a phenomenon to formulating a theoretical foundation to predict and explain.

Grounded Theory Method

Grounded theory sits among the main methodological approaches to qualitative research, along with ethnography, case study, phenomenology, action research, and narrative. According to Somekh and Lewin (2005), grounded theory is “probably the most influential approach developed in the twentieth century to the analysis of qualitative data” (p. 15). Its distinction from other qualitative methodologies is the focus on theory development and decreased emphasis on the description of events, experiences, or populations.

Classic grounded theory provides the researcher with strategies to discover what is occurring within the data. The method “is a balance between systematic process and intuitive creativity” (Holton, 2007b, p. viii). The central tenets of the method will be briefly elaborated later in this section, while the strategies and implementation of the method with respect to this study are described in Chapter Four.

History and Development of Grounded Theory

The origin of grounded theory is credited to the work of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 emanating from their *Awareness of Dying* study. Glaser (1998) believes that “grounded theory was discovered, not invented. Its discovery is rooted in what may be considered some of the best schools and methodological thought in sociology in the sixties” (p. 21). The initial discovery of grounded theory was tied to the research of Glaser and Strauss, but has since become one of the more widely used qualitative research methods when theory development is the goal (Haig, 1995). Glaser and Strauss offered a method that would substantiate qualitative data analysis as well as

create theory. Their goal was to move research beyond the descriptive or the testing of hypotheses and into explanatory theoretical frameworks of studied phenomena.

Barney Glaser, an American sociologist, studied at Columbia University under Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton. Glaser was a student of Lazarsfeld, a strong proponent of quantitative methodology, and of Merton, who taught from a functionalist perspective. Merton, a student of Talcott Parsons, was himself turning away from and questioning his own teacher's predilection for a "grand theories" approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Another American sociologist, Anselm Strauss from the Chicago School, studied under Herbert Blumer, an exponent of the theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism (SI). Glaser and Strauss may have come from different universities and backgrounds, but were able to meld complementary sociological ideas and training in their work together.

Anselm Strauss trained at the University of Chicago and acquired a great deal of experience in qualitative research and analysis. The Chicago School is known for field research, applying scientific techniques to the collection and deductive analysis of data to explain different types of individual and social phenomena. Strauss' training introduced him to the philosophy of Pragmatism and the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, both of which can be seen in the processes and epistemology of grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Reflected in his training as a Symbolic Interactionist, Strauss "brought notions of human agency, emergent processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices and the open-ended study of action to grounded theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 7).

The competing traditions of the Chicago School, Strauss' training, and Glaser's work at Columbia nonetheless became a complementary collaboration. The grounded theory literature, however, places greater emphasis on the essential contributions made by Symbolic Interactionism and Pragmatism to grounded theory, while Glaser's Columbia roots have often been overlooked. Glaser was trained at Columbia University in quantitative research, methodology, and theory generation. He saw a need for "a well thought out, explicitly formulated methodology and systematic set of methods for collecting, coding and analyzing data" (Glaser, 1992, p. 17). Lazarsfeld's influence on Glaser can be seen in grounded theory's constant comparison method, consistency analysis, and behind the logic for theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1998). With grounded theory, Glaser placed an emphasis on rigorous coding and systematic analysis of data. Glaser (1998) suggested that qualitative math had a strong influence on him and, as a researcher using grounded theory, he was interested in discovering patterns of behaviour and in theorizing concepts from these patterns.

The Grounded Theory Controversy

In the years following the 1967 publication of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss continued to develop their theory methods independently of each other. The grounded theory method has evolved from its Glaser and Strauss origin, further developed by Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998), Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1997), and researchers such as Dey, (1999), Clarke (2005), and Charmaz (2006).

The grounded theory debate began in a very public way in 1987 when Strauss published *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. It intensified in 1990 when Strauss

joined with Juliet Corbin and published *Basics of Qualitative Research*. This book was aimed at novice researchers and those interested in conducting grounded theory studies, and provided a thorough breakdown of the steps one would go through in using the grounded theory method. This book and the newly evolving method were then contested by Glaser in his book *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (1992). In his book, Glaser claimed that Strauss had taken the original intent of grounded theory and developed a new methodology, the outcome of which Glaser termed *full conceptual description*. While it may appear that this is merely an academic quarrel between two colleagues, it is important for new grounded theory researchers to understand the basis for the quarrel and where their research fits with respect to this dispute.

The latest concern in the grounded theory literature is whether a method discovered over 40 years ago could still be relevant for researchers in light of the new thinking on several fundamental issues currently dominating the social sciences. Charmaz (2000, 2006) and Clarke (2005) are two of the more prolific authors arguing for the necessity of bringing grounded theory “around the post-modern turn” (Clarke, 2005, p. xxi). The addition of *constructivism* and *situational analysis* to traditional grounded theory is an attempt to refashion grounded theory in light of the post-modern perspective.

In the literature on grounded theory, the recent changes to the method have been described either as *evolutions* (Kelle, 2005; Kendall, 1999; Melia, 1996; Robrecht, 1995; Schreiber & Stern, 2001) or *erosions* (Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Glaser & Holton, 2004). This duality provides additional fuel for the debate. While there are a variety of offshoots (such as differential analysis, grounded action) from the classical

grounded theory method, the greatest focus is on the two most dominant ideas: *social constructivist* and *post-modern* grounded theory.

It could be argued that grounded theory is struggling with a “crises of representation” (Annells, 1997, p. 127) and researchers must take up the challenge to accurately reflect the voice of their participants. Charmaz (2000) asserts that all grounded theories are interpretive constructions of reality whereby the participant’s voice is being “re-presented” in the analysis and interpretation. Glaser asserts that what the constructivist grounded theory researchers are doing is in fact the opposite of what they claim: diluting their participant’s voice rather than retaining their “truth” or personal “reality”. Referring to Charmaz’s work, Glaser (2002) states “her formulation actually takes away the participants reality by saying it is recast in some way by the researcher. So the participant's voice is not heard, but distorted or lost” (p. 6). Constructivist grounded theory attempts to provide the balance between seeking an objective single reality in the data and representing the multiple realities that can exist within the data. Glaser argues that the grounded theory process does recognize multiple participant perspectives. However the importance is not on the individual data, but rather “the GT researcher comes along and raises these perspectives to the abstract level of conceptualization hoping to see the underlying or latent pattern, another perspective” (Glaser, 2002, p. 2).

While there are many similarities between these various articulations of grounded theory, there are enough differences that a researcher must decide which stream of grounded theory she is using, and then proceed with the study. This study follows the

classic grounded theory method. Glaser (2004) acknowledged the use of the term “Glaserian” grounded theory in the literature, but stated his preference for the term “Classic as recognition of the methodology’s origin” (p. 2). Given Glaser’s stated preference, I shall follow suit and refer to the method used in this study as classic grounded theory.

Key Tenets of Classic Grounded Theory

This section offers a brief overview of the central tenets of classic grounded theory. In Chapter Four I will describe in depth how I enacted the various stages during my research.

The process of grounded theory as laid out in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss is still a commonly accepted method for conducting grounded theory inquiries. The researcher engages in the following process: problem identification, theoretical sampling, data collection, analysis, memo writing, and theory development. One can describe the steps of grounded theory but that is not to suggest that it is a linear research process. A systematic method, grounded theory is cyclical; the researcher cycles between data collection, analysis, conceptualizing, memoing, and back to further data collection. The stages of grounded theory research are mutually interdependent and cannot be separated into isolated tasks.

Constant Comparative Method

An essential feature of grounded theory research is its constant comparison process. The constant comparison of data allows new data to be compared to previous

data as well as the theoretical constructs that are emerging from the analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

There is a connection between constant comparison of data, the emergence of categories and properties, examination of relationships, and allowing the data to determine where further inquiry will be required. The researcher must allow the data to guide the process, and must be willing to move in a fluid process with seemingly little control or presumptive ideas. In a synchronous manner, a grounded theory cycle emerges, as Anglin (2002) observes:

It is now evident from what has been presented that the ongoing process of coding, memoing, and re-coding (i.e., the process of constant comparison) cycles on throughout a grounded theory study until a very small number of categories emerge that appear to articulate and explain the central aspects of the phenomenon being examined. (p. 43)

The research study begins with a sample selected by the researcher and, following the constant comparison process, further participant sampling is continued through theoretical sampling. The sample expands incrementally over the course of the study. An initial group or population that can address the broad research issue is chosen and from there, more subjects are identified through the collection and analysis of data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe “the process of data collection as *controlled* by the emerging theory” (p. 45, emphasis in original) and “the basic question in theoretical sampling . . . is: *what* groups or subgroups does one turn to *next* in data collection? And for *what* theoretical purpose?” (p. 47, emphasis in original).

Data collection is shaped by an ongoing analysis process – the constant comparison method. Analysis commences with the first set of data collected and continues throughout the entire research process. “The constant comparison technique ensures that concepts and categories are generated and that, over time, certain categories come to be seen as increasingly significant in the understanding of the social processes or phenomena being studied” (Anglin, 2002, p. 44). In grounded theory studies, everything is data. “Different kinds of data give the analyst different views or vantage points from which to understand a category and to develop its properties; these different views may be called *slices of data*” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 65, emphasis in original). As each new data collection opportunity adds data to the study, they are analysed in relation to what had already been collected and examined. The researcher records her thoughts regarding the data analysis and from these memos the initial theoretical concepts will begin to emerge. The researcher will examine the relationships emerging from the data and determine where further inquiry will be required, thus allowing the data to guide the process rather than presumptions.

Coding

Coding is one of the core processes in a classic grounded theory study (Holton, 2007a, p. 265). Coding is the process which “breaks data down into component parts” (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p. 381), categorizes data, and whereby the researcher begins to identify categories and their properties. The link between the data and the emergent theory is the conceptual code (Holton, 2007a).

The coding strategy for this study followed the form outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978, 1992), and Holton (2007a). Many proponents of grounded theory indicate that coding takes place at both the *substantive* and the *theoretical* level (Holton, 2007a; Glaser, 1978, 1992). The initial phase of coding is “open coding”, where the researcher does a line by line coding of the data. It is concerned with identifying and naming what is in the data. The researcher asks “what is this data about, what is being referenced” while moving through the lines and paragraphs of data and assigning codes to categorize and describe the data. This type of coding is often done in the margin of field notes or transcripts. Selective coding begins once a “core category” has been determined. Once the core has been identified, other data is selectively coded with this in mind.

Theoretical coding is the process of specifying possible relationships between substantive codes and integrating emerging concepts into a theoretical framework. Theoretical codes begin to make the connections between categories that have been developed from the data (Anglin, personal communication, October 9, 2009). For Glaser (2005), the very strength of a grounded theory comes from the ongoing openness of the researcher, that codes and categories are emergent and have an earned relevance rather than a forced or imposed position.

Memoing

Along with data collection and analysis, writing is a major part of the research process. In grounded theory, memoing is an essential component of the method. It “refers to the process of writing notes documenting the conceptual and theoretical insights that happen as the researcher compiles and analyzes the data” (Anglin, 2002, p. 42).

Glaser (1992) claims three purposes to memoing for recording observations in the form of memos:

- Make explicit pre-existing assumptions
- Record methodological decisions
- Speculate on and analyse the data

Writing memos is an ongoing part of analysis and is “the process the analyst uses to keep track of what they think about the data” (Stern, 2007, p. 119). The emergent theory derives from the memos written throughout the research process, and the process of identifying constructs and tentative hypotheses. Writing memos on the field notes “provides an immediate illustration for an idea” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 108).

Memoing is both the step between data collection and writing the final paper (Richardson, 1998), and a form of further data collection (Anglin, personal communication, September 12, 2008).

Two types of memos – those related to data and the content of the study; those related to the process of conducting the study, analysing the data, and being a researcher – were used in this study. Sample memos are included in Chapter Four in the analysis section.

Sorting

Tied to the discussion of memos above is the final distinct phase of grounded theory, sorting. “Sorting a rich volume of memos into an integrated theory is the culmination of months of conceptual build up” (Glaser, 1998, p. 187). Sorting through all

of the collected data, analyses, memos, and thoughts surrounding the research allows the creativity of the researcher to flourish in the development of the final theory. Sorting and categorizing is an analytical step whereby the researcher selects those codes which are determined to have theoretical significance (Glaser, 1998). The process of sorting and categorizing raises the data from the descriptive to the abstract theoretical level and permits the generation of an emergent theoretical outline (Holton, 2007a). During this phase of my research, I was in regular communication with my supervisor, Dr. Anglin. Communication with a grounded theory mentor assisted me in understanding the data I was working with and in processing and translating my analysis to a conceptual level.

Theoretical Saturation

Most grounded theory authors indicate that a researcher will know they have reached saturation when they are no longer uncovering new data (Anglin, personal communication, November 22, 2009; Giske & Artinian, 2009; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A saturation point can be determined when the researcher is no longer acquiring new information from observations and interviews (Hood, 2007). Beyond data saturation, the researcher is attentive to reaching theoretical saturation, the point at which no new theoretical insights are being revealed, or new properties being discovered for the core category, through the collection of additional data (Glaser, 1998).

Parsimony and Scope

Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe the two major requirements of theory as “(1) *parsimony* of variables and formulations, and (2) *scope* in the applicability of the theory to a wide range of situations, while keeping a close correspondence of theory and data”

(p. 111, emphasis in original). A theoretical framework emerging from a grounded theory study should account for as much variation in the phenomenon with the fewest variables possible (Glaser, 1992). Glaser (1978) describes this criterion as “theoretical *completeness* – accounting for as much variation in a pattern of behavior with as few concepts as possible” (p. 93, emphasis in original).

Criteria for evaluating a grounded theory will be discussed further in Chapter Four, but the key point is that a solid grounded theory fits, works, and is relevant. As Glaser (1998) states, “these criteria engender trust because a theory with fit, relevance and that works and that can be easily be modified has ‘grab’ people feel they can use it meaningfully” (p. 237).

Visual and Spatial Methodology

Having determined the best fit of classic grounded theory for this study, there was a second methodological challenge to overcome. An abundance of research expounds on the importance of matching research methodology with the population studied, in particular when the group of interest is children or youth (Bolton, Pole, & Mizen, 2001; Clatts et al., 1995; Dodman, 2003; Gold & Coaffee, 1998; Ruddick, 1996; Young & Barrett, 2001c). Congruence is the quality of matching two or more factors, with all of the factors in alignment with each other. In research, congruence must be achieved between what the researcher wants to know, how she sets about discovering it, and the process by which she writes and presents the work. If matters of congruence are not attended to, the reader or critic of the work may find areas of discomfort, resulting in unnecessary tensions and questions.

Without always realizing it, we all absorb our environment visually, aurally, viscerally, and emotionally. Socio-spatial experience is a multi-sensory experience, yet much of the research into how people interact with (and are affected by) their environments does not acknowledge this fact. The social world is a tangible world that is both seen and felt, yet in research, it is often studied through words, language, and text. Adding image-based methods to research with street-involved youth allows the data to be presented in another medium – the visual. The language of research reflects this as researchers describe how they *see*, *picture*, *imagine*, *view*, *locate*, and *illustrate* the world they study.

Research with street-involved youth is complicated by issues of invisibility and power, so image-based research can overcome some of the challenges. The issues of access and representation are important considerations when conducting research with marginalized groups, including street-involved youth. To engage in child and youth work research entails working with the whole client, and that necessitates seeking out knowledge and strategies that examine all aspects of young people's life space. It goes beyond their physical, social, and emotional lives to the literal spaces that they occupy in the world, and finds ways to bring these elements to the forefront of the research.

Because youth are already actively engaged in the creation of their social and life spaces, it is important to find congruent methodologies or strategies that allow young people to be more than passive participants, but to actively engage them in the research process. A considerable amount of research examines the relevance and usefulness of photography as part of mixed method qualitative research (Dodman, 2003; Gold &

Coaffee, 1998; McIntyre, 2000; Ruddick, 1996; Young & Barrett, 2001c). Young and Barrett (2001c) relied on various visual methods such as photo diaries and community mapping in their research with street children. Visual data collection methods bring physical spaces into data from the perspective of the participants.

Research based on verbal exchanges may limit rather than liberate knowledge. According to Haywood (1990, as cited in Markwell, 2000), “photographs are profoundly important because they reveal something about us – how we see and interpret the world and the people and places in it, and all the meanings and associations we conjure up” (p. 92). Photography offers a powerful tool for the researcher seeking to generate visual knowledge. “Through photographs, we see, we remember, we imagine: we ‘picture place’” (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003, p. 1). Providing street-involved youth with the tools and the freedom to “picture place” and then attach a narrative interpretation to it will provide a spatial awareness and significance for the youth that might not have been there before. Visual methods were “particularly important for gaining insights into street-child spaces and their negotiation of the cityscape” (Young & Barrett, 2001a, p. 389).

In exploring the visual, Gatrell, Popay, and Thomas (2004) remind us that to seek visual representation of a space is to go beyond the metaphorical “seeing” and to bring about visual and image representations of the themes and categories of research. The purpose of using participant-generated photography is not to supersede other research methods such as interviews or observation, but rather to provide a visual “jumping off point”. A value of image-based research is its ability to bring forth the perceptions of how street-involved youth “see” their environment and the important places in their lives.

In so doing, researchers may be able to present a more holistic view of the connection between street-involved youth and the environments they inhabit and thus influence or even change the dominant spatial ideology of others.

This discussion raises the question of whether, in research, we are producing images of what is already there, or creating a new narrative about an image that could not be told without a visual/photographic portrayal. The act of taking the photograph may be enough to create a new *landscape* for the youth. This value-added contribution of image-based research creates an opportunity to explore space and place in a way that would not be possible in a research study that is solely orally based.

Ethics of Research with Street-Involved Youth

It is accepted within the social sciences that research with children and youth is not as straightforward a process as working with adults. Additional considerations need to be built into the research design to accommodate young people's development, level of competence, and position in society. Engaging in social sciences research with street-involved youth amplifies these considerations even more profoundly. At first glance, it may appear that accessing and researching street-involved youth would be easier than their peers who live at home in family environments. Their independent nature, physical presence in public spaces, and lack of adult guardianship may make them ideal youth participants for such work. Yet these same factors that seem to simplify researcher access also create complex ethical dilemmas. Street-involved youth's tenuous position in society, their location between developing adolescence and acknowledged independence, together with a lack of established, accepted guidelines for researchers wanting to

conduct qualitative studies with this population, raises the issue of how we can best meet the needs of street-involved youth while advancing our knowledge of their lives through such research.

For researchers wishing to conduct studies involving street-involved youth, a number of potential ethical roadblocks exist on the way to accessing the youth. Current literature on street-involved youth (Jansson & Benoit, 2005; Mayers, 2001; Robinson, 2002a; Young & Barrett, 2001b) identifies challenges faced by researchers, as well as emphasizing the significance of reflexivity and questioning for establishing ethical practice. The main ethical obstacles identified by these researchers include consent, minimizing harm while maximizing benefits, issues of disclosure, and compensation for participants.

One highly contested ethical dilemma discussed in the literature on research with street-involved youth centres on the practice of providing compensation to participants. When working with street-involved youth, who have a great need for many material items, the offer of compensation may provide an incentive for them to consent to participate in a study that they otherwise might prefer to ignore (Ensign, 2003; Levine, 1995; Sugarman, Mastroianni, & Kahn, 1998). Not all researchers feel this way however. For example, Mayers (2001) was quite clear in her belief that participants do not need to receive monetary incentive. Jansson and Benoit (2005) provided compensation for the youth they worked with in their study with street-involved youth, as did Kidd (2003, 2007) and Rew (2003). In this study compensation was provided to the youth who participated in interviews and community photography. To remain consistent with other

research protocols that have been followed at Street Youth Centre¹ (SYC) over the previous few years, youth were provided \$10 per interview. Youth who took part in the photography phase of the study received \$10 for each completed disposable camera they returned (to a maximum of \$20).

The use of visual data collection strategies brings about additional ethical considerations not present in more common qualitative research designs. Ethical considerations particular to using auto-photographic methods include the following: awareness of when and where picture-taking is appropriate; obtaining consent and respecting people's choices about being included in photographs (this includes not only pictures of themselves, but also of their property and location); and ensuring the reasons for taking photographs is clear (Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000; Young & Barrett, 2001c). A training workshop was conducted at the SYC drop-in with the youth on issues of consent, safety, and ethics of photography in research prior to setting them free with the cameras. In addition, all youth were provided with a Ziploc bag to store their camera and a printed card with brief details of the research study, their role, and contact information of the researcher.

The study protocol was submitted to the Research Ethics Boards at the University of Victoria and was renewed annually until study completion. The approval form is included as Appendix A.

¹ Personal and organizational names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Chapter 4 – Research Implementation and Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the implementation of this study and to present the process of data analysis. Specifically, it will articulate how I gained access to the streets for the purpose of this research study, the means of recruiting participants, and how data was gathered, as well as the process by which the data was analysed and a substantive theory discovered.

The first section of this chapter sets the context for how I found a place on the streets from which to conduct my research and outlines the methods used to conduct the study. This section will also indicate where shifts in focus were made during the two years of data collection and analysis and the reasons for making such changes. Chapter Three provided an overview of this grounded theory study's elements including open coding, constant comparison, sorting, theoretical sampling, and theorizing. In the second section of this chapter, I outline the stages of theory development and how the resultant theory, *negotiating duality*, emerged.

Gaining Access to the Streets

Those who research street-involved youth often report challenges in gaining access to the streets, the services, and the youth (Mayers, 2001; Robinson, 2002b). Robinson (2002b) discussed the challenges she experienced entering into the distressing arena of the homeless in Sydney. Many researchers studying street-involved youth may have very limited experience with or exposure to the spaces and places of the streets. As Robinson states, for her “to be able to just talk to people . . . was perhaps the most necessary and difficult skill to develop” (p. 77). Mayers (2001) had worked for four

years with street youth prior to beginning her study but still faced challenges in gaining access to the streets as a researcher. “Service providers and frontline workers seemed to be distrustful of lofty academic pursuits” (p. 29) and solidifying a relationship with a community agency partner was difficult. Robinson (2002b) also faced a “difficult process of gaining agency support” (p. 84). In addition to issues related to researcher fears or discomfort, and agency distrust or lack of support, youth homelessness researchers report on the challenges of being accepted and trusted by the youth (Kidd, 2003), feeling safe on the streets (Gibson, 2007; Robinson, 2002b), and learning to blend unobtrusively into the places street-involved youth occupy (Bemak, 1996).

The literature documents the importance of the location of the researcher in studies involving young people and, in particular, street youth (de Oliveira, 2000; Kidd, 2003; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Mayers, 2001). Hagan and McCarthy (1998) referred to the necessity of “hanging out” and being present in the same space as the youth with whom they wanted contact as an early research phase. The location and the relationship of the researcher to the research is a dynamic rather than a static process. Numerous qualitative methodologies allow the creation of a “position of similarity” with the youth as a starting point to shift from the outsider location (Mayers, 2001; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Whyte, 1943).

Prior to the formal start of my data collection, I spent a 12-month period acclimatizing myself to the streets through volunteering at a local street services drop-in and outreach program. This acclimatization period took place prior to the formal start of

my research study, and helped develop foundational relationships that later were critical for data collection.

Unlike most other researchers who explore elements of youth homelessness, I am uniquely placed in that I have lived three different connections to the streets: I have been a street-involved youth; I have been a youth worker in the youth shelter system and street outreach sector; and finally, I have been a researcher exploring and theorizing the connection street-involved youth have to the spaces and places in their lives. The first two roles facilitated the access to the streets that was necessary for this study.

Site of the Research Study

The study was conducted in a mid-sized Canadian city in the Province of Ontario. Street Youth Centre (SYC), an agency serving street-involved youth since the 1970s, agreed to provide me with space and access to the intended population. Street Youth Centre provides on-site daily drop-in services for youth ages 16 to 25, a school program, two social enterprise work programs, a work training program, and street outreach. The drop-in accommodates approximately 20 to 60 youth per day. Volunteers on a typical outreach shift interact with between 10 and 50 street-involved youth per night.

My relationship with Street Youth Centre is twofold. In 1991, I first encountered SYC as a client exiting the street. I was involved in an employment program and completed a placement at SYC learning office skills. Between 1991 and 1993, I was an organizational spokesperson and attended various national conferences with the Executive Director and President of the Board. After a 14-year absence, I returned to SYC in May 2007. I met with the Executive Director and Manager of Drop-in Services

to outline my intention to pursue doctoral research pertaining to street-involved youth and to ask permission to align myself with SYC as a community research partner. The Executive Director and Manager were interested in the study and welcomed me into the agency. In June 2007, I returned to SYC as a drop-in and street outreach volunteer. Upon receiving ethical approval for this study in July 2008, I shifted out of the role of volunteer to that of researcher and began to collect data.

There are limitations to such a heavy reliance on a single site. The majority of the current street-involved youth, and adult service providers were recruited through the SYC. In the city where this study was conducted, there are two street-youth serving agencies. SYC was selected in part because of the researcher's past experience with the centre twenty years prior but also because, of the two drop-in agencies serving street-involved youth, SYC presented a wider age range of client and, uniquely, allowed youth to bring their pets onto the premises. The inherent limitation in primarily recruiting through a single site is the lack of data from service resistant street-involved youth. It also creates a bias toward the agency and the demographic of youth serviced by the Street Youth Centre. To counter this, participants were also sought through respondent-driven sampling and through outreach and researcher presence in the community. The current street-involved youth brought into the study by their peers were generally younger, with less time accumulated on the streets. They also were not daily users of street services. Theoretically sampling former street-involved youth through word of mouth and respondent-driven sampling further diversified and added participants not connected to SYC.

SYC remained one of the main sites of my interaction with street-involved youth and the resulting data collection but, as will be discussed in the latter section of this chapter, data collection extended beyond this specific agency into many sections of the city where street-involved youth congregate, as well as into the spaces often seen only by the youth themselves.

Theoretical Sensitivity

[Theoretical sensitivity] involves his [the researcher's] personal and temperamental bent . . . ability to have theoretical insight into his area of research, combined with an ability to make something of his insights.

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 46)

one should deliberately cultivate such reflections on personal experience. Generally we suppress them, or give them the status of mere opinions...rather than looking at them as springboards to systematic theorizing.

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 252)

From its beginning in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), grounded theory has embraced the central concept of *theoretical sensitivity*. In Glaser's words, "theoretical sensitivity refers to the researcher's knowledge, understanding, and skill, which foster his generation of categories and properties" (Glaser, 1992, p. 27). Theoretical sensitivity is the concept that identifies and helps to expose and utilize my own inescapable self-interest, experiences and work, and previous knowledge, in relation to my research topic.

A *sensitizing concept* is an "idea or understanding the researcher already has in her/his head about the phenomenon of study" (Schreiber, 2001, p. 59). Researchers are not always aware of their preconceived ideas and need to make an effort to uncover them.

This is a continual process, not simply something done once at the beginning of a study. Charmaz (2006), highlighting the importance of the knowledge and experiences of the researcher in conducting a grounded theory investigation, states “the theory *depends* on the researcher’s view, it does not and cannot stand outside of it” (p. 130, emphasis in original). This view is not acknowledged in order to be pushed aside, but rather held for analysis against the data emerging in the study. As a researcher, it is necessary to be aware of one’s position when interpreting observational data, to be theoretically sensitive to one’s location and aware of prior knowledge and beliefs as one initiates a research project. Throughout the study this was accomplished through memoing and direct dialogue with my doctoral supervisor.

It is relevant to acknowledge my experiences, knowledge, and position. My own life’s spaces and places influence what I am able to observe and interpret. Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that the researcher “must have a perspective that will help him see relevant data and abstract significant categories from his scrutiny of the data” (p. 3). Part of the perspective I bring to this study is that of a former street-involved youth. Having spent significant time on the streets, my previous knowledge of street-involved environments and lifestyles contributed to my ability to recognize important concepts in the data. The use of a research journal allowed me to memo connections and ideas raised by the data. I was able to contextualize the first-hand knowledge and experiences I had with those contained in the study data. During the data analysis phase, bi-weekly phone conversations with my supervisor allowed me to be sensitive to how I was reading and interpreting the data. Taking the opportunity to reflect on instances that raised emotions or brought forth memories were memoed in my research journal and then set aside. A

conscious effort was made throughout the study to acknowledge the separation and connections from my various forms of experience with street-involved youth and the streets. As will be discussed in the following section, decisions were made to formalize and include data originating from my experience.

Research Strategies

This section on research strategies is organized in two parts. First, participant sampling and recruitment will be presented. Secondly, the data collection techniques used in the study will be discussed in detail.

Participants

There were three categories of participants: current street-involved youth, former street-involved youth, and adults working with street-involved youth in some capacity. Fifty-two current street-involved youth participated and met the criteria of being between 16 and 25 years of age, not living with parents, and engaging in most of their daily activities in the context of the street; 65% of the current street-involved youth participants were male and 35% were female. By the end of the study, approximately 60% of the street-involved youth had some attachment to a home environment or had transitioned off the street into more stable housing, yet were still actively involved in street life.

Beginning the study with current street-involved participants led me to question what perspective former street-involved youth would bring to the data. Six former street-involved youth participants took part in this study and ranged in age from 26 to 37 years. The criteria for former street-involved participants were that they had spent time on the streets during their adolescence, had since left the streets, and no longer identified as

living street-involved. The inclusion of this category of participant emerged out of the research methodology.

In the final category, eight adults who work with street-involved youth participated, including a shelter worker, an outreach nurse, two youth workers, the SYC agency director, two volunteers, and a police officer (refer to Appendix B for a table of demographic information on the study participants).

Over the course of this study I came to know some of the youth quite well. I learned about their previous family lives, their struggles and successes on the streets, and watched as a few moved on to their own apartments and set off on their first day of work at a full-time job. A small number (fewer than 10) of the youth I observed and chatted with at the drop-in or along the streets of the city were merely passing through or took limited interest in the research. I listened to their stories if they cared to share them with me and added their data to the growing set of narratives and ideas that ultimately led to this grounded theory.

To engage street-involved youth in exploring how their daily environments influence their health and development, it is important that they have spent enough time in street environments to be able to discuss them. Youth involved as participants in this study identify themselves as having been street-involved for a minimum of three months. The rationale for a three-month period was to ensure participants had enough time on the streets to be able to speak to a variety of issues, and to have encountered numerous environments.

As grounded theory is an emergent design method, I could not predetermine the total number of participant interviews that would be conducted. Initially, I anticipated interviewing between 20 and 25 street-involved youth. In total, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 current street-involved youth, six former street youth, and eight adults who work with street-involved youth. The remaining 37 current street-involved youth were involved in the study through casual conversations on the street or in the drop-in, through the photography aspect of the study, or were observed in their interaction with other youth and adults.

My sample of current street-involved youth was drawn from the downtown/market area of the city, but as data collection took place over an 18-month time period, I was able to capture youth who also travelled from other Ontario cities, as well as other provinces. Particularly during the summer months, street-involved youth are a transient population and there is a well-known movement between cities.

Street-involved youth were recruited to participate in an interview through direct contact with myself. Word of mouth at the SYC drop-in and during my outreach shifts was the primary means to advertise the study and recruit interested youth. I posted an announcement on the SYC drop-in whiteboard advertising the study and my interest in recruiting participants. Youth encountered during outreach shifts may access the services of Street Youth Centre, or they may be unknown to the agency and its staff. Recruiting youth in this manner allowed me to access both those who frequently use services and those who were not regularly involved with social service agencies at all.

In addition, I employed respondent-driven sampling strategies (Heckathorn, 1997) to expand my initial sample. It is believed that “reclusive youth are more likely to respond to the appeals of their similar-age peers who have already participated in the research project, than to requests from more privileged adults from either the university or community agencies” (Ensign & Gittelsohn, 1998, as cited in Benoit et al., 2008, p. 335). Respondent-driven sampling allowed participants who engaged in an interview or in the photographic component of the study to recommend or introduce other youth they knew who might be interested.

In a grounded theory study, an initial sample is selected and then subsequent samples are determined through the process of theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is a means of following the emerging concepts and sampling where the data take you (Glaser, 1998). Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicate that “theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (p. 45). Coding and data analysis may take the research in an unforeseen direction, which will then be followed up through theoretical sampling. Data analysis, as part of the constant comparison method, will inform and direct further sampling (Charmaz, 2006).

Three months into my data collection phase, I began to expand my sample. By this point in the study I had conducted five interviews with current street-involved youth and with one youth worker. In addition, observation and conversations with numerous other street-involved youth provided me with initial data to code and analyse. As participants joined the study, it was becoming clear that the majority of their experience

was in the present in terms of street involvement. The youth accessed through the drop-in and on outreach shifts were currently street-involved.

To expand the data to include reflection upon exiting the streets, I decided to seek out a few participants who were *formerly* street-involved. The drop-in manager put me in contact with one youth who agreed to take part in the study. The remaining former street youth participants were recruited through word of mouth. Friends, colleagues, and fellow students knew the nature of my study and four of the former street-involved youth participants were referred to me through a mutual acquaintance.

Eight adults who worked with street-involved youth in some capacity constituted the final category of participants. Initially, adults were recruited through their work or volunteer involvement with Street Youth Centre. In addition, the drop-in staff put me in touch with a community police officer and an outreach psychiatric nurse who later both became participants in the study. The final adult participant was a youth shelter manager known to me through my work in the field.

Data Collection

Data collection methods included observation, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, photographs taken by current street-involved youth, walking interviews, and auto-ethnographic sources.

Observation

Observation is one of the most important methods of data collection in qualitative research. In a review of the literature, it is clear that observation is a basic method of obtaining data about street-involved youth (de Oliveira, 1997; Kidd, 1999; Robinson,

2002b; Young & Barrett, 2001c). Observation is not exclusive to any research methodology. Because “the methodological framework for the research will largely determine what is ‘seen’ and is, therefore, the key factor in the choice of observation method” (Jones & Somekh, 2005, p. 139), we are unable to detach observation from interpretation, and the constant reflection of researchers on their data influences what they observe.

When observation is used as a method of collection, it is important to recognize that anything can become data, and remain open to data being found in unlikely environments. “Data are nothing in themselves. Data are good to think with. They are ways of entering reality, each as good or as bad as the method used and the researcher who used it” (Boyden & Ennew, 1997, p. 168). In a qualitative study, the researcher needs to be vigilant and both overtly and passively examine the data that is presented.

Observation initially took place during time spent at the SYC drop-in and on the street outreach route. I was provided with the flexibility to “hang out” at the SYC drop-in and school program any day during the week, allowing me to engage with the youth as a participant-observer for 15 hours a week during the first nine months of my study.

Planned observation in the drop-in occurred from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. two days per week (most often Monday and Thursday). Observation began with my arriving at SYC and signing in with the drop-in staff manager. The drop-in is a relaxed, informal setting comprised of the house kitchen and computer room. Youth may come for breakfast, coffee, to read the paper, use the computers, or simply to hang out. In this context I had the opportunity to observe the youth as they interacted with each other, and

the agency staff, while going about their daily routines. These provided opportunities to see the youth interact with staff and to observe the staff debrief at the end of the day's shift.

Observing through the drop-in, work program, and school program of this agency brought me into contact with a large number of street-involved youth. On a daily basis, the program serves between 20 to 60 youth, though many of these are regular clients who come to the drop-in or work programs five days a week. The drop-in is the only street youth agency that serves breakfast and allows pets on the premises. These two factors create a space that encourages the youth to regularly access the centre.

Observation at the drop-in was not a passive activity. The agency is housed in a large, three-storey house in the downtown section of the city. The main floor of the agency contains the computer room, employment program, and a large kitchen. Feeling very comfortable in the space, I would begin my observation shifts by pouring myself a coffee and settling in around the centre island of the kitchen. I would greet the youth I was already acquainted with, introduce myself as a research student to the new youth I had not met before, and briefly describe my presence at the agency.

Participant-observation on street outreach shifts allowed me to see the youth in the community environment, and have contact with youth who do not frequent SYC. I participated in outreach two days a week either between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. or 5:30 and 9:00 p.m. Outreach was conducted in teams of two and my partners were aware of my research study. A set route was followed for each morning and evening shift and I followed the direction of the outreach volunteer. During outreach sessions I often came

into contact with youth I was acquainted with through the drop-in but occasionally met youth who did not access any agencies or services.

In addition to collecting data through participant-observation with the outreach team, I collected direct observational data at four public locations frequented by street-involved youth. Research with a street-involved population is most appropriately done “where the kids are at” (Baizerman, 1999, p. xvi). The direct observation locations were selected for their high foot traffic and for being known as common street-involved youth hangouts. Field notes were initially jotted down on index cards while in the field. These were then written up shortly after I completed each outreach session, often as I waited for the bus, and a detailed account was written once I returned home.

Observation and conversation go hand in hand. As a method they are easily combined. On many occasions I was sitting on the bridge or park bench and youth familiar with my study would approach and initiate a conversation.

Conversations

Some scholars describe their interview process as an informal conversation (Gibson, 2007; Kidd, 2007; Mayers, 2001). Conversation assumes mutuality of question and answer. “Understanding is participative, conversational and dialogic ... something that is produced in that dialogue, not something reproduced by an interpreter through an analysis of that which she seeks to understand” (Schwandt, 2003, p. 302). Conversations are a means of conducting informal interviews and, when working with street-involved youth, they are an appropriate method for gathering data. As Schwandt (2003) indicated, the value of the conversations is deeper than the transcribing and interpretation the

researcher does later on his or her own. Several scholars described beginning their research with an invitation to the youth to tell their story (Karabanow, 2005; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Mayers, 2001; Rew, 2003). Gathering data through conversations with the street-involved youth in their locale (often sidewalks), while they carry out their daily activities (usually panhandling) allowed me to gather data that may not be expressed in formal interviews.

Informal conversations were often unscheduled and occurred in various locations throughout the downtown/market area of the city. All street-involved youth who engaged in conversations with me (and who were not previously participating in the study) were informed of the study, provided with an informed consent letter, and asked to sign the consent. Informal conversations with youth were not tape-recorded, nor were notes taken during the discussion. Shortly after such informal dialogues, I wrote a rough draft of key points that I wanted to capture from the conversation. As the study progressed and categories emerged out of the data, I organized my conversation notes in alignment with the emergent codes and categories. Any data that did not fit with a current code/category I added at the bottom of the note. Notes were initially recorded on index cards and then transferred into my research journal.

Interviews

In addition to collecting data through informal means such as observation and conversations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 15 currently identifying street-involved youth, six former street-involved youth, and eight service providers including one police officer and two long-standing outreach volunteers. Semi-

structured interviews were predominately conducted in a counselling room at the SYC drop-in or alternatively in a place chosen by a participant.

As is consistent with grounded theory, a general interview guide was used rather than a detailed set of questions (see Appendices C and D). Interview questions evolved during the first few months of data collection bringing about slight changes in wording and structure. At the start of each interview, participants were presented with the informed consent letter and asked to sign the form with a pseudonym of their choice. Interviews were approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The first 12 interviews were tape-recorded with the participant's permission and later transcribed in full. Glaser (1998) recommends against recording interviews because "when doing grounded theory there is no need for complete recording of the interviews as one would want in descriptive completeness" (p. 107) but my confidence was nonetheless strengthened by the knowledge that I had the recordings and full transcripts. This practice shifted as I became more comfortable with the study and my ability to take detailed notes. The interviews with staff and four of the six former street youth were not recorded. Instead key phrases were jotted down during the interview and detailed notes and quotes were immediately written up in the hour following the interview.

The initial interview guide used with current street-involved youth consisted of the following: five demographic-type questions; ten questions focused on how they spend their day-to-day time, where they go, what spaces and places are important to them, their behaviour and experiences; and finally a set of five questions exploring issues of health and support. Given that this was an informal interview guide, questions were added to follow the train of thought of the interview participants. At first, the intent of

the interviews was to establish some of the key places that the youth frequent, determine how spaces are invested with meaning, understand what particular places mean to street-involved youth, and explore the connections between space, place, behaviour, and well-being.

As the interviews continued and evolved to include staff and former street-involved youth participants, the interview guide expanded to include questions exploring codes and concepts that emerged out of earlier interviews. Adjustments were made to clarify questions and make them more relevant to the youth's lives. Initial questions and ideas about therapeutic potential on the streets shifted to examine risk-enhancing and health-enhancing opportunities, as well as perceptions of society-controlled space versus street-controlled space.

Photography

Given my interest in exploring the spaces and places of importance to the youth, I needed to use data collection methods that would capture spatial as well as verbal data. Early in my doctoral program, I spent months pondering how I could effectively capture the spatial lives of street-involved youth. How can I see where they are living and the places that are important to them in a way that is safe for both me and for them? Can I get beyond words and observations and see where they are describing and will it make a difference to how I understand?

I was familiar with using photography in community-based participatory research and knew I wanted to include photography in this study as well, as I believed it could add significantly to my data. To get the photos, I gave disposable cameras to 11 youth and had them take pictures of the places that were important to them. Image-based research

strategies such as photography allow the researcher to obtain data that complements the written text, and bring pictures and dynamic visuals to the data. The value of visual research is its ability to illustrate the perceptions of street-involved youth by seeing their environment and the important spaces and places in their lives. By using visual methods, researchers may be able to present a more holistic view of the street youth/environment connection. Photographic research methods act as a catalyst for eliciting narrative descriptions of places and activities that young research participants may not be able to describe (Bach, 1997; Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Weber, 2008; Young & Barrett, 2001c).

It is undoubtedly a difficult task to describe solely in words a place that plays a special part in one's life, health, and happiness; having the photographs made this task easier for the participants because they had a tangible image to draw on and to refer to when explaining things to me. Participants' photographs acted as a bridge between our very different experiences of reality. (Pink, 2001, as cited in Sperling, 2006, p. 70)

It has been noted that street-involved youth live invisible lives in a very visible context (Mayers, 2001). It can be challenging for a researcher to enter their world and understand how they perceive their space, interact with and use places in their daily lives. Providing cameras to the youth as a means of eliciting photographs of spaces that could not be seen by the researcher brought added depth to the research.

After conducting three interviews and one month of observation, I invited youth to photograph aspects of their daily environments. Nine youth expressed interest so I arranged a training session to be held at the drop-in. The training covered issues of

ethical picture-taking, consent, and safety, as well as what the youth might want to photograph, and instruction in how to use the cameras. I also described the purpose of the photographs and how they would be used in the research study. During the training sessions, there was limited discussion on what spaces and places the youth might want to capture on film to decrease the chance of youth taking photos of places they felt were expected. Later, two more youth were referred to me by other youth who took part in the photography aspect of the study. These two youth were also provided with cameras that were returned to me and included in the study.

¹Sept 30, 2008 – Memo about photography workshop

Nine youth participated in the initial photography activity (6 males and 3 females). Of these, four have not yet been involved in the study through formal interviews. I began by reviewing what my study is about and why I want to include a photography piece. At first they seemed anxious to just get the cameras and leave but they got into the conversation once we started talking about what they would actually do with the cameras out in the community.

I had a cue card included in the ziplock bag with the camera and one side was printed with an overview of my study name, my name and contact information and a sentence indicating the youth were involved in collecting data for a research study. The other side of the card had a few “cues” for what they might want to consider when taking pictures (i.e., sleeping spots, places you feel safe, places to make money, to hang out, to find

¹ The dated and blocked sections are samples of grounded theory memos written by the researcher throughout the course of the study.

privacy, etc.). We talked about where some of these places might be and what issues might arise when they take pictures of them. They had a hard time at first thinking of any issues but once I prompted with a few ideas they understood what I was getting at. They all agreed that the police or business owners might approach them and want to know what they were taking photos of. They agreed that it was best not to take pictures of storefronts or people.

They seemed to have a hard time grasping the idea that there were safety concerns that might arise when they had a camera. We got into this a bit by talking about the power that comes with having a camera and how other people might view them. From this we got into how that might translate into a possible safety issue and how they could avoid putting themselves in positions of risk. What was interesting to me however was how oblivious they seemed to all this. Their concept of what constitutes risk really is skewed. It is not that they don't think they are at risk, they just have such a different concept of what is "dangerous" and carrying a camera is so far from that realm of risky.

One of the males commented that tourists always walk around the city with cameras, "you see them everyday and no one bothers them. I can pretend I'm a tourist. It's normal to see someone taking a picture of a park or place downtown" (Jack).

Another interesting point was raised when we discussed the ethics of picture taking. I made it clear that the focus of all pictures was to be places and not people. They all seemed to understand and agree that it was wrong to take pictures of people without their knowing about it and that you needed permission to take someone's picture but it did seem odd to them that a "place" might also have a need for privacy or confidentiality. To

them, places did not qualify as needing ethical consideration. We talked about how a place might be identifiable in a picture and that may not always be a good thing. For example, if they were taking a picture of a women's shelter and were then going to name it as such what might that picture reveal? During the discussion Evan raised the point that taking pictures inside someone's house might qualify as a place and not a person yet it may be revealing things that the tenant did not want viewed by others.

The session was good in that it got them thinking more about the spaces and places that they occupy and use and move through in their lives. They were talking about pathways of their lives and what places might they encounter on their day-to-day walks and because they were doing this in a group it appeared that for some of them, they were starting to think about the actual where of their lives for the first time. Listening to their conversation I was reminded that simply the act of reflecting upon or talking about your situation can be enough to bring about an awareness that would not have otherwise occurred. I wonder how our conversations about places and pathways changed how they think about them or what new ideas came to mind for them? Will they look at these places differently after they have viewed them through a viewfinder? What about after they have viewed them in photo form? What new things will they see about these familiar places when they view them in their photographs?

There have been recent acknowledgements among geography researchers that various methods and strategies can be mixed to enhance the development of knowledge and provide different texts for study (Dodman, 2003). "Understanding movement through the spaces of everyday life requires methodologies that can both move with

research participants, and capture the flow of daily life” (Bijoux & Myers, 2006, p. 58).

Photography was an ideal method to capture the spaces and flow of street-involved youth.

In total, 11 youth were provided with a disposable camera of 24 exposures and asked to return the camera to me at the SYC drop-in once they completed taking their pictures. I developed the film and obtained two copies of the pictures. The youth knew they would be provided with one copy that they could keep while, with their consent, the second set would be used as data within the research study. The youth were also informed that they could choose to remove individual photos from the research set and withdraw them as data. These withdrawn photos were returned to the youth. Of the returned cameras, 260 pictures were developed and of these, 150 were usable. Reasons for not using photographs include: They were all black or too overexposed to make out any images; the sole image was of a person; the image centred on illicit activity (e.g., injecting drugs, or urinating off a balcony); or the youth requested that the photo be excluded. In these cases both copies of the photo were returned to the photographer.

The photographs hold a prominent place in the research, providing raw data to be coded and analyzed as well as serving as a catalyst for further interviews and narrative data from the youth photographers.

Walking Interviews

A walking interview permits a different understanding than might come from a static interview. As stated by Moles (2008), “attention is being turned to the use of mobile methodologies in social science research, partly in recognition of the importance of generating understandings of mobilities and to create more dynamic understandings of

space and place” (p. 1). Walking interviews are an ideal means of exploring participants’ daily environments and their relationship with space and place (Anderson & Jones, 2009; Carpiano, 2009; Jones, Bunce, Evans, Gibbs, & Ricketts Hein, 2008).

Two forms of walking interviews were used in this study. In the first, I conducted interviews with a street outreach volunteer and a police officer as we walked along their regular routes through the city. Walking interviews allowed the volunteer and police officer to show me areas of the city where they frequently encountered youth and illuminated their perspectives of the pathways through the streets, while imparting an understanding of how they saw the intersections between mainstream society, the streets, and street-involved youth.

In the second form, I conducted walking interviews with four of the youth photographers. Having provided them with their set of photos, they walked me through the route their photographs represented, telling me about their pictures as we stopped along the way at the photographed locations. This form of walking interview came about quite by accident. I was meeting on the lawn of SYC with one of the youth photographers discussing her photos when she pointed to one of the pictures and asked if I knew which park bench she had photographed. From the picture, the exact location of the small park was not evident. She indicated that it was quite close to where we were sitting and asked whether I would like to go and sit there. We walked two blocks to the park bench, and she described the meaning that little park held for her. From there, she looked at the next photo and suggested we walk over to the bridge it captured. That afternoon we walked the route she used to take the pictures and visited many of the

locations captured in her photographs. At each location we stopped and she shared a story, a memory connected to the location, and the reason why she took the picture.

Seeing the value in such walking interviews, I then invited other youth photographers to share with me the route and locations captured in their photographs. For those who agreed to the walking interview, data was captured on the backside of my copy of their photographs and then with follow-up notes written once I returned home. Data from the walking interview helped to clarify how the photos were coded and to correct for instances where my interpretations of what the photographs meant were inaccurate. In addition, it provided an opportunity for further recall of detail and new data, as the youth who walked me through their photographs often told stories and shared experiences attached to places between the locations depicted in the photographs. By walking through their daily spaces they were prompted to add new details and discuss locations not previously included in their interview or pictures.

Auto-ethnographic Data

In this subsection, I present my struggle and decision to include my own auto-ethnographic street-involved experiences as data for my study. At the outset, I was reticent to acknowledge the role my street experiences would play in my study. In many ways, my dissertation was born on the sidewalks of my youth. I set out to examine an environment and a population of long-standing interest to me and to try and understand and explain elements that had puzzled me for the better part of the last two decades.

From early in my doctoral research, I knew I wanted to use a classic grounded theory approach and incorporate photographic data and interviews. I believed I would be

able to acknowledge my personal connection to the subject matter and then step aside from my own experiences without having them affect the research. Within the first few months of data collection, I realized this was not going to be a simple task and I began to explore the literature for direction on how to proceed. It was important to keep the study focused on developing a theory of street-involved youths' relationship to the spaces and places in their lives. Given my personal and professional connections to the street, and the fact that as a researcher I bring my past with me, I needed to find a way to incorporate who I was in a transparent manner. In my search I found the writings of Carolyn Ellis (2003), Carol Rambo Ronai (1995, 1998), and Catherine Russell (1999) detailing auto-ethnography and a process of integrating auto-ethnographic data into qualitative studies.

Auto-ethnography can be a means of incorporating one more source of data – the author's own – into a qualitative research study. There is a natural fit in doing so in a grounded theory study. The grounded theory dictum “all is data” (Glaser, 1998, p. 8) suggests that my own experiences could be added to the data. In addition, Glaser supported the decision to personally interview myself using the same interview guide I followed when interviewing former street-involved youth. “Do not disregard the data you can contribute. Coding your own interview and including it in the study gives it a place, but no more prominence than that of any other participants” (B. Glaser, personal communication, June 24, 2009).

The inclusion of my own data took two forms. Upon first discussing the ability to use data from my own life, my doctoral supervisor suggested that I “interview myself” (J. Anglin, personal communication, October 10, 2008). In addition to this interview

transcript, I also had numerous memos examining memories of old street experiences and street spaces triggered by my present-day research and data. These memories are all filtered through my current position and place in life. They are my reflection and interpretation of past events and provide a hindsight view. This data has been with me since the beginning of my study, but it was not until a few months into data gathering that I allowed myself to formally acknowledge it, at which time I did interview myself and went back to reread memos I had written in a separate notebook. I was attempting to set aside or bracket feelings and memories, but at this point, I decided to include them all as a legitimate part of the study.

The second form of auto-ethnographic data came 12 months into the data collection phase of my study when I inadvertently discovered the box containing my old street journals. Reading through them, I knew I had come across another data source. Here was written data from my 16- to 19-year-old self. It was data unfettered by memories and another two decades of living and learning. In discussing this new data source with my supervisor we agreed that it would be acceptable to enter it into the study, subject to the same constant comparison method used for all the other data. In doing this, my personal narratives from the streets became just one more set of data to be raised to the conceptual level and into the emerging theory. Although I was now a source of data within my own study, I was merely one source of 66. The use of grounded theory memoing contributed not only to my analysis and conceptualization of the data, but served as an opportunity to be reflexive (White, 2007) about the place I had within my own research.

Analysis: Finding the Theory in a Grounded Theory Study

While the classic grounded theory texts (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) detailed the research process – where to start, how to deal with the literature, data collection, coding, memoing, sorting, and writing up – little guidance was provided for *how*, exactly, to develop the theory. Grounded theory was not a process I could fully understand by reading about it or through the second-hand knowledge and stories of my advisor. I was only going to learn by doing and by immersion, by making mistakes and working them out. In this section I account for my data analysis process of putting the pieces together, completing my analysis of the data, and developing the theoretical framework.

Describing the analysis in a chronological manner can make it appear to be a linear process, which it most certainly was not; however, I decided this was the most suitable structure as it allowed me to follow the order of the memos. The intent of this section is not to provide the reader with a step-by-step understanding of how the theoretical framework was created, but rather to illustrate my challenging, complex, circuitous path through analysis to conceptual understanding during this study. This section follows the chronology of the evolution of the theory. Looking back over the past two years of constant comparison and analysis of the data, I can see that the final theoretical framework emerged through four iterations. It will be evident that some early categories and their properties remained prominent throughout the analysis and are part of the final theory. Other categories came and went, and some were subsumed within larger elements.

Journal articles and theses often include cursory coverage of how the researcher arrived at their final results through the process of analysis used in their study. Reading these did not give me a sense of how the researcher moved from initial inklings to their final outcome. This section contains selected memos that I wrote that not only illustrate the evolution of the theoretical framework, but also give an indication of how I, as the researcher, constructed this theory from the data. It is my intent to make transparent the key junctures of my analysis process and to allow the reader to understand how I came to discover the theory in my grounded theory study.

Open Coding

The earliest data came from observation and semi-structured interviews with current street-involved youth. The analytical process began with open coding the interview transcripts and observation notes – “coding the data in everyway possible” (Glaser, 1978, p. 56). A list of Glaser’s (1978) three guiding questions directed the coding:

- What is this data a study of?
- What category does this incident indicate?
- What is actually happening in the data?

Through discussions with my supervisor concerning Glaser’s (1992) stated preference for working with transcripts, analysis was conducted manually without the use of computer software. Incidents in the data were compared to other incidents, and as categories and themes began to emerge, they were compared back to previous specific incidents to find linkages and differences.

September 12, 2008

I am only four interviews in and already I can see how you can drown in your data if you do not stay on top of it. There are so many pieces that seem to connect (not make sense, just connect).

Acceptance – belonging – seeking a sense of normality

Being drawn away – being sent – being placed – driven away – feeling displaced (all negative, passive on the part of the youth, active on the part of society or those who are doing the “displacing”)

Disappearing – hiding – escape – not being noticed/invisible Trying to get away – working your way out/Caged – caught in a trap

Lack of choices – lack of rights – lack of stability – lack of support

Claiming space - Claiming back the right to place – right to be in places – taking over – ownership

Support – strength – survival – lived through it – luck – doing what needs to be done to get through the day – persistence- routines – structure

The youth are trying to feel a sense of control or mastery over their environment. They are trying to find their place on the streets and not feel like they lose their place in society.

Working with the Photos

Two months into the data collection stage, I introduced photographic data. In this section I focus on how the photographs were analysed and used in the study; 260 pictures were developed and of those, 150 were included in the study.

A total of 110 photographs were developed but excluded as data. There were several reasons for such exclusions. Photos were excluded because they were very dark

and we were unable to discern what had been photographed, they included faces of youth who had not consented to be included in the study, or they captured illicit activities that I understood were to be omitted from the study. During the ethics approval process I was instructed to inform the youth to focus their picture taking on their daily environments and request that they not take photographs of people or illegal activities. Upon development, photographs that contradicted these parameters were excluded from the study and both copies of the photo were returned to the youth.

In addition, any photos which the youth requested be removed were excluded from the study. When a youth expressed a desire to remove a photo from the data I asked their reason. Most often the reasons fell into two categories: (a) the photo did not reflect what they were aiming to capture in the picture; or (b) the photo was taken “just for fun” and not intended as data. The youth knew from the outset that they would receive copies of their photographs. Three of the youth indicated that, not having any pictures of their friends or of the city, they saw this as an opportunity to gather some mementos.

This left the remaining 150 photos as data. I worked with these photos in three ways. First, I coded them as data. The initial coding of photos was based on what I thought the picture represented. Categories were created and photos grouped together around themes such as nature, indoors, sleeping spots, money-making, and so on. For the coding exercise, the photos of the 11 youth were combined (though they could be identified and individualized back to the specific youth photographer through a number on the back).

Secondly, I separated the photos into 11 piles, one for each photographer. I then tried to understand the story of the photos. I wrote notes on what I thought the youth were telling me through the pictures they took. I attempted to understand them from a holistic perspective: Why were these places of importance for each of these youth? I completed these first two analytical processes myself.

Finally, I reconnected with each youth photographer individually. Of the 11, I was able to reconnect with nine (two were no longer in the city). Five of the nine met with me on the front lawn of the SYC drop-in centre. They were given their package of photos to look through, first on their own, and then with me. I asked each to tell me about their photographs, which became the basis of an interview. I took notes as the youth spoke and wrote down key points as they described their pictures.

The other four youth photographers met with me in various places around the downtown core of the city. We conducted walking interviews, in many cases our route being dictated by the photos. The youth seemed keen to show me where many of their photos were taken. Walking through the streets, they stopped at a particular location and told a story related to its space or relevance to their life. These interviews combined an elicitation of descriptions of the pictures and spatial engagement with the places of their daily lives.

While 150 photos were used as data, not all could appear in the presentation of the study. Given space restrictions in the dissertation, decisions needed to be made regarding which photographs would be included in the text. I focused on two criteria: (a) those pictures which photographically illustrated key constructs of the framework; and (b) those

which the youth flagged in our discussion as being their favourite or best highlighting the important places in their lives.

An Example of Debriefing Photographs

I met with Jake and Sky to review their photographs and understand their interpretation of the images. I wanted to begin by talking about what it was like to take the pictures but they wanted to see their pictures first so I let them go through the set of photos before we started talking. Unfortunately, I did not have my digital recorder with me so I had to rely on my memory and notes to capture the conversation. They were both happy with how their pictures turned out and were pleased to be able to keep a set for themselves.

Before discussing the pictures we talked about the process of taking them and what it was like to carry the camera around. Jake and Sky both agreed that they liked having the camera and would like a camera of their own so they could take pictures whenever they wanted to. I asked them to describe what it was like to walk around with the cameras and take photos.

Jake: . . . it was good. I liked making the choices of where to go and what would be important to take pictures of.

Sky: . . . it was fun. Like being a tourist, but not really because we were taking pictures of where we live. No one bothered us taking the pictures.

Stephanie: Did you expect to be bothered?

Sky: I guess not. I just remembered that no one seemed to notice or it didn't matter that we were standing there taking the pictures.

Jake and Sky took a total of 51 photographs. We spread the pictures out on the table so we could see them all at once. We went through each picture one at a time and Sky described what the picture focused on. At first, she was just stating where they took the picture but when I probed with questions such as “what did that place mean to you” or “why did you take that one” she shared further stories of their places.



Stephanie: What is this a picture of?

Jake: The street, D----.

Stephanie: Why did you take that picture?

Jake: Because we are always on this street.

Sky: We walk up and down this street like a hundred times a day. It's part of where we go.

Stephanie: Is there anything on D---- that you go there for?

Sky: No, but it connects a lot of the places we need. You have to walk up D---- to get to the drop-in if you do not want to have to walk past 797 (the drop-in). And then we walk back up D---- to get to R----, or the bridge, or the hotel, everywhere really.

January 30, 2010

It's interesting – if I continue on with the delineation of place and space using Tuan's (1977) definitions – I can classify pictures as being examples of both. There are a number of pictures that are of spaces that the youth move through each day. A few of the pictures (in particular the one of D---- Street) do not show any particular place but are “avenues” of where they walk when they are moving from one place to another and are, as such, a regular and familiar path of their day.

Coding the Photographs

As stated above, I first coded the photos on my own, and then with the youth as we talked about their pictures. The photo interviews proved crucial in identifying the correct meaning of the photos and understanding how to code them and categorize them as data. As an example, consider this picture. How would you code this picture? What “story” comes to mind when you look at it?



During the first round of coding and sorting photos I placed this picture in a pile with other photos of nature-related images, and coded as “peaceful”, “calm”, “quiet”, and “escape”. In working with this photo as data I assumed this place to be an escape from the streets, and a place of potential calm, quiet, and solitude. My personal experiences and preference for outdoor nature spaces led me to categorize this as a potentially “positive” place.

A week after coding the data, I met with the young lady who took this picture. She and I were sitting on the front lawn of the drop-in centre when we reviewed her pictures. She flipped through them, stopped to tell stories of many of the images while I took notes. I was looking down at my notebook when she commented, “ah, yes, the gates of hell”. I was puzzled when I looked up and realized she was holding the photo of the

sun-filled pathway in the woods. The contradiction between my interpretation of the picture and her caption caught me off guard.

Stephanie: The gates of hell? Here? How so?

Sierra: It looks pretty and for most people it would be a nice place but for us it's dangerous. Funny, this is not likely what people imagine when they think of risky or dangerous places for street kids. But I'm more at risk here than near any street.

This exchange, very illuminating for me as the researcher, showed the importance of seeing beyond the picture as raw data and the necessity of hearing the youth's perspective and experience associated with each location depicted. As I conducted follow-up interviews with all the youth to review their photographs, I asked them to help me code the pictures into categories. In doing this, the youth were able to participate in making meaning of their data. In many cases, they were able to bring a level of accuracy that otherwise would have been absent; it became quite clear that I had misunderstood the emotion or significance behind many of the images.

Through coding and categorizing the photographs one thing stood out for me – the lack of stereotypical street scenes and the normality of the photos. Combined with the coding and analysis of the interviews and observational data, a picture of the streets and the relationship street-involved youth had to the spaces and places in their lives was emerging.

Evolution of a Theory

How does one find a theory amidst a surfeit of data? Looking back, the final theory can be glimpsed in the early data but it took over 18 months of analysis for it to evolve. The final theory did not to present itself all at once in a single “Aha!” moment. During the months devoted to analysis, the theory shifted through four main iterations as I worked to understand what was occurring in the data and to thereby put the pieces together in a way that explained the relationship between street-involved youth and the spaces and places of their lives. To understand the process of theory development in this study, it may be beneficial to discuss the process I went through as it emerged. Traces of the final theory can be seen in each of the three earlier iterations, some pieces falling by the wayside, others gaining strength, but each iteration evolving from the one that preceded it, and all grounded in the data.

Iteration #1 – Mastery: Avoidance – Engagement – Adapt – Modify

Initial interviews and observations led to a list of over 100 codes. Early patterns regarding the youths’ relationship to space show a typology of interaction: they avoid, engage, adapt, and modify the spaces and places of the street and mainstream society to best suit their needs. Themes and patterns evident in the first few interviews and two months of observation point to many of the youth actively “placing” themselves in the streets and in mainstream places.

Following the constant comparison method of data collection, coding, and analysis, early patterns emerged from the data. Data were sorted into four key themes

illustrating how youth used space or placed themselves within the streets or mainstream environments:

1. Engage: Issues of territoriality, protecting space, claiming the right to be in public space, recognizing that others are uncomfortable or dissatisfied with their presence.

I sit on R---- and pan for money even if it's risking the cops approaching. – Sky

I have a right to be in this place because it is public property so I am going to sit here no matter how much I'm stared at or harassed. – LJ

I've chosen this way of life. I am on the streets. – Adam

2. Adapt: Not all youth try to change their surroundings, but rather adapt themselves to better fit in or use the spaces they are in.

We just move to a new spot if something happens or we're not safe where we've been. – Jake

I find someone to take care of my dog so I can go in drop-in and shower; we don't hang out in big groups anymore because that draws attention of the cops. – Adam

I'll choose not to eat rather than walk down M---- Street. – Sky

I just try to stay invisible. – Zander

We change our routine . . . I got a cell phone now instead of have to come downtown to sell drugs. – Jorge

We are very persistent; nothing is stopping me, I'm like Gumby, I'm bouncing back. – Jack

3. Avoid: The youth often speak of moving through the city with an intent of avoiding detection by police, drug dealers, group home staff or parents, other street youth. There is an element of fear-based mobility; decisions of where to be or to go take into consideration what or who they want to avoid.

We won't walk down crack alley. – Sky and Jake

I make sure I'm not going places I know I'll get harassed. – Anders

I hide; I escape, just try to get away. – Sierra

4. Modify: The youth speak of making changes to places to better suit their needs.

I just move things around so I can be invisible from the path. – Zander

You have to hide everything so it is not found; arranging good hiding spots lets you use the place better and not have to carry your shit around all day on your back. – Alexa

I can make almost anywhere comfortable if I have to; most sleeping spots can be fixed up, made nicer, more home-like, you know. – Evan

October 8, 2008

Avoidance can be positive. Their efforts at engagement go against what society wants. Are there components of health-enhancing behaviour here? What are their pathways of avoidance? What tensions lie between avoidance and engagement? There are patterns of

avoidance at each stage of street life (so far) as well as incidents of invisibility – to what degree are they seeking invisibility when they leave “home” and come to the streets?

Avoidance as: prevention, safeguard, precaution, anticipation, a coping mechanism.

Despite the chaos they want to lead a normal life. There seems to be a desire to bring structure and routine into their lives. To find a way of being “normal” even in the circumstances that they are living in.

What makes a place contribute to the normality of a kid’s life? What spaces or places are they trying to create or recreate for themselves while they are on the street? Because from the outside looking in, sleeping under a bridge or in shelters or spending 16 hours a day outside is not “normal” socially-accepted behaviour but that is what these kids are doing and they are using some of these things to try and build a sense of structure around themselves?

Is the degree to which they do this related to their phase of street life? Which would occur earlier in a street career? Do youth who are preparing to transition off the streets modify their environments more than they adapt to them?

Modification is an external act – they are trying to change something about the place while Adaptation is an internal act – they are changing themselves to fit or be accommodated by the location.

There is awareness on the part of the youth (as seen in data from LJ, Evan, Jack and Carter, and Frannie) that place is something that can be used or manipulated. The right to place and a sense of justice almost seem to be underlying beliefs that they hold about society and that other people hold and impose against them.

October 10, 2008

The aim of a grounded theory study is to “explain the behaviour in how the participants continually resolve their main concern” (Glaser, 2001, p. 41). So what, then, is the main concern of street-involved youth? It seems almost logical that it would be to find housing but I don’t think that is it. I think acquiring stable housing (and employment) is a positive outcome of their resolving a more fundamental concern. Now, what is that concern?

With data added and continued use of the constant comparison method, the theoretical conceptualization shifted from how street-involved youth move through or interact with their environments to a focus on their attempt to gain control over it. The central problem, as currently seen in the data, is that the youth are trying to make it through their time on the streets – to survive and to move on. “When individuals experience successful environmental mastery and believe that past success predicts future positive outcomes, a sense of ‘learned hopefulness’ results” (Ungar, 2004a, p. 152). Codes and categories do centre on notions of mastery, negotiating or actively seeking out what they need. They attempt to master their environment and gain a sense of self in the process.

Iteration #2 – Seeking Normality

GT boils down to generating a theory of continually resolving the main concern, which explains most of the behaviour in an area of interest. . . . this concern is . . . the fateful, preoccupying problem of the participants. . . . it is what the participants are trying to do.
(Glaser, 2001, p. 103).

Street-involved youth are trying to resolve how to live a normal life on the streets. Their sense of normality changes and evolves as they spend more time on the streets. At first they are seeking to break away from the “norm” of their family. They fall into the normal rhythms of street life. They need to rectify their emotions and ideas around society’s normal and then find their way back into it.

There appears to be value in normalizing the streets. In conceptualizing a different normal, we allow ourselves to accept the contradictory notion that the streets may in fact hold positive or therapeutic value for those who live there. Also, through normalizing the streets we work toward decreasing the stigma of living on the streets, decrease the chasm between street life and so-called normal life. We become more likely to “use the streets as part of the solution” (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003, p. 11). There is so much fear, misunderstanding, and inaccuracy associated with street life that needs to be clarified.

Decreasing stigma would reduce social invisibility as “youth draw on ‘street smarts’ . . . to remain invisible and pass as normal rather than deviant” (Harter, 2005, p. 307). Their actions and behaviours do not always make sense because others don’t recognize the underlying powerful motivation guiding them.

May 6, 2009

Whose interpretation of normal matters, the youth seeking normality vs. society normalizing their behaviour (often as deviant)? Street youth and street children have been seen as being “outside normal childhood” (Panter-Brick, 2003, p. 154).

Perhaps this is part of the problem – rectifying an identity issue as well as a spatial/location issue. This raises the question of “what are the components of normality?”

Routine, structure, and stability relate to a sense of order and predictability.

Patterns are visible in the data reflecting the importance the youth place on the routines and structure in their lives. The youth come to the streets seeking a “new normal” – trying to distance themselves from a chaotic or malfunctioning family life. They adapt to the street environment and seek to master their environment and themselves. Then, they move forward, seeking normality and aiming to leave the streets behind and live a normal life.

Youth run away and get caught up in a lifestyle that they do intend to (eventually) move beyond. Their current actions, decisions, behaviours, etc., create entanglements that can be hard to move beyond. But they are not hopeless. They are seeking normality and their current environment or situation is providing them with a path to move forward.

July 6, 2009

Seeking safety – let everything else integrate around it. There are a number of ways to do this, but you need to choose just one. Examples of codes for “seeking safety”: (a) bushes, (b) friends, (c) drugs. Properties of seeking safety could be (a) future orientation, (b) remaining invisible, (c) practicing normality, (d) transitory comfort.

Parallel universe – there are a number of references to where two worlds intersect.

The streets provide a pathway or a tunnel to a future life – a someday life. It is a

formative/transformatory experience. The category you choose should transcend time and place.

Actions and thoughts directed toward normalizing the streets and seeking out ways to bring mainstream normality into a street-involved life readily appear in the data but they are not the central concern of the youth. This is not the core category upon which the theory can be centred but the construct of normality will be a key element of the framework. From this stage, the analysis turned toward understanding street-involved youths' experience of the streets, their experience of mainstream society from a street-based perspective, and their interaction in both worlds.

Iteration #3 – Duality of Parallel Worlds

The key concept of normalization was combined with the notion that there are two separate, yet linked, worlds associated with street-involved youth. A shift was made from considering normalization to be a core concept to it being a subsidiary of the duality of parallel worlds. Navigating parallel worlds speaks to the reality that most of the youth I've interviewed or observed inhabit, the space between being fully on the streets and fully off the streets. Even those who are housed still make daily or regular use of street services (provisioning, hanging out in street environments, and self-identity as a street kid).

In navigating parallel worlds, mastery is a process they engage in. The youth are seeking safety, normalizing behaviours and situations on the street to better cope with their day-to-day lives, and playing with their identity (i.e., considering how presenting themselves on the streets and in society affects how they are treated and regarded by

others). Regardless of how integrated a youth is in street life, they recognize that they are in one place and are balancing their ability to move to another place. Many of the youth are not ready to move but they're aware of where they're "not" and the contradictions inherent in duality.

A Comment on Relating Concepts to Each Other

To selectively code for a core variable, then, means that the analyst delimits his coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory. . . . Selective coding significantly delimits his work from open coding, while he sees his focus within the total context he developed during open coding. (Glaser, 1978, p. 61)

At this stage of the analysis I began selectively coding the data. I re-examined the emerging category and property tables constructed over the previous few months and examined whether there could be any integration or subsuming of content under the larger category of *negotiating dual worlds*. For the most part, I was able to recognize the data within the columns as being pieces of, or small components of this larger (potential) core category.

Next, I laid out my index cards (one card for each code) on the living room floor and placed the one for *negotiating dual worlds* at the apex. I placed each card, one by one, in groupings by category theme (seeking safety/escape; living outside normal) and then organized them to reflect the stages of negotiation (immersion through emergence). Below these, the cards depicting common strategies and skills employed by the youth as they make their way through the various stages were laid out. Finally, at the bottom of the card structure, I placed the codes that reflect actions by society toward the youth.

Thirdly, I reviewed the interview transcripts and went through two rounds of re-reading. In the first read, I wanted to examine the interview as a whole story and determine whether *negotiating dual worlds* fit the story told in the interview. This holistic view of the transcripts held up in every case; *negotiating dual worlds* is a common and general underlying narrative in each interview (regardless of whether it was from a current street-involved youth, a former street youth, or a service provider). During the second reading of the transcripts, I examined the interviews as collections of incidents and I compared these incidents to the emergent core category.

Fourth, I re-examined the photographic data and notes taken during the follow-up interviews and walking interviews. I laid all the photographs out on the living room floor and asked of the pictures: Do you represent two worlds, and can I see the negotiations of the youth within the photos?

Finally, I conducted another round of theoretical sorting of my memos (well, not every memo as there are over a hundred, but enough that I did capture all the major themes and properties and categories among them). One purpose of sorting memos is to find the “internal integration of connections” (Glaser, 1978, p. 116) between the pieces of the theory. In doing this, I attempted to string together the multiple layers and disjointed pieces of the emerging theory. This was one of the most challenging points in the analysis and where the greatest sense of being stuck was present. The physical task of sorting data, codes, and categories may be simple, but I was caught on the conceptual task of raising the data to a theoretical level. I see *so many* pieces of this theory, all connected at the periphery, and have yet to make the articulate connection of how it all comes

together. I don't think this is something that can be *taught* to me, rather it is something I am just going to have to *get*, but there is certainly an element of frustration in the process.

November 2, 2009

For the moment I am happy with the core category that I have as well as the sub-core categories but I am not quite sure how I want to organize the material. If I have the core as "negotiating parallel worlds" it makes sense that first I address the parallel worlds sub-category, then move on to spatial practice and from there end with seeking safety and practicing normality. As these last two categories are what they are "doing" while they are between worlds.

"Parallel worlds" does encompass spatial elements and dichotomies of place. I think spatial elements needs to move over to spatial practice and become a subset of routing. It is what they base their decision-making upon. I can leave dichotomies of place in parallel worlds as it speaks to the type of place that they are interacting with. It is the categories of environment that they are negotiating.

Over a year into the analysis, the theoretical framework started to come together. At this stage of the analysis the key elements of the theoretical framework were taking shape but I knew they were not yet final.

1. Psychosocial processes: Seeking safety and escape AND Living outside normal
2. Stages of street life (immersion, inhabitation, emergence)

3. Developmental model in the context of the streets (physical, emotional, cognitive, social dimensions) – Level of attachment to street life
4. Model of action in the context of the streets (theirs and ours) – goals/strategies/skills

Negotiating the duality of parallel worlds remains a central category in the data.

The youth are negotiating between the street world and the mainstream world. The struggle between normalizing where they are (on the streets) and getting back to normal society is emphasized in the concept of negotiating parallel worlds.

Iteration #4 – The Final Theory: Negotiating Duality

For weeks I played with the idea of parallel worlds but knew it wasn't quite right. The streets and mainstream society do not lie parallel to each other. There are spaces of intersection. Accepting this shifted the theory into its final stage. It became evident that to negotiate duality was the core category. In this framework, the street-involved youth are negotiating dual spaces and places, identities, logic, and normalities.

The core category “will serve to connect and place in perspective virtually all of the elements of the phenomenon being studied” (Anglin, 2002, p. 51). Glaser's (1978) criteria for identifying the core category:

1. It must be central.
2. It must recur frequently in the data.
3. It takes more time to saturate than the other categories.
4. It relates meaningfully and easily with other categories.
5. It has clear and “grabbing” implications for formal theory.

6. It has carry-through.
7. It is highly variable due to its dependence on related categories.
8. While accounting for variation in the problematic behaviour, the core category is also a dimension of the problem.
9. The core category should prevent ungrounded sources from dominating the analysis.
10. Because of its “grab” and explanatory power, it can tempt the researcher to see its presence in all relations whether grounded or not.
11. The core category may be any kind of theoretical code.

Negotiating Duality met Glaser’s criteria for a core category. This category encompassed the four dimensions attended to by street-involved youth: space/place, identity, logic, and normality, as well as the process of their seeking safety and struggling to emerge out of the streets.

Theoretical Coding

Theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive code may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory . . . they weave the fractured story back together again. (Glaser, 1978, p. 72)

Toward the end of the analysis, a re-reading of all the memos written throughout the study illuminated the presence of theoretical codes. These theoretical codes help explain what is occurring in the data. A challenge in articulating a grounded theory is bringing together the connections to solidify the relationship between categories. Seeing the theoretical codes in this study was a development that came to me toward the end of the analysis. Only after the theoretical framework was established did I begin to see the

theoretical codes in the data and analysis. Numerous memos and discussions with my supervisor focused on understanding this aspect of the research.

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Boundary – what is going on at the edges, boundary maintaining mechanisms, all deal with which side of the boundary the action is going on. Social constraints: boundary maintaining conditions that provide the containment of social life. To cross the boundary is to engage in a form of deviance whether normative, legal, or moral.

Balancing – how we handle complexities. Handling many variables at once in order to start an action, keep an action going or achieve a resolution.

The theoretical codes best explaining the relationship between the categories are balance and boundaries. These theoretical codes help integrate the categories presented in the theoretical framework.

Seeking Feedback

Given the position of most of the research participants – currently street-involved – their unfinished journey provides a perspective of actively negotiating between the streets and mainstream society. The reflective contributions of the six former street-involved youth add to the theoretical understanding. Their street lives ended between 7 and 20 years prior to this study, yet many of their experiences and stories resonate and reflect with those of the current street youth participants. In addition, their emergence into and ongoing place within mainstream society since their time on the streets allows

them to see beyond the streets. Once the framework was established, follow-up conversations were held with two of the former street-involved youth (Vince and Dani), two current street-involved youth (Sky and Jake), and two staff who work with this population. All six agreed that *negotiating duality* captured their experience or understanding of how street-involved youth relate to the streets and mainstream society. This feedback provided additional confirmation of the framework's fit, workability, and relevance (Glaser, 1998).

Summary

Using grounded theory while collecting qualitative data allowed a conceptual understanding of the relationship between street-involved youth and the streets to emerge. Valuing the photographic data added not only raw data to the study, but also illuminated the places and spaces on the streets from the youth's perspective. It also permitted the researcher, and therefore the reader, to go into the streets and understand segments of this study from a visual perspective.

The emergence of the theory required months of analysis and went through four main iterations. Having discussed the research process and analysis, Chapters Five, Six, and Seven will present the emergent theory, *negotiating duality*, in detail.

Chapter 5 – A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Lives of Street-involved Youth

Chapter Five presents an overview of the theoretical framework in narrative and graphic form, and identifies the main concern experienced by street-involved youth. The central components of the theory of *negotiating duality* are discussed. How the theory both resolves the youths' main concern and accounts for much of their behaviour is elaborated.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven present the principal argument, that the emergent theory provides a coherent framework for understanding the dynamic reciprocal relationship between street-involved youth and their environment. During the two years of data collection and constant comparison and analysis of the data, it became apparent that this study is focused on understanding duality in the day-to-day lives of street-involved youth and the bifocal nature of their experiences of seeking safety while struggling to emerge from the streets. In so doing, they are caught living outside *of* normal (i.e., mainstream society) while simultaneously living outside *as* normal (i.e., on the streets).

The duality of this experience is reflected in the perceptions and behaviours of both the street-involved youth themselves and the general public who encounter these young people in various ways. This study is a contribution toward greater understanding of street-involved youth and how they influence and are influenced by their environments. Most importantly, it contributes a theoretical framework explaining how street-involved youth negotiate the duality of living a street-involved life to the literature.

Much of the research on street-involved youth focuses on within-person processes and does not examine the spatiality of the youths' lives. Gifford (2007) notes that there is still a great deal to learn about the "intricacies of person-environment transactions" (p. x). With the exception of those adults who intentionally seek out and work with street-involved youth, few adults are likely to strive to understand the complex lives of these young people. Perception becomes reality, and in mainstream Canadian society adults assume they know enough about street-involved youth based on what they see in the media, their own observations, and superficial encounters on the sidewalks of our cities. Unfortunately, this type of superficial knowledge fuels the continuation of actions and beliefs that exacerbate the negative environments and situations experienced by street-involved youth.

At the heart of this grounded theory study is the relationship between street-involved youth and the places and spaces with which they interact. The theoretical framework explains the relationship between street-involved youth and their environments and expands our understanding of how they balance daily survival with the pursuit of a non-street involved life. It encapsulates their seeking safety and struggling to emerge while illustrating the normality in their lives. Based on the analysis of data in this study, I contend that *negotiating duality* is at the heart of street-involved youths' experience, accounts for the majority of their behaviour, and allows their behaviour to be normalized. In addition, from their perspective, it recognizes how they develop in the context of a stigmatized street environment known for its inherent risks, violence, and lack of resources.

Attaching a spatial identifier – the word *street* – to this population illustrates that street-involved youth are spatially positioned from the outset. The association of these youth with the streets of our cities is made before any other information about their lives is gathered. One way to further an understanding of their lives is to examine how this spatiality is understood by the youth, or in other words how the *where* of their lives influences the *what*. The streets are often pathologized given the high incidence of drug use, crime, violence, and the resulting vulnerability of the youth. But beyond this is the vibrancy of street culture, a resistance and ability to negotiate duality between street and mainstream contexts. The data in this study show that street-involved youth follow similar patterns. They negotiate the use of dual space, identity, logic, and normality; they seek safety and position themselves in and between the streets and mainstream society as they struggle to emerge out of street life.

In this study are the voices and experiences of 66 participants, including youth currently involved with the streets, former street youth, and adults who work with and engage this population. Some of these voices will be more prominent than others in subsequent chapters but the use of the grounded theory constant comparison process allowed for all their data to be analysed, interpreted, and included.

The current street-involved youth participants come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, communities, and lifestyles. Some have only begun flirting at the edges of the street community while others have been entrenched for almost a decade. They are living outside normal, but is this situation as bad as we think? Evidence from this study, as well as previous research (Kidd, 2009; Mayers, 2001), demonstrates the

awareness street-involved youth have of society. How they are perceived and treated and the stereotypes and stigma directed toward them contribute toward the duality of self they experience. Street-involved youth negotiate duality, and given that the majority of society does not, most citizens do not understand the complexities facing street-involved youth. One aim of this dissertation is to help explain this duality as understood and negotiated by the youth.

The theory of *negotiating duality* will be presented over three chapters. This core category is evident throughout the data and serves as the construct through which we can understand problem-solving strategies and behaviour of street-involved youth.

Main Concern of Street-involved Youth

Developing a grounded theory is about finding the relationships between the categories that explain the central concern of the participants. “A grounded theory tries to understand the action in a substantive area from the point of view of the actors involved. This understanding revolves around the main concern of the participants whose behaviour continually resolves their concern” (Glaser, 1998, p. 115). If the emphasis of a grounded theory is to explain how the participants resolve or process their main concern, then it is necessary for the researcher to identify what that main concern is.

The main concern of the youth in this study is to survive each day on the streets and to find their way back into society – to find their place in the mainstream and make a life there. Street-involved youth are trying to find their place, just as all adolescents are, yet they are doing so in the unique context of a public environment often characterized by its high degree of risk.

The day-to-day lives of street-involved youth can be understood as spent between two contexts – the streets and mainstream society. All of the youth involved in this study spoke of being in both contexts. Clearly revealed through data analysis are the complex interconnected relationships between street-involved youth, the streets, and mainstream society. Street-involved youth do understand the influence on their lives of *where* and we can see evidence of their awareness of spatiality through their manipulations of space, identity, and the perceptions others hold toward them.

It is important to remember that living a street-involved life is not a permanent state for most of these youth. The literature indicates most street-involved youth eventually leave the streets and continue on to have a successful life. Few street-involved youth go on to live a chronically homeless adult life (Bender et al., 2007; Karabanow, 2008). Some youth may live in the context of the streets for a few months or many years; however, negotiating the duality between the streets and mainstream society is a finite period encompassing a small portion of their lives.

As Glaser (1998) explains, “the goal for a research [sic] using grounded theory is to discover the core variable as it resolves the main concern” (p. 115). Living on the streets is a very spatial life. *Where* takes on a different, perhaps more important, meaning. For most of society so much of life takes place in one’s house, or in the houses of friends and family. Where you are going to be each day or each night is not of daily concern. However, for street-involved youth, knowing where they are going to sleep, eat, and shower or even where to sit is of daily concern. Additionally, where each youth

hopes to be once they leave the streets is an ongoing preoccupation. The *where* of life becomes more important because it is not guaranteed, it cannot be taken for granted.

Just as Glaser (1978, 1998) states that how participants continually resolve their main concern explains most of their behaviour, so in this study negotiating duality emerged as the means by which street-involved youth handle their need to survive in the day-to-day context of the streets while simultaneously working their way off the streets and back to mainstream society. Beyond the core category of negotiating duality, three interrelated concepts emerged from the data: seeking safety, struggling to emerge, and living outside normal. This theory is a model of person-place interaction. It explains the dynamic relationship street-involved youth have with and between the street and mainstream society.

Negotiating Duality: An Overview of the Theory

At the heart of any grounded theory is one core category “consistently related to many other categories and their properties over and over” (Glaser, 1998, p. 26). The core category is at the centre of the data and the theoretical framework. To contextualize the theory, the remainder of this chapter will elaborate on the core category and discuss the connections between the core category and the substantive categories integrated into the theoretical framework. Duality is the central theme of this study. The emergence of the core category – *negotiating duality* – brought together the data that I had been immersed in for almost two years.

The world does not divide itself easily into rigid categories. Identifying duality as a central construct implies that there is a clear demarcation between two things – in this

case, the streets and mainstream society – that boundaries exist and can be seen, experienced, and understood. All participants acknowledged and spoke of the streets as a separate environment from mainstream society and this represents the overarching duality in their lives. Four forms of duality became evident: the duality of space and place; dual identity; dual logic; and dual normality.

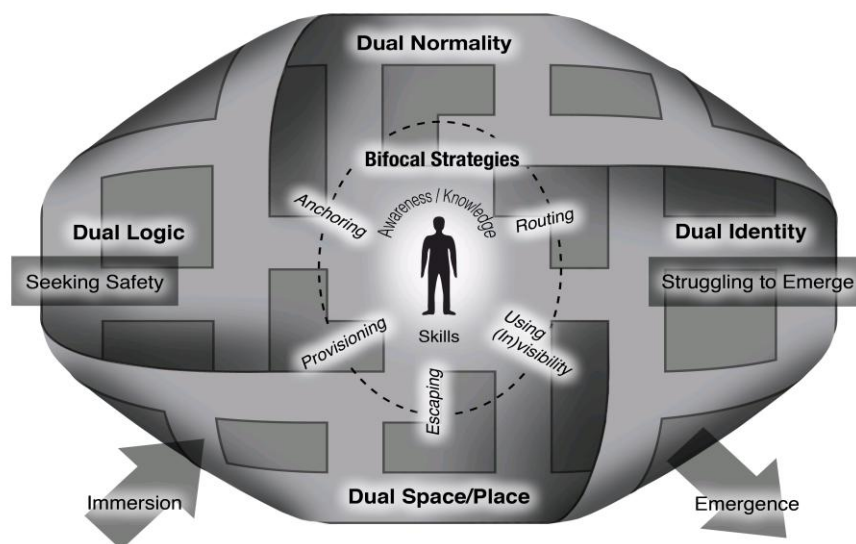
In directing the researcher, Glaser (1998) suggests that, “the smaller the amount of concepts that account for the greatest variation in the substantive behavior resolving the main concern is the goal” (p. 190). In addition to the core category, the constant comparative analysis of data brought forth two substantive categories related to the main concern of participants – *seeking safety* and *struggling to emerge* – that combine to form a basic social process. Basic social processes are “theoretical reflections and summarizations of the patterned, systematic uniformity flows of social life which people go through” (Glaser, 1978, p. 100). The process in this theory is connected to the core category of negotiating duality in that it represents a duality in the youths’ lives and is the means through which the youth live on, and move toward getting off, the streets. This process is conceptualized as temporal duality, encompassing the duality between the present versus the future as well as youths’ experience of changes that occur in place related to time of day or year. Each of these categories will be explicated in subsequent chapters.

Within the theory of *negotiating duality*, these categories are interrelated, and while we can isolate and examine each one individually, the sum of the whole is needed to explain the phenomena under study. Presenting these three categories individually

needs to be recognized as reductionist and in their abstraction from the whole, is, strictly speaking, a misrepresentation of the streets and the lives of street-involved youth. It is the interplay between them which is at the root of this theory. For each of the categories and their properties, I draw on examples from the data and reflections from the analysis to understand the lives of street involved youth and how they make their way through the reality of life on the streets.

This framework accounts for the majority of the youth in this study. There is also a small percentage that live on the outside of the common experience and that may only be captured with specific components of this framework. The remainder of this chapter briefly explains the theory as a whole showing the relationship between categories and how they represent core aspects of the lives of street-involved youth. The following theoretical diagram depicts the key elements of the theory:

Figure 1. The Negotiating Duality Framework for Understanding the Lives of Street-Involved Youth.



1. The Mobius Maze

The theoretical diagram illustrates the core category of *negotiating duality* and the key constructs that comprise the theoretical framework. The Mobius maze is the foundation of the theoretical diagram but it is not the totality of the model. It illustrates the Mobius relationship that the streets have to mainstream society and the duality street-involved youth experience on the streets. The two are inextricably tied; the streets do not exist in a vacuum, or outside the realm of society. Mainstream society contains the spaces and places of the streets, whether everyone in society is aware of them or not. This is the significance of the Mobius. The underlying Mobius maze is not intended to describe the life course story of the youth. The diagram serves to illustrate the dual spatiality of street-involved youth and predominately captures the street-involved time period rather than the pre-immersion or post-emergence phases.

In talking to the youth about how they view the streets, the metaphor of a maze was often used. The streets are something you can feel lost in, unsure of which turn or direction will get you through, with different paths to potentially follow rather than an obvious single direction leading you out. There is a sense of confusion and chaos in the youths' discussion of the streets. A few youth used the term "maze" in their description of their life and when asked, others agreed that a maze was an appropriate way to describe the streets. It is not the only possible metaphor, but combined with the Mobius element, a Mobius maze gives the sense that the streets are not isolated from society; they are an integrated part, yet there is a still a perception of separation. One is, of course, still

travelling the streets of one's city or society when street-involved, yet there is an awareness of also being somewhere *else* apart from those who are not street-involved.

As a base, the Mobius maze indicates the interrelated spatiality between the streets and mainstream society, as well as the potential confusion, challenges, and multiple pathways leading from where one enters street life to where or when one exits.

The image of the maze as the core of the theoretical framework diagram resonates with the data and my interpretation of what was occurring for the participants in the study. Out of the data came the tension that is reflected in the Mobius image. The data points to boundaries that are perceived to exist, but do not separate into two physical worlds. A Mobius creates both an inside and an outside perspective; it seems to have two sides, but in fact only has one. The process of negotiating duality can be understood through a Mobius model, as described by Grosz (1994):

A model which insists on (at least) two surfaces which cannot be collapsed into one and which do not always harmoniously blend with and support each other; a model where the join, the interaction of the two surfaces, is always a question of power; a model that *may* be represented by the geometrical form of the Mobius strip's two-dimensional torsion in three-dimensional space. (p. 189)

The reference to the Mobius strip conveys the youths' struggle to reconcile and balance opposing demands. The maze captures the relationships and pattern that emerged out of the data. Wynn (2001) notes that, "What is disconcerting about a Mobius strip...is that prior expectations about topography are violated. We expect an *inside* and an *outside* to objects. Discomfort arises as we see that what contradicts common sense is logically

possible with lines” (p. 23). The difficulty in theorizing the streets is that it is difficult to distinguish the inside from the outside, or to fully comprehend where the edges are:

There is no road map to “the streets”. You have to navigate by feel, groping around in the dark without a flashlight, only catching glimpses of light shining through cracks to guide you. A lot of stumbling and bruises before you find the door out. – Sierra

Most days I’m going in circles. Every day I go to the same places, through the same steps. I’m moving forward but I’m not getting anywhere. – Adam

I move forward and backwards. I’ve been through most of this shit once or twice already but didn’t get it right and am back at it again. I get stuck a lot, spinning in circles, can feel like you’re moving, but really you’re not. – John

As we will see in Chapter Six, while they may ostensibly be invisible, structural and attitudinal edges or borders are evident to the youth and play an important role in their decision-making and behaviour.

2. Awareness/Knowledge and Skills

At the centre of this theoretical model is the youth, with their personal awareness, knowledge, and skills. Often discussed in the literature, street-involved youth are not a homogeneous group (Caputo et al., 1997; Koeller, 2005; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Each youth has a unique knowledge and skill set, developed over the course of their life, which comes with them to the streets. The particular skills and knowledge of each youth affect the way they deal with street life, and how they navigate

their way through and off the streets. While patterns of behaviour are evident, this individuality does contribute to a youth's success and ability to find their way.

For many street-involved youth, daily actions and thoughts focus on the short term. Goals and strategies that meet short-term needs take precedence. With so much energy spent on daily survival and meeting immediate needs, there is less attention paid to the long term. Regardless of how entrenched a youth is in street life, they recognize that they are in one place and are balancing their ability to move on to another place. Street-involved youth may have a dominant nearsighted awareness that maintains their focus on where they are, but many are also clearly aware of where they are *not*.

It can be said that street-involved youth occupy two spaces at once. The logic that guides behaviour in one context is often counter to that which guides the other context. A street identity can help keep youth safe and provide a sense of belonging in the context of the streets but this same identity will spark misperceptions and stigma in the context of mainstream society. Therefore youth negotiate a dual identity: one that helps them meet their needs on the street and a second that helps them blend back into mainstream society to help achieve an altogether different set of goals. These skills are crucial for street-involved youth to successfully resolve their main concern of staying safe on the streets, and emerging back into mainstream society.

3. Notion of Bifocal Tension

Through participant stories, interviews, and photos, patterns and incidents are revealed that point to daily actions aimed at both a focus on day-to-day survival, and of moving forward toward a new and different life. This can be seen as a bifocal tension:

viewing street life through two lenses, one near-focused and one distant. The bifocal construct recognizes the tension inherent in behaving in a manner that allows the youth to seek safety on the streets while also attending to circumstances that will allow them to emerge back into mainstream society. In the realm of the streets, moving back and forth between spaces as well as in time creates a tension that must consistently be attended to.

A bifocal perspective is as much concerned with the present context as it is with the future. In conceptualizing the tensions of negotiating between street life and a life in mainstream society, and the strategies street-involved youth employ in this negotiation, a bifocal perspective recognizes and gives value to both the present and the future simultaneously. Bifocal strategies can be applied to either the present or the future depending on how they are executed. Acknowledging the bifocal nature of living a street-involved life takes into consideration what is occurring daily in the life of the youth but also attends to desires and actions aimed toward facilitating the emergence out of the streets and back into mainstream society.

A majority of street-involved youth maintain a nearsighted focus on the immediate concerns associated with daily survival and pay less attention to the far-sighted focus of action which could lead to emergence. Some youth remain street-based longer than others, or are entrenched more firmly in the streets than their peers, but all current street-involved youth in this study stated they will find their way out of the streets to somewhere better, a life beyond the streets. This bifocal tension is a part of how street-involved youth negotiate duality.

Examining the Specifics of Negotiating Duality

As noted previously, duality is at the core of being street-involved. A crucial element identified by current and former street-involved youth is the active effort of *negotiating* such duality. Street-involved youth do not passively wait for service providers to rescue them from the streets, nor are they simply sitting around, idly passing their days. Negotiating is the active process they engage in to make their way. It includes their knowledge, awareness, skills, and actions. Understanding street-involved youth and street life from a perspective of negotiating duality provides a strengths-based view of their behaviour.

For street youth to negotiate their day-to-day safety with their need to one day live a non-street-involved life, they need to attend to the dualities present in their lives. Attending to duality is primarily an active endeavour, even though the youth might not consciously acknowledge the duality. There are, as one might expect, many incidents in the data that show how street-involved youth become stuck or face ongoing boredom, but they nonetheless continue to actively negotiate the dualities of living a street-involved life. This life is not a linear journey. The maze-like paths that double back on themselves, leading to potential dead ends encountered when least expected, and producing openings and exits between the boundaries, are complex to live and therefore complex to explain. There is not a single pathway through the data or single means of explaining the resultant theoretical framework. By living street-involved, the youth are located in two contexts at once, the streets and mainstream society. Given this dual location, they can either succumb to the streets, largely cutting themselves off from

society, or they can actively and more consciously negotiate their existence between the two.

The theory of *negotiating duality* explains the contexts, conditions, and consequences experienced by street-involved youth. At the centre of the theoretical framework are the youth themselves surrounded by their personal knowledge and skills. They are located in a Mobius maze depicting the duality of the streets with mainstream society. As street-involved youth negotiate their way between and among the streets and mainstream society they balance the tension of seeking safety in the immediate term with struggling to emerge out of street life. In doing so they rely predominantly on five strategies: escaping, provisioning, anchoring, routing, and using (in)visibility. These strategies are bifocal in nature: each able to further entrench the youth in street life or to move them forward toward a stable life in mainstream society. These strategies will be explained in detail in Chapter Seven.

While not all youth will emerge out of the streets, the majority of youth involved in this study expressed a clear desire to move beyond their street-involved life. It is likely that some street-involved youth will not be represented within this model, as they will not move toward emerging out of street-life. There are also a few incidents where youth express a desire to live “in the moment” and not project where they may one day be. For these youth, the bifocal strategies explained in the theoretical framework are decidedly more singularly focused. They are using these strategies to maintain their day-to-day safety and not as a means of also finding their way out of the streets. Youth who were pulled from the streets, by entering drug treatment or going to jail, then moving back in

with family were least common in the data. A small number of street-involved youth participants in this study experienced this form of emergence, but once they left the streets in this manner, we lost touch.

A potential limitation to this model is the confusion of how one would move beyond or exit the streets if they are always there, as per the Mobius indicator. The streets are still there. The street environment doesn't simply disappear when a youth is no longer involved with it. Perhaps former street-involved youth just attend to the streets differently. How former street-involved youth attend to that side of society may be a valuable future study.

Summary

In summary, Chapter Five is the first of three chapters outlining the theory of *negotiating duality*. The theory was introduced and graphically presented in the theoretical framework diagram. Negotiating duality was explained as a core construct with multiple dimensions. Once the core category of negotiating duality came to light, the dualities could be seen amongst all the key categories. The core category provided a new and unique vantage point from which to view the processes engaging street-involved youth.

Chapter 6 – Negotiating Duality: The Core Theme in a Street-Involved Life

The purpose of this chapter is to address how and why street-involved youth negotiate the four dimensions of duality subsumed in this grounded theory: dual space and place, dual identity, dual logic, and dual normality.

The terms space and place were defined in Chapter Two. In this chapter they will be discussed in the context of the data. Street-involved youth are actively located in two spaces simultaneously: the streets and mainstream society. To understand how and why they negotiate their way through and between these two spaces the first section of this chapter will explore the notions of boundaries and emplacement.

With an understanding of where street-involved youth are located, one can then gain an understanding of how they view and present themselves. In addition to being dually situated between the streets and mainstream society, street-involved youth maintain an identity tied to each space. As will be illustrated by examples from the data, negotiating a dual identity is a challenging task but one that serves to provide safety and address issues of perception and stigmatization that face these youth. Understanding the dual space and place, as well as the dual identity of street-involved youth leads to the notion of dual logic. The streets and mainstream society each have a guiding logic. To be situated in both spaces requires understanding and abiding by two forms of logic. Street-involved youth negotiate this dual logic through their awareness of rules of inclusion/exclusion, resistance, and contradictions.

Finally, this chapter will explore the dual normality inherent in the lives of street-involved youth. The category “living outside normal” takes into account the previously

discussed dimensions of duality and illustrates how street-involved youth negotiate the normality of the streets with the normality of mainstream society in order to keep themselves safe and transcend street life. Living outside normal is a process of moving from one normal to another. This concept is actualized and given dimension through the process of assimilating to street normal, normalizing the streets, reintegrating mainstream normality while street-involved, and disengaging from street normal. The youth are normalizing and seeking normality concurrently.

Dual Space and Place

Dual space and place is the first of the four ways street-involved youth experience the spatial duality present between the streets and mainstream society. The relevance of this section is in recognizing how street-involved youth understand and experience the duality of space and place in their lives. They feel caught between two physical spaces and places and this sense leads them to actively seek out their place in and between both.

In Chapter Two the distinction was made between space and place, as well as the streets and mainstream society. As a reminder, place is physical. It can be mapped. It has structure, edges, and limits. Space is what gets created in place. It is not physical, but rather a feeling, an opportunity, a sense of *where*. The streets and mainstream society can each be understood as singular contexts that overlap. While space and place are inter-related concepts they will occasionally be written about separately for purposes of clarity. In negotiating space and place both on the streets and in mainstream society, place is a greater constant. A road is a road and a park bench exists regardless of who sits upon it or what activity takes place nearby. A place may be more street than mainstream (i.e.,

shelters, popular street-person hangouts) but its composition does not change. Space shifts more significantly between the streets and mainstream society.

Conceptualizing the dual space and place of street-involved youth requires a differentiation between what constitutes a street space/place and what constitutes a mainstream space/place. It is challenging to articulate the divide between street s/places and mainstream s/places. There is almost an unspoken understanding held by street-involved youth and citizens alike. I posed these questions to a group of youth in the drop-in one day: What are “the streets” to you? How do you define “the streets”? Here is a sample of their answers:

A huge geographical area. All the services and agencies for the homeless as well as places they hang out, panhandle, deal. They're all encompassing.

The streets are everywhere. They are all around us. Visible to those who look for them. Do you know what I mean? I know where to find people on the street, I know where to look. They're visible to me but you just walk right past them every day, don't even know what you're really looking at.

The streets are where we can be ourselves, you know, where we chill. The streets are just a name for the places that we, I guess I mean the homeless, because it's more than just us, you know “street kids”, spend our days.

The streets are a parallel universe. When you're on the streets you're walking side by side with some rich guy or a mother and her kid on R----, but you're not in the same place at all.

The streets are portable. They are with me wherever I go. I can travel to Halifax, Winnipeg. . . , wherever, and I am accepted on the streets. I bet you can't say that. Are you at home when you leave here? [No, I'm not, I might be on vacation, but I'm not at home.] Exactly, I am at home wherever I go because when you're on the streets, they're the same in any city. I can find a bench or bridge to sleep under, food kitchens any place I go, someone who knows someone that I know and can hit me up, it's all there.

The streets are what you have when you have nothing. They're nothing. [What do you mean by nothing?] Just that, I have nothing, therefore I am on the streets. If I had anything, I would not be living here. [So, can you define "the streets" for me?] I did! Nothing! Plain and simple. Do you have a house? [I live in a house, yes]. There you go, you're not on the streets. I don't live in a house, the shelter does not count, I live on the streets and my life is full of nothing. And when I get out of this shit, I will start to have something again and then I will no longer live on the streets.

This shows how some youth understand and perceive the spatiality of the streets. It can then be said that all that is not "the streets" is mainstream society. This photo was taken to show a place that is important in both the mainstream context and that of the streets.



Thousands walk through this intersection every day. If you take a bus in this city you've likely been here, used this street to get you where you're going. For us, this is the hub of the streets (laughs). It is our meeting place where you can always find who you're looking for. See that column on the right? That's my best money-making spot in the city.
 – Sky

It became clear from the interviews and conversations with current street-involved young people that they see a distinction between the street and mainstream spaces, and what it takes to negotiate them. LJ explains the side by side existence of these two spaces:

It's a whole different world out here on the streets and most people never see it. They walk by, and through, and past us and don't realize they're side by side with a different place. You know what's funny? People put us down all the time and think we're useless and all that crap, but we're the ones who can do something

that everyone else can't. We can live in the streets and live in your world. I may not be able to grab hold of my permanent place yet, but it'll come, one day. But I know I can always make it here if I have to. How many suits do you think can say that? How many other people could survive here? – LJ

As citizens of mainstream society, we look into the streets but do not experience them as street-involved youth do. These young people are living in street spaces but also interacting within mainstream society. The need to go back and forth between places to meet their needs is a challenge voiced by most of the youth in this study. Some youth are firmly entrenched in the streets, others are on the border with one foot in each and some have essentially emerged back into the mainstream. The youth included in this study describe their lives in a manner that indicates they simultaneously occupy space in both worlds. In this dual space there are numerous intersections and opportunities for movement between them.

Familiarity

An important element related to street places is the notion of *familiarity*. Familiarity with place became a guidepost for helping youth determine a sense of safety in place. A place can be safe and unsafe at the same time. Sky raised the issue that a few of the important places in her photographs depict places of familiarity – they are concurrently safe and unsafe but because they are familiar to her she continues to frequent them.



Sky: This is a picture of the Hill. Well, all four of these are just different parts of the park.

Stephanie: What does this place mean to you?

Sky: It's an unsafe place. It's where we shoot up so I guess it is also a safe place. It is familiar. You need to be in a place that is familiar when you shoot up or else you will be real messed up once it hits you. But being familiar does not mean the place is safe. It is both though for me.

Jake: We feel safe enough to use there but if we are using, which we know is bad, that makes it an unsafe place. I know it's confusing but some places just are both things. They are not easy to make just one category. We can put some pictures of here in each pile okay?

Stephanie: Yeah, it does make sense. You can put them in whichever pile you think is right.

Familiarity with a place helps the youth feel safe, even when their actions or the conditions inherent in that place are unsafe. This dual property of safe/unsafe was voiced by a number of the youth.

Boundaries and emplacement also emerged as two important properties of dual space and place. Foremost to understanding how street-involved youth behave in an attempt to resolve their main concern is understanding how they feel about the space they're in, the boundaries they experience between the street and mainstream society and how they believe they are emplaced by others.

Boundaries

Conceptualized as a Mobius maze, the streets and mainstream society are perceived to be separate domains but in reality are both part of the same space. This perceived independence is in part due to boundaries that separate those on the streets from mainstream society. To negotiate the duality of space and place one needs to be aware of the boundary limits of each side. In the case of the streets, there are many intersections and cross-points that connect the streets to mainstream society but the boundary line between the streets and society is not clearly visible. In analysing the data, it was apparent that street-involved youth had an awareness of structural and attitudinal boundaries between the streets and mainstream society. Boundary lines may not be clearly seen but they can be clearly felt.

Like yesterday we were done making our money by 5 p.m. and we just got kicked out of Second Cup, they don't want us there anymore because we are homeless. It is new owners and we used to go there for a few years but now can't and I am

barred from McDonalds because I am homeless. Chapters won't let us go because we are homeless and yesterday we had nowhere to go and we were freezing and it sucks cuz there was nowhere to go. We used to go to Chapters and sit upstairs and sit and read but they got fed up seeing us there everyday and if you're homeless, they may not say it but that is the reason. – Jake

Boundaries are socially constructed both in the context of the streets and in mainstream society. Examining how street-involved youth perceive boundaries is an initial clue to understanding the important role they play in structuring where they go on a day-to-day basis. Expanding from this is the recognition of how such boundaries are maintained.

Boundary Maintaining Mechanisms

Boundaries indicate a sense of division. Boundary maintenance is the behaviour or practice that keeps members of a group apart from others (Gifford, 2002). Boundary maintaining mechanisms are related to the need for safety. They are protective mechanisms employed to keep out what may be threatening. As evidenced through the data, the youth are acutely aware of both structural and attitudinal boundaries and the maintenance strategies used to keep them in place. “The maintenance of boundaries in ...cities relies on a liberal assumption that there is one shared set of ‘public’ values to which all members of the civil society subscribe, and which determines what is deviant and who is welcome” (Malone, 2002, p. 161). Boundaries experienced by the youth highlight points of socio-spatial exclusion. Examples of boundaries varied from those

aimed at maintaining street spaces to those mechanisms that maintain the boundary of mainstream society:

- The stigma aimed toward the youth by society;
- Formal or informal acts of enforcement (i.e., police moving youth off the sidewalk or ticketing them for sleeping in the park; shop owners refusing access to their store);
- Citizens walking past street-involved youth without acknowledging them.

One commonality to the boundary-maintaining mechanisms discussed in this study is their exclusionary focus. “It is the fact that exclusions take place routinely, without most people noticing, which is a particularly important aspect of the problem” (Sibley, 1995, p. xiv). This exclusion affects the youths’ mental well-being, decisions, and actions.

Boundary maintaining mechanisms exist both on the street and on the mainstream side. There are both formal and informal mechanisms of social constraints on the streets; internal constraints from those who live within the streets as well as external constraints from the mainstream community:

- Street-involved youths’ common use of slang, gestures, dress;
- Groups of street youth congregating in public places (group size and intimidation serve as a means of keeping others out or distracted).

A key theme in the interviews and conversations was the youths’ desire and attempts to control space around them. The youth are successful at this to varying degrees. Those involved in criminal activity or drug behaviour (either using or selling), as well as those deeply entrenched in the streets, express the highest need to control the

spaces they are in. Alternatively, two groups who might seem at opposite ends of the spectrum – those who are only marginally involved in the streets and those who are highly mobile and often move between cities – both exhibit a similar lack of interest in controlling the space around them and therefore may not develop the same level of skill as other youth in manipulating and controlling their environment.

Intersections

In addition to boundaries, there are intersections between the streets and mainstream society. Agencies and services fall in the space between the streets and larger society. Many of the youth expressed inclusion of certain agencies within the boundary of the streets:

Most places I don't think wanna be a street space. The two drop-ins, yeah, they're different, for sure, cuz they let us just hang, and don't put too many rules on us for being there. – Anders

Others described agencies such as the street youth drop-in, a street youth program offering a drop-in, schools, and work programs to be bridges that help take them between the two environments. Conversely, other youth made it clear that shelters, soup kitchens, food cupboards, and street health clinics were services for those who are street-involved but offered within the boundaries of mainstream society:

Most of these places, they're here cuz the city doesn't want homeless on the street, in the way. Lots of these places they don't really help us, they are, more like, helping the city feel like they're doing something. If we go to them good, but if not, they sure don't come out and see us. – Grim

Sure I get socks and soap and food at the Sally Anne and that, but shit, I don't feel like I belong in there. They're just for when you're desperate, you know. – Kai

Are agencies a part of the social fabric of the city or are they within the boundaries of the streets? The youth are seeking a sense of belonging and normality and the most popular agencies provide them with that. The youth identify and seek out places where they can experience safety, or where they know they are accepted, valued, and respected.

We're a safety net, no question about it. They go out and try to make it on their own and when they fall down, we're always here to catch them. For some of these kids, we're the only one doing that. – Juanita, youth worker

In analyzing the data, I came to see a distinction between agencies perceived to be part of the streets and those that were not related to where the youth felt a sense of belonging. There are places where they belong, places they are tolerated, and places they are forbidden.

Emplacement

The concept of emplacement emerged from the data as an explanation of how street-involved youth believe others affect their ability to *be* someplace in the city. Emplacement is another form of exclusion experienced by the youth. They are struggling within a context where others exercise a lot of power over them. Incidents in the data reflect the youths' perception of *being placed* in socially acceptable locations in the city, and in other instances of having their access to places cut off.

Street-involved youth consistently spoke to me about how they felt placed in the city by others, decreasing the choices they felt they had:

Cops come along and shuffled us off the sidewalk even though we're not even flying a sign. Geez, just sitting is not even allowed. – Aaron

The rent-a-cop by the embassy lets us stay near the planters, but never any closer, and only when it's past dinnertime. – Luke

We mostly don't get hassled on R---- or the by-way there, you know where, but anyplace else, a group stands too long in front of a business and sure as anything the owner'll come tell us to "move it along now" even when we're just hangin'. – Jake

A popular hangout and sleeping spot in the city was located in a pedestrian underpass in the downtown area. While participating with the volunteer outreach workers I visited this spot twice a week for many months. It was always the most heavily populated place visited on the outreach route.



This is now just a hang out spot. It's safe. The city caged it to prevent youth from sleeping under the bridge though. Now it's just a day spot rather than a 24-hour place.
 – Evan

Though such actions by the city are said to be for the safety of the youth as well as citizens and tourists (CBC News, January 31, 2008), the youth see this as a reduction of street space and further control over where they can be. Discussions of lack of control and emplacement in the data point to the frustration experienced by the youth as they try to make a place for themselves in the city. Shifting from this, the related notion of claiming space or one's right to the city was equally evident in the data.

Right to Place/Claiming Space

Researchers draw attention to the transformation of space and young people's ability to use place to their benefit despite its intended purpose (Gough & Franch, 2005; Malone, 2002). The caging of the underpass occurred during the data collection phase so

incidents related by the youth reflect both its before and after use. To help mitigate this power, they seek out situations where they can exert control over their environment and activities.

There are vendors there now. During the day they set up their tables and sell just like in the market. SYC has the beading co-op selling their jewellery there three days a week. – LJ

Few interview questions elicited such energetic response as the one asking about how participants perceive their right to place within the city. LJ makes a number of points when he talks about justice and the rights of youth to just *be* and to sit on the sidewalk or a bench, or to hold a piece of cardboard in public asking for help:

Stephanie: How do street youth claim a space for themselves in society, where street kids hang out and claim stake in these places?

LJ: (Laughs) It's got nothing to do with claiming ownership of, of public property, it's claiming the RIGHT to BE ON public property and that is all any street kid should ever be doing. I mean, I've never heard a street kid go, "No, it's my street, I own it". No, it's public streets, we all have a right to them, and I mean, if you're really in the position where you have to be sleeping on them, well fuck, man, it is what it is but goddamn man, it's public property. You should have every right to every fucking bench in every park, under every tree, under every bush, on every street corner, everywhere in this country because it is a free country, right?

It's not my idea, it is what it should be, it is public property! And a street kid has as much right to sit there as the corporate fuck who is walking down the street on his way to the office. Do you think a cop is going to stop and harass a guy with a briefcase and three-piece suit sitting on a bench or under a tree? Fuck no! But as soon, as soon as you see a few street kids doing it, they're like, bam, on them. We have no rights, but they are our rights too, we just have to figure out how to claim back our right to be in and use public places.

LJ and others expressed their anger and frustration regarding the discrimination they felt from others. Common to their stories and descriptions of getting by in the face of such discrimination, is their ability to persevere.

Stephanie: Okay, so then one of the things I am trying to understand is the whole dynamic of how they do it, how the street kids get by, living in a public place, where they have the right to be, but where people don't want them.

LJ: Persistence, I mean, you just go to sleep where you want to go to sleep and hopefully you will find a spot where you are not kicked awake by the police in the morning. I mean, like, it's ridiculous that, this is the problem with democracy, you can legislate away minorities' rights and I mean, yeah, you think you are doing a good thing, and majority rules, but that is why pieces of paper like the Bill of Rights and blah, blah, blah are so important. But I mean, honestly, if a street kid had the resources to go about and take their case to the Supreme Court of Canada and challenge the Safer Streets Act, come on, guess what? It would fall. Like a fucking rock. But, fuck, who's got the resources? No lawyer, no lawyer,

god, you have no idea, most of the laws in Canada only apply to the people in power and the rest, we only acquiesce to be liable to those laws, any law that is written as "any person who..." you don't have to agree to be a person. Anyways, all right.

Related to the notion of right to place is how street-involved youth claim space.

They claim space just by stopping in it. You get a group of four or six street kids hanging out in a spot and it just sort of becomes theirs while they are there, you know. Not a lot of other people are going to come up and take over, or even sit down alongside them. In that way, they can claim space pretty much anywhere they want to. – Frannie, youth worker

The issue of police interaction with the youth was raised by all the staff and volunteers interviewed. High police presence and known harassment of street-involved youth by the police offers another perspective.

Jake: I used to go to a church drop-in on B---- Street but we don't really hang out on B---- Street anymore.

Stephanie: What changed?

Jake: The cops started harassing us like crazy. There are two foot cops on B---- that are always there and they like us cuz they've never given us tickets, but they started threatening to arrest my girlfriend so that is why we came down here and she ended up getting charged down here which is not great for her.

You gotta be in control and always keep an eye out for the cops. Always be aware of the cops, cuz when you get picked up they don't care about your dog. – Bones

The youth may not feel they're afforded the right to be in public places but despite this they are claiming space to be themselves and to carry out their daily activities. Street youth, positioned through stigma as "other", must claim space for inclusion in mainstream space. Boundaries may be fluid and can be manipulated but are always present between street-involved youth and society. How street-involved youth are perceived by others in the city contributes to what boundaries are placed on their movement and their access to mainstream places.

Dual Identity

To listen to the youth participants and see how they picture their life and environments (through the photos presented in this chapter), it is clear that they feel too few people are intervening or advocating on their behalf and too often the reaction they face from society is one of pity or ignorance.

In this theoretical framework, identity is a component of negotiating spatial duality because street-involved youths' identity is influenced by the context of the streets and mainstream society. The need for a dual identity (and the negotiation of such) is a consequence of living in dual spaces. The youth are aware of how they are perceived and treated, often through their experiences, and they adapt to better fit what society wants in order to meet their needs (e.g., find an apartment, get a job, sit in a coffee shop, make more money panhandling). The youth try to normalize their identity in order to better fit into the mainstream – to be accepted or not ignored and excluded. Their need to

normalize is a consequence of how society views and treats them. On the other hand, one strategy for seeking safety is to ingrain themselves in street culture, blending in, finding transitory comforts and finding a place of belonging amongst the other street youth. This need to have a dual identity is part of the tension of living a street-involved life.

Perception/Associations

Many in society do not acknowledge the *normal* upbringings or backgrounds street-involved youth may have. Maybe it is easier to set ourselves apart from them. To think of them as different is how we convince ourselves that our own children cannot fall prey to the streets. But what effect does this perspective have on street-involved youth? As the data will show, the youth are well aware of how they are perceived and placed within society. Their decisions and actions take into account how they are dismissed as “other” and they use strategies to intentionally distance themselves from such associations to their benefit or gain. “Other’ing” is making a distinction between oneself and another. It is how citizens set street-involved youth apart from themselves.



This is my favourite picture. I wanted to take the picture of the shadows because it shows that once you get hooked on drugs you become a shadow of your former self. And once you are only a shadow it is really hard to become whole again....You know, the more I look at it, I see that it also is a great way to show how people walking by see and treat us. Street kids are just shadows on the sidewalk. We are not real. We're not whole beings they need to deal with. You can walk over or through a shadow without affecting it. That is how they treat us. Like we are not really there, something they barely see as they walk down the street. That is really cool. – Sierra

In most urban cities homelessness is recognized to take up space in specific sections of the city. Often, these spaces surround social service agencies, shelters, and food providers. Within these spaces, evidence of street-involvement becomes accepted and blends in to the everyday scene. Outside of these spaces there is much less acceptance for the visible presence of homelessness. The spaces where citizens come to expect homelessness can be considered tolerance zones. An example of a tolerance zone in the city where I conducted my research is the area known as the Market. It is the

section of the city with the highest concentration of street-involved youth and adults, as well as services for these populations.

Understanding this, some street-involved youth seek out places beyond the tolerance zone of our city in an effort to maximize their ability to make money. The stereotypes and perceptions held against the street population as a whole cause individual street-involved youth to negotiate against this stigma to improve their daily circumstances. The youth make conscious decisions about where they place themselves within the city to achieve the best outcome.



This is a great spot to fly a sign. We bus out to here a lot because it's out of the core so we make more money here. It's off the beaten path, you know, so people aren't thinking "street kids" or drug money when they see us. – Anders and Sierra

This photo depicts a behavioural consequence in response to the youths' understanding of how society views and, thus, responds to them: Consciously setting themselves apart from the group or location known for street-involved youth increases the amount of money they make. How street-involved youth are perceived by others also contributes to how they feel about society. The following conversation excerpt provides an example:

Stephanie: Your drawings show how you see others, but how do you think people see you?

Hailey: I don't know. Most don't really. They see through me. Some stop and talk or give food, money, but really, most just walk by. It's like most just ignore me when I'm out there, and then the others are either nice or nasty.

Stephanie: What do you mean by nasty?

Hailey: It's crazy actually. Grown adults, businessmen in nice suits, insulting kids just hanging out on R---- or S----. One guy was priceless (laughs). I was flying a sign on S---- and this guy walks by me and says, "why don't you go back to where you came from and stop bothering us for money". It only took me a second but I realized I knew him, and I was in a good mood so I thought I'd play a bit, you know, so I said, "oh, okay, you mean your neighbourhood?". He had already walked by by now, but he turned and just looked at me. See, I recognized him, his daughter and I were friends in Grade 7 or 8 and I used to play with her at her house. I've been in his friggin' house, and here he is telling me to go back to where I came from. Fuck, where I came from is up the street from his place!

(laughs). So, anyways, I said, "say hi to Kaitlyn for me" (that's his daughter) and he just looked again, like trying to figure out if he might know me, but then turned and kept walking away.

Hailey's story tells us how she was perceived by the male who passed by her and we can understand that he did not associate her as someone who might live on his street, or play in his house with his children. His reaction to her was one experience that added to her identity as an invisible person.

An often-repeated comment in interviews was that street youth felt placed by others and this placing can have consequences. LJ illustrated this by stating that "*when others move them [street-involved youth] along or determine where they can and can't be it decreases safety*". Unfortunately, those who do not really understand the rules of the streets and the manner in which their decisions or actions affect the lives of street youth often have too great an influence.

Another illustration of how perception and emplacement can affect the youth is seen among the youth who are working towards quitting drugs and are in a methadone program. Many of them described difficulties accessing the few pharmacies in the city that will carry their prescriptions.



This place used to stock methadone so we'd be here every week, but then they stopped. They did not like the clientele it brought to their store. – Jake

Some youth easily move between their street and mainstream identity while others resist this transition completely. Moving between a street and mainstream identity influences their activities and place on the street. Patterns of resistance are seen throughout the data. Resistance can be a spatial practice acted out in incidents of youth exerting their right to be in public places when others would rather they not be there.

Everyone wants to change me – but why not change the mind of the average guy walking by? I know, I know fix the street kid. Maybe if you all fixed your attitudes I wouldn't be here no longer. – Sky

Negotiating the duality of space and place involves recognizing the stigma they live under and using strategies to work around it. In the next section, the presence and

effects of stigma on street-involved youth and how they feel about themselves will be explored.

Stigma

There is evidence from this study as well as previous research (Kelly, 2005; Kidd, 2007; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Mayers, 2001) demonstrating the awareness youth have of the stigma living street-involved carries. They know how they are perceived and the stereotypes directed toward them. The inherently dangerous actions undertaken by street-involved youth as means of seeking safety contribute toward their stigmatization. What became clear upon analysing the data was that street-involved youth are aware of how others see them, and how others try to influence their place amid public spaces. They almost all expressed how wrong they feel society is with regard to their circumstances.

I get shouted at all the time to go back home. Like my flying a sign here is a way of playing or getting out of school. People got no idea why I'm here, but they all assume they know everything about me. – Evan

Erving Goffman (1963) suggests, “we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances” (p. 5). In conversations with me, a majority of the youth spoke of feeling looked down upon simply because they were on the streets. Internalizing such stigma can lead to depression, suicidal thoughts, guilt, and self-blame.

Yeah, some days it gets too much. I got a problem with depression. I know it.

Getting told you're nothing at home, then getting told you're useless out here, you start to believe it. – Anders

Stigma is a barrier. One consequence of stigma is the youths' expressed desire to alter themselves – their image or presentation. In exhibiting a mainstream identity they increase the chance of acceptance in a certain environment. This strategy of manipulating identity used by the youth achieves beneficial outcomes. For those who do not present a mainstream identity, the consequence may be losing out on an apartment or a job.

Every landlord that we call, like, they won't deal with me because I am on the streets and when we do get an appointment to see a place, when they see us it's like, oh its already rented and, like, on the phone they were, like, you can definitely have the place as long as you have the cash and as soon as they see us, like, it's already rented I forgot. I was, like, you told me I could have it. It sucks. They think it will be a party house. I am sure some homeless people would have a party house, but not me and my girlfriend. We don't have that many friends. After three years on the street, we would not do anything to risk losing it again. We actually spent the last two winters on the street and that is something that most people don't do. – Jake

In addition, the street-involved youth make conscious decisions about where they place themselves within the city to achieve the best outcome. Yet despite some attempts to meet their needs, there are a multitude of barriers facing street-involved youth beyond just the stereotypes and perceptions of mainstream society. Youth speak to their

difficulties in accessing the services and resources they need. They are moving forward on the streets, often unaided by the resources that would make their journey much easier.

Housing Help does not help unless you don't know how to read or don't know where to look at all, like that is all they do. They'll give you a newspaper and tell you to make calls and if you can't read it they'll read it for you, but other than that they really don't help at all. – Jake

The data illustrate that at times the youth are identifying with other youth on the streets, and at times they set themselves apart from them. There is a tension between wanting to be part of the collective, yet at the same time realizing they are not going to escape the streets if they remain attached to that identity. Being “one of them” is both a comfort and a hindrance. When the youth normalize their street identity they connect themselves with the streets – this has an element of safety to it; they are part of the group, not an outsider – but doing so may serve to further entrench the youth in the streets.

I am More than my Stereotype

By having a foot in both worlds, street-involved youth negotiate the spaces of the streets and society in part by how they feel about themselves and how they present to those around them. Negotiating a dual identity requires an awareness of where one is, how one is perceived, and how one presents oneself.

I know everyone who walks by me thinks I'm useless, a drain on their tax dollars (laughs). It just drives into you that you really only have yourself. – Zander

It might not have been my choice to become a street kid, but it is my choice how I live now. Choice is a state of mind. I'm a street kid, but I'm not a junkie and that is my choice. I bet you didn't know that about me. That I don't smoke up or shoot shit in to my veins. Ask most strangers walking by me on S---- and I get they think I am though. – Gray

I might tell you to fuck off but that's only because I don't know how to tell you I'm jealous. It's so crazy. I know you don't see me right, like for who I really am and what I want. But I don't see people right either. Not everyone probably thinks I'm useless but how am I to know the difference? – Eila, former street-involved youth

We're not all junkies and thieves. – Sierra

Sierra's assertion is a sentiment that was echoed many times during conversations with the youth. The youth know how others see them, and the longer a youth is street-involved the more likely they are to internalize these stereotypes as part of their identity. Losing the balance between using their street identity and mainstream identity may be a risk-enhancing practice. Effectively negotiating between the two identities may be a healthier way to be. However, a few youth spoke out against this. Entrenched in the streets upwards of eight years, Jack, Carter, and Evan all resist internalizing others' perceptions into their identity. Their resistance can be understood simply as resistance, or alternatively, as a defence strategy.

I read the paper everyday with my cereal and coffee. I know what's written about us. And most of the time, they got it wrong. You know what I'm not – a victim of

circumstance. I'm not a victim! Sure some of these kids play the victim card, but lots of them, that's exactly what they're doing - PLAYING the victim card cuz it gets them what they want. You wanna know what one of the biggest problems is? Society makes too many assumptions about street kids, and those assumptions are at the base of a lot of our problems. But, we gotta be smarter than all that cuz we have to know your assumptions and then work our way around them, cuz FUCK you's all don't seem to change. – LJ

Stigma and stereotypes tell them they are not okay as they are, that there is something wrong and deviant about them. Some youth embrace this and feel power in their alienation, while other street-involved youth internalize the stigma contributing to depression, low self-esteem, and guilt. Recognizing the stigma and stereotypes categorizing them, some street-involved youth use this knowledge to present a mainstream identity when interacting with the public. Leaving their street identity behind when they meet landlords or potential employers is a strategy to get beyond the stigma. They benefit by identifying themselves closer to the expected social norm for a young adult and one additional step toward emergence from street life. Conversely, on the street amid their peers they adopt a street identity that allows them to fit in and feel a sense of belonging. In the space of the streets their mainstream identity may be more of a detriment where trust and friendship among street youth is tied to their shared identity.

As youth begin to seek a place back in society their identity shifts, letting go of the strongly held sense of street kid and adopting a new mainstream identity. One challenge voiced by many of the youth was not knowing what this new identity would be.

Out here it's easy. I'm Stretch to everyone out here [on the street]. I'm Anders when I visit my old friends, or my worker, or call my grandma. But who am I going to be when I leave? – Anders

You get used to acting a certain way, to being a certain person. I can get away with a lot of shit out here cuz everyone's just all "that's just Sab" but that shit's not gonna fly anywhere else. I gotta become a new me when I leave here. – Sab

On the streets I get taken care of a lot because of Daven. Being a mom on the street gets you privileges other kids don't get. But off the streets I'm back to just being a teenage mother. I want to be more than that. – Jazz

I don't think I'll ever give up being a street kid. I'm just gonna get good at hiding her deep inside me. – Avery

Constructing and maintaining an identity is an individual, yet social process.

Beazley (2003) notes that a youth living a street-involved life:

must learn to balance his collective identity with other fluid identities, often resulting in the fragmenting of the presentation of the self. This is due to the multiple identities street children present for various activities and needs across different spatial areas, and the contradictions between these presented identities.

(p. 13)

The youth in this study are balancing between who they are among street youth, and who they are "out in the world". This balance and negotiation of identity is in part influenced by the dual logic that guides behaviour and decisions.

Dual Logic

Despite attempts to meet their needs and effectively negotiate space and place, there are a multitude of barriers facing street-involved youth beyond just the stereotypes and perceptions society holds toward them. In this study, the youth spoke of their difficulties in accessing the services and resources needed. They are moving forward on the streets often unaided by the resources that would make their journey much easier. There are many reasons why street-involved youth struggle to access services and why few services exist to effectively reach this population. One such reason is the dual logic that is evident in the data. In this section I will explain the dual logic, thought processes common to both mainstream society as well as the streets. Different sets of logic are a condition of each context and at times, the differences between these two can lead to a breakdown in communication, ineffective services, or street-involved youth being outside the reach of necessary resources. In conceptualizing dual logic we see the following properties: rules of inclusion/exclusion; resistance; and contradictions.

Rules of Inclusion/Exclusion

Do you feel the unwritten rules that govern a public space when you enter a bookstore? Is your awareness heightened as you sit on a chair in the fiction section over in the back corner? Is your presence in a public place and others' perceptions of you at the forefront of your mind? For most people the answer would be no. For the youth involved in this study it is a resounding yes.

Street-involved youth are a part of the social mosaic of our communities. But they are not readily allowed a place within the mainstream. Rules of exclusion are

created for the comfort of mainstream citizens with little consideration to the psycho-social health implications they have on street-involved youth. The youth talk about their desire to go and sit in a coffee shop, or the Chapters bookstore, or the thoroughfare of the shopping centre so they can feel normal and get out of the street space, but often these places are beyond their reach. Most of the street-involved youth I interviewed or talked to are (or have friends who are) banned from the shopping centre, and are regularly kicked out of the Second Cup and Chapters for loitering.

One set of rules guides the movement or placement of street-involved youth – for example, the harassment they receive from business owners and police for sitting on the sidewalk along R---- even when they are not flying a sign – while a second set of rules applies to average citizens in society. The youth are intentionally seeking out mainstream spots as places to go during the day because of how it makes them feel to access them, but *we* are preventing this by banning them from these places due to who our perceptions tell us they are.

Resistance

With dual logic comes a form of resistance practiced by some street-involved youth. They resist the choices and advice of others and assert the right to make their own decisions. What agency staff, or police, or policies say is best for them is not always the case. What we view as defiance flying in the face of the logical may be what *should* be done. They see resistance as self-preservation. Accessing a drop-in may be an easy way to find food and support but for some youth the choice not to visit agencies is worth the trade off. Shya provides an example:

Nah, I can't go to those [drop-ins]. Well, I could but I can't. My ex and his new bitch go there so I chose not to. Get it? I don't want to risk having her fist run into my face is more like it. – Shya

To repeat, there are multiple causes to explain why street-involved youth struggle to access services and for the lack of services effectively reaching this population. As previously discussed, dual logic provides one possible explanation. As a further illustration, consider the shelter system. The City builds and supports shelters to help resource the homeless but the youth do not want to sleep in them. Shelters are an illustration of society's misunderstanding of the type of place which brings comfort to street-involved youth. Shelters serve a purpose but for many of the youth interviewed, they are not serving the *right* purpose (Adam, Evan, Jake, Zander, Sky).

The shelters are the worst place to be at night. I'd rather be in the park or under the bridge. – Evan



That's the Sal in the background. I took it from here since we sit here a lot and look over there waiting for friends to come out. I don't like the Sal, well, except for socks. And sometimes food. I don't never sleep there. – Jake

Showing resistance to the services and supports that are aimed at helping them is one way street-involved youth are voicing their opinions about what they need and want. In light of the dual logic guiding beliefs and actions, resistance is a way for their personal agency to take shape. Their ability to resist and survive in such harsh conditions may suggest that the strategies they adopt are effective, at least in the context of the streets.

Contradictions

City staff and service providers may believe the reluctance to use shelters is an act of resistance on the part of the youth, but this is not necessarily the case. The idea that the youth chose to be on the streets is an act of agency on their part. They are seeking control in their lives and the way they go about achieving control may, in all probability, seem backwards or contrary compared to what non-street youth might do. A few of the

youth talk about getting housed but realize the conditions are worse in the rooming house than they are in the outdoor sleeping spot in the trees or under the bridge.

Places created for us to get off the streets make us want to sleep under a bridge.

– Sky

This sense of being better off outside does not just pertain to their resistance to the shelter system. In Jack's photo interview, he showed the picture of the stairwell from his old apartment building and talked about the effect of landlord apathy and rundown buildings.



Many services try to help me one way or another. They help me survive today (food, showers) or work to get me to be somewhere else. Almost with the attitude that anywhere is better than where I am. But I disagree. Here might be hell but it's better than the shelter or the disgusting rooming house the worker thinks I should live. This is not the worst place I've lived and it's better than a lot of places they want to put me.

Whose best interest are you taking care of when housing workers find us rooms that they would never live in? Not mine. It's their own best interest because they can check a box.

I become important when I'm a checked box – tick – “got another one off the streets, my stats are going up. Too bad you have to live in this, but it's better than where you were”.

One thing I've learned is to agree with you all to get what I want. Ass-backwards though, don't you think? Maybe more workers need to agree with me even when it doesn't make no sense to you all. Because anywhere is better than here right? Wrong!

Sometimes when I lived here I'd not bother coming home. I'm safer and cleaner on the streets than in here. Would you like to live here? – Jack

Notions of safety were prominent in the data and there is a dual logic inherent in how and where street-involved youth are safe. Some incidents spoke to spatial elements of safety; where you are is related to how safe you will be and feel. For example, Jake believes he is safer downtown than when he goes out to the suburbs. This seems contrary to what one might think.

I know for regular people the streets would not be a safe place to be, or to live but for me personally being me, I am safer here. – Jake

What dangers lurk in the trees or the hidden areas of parks and natural spaces?

There is a contradictory notion that what is normal and accepted for most people is the opposite of how street youth see things. For most people this photo would likely draw to mind positive emotions or associations, but for the youth who took it, they see this as a place of hidden danger, risk, and separation from their sources of safety and control.



Safe spots can be found in the trees if you're not alone. – Sky

The Role of Fear: Fear-based Response

It seems natural to accept that fear would play a key role in the lives of street-involved youth. There are numerous examples in the data where the youth discuss elements of being on the street that they are fearful of, or how fear factors into their decision-making. Fear-based mobility describes how youth plan routes based on who they want to avoid or places they were afraid to walk through.

I know where my ex and his bitch hang out and since I don't feel like getting beat up, I know where not to go. – Shya

Hanging in groups helps since less is likely to happen to me when I'm not alone. But as a girl, I gotta always think about that stuff. Men watch me when I'm

walking down the street on my own, or eating at a table alone at the Mission. It's not smart to do that, and being a bit afraid is what reminds me to take care. – Sky

In North America, children are taught to trust and seek out police when they need help or are in trouble. But the nature of street life runs counter to this lesson. A large percentage of the street-involved youth in this study are afraid of the police, and while this fear is often disguised or presented as hatred, the underlying fear comes out in their stories.

I get nervous, um....yeah, nervous or stressed now but I have to get money somehow. So I hustle, but, um.....there's a lot to worry about....and all that worrying, um, yeah it makes you nervous that you'll get picked up when all you're trying to do is make some money to live on. If the police would leave me alone, um, yeah, I'd have a lot less to worry about. – Luke

Fearing the police, or the violence associated with the streets is not illogical when the circumstances of street-involved youth are considered. But, what about the other side of fear – that of society fearing those on the streets – and whether this has a causal effect on the youth? Evan said the “*city is afraid of us*” as a way of explaining the recent increased enforcement of city bylaws prohibiting street loitering and panhandling. Sierra’s photo of a “No Panhandling” sign on the side of an agency points out another example of how fear factors into decision-making:



No panhandling sign is on the side of the wall. It's funny, because so much worse stuff goes on right near that sign. It would be better to have a "don't sell crack" or "no pimping" signs. They can feel like they're doing something to counteract the problem. Maybe a security camera would be more useful. You know, I wonder who that sign is there to benefit? Most likely it's so those walking by can feel safe, but it does nothing for our safety. Hmm, never read that sign like that before. – Sierra

Logic is the system of principles and reasoning underlying a group's beliefs and actions. The streets and mainstream society both have their own logic and as street-involved youth balance their place between both contexts, they must live by the consequent dual logic.

Dual Normality

Nobody realizes that some people expend tremendous energy merely to be normal.
– Albert Camus

The final substantive category and dimension of duality evident in the data is dual normality, a multi-stage process whereby street-involved youth recognize and play with elements of street and mainstream normality to ease themselves into and out of the streets. Street normality draws the youth further into the streets and through assimilating street normality the youth become comfortable on the streets. Contrasted to this is mainstream normality. As will be shown, the youth intentionally bring elements of mainstream normality back into their street-involved lives to help them feel normal despite their street circumstances.

Unlike the previous three types of duality negotiated by street-involved youth, normality can be conceptualized as a process. In the context of being street-involved, the youth are living outside normal. Living outside normal is a concept that works grammatically in two ways, referring both to the youths' attempt to view living outside *as* normal, and to the youth living outside *of* normal when they are street-involved.

In the first concept, we can understand living outside normal to mean living outside *as* normal. Street-involved youth seek to understand the normality of the streets and to assimilate into this new way of life. After a period on the streets, they normalize their surroundings and bring elements of the mainstream normal into their daily activities. It is their hope to be perceived by others (i.e., landlords, job interviewers, family) as normal youth who are trying to make positive changes in their lives. Despite the chaos of street life, they want to lead a normal life. Living outside *as* normal is a perspective on life. Street-involved youth aim to make the street environment and their life as close to normal as possible despite *where* they are. As the data will show, there seems to be a

desire to bring structure and routine to their lives and to find a way of feeling normal even in decidedly non-mainstream circumstances.

Alternatively, we can understand living outside normal to mean living outside *of* the normal mainstream society. Street-involved youth are therefore set apart from and outside of normal societal structures. Living a street-involved life sets these youth physically and socially apart from mainstream society. This is not necessarily a negative place for them to be. There will be examples from the data included in this chapter that illustrate how setting themselves apart from and outside of the normal mainstream allows them an opportunity for personal development. Nevertheless, despite their position outside normal, street-involved youth are not as far off the developmental path as some may believe them to be.

Living outside normal is possible because of the context these youth are living within. As street-involved youth they have detached themselves, either intentionally or as a result of being pushed out, from the normal trajectory of adolescence. Living outside normal is both a physical and a psychological state of being. As street-involved youth shift from living in their family home to a homeless shelter, squat, covered bridge, or surfing friends' couches, physically they are living outside the normal context of adolescents in our society. Psychologically, many of the street-involved youth in this study spoke of breaking away from their pre-street environments (whether their family, foster home, or residential care) and beginning to live their own life – living outside the normal they had come to know in their previous home life. Living outside normal can be conceptualized as a consequence of their leaving their pre-street environment and shifting

into a new context on the streets. Living outside normal is embedded within the larger context of the North American society. Despite the common discourse speaking of the streets as an isolated entity, as depicted in the Mobius maze, we recognize that the streets are part of society as a whole, yet also distinctly separate. These contextual conditions influence street-involved youth's ability to move on, between, and off the streets.

For street-involved youth, living outside normal may begin before they even arrive on the streets. For many of these youth they had lived for most of their lives with a *normal* that they wanted to get away from. In breaking away from their family or pre-street home they begin to detach themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially from the normal they have always known.

Assimilating Street Normality

The youth often come to the streets seeking a new normal – trying to gain distance from a chaotic or malfunctioning family life. Early on, the reality of living on the streets can be quite shocking. What youth think they know about street life from television or books or friends' accounts often falls short of the actual experience. To ease the shock, youth describe the need to quickly assimilate to the norms of the street. As with orienting oneself around the new spatial environment of the streets, youth assimilate what is normal on the streets to help themselves feel a sense of belonging.

It appears that regardless of whether the youth made a gradual or immediate entrance into the street community, they recognized the street environment as being outside of normal. Immersion into the streets is often described by the youth as a chaotic time and assimilating street normality allows them to gain a sense of control over where

they are and what their new daily routine has become. There was an excitement to being away from parents and authority, to living outside of the normal role they had fulfilled thus far in their life, and to being outside of the norm.

The youths' sense of normality changes and evolves as they spend more time on the streets. At first they are seeking to break away from the norms of their family. Then they fall into the normal rhythms of street life. The youth begin to rectify their emotions and ideas around mainstream society's normal and, finally, to find their way back into it. The contrast between the reality of the streets and the norms of their previous home lives and the perceived preferential normality of society influences their behaviour and decisions on the street. A number of youth spoke of how they spent a typical day soon after immersing themselves in the streets. Brianna's account of how she spent her days illustrates a break from her pre-street life norms:

So, like when I was spending a few nights a week at the Sal and then panning during the day, typical would have been like, get up and eat at the Sal, you had to leave by 9 a.m. and be out all day so we'd just walk around, try and make some money, wander around looking for people we knew, eat again, make money again, and then likely end up drinking in the park or at the bridge and then go back to the Sal again before 11 p.m. so we could sleep. Or if we ended up over the bridge and then, often we'd just stay there for the night and not bother walking back.

– Brianna, former street-involved youth

Early on, street-involved youth recount feeling out of step with their new environments and seek ways to regain a sense of control. The examples in this chapter

speaking to the learning curve street-involved youth face upon entering the streets.

Assimilating quickly to such norms of the streets as where it is safe to sleep, where to eat, how best to safely make money, helps the youth adjust and negotiate the new normality of street life.

In assimilating to street normality, street-involved youth learn to adapt to the street environment but not all youth are willing to do this. Lee, a former street-involved youth, recounts how much she resisted assimilating to the norms of street life:

Lee: They [the streets] were just too much, in every regard. Too much drama, too much chaos, violence, dirt, drugs. The city is huge and the underpass we slept under was out of the core, and a lot of time we didn't have bus fare, but for some crazy reason, we kept going back to the sleeping spot, and we'd, like, walk two hours to get there, and then in the morning walk two hours back downtown so we could eat. Too much craziness!

Stephanie: You have referred to the craziness a few times. Can you tell me what you mean by that?

Lee: (Laughs) Aaah, "the craziness" was how I referred to the streets most of the time I was out there. You know, get a bunch of street kids together, stoned, angry, jealous of each other's girlfriends, ripping each other off, there was always drama, people were always fighting, or yelling or lookin' for someone, or the police were coming around and looking for someone. It really was a crazy life. Too chaotic. For me anyways, I didn't like it.

Once assimilated to the normality of the streets youth shift into normalizing the streets.

Normalizing the Streets

Youth shift from assimilating street normal to normalizing the streets. The streets have their own normal. Youth adjust to the daily normal of being street-involved. This stage relates most closely to the youths' inhabiting the streets stage. Normalizing the streets is the component of living outside normal that came through the loudest in the data. Almost all of the youth interviewed included incidents of how they needed to shift their mentality to accept that what they were experiencing on the streets was normal.

During interviews and conversations with current street-involved youth, the notion of rationalizing behaviour was commonly discussed. They described doing things on the street that they would never have done in their pre-street life. Rationalizing their actions and behaviours was a means of convincing themselves that they were okay and justified. Circumstances and actions that would have upset or disgusted them prior to leaving home now are accepted as normal acts of being on the street, just the way things are out here.

At first, I swore I'd never eat out of a dumpster. I thought I was so above all that.

Your opinion of what is acceptable and what you're willing to do sure changes.

– Prada

I've done a ton of shit I ain't proud of. One blow makes me 10 bucks though and that's enough to get me through the night. – Kinly

It all comes down to what you're willing to ignore...or maybe convince yourself doesn't matter in the first place. Not showering, I haven't changed my underwear

in almost a week. That'd have grossed me out last year. Now, I don't give a shit about clothes or shampoo, because that's just the way it is. Stress out about shit like that and you're sure as hell not gonna last. – Gray

Normalizing is connected to the process of seeking safety. The youth rationalize their behaviour in the context of the streets and allow themselves to believe and feel that what they are doing and where they are is normal. In so doing, they begin to accept living outside as normal. It is a survival technique. Conversely, they also seek out normality. They seek to find and integrate pieces of mainstream normality back into their life. They may be sufficiently entrenched in the streets, but these small pieces of normal added to their day help build their future-orientation; to know they are on the streets, but see another place as being ahead of them. By seeking out mainstream normality they are not succumbing to the streets. The youth find a way to feel normal despite their circumstances. Incidents of seeking normality are revealed in how they frame things; for example, sleeping in the park is like camping.



One of the best sleeping spots we've found. Not too many others crash here at night. It's more busy during the day. It is off the bike path in the woods and so it is quiet, and people can't see you but you feel like you are camping. With all the trees and that we can see the stars and then it's like taking a break of being in the city. – Sky and Jake

While they are normalizing the streets, there is also a sense that they are acting it out, that it is not real. Having had a few years to reflect back on her experience, Brianna describes how so much of what they did each day seemed normal to them at the time. In hindsight, she expresses the underlying desire in seeking to attain normality was to gain a sense of belonging through their actions.

Life was crazy but it seemed so normal. I think I probably knew that it wasn't normal but we were just going along trying to make ourselves into this little family. I remember this time that one of the guys, Frank, came back with two new blankets and a tarp. Not new new, of course, but new to us and we were thrilled.

Then, we made this whole production of going out and finding cord that we could use to fix up the tarp into a roof. And Celeste and I stuffed a few grocery bags with leaves, tons of leaves, oh shit that was fun because we spent more time throwing them at each other but in the end we stuffed these bags and ripped off a roll of tape from Canadian Tire and we fixed up the tarp as a roof and then arranged the blankets and put our leaf pillows there and were so proud of the bed that we made. It was our nest and we loved it. We were so proud of that damn, disgusting really, nest and we couldn't wait for the guys to see it. I look back on that now and cringe, but back then that was perfectly normal and important.

– Brianna, former street-involved youth

Through normalizing, street-involved youth are attempting to adjust to and survive in their daily circumstance. Though normalizing, the streets may provide benefits for some youth, although normalizing the streets often involves being desensitized to its violence and risks. With long-term entrenched youth, normalizing the streets establishes a belief that they can live through anything out on the streets. This normalization, or acceptance of traumatic and high-risk events, decreases their desire to reintegrate elements of mainstream normality into their daily lives. They are becoming stuck, further sucked into the streets. To emerge from this they will need to shift the balance from normalizing to reintegrating normality.

There can also be a downside to too much street normality in one's life. Normalizing the streets is a risk-enhancing behaviour, and while it appears that almost all street-involved youth engage in this, it serves to desensitize street-involved youth to the

dangers and risks they are experiencing. While this strategy may numb the youth to the vulnerabilities they face on the streets, it helps them survive.

They recount some of the most horrific stories I've heard all with almost no emotion at all. They tell you stories from their life as if they were describing a scene from a movie or book they'd read. – Gayle, youth shelter manager

The longer youth are street-involved, the more aspects of their life have become normalized to the streets, and rationalized as acceptable. The more they can rationalize where they are and what they are doing in the street context, the more challenging it is to emerge. This Catch-22 anchors them to the streets and works in opposition to their ability to successfully emerge back into mainstream society.

With their main concern to emerge out of street life, they normalize the streets but many also normalize themselves to appear more acceptable to employers and landlords. While in the process of emerging, they need to attain footholds in mainstream society (such as a job or an apartment). They need to normalize themselves. When they normalize *themselves* they demonstrate their awareness of how society sees them.

They have a hard time finding housing because they are on the streets and landlords will not trust that their income is stable or that they will not destroy the apartment. – Hazel, street outreach nurse

Landlords act nice when we're there looking around but then there's always some reason, eh, why we don't get the place. It's not rocket science. They don't rent to

street kids. So to get a place, you gotta show up looking like anything but a street kid. – Harley

Normalizing the streets was a pattern reflected in the data yet some street-involved youth resist normalizing, resist reintegrating normality, and resist altering themselves to better achieve a connection with society. This aspect of normalizing is tied to one's sense of self and one's personal sense of being out of step with society. For some, this is a consequence of where they are living but others actively seek to place themselves outside of normal.

I left that shit behind, I can be whatever I want now. You don't like how I dress, how I look, what I say, that's your problem man, not mine. I may not make the most money sitting out there on R---, like maybe the girls do or some of the baby face kids down here, but that's fine. I'm not selling out. – Talib

Taken one way, we can view this resistance as a stand against mainstream society, an attempt to gain distance from where they came from and the norm, but their resistance can also be understood as a health-seeking behaviour; behaviour which enables the youth to make choices that contribute positively to their lifestyle behaviour (MacKian, 2003). They are not yet ready or prepared to alter their sense of self or identity to more easily fit into a mainstream environment. There is an interrelationship between living outside normal, negotiating duality, and struggling to make a final emergence out of street life.

Youth who become stuck in street life tend to be those who most succeed at normalizing the streets, who accept their street-involved life and seek fewer opportunities to reintegrate mainstream normality back into their day-to-day life. The excitement of the

streets starts to wear off and the youth describe their desire to incorporate a sense of normality into their street life. They do not want to be apart from society; they want, in fact, to emerge out of street life and move forward with their lives. They attend to this by reintegrating mainstream normality back into their street life.

Reintegrating Mainstream Normality into the Street Context

The sense of normality changes and evolves as street-involved youth spend more time on the streets. At first, they are seeking to break away from the norm of their family. Then, they fall into the normal rhythms of street life. They work toward dealing with their ideas around society's normal before finding ways of integrating it back into their lives. Reintegrating mainstream normality represents the third phase of living outside normal.

Reintegrating normality is a forward-focused notion in which the youth attempt to add elements of mainstream normality to their lives. In one sense, reintegrating normality is characterized by stepping out of the streets and temporarily returning to mainstream society. In conversations with the youth participants, many spoke of maintaining communication with their old school friends and occasionally visiting them at school. Incidents in the data such as spending time in the library, the botanical gardens, going to the movies, buying a snowboard with the extra money they made working that month (even though they are still living in a shelter and have to store the snowboard at a friend's house) speak to their need to *act* like a non-street-involved youth. This category is evident in almost every interview and in many of my observation notes.

Street-involved youth are highly aware of their life circumstances and while many may fail to change their situation, they often speak of wanting to live a normal life. The youth know how their street life takes them away from normality. Carter discussed this in our interview:

I don't know, doing normal things that normal people do, yo. I ain't played basketball in years. You know, I ain't snowboarded in years. I ain't gone to see a movie, or a club. – Carter

The youth are holding onto pieces of street life while trying out their life back in normal society. They are reintegrating normality with various forms of safety nets ready to catch them if they fall. Many youth need a lot of practice and they do fall often. They try out being back in normal society but often they are not ready to fully commit to the transition. The more opportunities the youth have at reintegrating mainstream normality back into their day, the closer they come to getting off the streets altogether.

Surprisingly, what became evident upon analyzing the data was how confusing this practice often appeared to the adults in their lives. In these incidents in the data, the staff and adults question the decisions a youth made, when they don't understand the motivation driving the youth's decisions and actions.

Like, take Aiden...it was nuts that one of the first things he did when he got a job was buy a snowboard. That is completely crazy in my mind, a kid living in a shelter owns a snowboard. There is a crazy logic that a lot of the kids have that I don't profess to ever understand. It seems to come along with street life. Maybe

you understand it better than I do, but the youth see success to be “feeling normal”. – Juanita, youth worker

Illogical to some, this can be seen as an act of seeking normality, a cognitive and social detachment from the streets. Aiden knows that he does not have the opportunity to go snowboarding while on the streets, but he wants more for himself than he currently has. What is interesting is that the youth seem to comprehend their need to do this yet the staff and service providers are perplexed by it. Their actions and behaviours do not always make sense because others don't recognize the underlying powerful motivation guiding them. Juanita, the drop-in manager of an agency, understood this type of behaviour to be connected to the youth's need to get beyond the normality of the streets:

They equate possessions with security and they try to start buying things that make them feel and look normal. – Juanita, youth worker

While some youth seek normality through material possessions, others reintegrate mainstream normality through their use of space. What makes a place contribute to the normality of a kid's life? What spaces or places are they trying to create or recreate for themselves while they are on the street? From the outside looking in, sleeping under a bridge or in shelters, or spending 16 hours a day outside, is not normal socially accepted behaviour but that is what these youth are doing and they must use some of these aspects of their day-to-day existence to try and build a sense of structure in their lives.

Reintegrating mainstream normality serves as a psychological step toward leaving the streets. Youth may be anchored to the streets physically, but by integrating pieces of mainstream normality they bring themselves closer to emerging out of street life. The

more opportunities the youth have at incorporating mainstream normality into their routine, the closer they come to getting off the streets altogether.

Disengaging from Street Normality

The final phase of living outside normal parallels the youths' emergence out of the streets. Whether emerging out of the streets gradually or immediately, street-involved youth need to disengage from street normality. In doing so, they acknowledge the rationalizing they have used to normalize the streets and make a shift away from life on the streets. For most of the youth this is much more challenging in practice than in intention.

So what's keeping me here? I'm not stupid. I know the hardest part is leaving these guys behind. I fucking hate this life now, but to leave means leaving these guys and how can I do that? We've had each other, even when we had nothing else, for like, three years. But, at some point you gotta say – them, or me – right?
– Jocelyn

Disengaging is a conscious choice to let go of the normality that the youth had come to experience on the streets. While it may be the case that some street-involved youth are pulled from the streets and therefore disengage from street normality in an abrupt manner, most make this final transition from living outside normal in a gradual manner.

I think the methadone program is finally working for me. Once I kick this, leaving the rest behind will be easy. – Jorge

Disengaging from street normality is a means of distancing oneself from the streets and accepting a place back in mainstream society. It can be noted that many of the street-involved youth in this study expressed an awareness of how different street and mainstream norms are and while they needed to internalize and live by the normality of the streets for their own safety and survival, they wanted to disengage from that and be part of mainstream society.

I realized that I was never going to become something if I didn't get away from what I was doing. I mean, look at the old guys living at the Sal. They been doing the same things for 20 years. Their lives are not going to get any different than what they have now. I want more than that so I get out of the streets. Completely.
– Albi

Disengaging from street normality requires a renegotiation of attitudes and beliefs. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, most street-involved youth immerse themselves in the streets in the hope of escaping the life they'd come to know as normal. "Ironically, the street where mainstream values are supposedly discarded, ended up tutoring them mainstream values" (Choi, 2005, p. 321). To be successful in disengaging from street normality and emerging back into mainstream normality the youth need to have made some form of peace with the society they are emerging into. To disengage from what has become familiar on the streets, the youth must learn to trust the norms of a mainstream society, despite how negative it may have been, despite its contribution to their street involvement.

Summary

Understanding the duality in the lives of street-involved youth is about recognizing the presence of distinct environments and understanding how the youth experience and fit into them. Negotiating dual space and place, maintaining a dual identity, and understanding the logic and normality inherent in both the streets and mainstream society requires knowledge, thoughts, and strategies.

Chapter 7 – Seeking Safety and the Struggle to Emerge

*You spend so long running **from** something that you don't realize the shift to running **toward**. – Eila, former street-involved youth*

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the process street-involved youth go through to seek safety and emerge from the streets back into mainstream society. This process can be understood as a temporal duality: Street-involved youth focus on and attend to conditions of their day-to-day situation in the context of the streets while also attending to conditions that will allow them to emerge out of street life. Pieces need to be put in place for their eventual emergence, but while they put these pieces in place, they are still living a street-based existence requiring attention to ensure their safety. This process of seeking safety while struggling to emerge is a central challenge in their lives – to survive each day on the streets and to find their way back to society, to find their eventual place.

The process is actualized by (a) progression through four stages of street life: pre-immersion, immersion, inhabitation, and emergence; and (b) the use of five primary strategies: escaping, provisioning, anchoring, routing, and using (in)visibility. Following a brief overview of the four stages, Chapter Seven is structured around the five primary bifocal strategies because they capture the duality of the seeking safety/struggling to emerge process and are evident at each stage. By examining the strategies we can understand the temporal duality inherent in the process of seeking safety and struggling to emerge and how street-involved youth deal with it.

Seeking Safety While Struggling to Emerge

For almost all street-involved youth, successfully emerging out of the streets is the end of one journey and the start of another. Two themes recur throughout this study: first, street-involved youths' need to survive in the moment, and second, a struggle to emerge from their current situations to something better. This process can be conceptualized as a temporal duality between present and future. For the most part, the youth involved in this study want to leave the streets, yet there is no clear, delineated path for them to follow. Tied to their struggle to emerge is surviving in the moment, doing what needs to be done to be safe today. This bifocal process is often at odds with itself. These contradictory elements can appear illogical or confusing or deviant to an outsider observing the youths' life but both foci are important. Unfortunately, what often happens is focus becomes stuck in the present and they lose sight of where they could one day be. Achieving balance with this duality is the desired state allowing the youth to be safe in the context of the streets, but to also be actively working on changing conditions in their life to allow them to fully rejoin mainstream society.

As is the nature of duality, there are two dimensions: The present aspect of this temporal duality is represented by the category *seeking safety* and the future aspect is the *struggle to emerge*. The next section provides a brief overview of the two categories. Further on in this chapter, this process will be illustrated through the five bifocal strategies.

Seeking Safety

Seeking safety is the present-focused aspect of this process. Street-involved youth are regularly seeking safety as a principle part of their everyday lives. For most people, safety is something that is thought about now and then, or in reaction to a specific incident. In contrast, safety is always at the forefront in the minds of street-involved youth. While many of the youth may not outwardly admit this is the case, they are aware that they are exposed and vulnerable. In general, the more focus they put toward seeking safety, the better they get at it: Practice makes perfect, in other words, which may also mean the better they get at hiding or creating realms of invisibility for themselves, or at becoming comfortable and adjusted to the streets. Seeking safety encapsulates emotional as well as physical safety. Means of seeking safety and the notions of escaping and using invisibility will be further explored later in this chapter.

Extending the idea of dual logic from the previous chapter, many of the youth expressed feeling safer on the streets than at home or in a shelter. Their means of seeking safety made sense to them and may take into account factors that many in mainstream society discount. One example was provided by Shya:

Outside is actually pretty safe because you can't really see me from the path when I'm tucked in there and even if there are people around, maybe having someone approach where I am is a better thing than being in a bed and knowing for sure that someone is going to show up. – Shya

In numerous interviews with street-involved youth, the notion of familiarity was often mentioned as an important factor when making a decision to use a particular place

for specific activities. For example, there is the desire to be in a familiar place when using drugs to minimize the after-effects of not recognizing one's surroundings. The familiar accentuates a sense of safety. However, a familiar place can change due to external factors such as time of day or the presence of others. A place may only be familiar under specific conditions, while at other times the place loses its meaning for the youth.



This is a sweet view from my junkie bush. We go there to shoot up and it's safe. It is important to be somewhere familiar when you shoot up. But also I feel normal here, it's pretty near the river. I can sit and think, it's calm here, not a lot of traffic comes in off the paths. – Sierra

A sense of the familiar with respect to a location increases the youths' sense of safety. Sierra raised the issue that several of her pictures show places of familiarity – they are both safe and unsafe at the same time but because they are familiar to her, she continues to frequent them.

Seeking safety is one dimension of this basic social process enacted by street-involved youth. The other dimension, struggling to emerge, speaks to their actions and desires to leave the streets behind and regain a place in mainstream society.

Struggling to Emerge

The future-focused aspect of the temporal duality is the struggle to emerge. The struggle to emerge is not about how youth enter the street, or necessarily about how they exit, but rather about what they experience while they are street-involved and struggling to leave the streets and get back into mainstream society. The struggle is to negotiate a path through the dual space and place discussed in Chapter Six. Evidence from the data shows a consistency in this struggle. Whether youth were on the streets for a few months or had been entrenched for six or seven years, they are caught between managing their day-to-day survival needs and doing what is necessary to get off the streets.

Numerous conditions work against the youth as they struggle to emerge. Drug use will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, but an example of one youth's attempt to remove drug addiction from his life as a stepping stone to emerging out of the streets was provided in the previous chapter. Jake's photo and story of accessing methadone at local pharmacies was complicated by the perceptions held by others and the stigma associated with street-involved youth and drugs. Drugs act as an albatross for many street-involved youth and the challenges youth face in gaining access to methadone programs is one example of a consequence that may result in their persistently remaining a frustrating step away from leaving the streets.

To successfully emerge, street-involved youth must attend to physical, social, cognitive, and emotional changes. Many of the youth participants in this study were street-involved for the duration of my involvement with them. Others were former street youth reflecting back on their street-involved life. Two youth transitioned through the process of emerging out of the streets during the study. A street corner conversation with Jake and Sky provides an example of successful emergence:

Yeah, we got our own place now, up there, and it's good. A nice place too, not a room or nothing like that; our own bathroom. – Jake

Jake's face showed pride as he made the above statement.

Sky: I'm working full time now, at YDI [Youth Drop-in]. Before it was just ten hours a week and that wasn't enough to pay rent, but then they hired me on this program they started and I'm working as a peer mentor with younger kids. It is great!

Jake: Yeah, and I'm on methadone now. And taking pictures. Remember that camera you gave us, well that was fun. And then I saw this camera at the drop-in and asked if I could use it some time. They had this auction coming up and said I could take pictures and if any were good they'd sell them there. I had some nice ones, but I also did some paintings. I made 600 bucks.

Sky: And then he took me out for a real dinner. Our fourth anniversary was in September and we actually went out on our first date (laughing).

We talked more about their apartment and current life. Sky was having a hard time adjusting to working 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday to Friday. She found the imposed structure tiring, but also expressed being really happy working at a job that she liked.

Jake: Do you go to the drop-in still? We don't go there no more, I guess you know that.

Stephanie: Yes, I have noticed that you were not around anymore. I've been looking for you when I'm down here.

Jake: Yeah, we don't want to go there no more. We don't need it no more, you know, and it is nice to be able to say we moved on.

Sky and Jake have now, after four years of being entrenched in street life, emerged both physically and mentally from the streets. Jake is participating in a methadone program, but when asked if he sees that as a connection to the streets, his answer surprised me:

No way. It is not at all about the streets. Methadone is about staying clean.

When I was on the streets I tried getting into the program but it could never stick.

Now that I am away from there, it will work this time. – Jake

Throughout the rest of this chapter, examples from the data will be provided that illustrate how youth seek safety while struggling to emerge. As will be discussed in the next section, youth follow four stages of street-involvement and their struggle to emerge can be supported or hindered by many factors.

Four Stages of Street Life

An analysis of the data led to the recognition of four stages – pre-immersion, immersion, inhabiting the streets, and emergence – that street-involved youth move into, through, between, and away from as they negotiate the streets and mainstream society. As illustrated through the Mobius maze, this complex cyclical process is characterized by forward and backward movement from one context to another. The youth seek safety at each of these stages but how they accomplish this differs depending on their present individual stage. For the majority of the youth in this study, their struggle to emerge displays an ongoing desire combined with actions that can lead to their emerging out of the street-involved life.

Pre-immersion

The reasons street-involved youth give for coming to the streets vary. Studies indicate that the majority of street youth have run from something rather than running to a life of change, excitement, or rebellion (Butt et al., 2004; CS/RESORS, 2001; McCreary Centre, 2001). The pre-immersion stage represents their life on the cusp, just before becoming street-involved. In most cases, it can be characterized as a stage of thinking, decision-making, and preparing for action. For others, it is a very brief stage, preceded by an immediate or unanticipated immersion.

During their interviews, many of the youth spoke of feeling as though they did not fit in at home, were not wanted by those they lived with, were unhappy, scared, and angry and wanted things to change. Jack, who has been street-involved for nine years, illustrates this when he talks about life with his mom:

She was usually all doped up. I took care of her. Things were crazy there . . . we had no money. . . .Me, I got kicked out onto the streets. That's why I'm here. If I had a choice I'd still be at home kickin' it with my mom. But I don't, you know.

– Jack

Their concern with staying safe and getting from *where I am now to somewhere else* can be the beginning in the pre-immersion stage. Youth spoke of their pre-street days in many of the interviews and conversations. The feeling of moving on to somewhere – anywhere – else was often expressed. Additionally, many youth spoke about the lack of safety they felt in their pre-street lives and seeking safety was one factor for moving on. Mathieu, a ward of the Children's Aid Society, describes what precipitated his decision to go to the streets:

No foster family wanted to keep me. Oh, they all had their own reasons, new baby on the way, the other kids didn't like me, my school was too far to drive to every day, all bullshit really. Why did they never come out and say "we just don't want him"? I never fit into any of those homes, so I figured I could just have to make my own place on my own. – Mathieu

In talking to the youth about what their life was like just before they came to the streets, there is a parallel quality between their pre-street lives and their on-the-street lives. Many of the youth spoke of a struggle or tension of getting by each day and thinking about what their future would be like. Most do not have a sense of belonging anywhere, of having a place to fit in, to be. The youth are thrown off course when they

end up on the street and then must struggle to emerge back into a sense of normality, back into mainstream society.

The pre-immersion stage ends when a youth leaves a pre-street home and comes to the streets. For all the street-involved youth participants in this study, the progression from the pre-immersion stage to the immersion stage occurred. However, a few spoke of their friends who did not leave home.

Charlie's just as bad off as me, yeah, but he never left. His tolerance for shit is better than mine I think. – Grim

My worker likes to say that I am out here because I want to be, cuz home is not as bad as I say it is. Know how she decides this? My sister still lives there. Things weren't the same for her and me though. They were bad enough in my opinion. Taylor is happy there, but I sure as hell wasn't. – Prada

For those youth who do leave their pre-street home, immersion into the streets is their next stage of street life.

Immersion

Immersion into the streets occurs either gradually or immediately, with four patterns evident in the data. The first three patterns illustrate a gradual immersion:

1. Those who were gradually lured or pulled into the streets but indicate they were not leaving a traumatic or severely abusive home life.

2. Those who were gradually immersed in street life because they kept running away from a home they did not want to be in. This can be characterized as a “left-went back” cycle. The length of time away from home continued to grow until they finally stopped returning.
3. Those who left their home of origin and went to a temporary accommodation, and then eventually ended up on the streets. Some youth describe leaving or being kicked out of their family home and their move to a friend’s or a relative’s house, or the move to an independent living program that does not work out and is followed by a move onto the streets.

The current and former street-involved youth interviewed described how their initial few days on the streets were “exciting”, “scary”, “anxious”, “freeing”, and “risky”. They talked about their immediate needs to find shelter, food, and friends. Immersion in street life often starts with a period of adjustment. The youth did not specifically refer to orienting themselves to the streets, but the data provides examples of incidents that fill this role.

All of a sudden, the city that I knew didn't make sense. I knew where to go if I wanted to catch a movie, or take the bus, or head to school, but now I needed to find places I'd never been to before. Sure, the Mission is obvious, everyone sees it as they drive in to the market, but I'd never walked through the front door before. Then, there was the issue of finding food. The cash I'd brought wasn't going to last long if I had to keep eating out all day. – Jake

The hardest thing is not finding a place to take a shower. I have a dog, see, so I can't get in places [agencies]. You think about what it might be like out here, but I never thought about not taking a shower. That just didn't even cross my mind, you know. I just thought I'd be able to find somewhere. It takes a new way of working stuff to get around the rules and, you know, I got to find someone to watch my dog and shit. – Adam

You got to learn to work the system, and learn to work it fast! There is no directions out here, you know, you might get someone to tell you how it works, but most of the time it's "figure it out for yourself" and the faster you do, the less of a target you will be. – LJ

Another common thread in the data is street-involved youths' sense of lack of choice. With regard to immersion into street life, the youth often expressed that whether they ran away or were thrown out, they perceived themselves to have "no choice". Leaving, with nowhere to go but the streets, appeared to be the only option many of the youth felt they had left.

I got out here and just thought it'd be short term, you know? No way was the streets gonna be worse than my folks. I just couldn't take it there anymore, you know, I had to get out. No kid should have to live in fear, and for some reason, I thought the streets would be safer. Funny eh, how I was more scared of my parents than the bums in the Mission? – Evan

The final pattern of the immersion stage was immediate immersion – those who reached a breaking point where they were living and intentionally left for the streets. The

concept of *control* becomes evident in the data at this early point of street life. Many of the youth had been in situations (either with their parents or in care) where they felt they had very little control and entering street life was one of the first active incidents of taking control that they describe.

Well, I'd got sent to my 17th place and when that didn't work out, I just said, "fuck it", I can do better than these workers that keep sending me to homes that don't last. I walked away and ain't goin' back. – Mathieu

I'm sure they knew right away that I was AWOL, probably looked for me but then gave up. I had to be friggin' careful, though, in the beginning: hiding, looking around when I was in the market, downtown, on the bus. There was no way I was getting caught and going back. – Grim

The youth end up on, or come to the streets needing to start over, to find out who they are and where they belong. Most do not have a sense of belonging anywhere, of having a place to fit in, to be. Some youth do not stay on the street long. A weekend spent living in the shelter might be enough to send a youth back to their family or group home. For others, the immersion into the streets is the beginning of their inhabitation stage.

Inhabiting the Streets

Two patterns of inhabiting the streets became evident from the data: (a) willing to get comfortable; and (b) fighting it all the way. There are those youth who are willing to get comfortable on the streets (or accept the fact that they need to adapt to the streets),

and those who never really settle in, who fight becoming a part of the streets. The attitude taken towards inhabiting the streets contributes toward how the youth uses the streets, moves through and between the streets and mainstream society, and how they deal with obstacles to emergence.

I made a number of tries before actually getting the apartment. I stayed with friends for a while and then found my place. You get comfortable, even in a bad situation and it can be hard to leave that. I mean to actually leave. I always wanted to leave but it meant smartening up and doing something about it.

– Brianna, former street youth

While evidence of adapting and adjustment is common among most street-involved youth, it is stronger in those who become adjusted to or comfortable in street spaces. For these youth, the streets become a place where they fit in and feel a sense of belonging. They adapt to living on the streets and their comfort in all probability keeps them there longer because they feel less of an urgent sense of needing to get out.

Some youth become quite adept at the day-to-day survival aspect of street life, so much so that they have a hard time when they move into an apartment or find housing. They do not have the independent life skills needed to live on their own, yet they do manage to survive on the streets, which of course require a different skill set. Youth who become adept at living in the context of the street might settle into the routine of street life. A willingness to get comfortable can lead to being stuck.

You just get stuck. As bad as this might be, it becomes easy. – Kinly

The second pattern of inhabitation seen in the data, fighting the streets, was much less common. This stage accounts for a small number of the youth in this study. For these youth, despite dealing with their day-to-day situation they never really feel they fit in or are a part of the streets.

I stopped living with my parents at 16 but I was only homeless for a few months. I was never really a “street kid” (air quotes when saying this) because I just couldn’t buy into the whole scene. – Lee, former street youth

Fighting the streets, and being unwilling to settle or adjust to them, can be a motivating condition toward emerging out of the streets. This condition of inhabiting the streets is counter to what Hazel sees in most of the street-involved youth she works with:

Many of the youth not only had problems with families but often struggled in school, socially, didn’t feel like their life “fit”. They’re seeking positive experiences, freedom, trying to get away from the rules they may have struggled against at home. They find this on the streets and it gives them a reason to stay, to get comfortable, because they feel something that they did not feel before.
– Hazel, outreach nurse

Whether a youth became comfortable on the streets or fought to get off quickly, most participants in this study at least experimented with emerging back into mainstream society.

Emergence

The final stage of street life is emergence from the streets back into mainstream society. Three patterns were evident in the data: (a) being pulled from the streets, (b) making a clean break, or (c) gradual disengagement.

Youth who were pulled from the streets, by entering drug treatment or going to jail, then moving back in with family were least common in the data. A small number of street-involved youth participants in this study experienced this form of emergence, but once they left the streets in this manner, we lost touch. Some of them maintained communication with the drop-in staff manager and she shared information on their progress or well-being with other staff and volunteers.

Making a clean break is a pattern characterized by moving to a new city, going to live with a different family member, or giving birth to a baby and moving into a supportive residence. Making a clean break was a pattern most indicative of success in remaining off the streets. The youth in the study who followed this path often made a quick exit from the streets once the decision was made. They chose to leave behind their street identity and to both mentally and physically emerge from the streets.

I just got fed up and left . . . I went to Edmonton and lived with my brother and his wife and never looked back . . . It has been a very long time since I considered myself part of that life. – Lee, former street-involved youth

I looked around one day and realized my life had become a joke, or a bad made-for-TV movie. I was sick of living like a tramp so I called up my worker and said

I'm done, come get me. That was eight years ago. Best decision I've ever made.

– April, former street-involved youth

Gradual disengagement – off, then on, then off, then on – was the pattern most commonly seen in the data. In this pattern, youth build skills and confidence with each experimental departure. One characteristic indicative of its on-again off-again nature is that while the youth are physically leaving the streets, most are still emotionally and socially tied to the streets. The process of disentangling themselves from the street community is a slow, gradual process of putting the pieces (employment, housing, new friends, reconnecting with family) back together. They continue to identify as being street-involved for a longer period of time, which reinforces the extension of street involvement beyond merely being homeless. Most maintain their street identity and street peers well after they secure housing.

Most of these kids take two steps forward and five steps back. It's like they're rock climbing and with each risky step they might make it or they might fall down.

We're at the bottom holding the rope. – Juanita, youth worker

The youth who become adept at seeking safety amid the streets are most likely to move through the gradual disengagement process of emergence. They manage to get off the streets, only to struggle with being able to adequately or effectively take care of themselves. So, they end up back on the streets, where they are comfortable or where they feel they know how to live.

A number of the youth who find housing and employment and leave the streets return. They have physically removed themselves from the streets, no longer need to be

there, but retain a mental placement in the streets. Many of the youth who regularly attend the SYC drop-in are not involved in any other street environments. They describe SYC as a place of comfort and acceptance. They intentionally return there day after day, or numerous times a week – it remains an environment in their daily routine. The youth have places of comfort and familiarity that remain with them even after they leave the streets. Evan spoke of his favourite sleeping spots as places that he checks on, to ensure they are still there and still private. Even though he shares an apartment with his girlfriend and has not slept outside for months, checking his old sleeping spots is part of his weekly routine.

Getting off the streets takes practice. The thinking stage is first, then comes acting. I've seen youth trapped in the thinking stage for a year or more before they are able to act on it. They almost all take two steps forward and then two or three or four steps back. It is not a linear process and it is almost never the same from youth to youth. – Hazel, outreach nurse

It takes practice to get off the streets. Not many kids I seen have done it on their first try. Hell, it took me twenty years. – Smith, street outreach volunteer and formerly homeless

Disengagement experiences are gradual or immediate and most often a consequence of their context. For example, going to jail and giving birth are two contexts that indicate an immediate disengagement with the street environment. Gradual disengagement, on the other hand, may occur over time, for instance in the case of

housing difficulties resulting from job loss: An apartment had been found – a disengagement experience – but must now be abandoned.

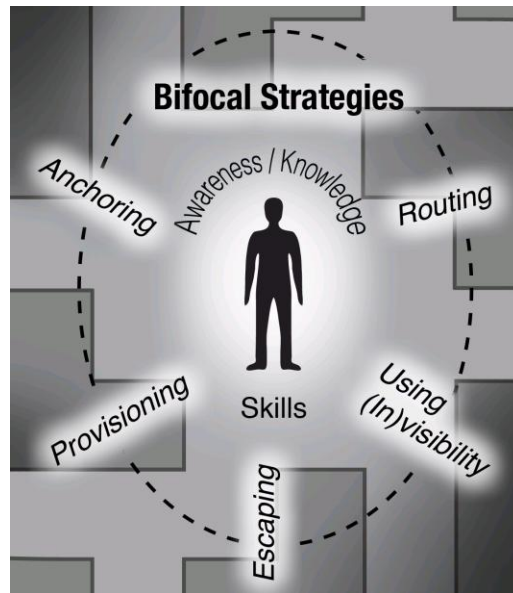
Tied to disengagement is clarity of goals. Many of the youth want to get off the streets but they are “*fuzzy on how they are actually going to achieve their goals*” (Hazel, outreach nurse). They have a destination in mind but not the path to get there; a destination lacking direction. “*They’re not insightful . . . don’t realize the ramifications of what they’re doing*” (Hazel, outreach nurse). Getting over, or getting a handle on, their substance use is one example of gaining clarity over their situation.

The process of emerging from the streets can be viewed as an *accumulation of experiences* and a process of becoming ready to move forward. Crisis events are normalized and then detached, stacked up like cordwood as life moves forward. Having examined the four-stage process of moving onto and out of the streets, the following section explains the five bifocal strategies used by street-involved youth as they negotiate the tightrope between seeking safety and struggling to emerge.

Five Bifocal Strategies

Prevalent across the data were five primary strategies used by the youth to both live on and find their way off the streets. Their stories consistently contain examples of five strategies that work for them though most are not aware of strategizing their way through the streets. Escaping, provisioning, anchoring, routing, and using (in)visibility will be explained in this section.

Figure 2. Bifocal Strategies.



Each of these strategies has been used to either help the youth seek safety in the context of the streets, or emerge back into mainstream society. How a specific strategy is used, or the nature of its focus determines which aspect of the process it helps the youth achieve. For example, anchoring is a strategy that grounds the youth in place. A street-based anchor might be a consistent sleeping spot that the youth returns to night after night, building a sense of familiarity and comfort. This anchor helps to keep the youth on the streets. Alternatively, a full time job or a shared apartment with a new roommate are examples of an anchor that contributes to emergence out of street life. The new job or apartment provides a solid, though possibly temporary, grounding in mainstream society and removes the youth from the context of the streets. All five identified strategies work in this bifocal manner and are the key components of how street-involved youth negotiate duality.

Escaping

Escaping is a recurring concept with multiple meanings and representations in the data. Incidents of the escape strategy are evident at all stages of street-involvement: before youth come to the streets, while they are on the streets, and as they emerge back into society. In keeping with the bifocal notion, escape is a strategy for seeking safety as well for emerging out of the streets. In the data, numerous forms of using escape were evident:

- To be somewhere else, a discomfort with one's current location;
- To physically remove oneself from a place;
- To get away from someone – relational escape;
- To escape (reality, pain, confusion, emotion) through drugs – self-harm;
- To escape from the life one is living and hating, to move on, to be somewhere else, to become someone else, to not be connected to the negative perceptions people hold about them;
- Running from oneself, not feeling comfortable in one's own skin, taking on a street name or a street persona, trying on a new identity;
- To escape back to the streets to a place where one feels some semblance of confidence and control in familiar spaces; and
- To escape the streets and the person one had become while living there.

If escape is so prevalent in the data, it begs this question: What are they seeking escape from and how does escaping contribute toward a greater sense of safety? Escape as a means of seeking safety begins in the pre-immersion stage and continues through to

emergence. They developed strategies to help them survive but with an eye to the future, to a change in their normal. On the streets these strategies were again employed and built upon through on-the-spot learning and adaptation to their environment.

I think most people believe living on the streets is a rough or risky thing to do and I don't disagree with this. But in my case, and that of many of the kids that I spent time with back in those years, the streets were essentially a different path through hell. Where I was (my parents' home) was hell. It was a place that I honestly did not see myself living through. So I left, I made that choice. I saw the streets as the dangerous place that they were, but they held possibility. They became the hell of my choice rather than the hell imposed. – Eila, former street-involved youth

Escape has both a functional (escaping *to*) and dysfunctional (escaping *from*) quality to it. Functional escaping may be a means of attending to mental health needs. Jack and Carter, Vince and Eila talk about escaping to the parkway or the downtown gardens. They are escaping to “feel normal”, “to get away”, “to get a break”.

A common form of using escapism to seek safety is affective detachment. The youth don't know how to deal with their past traumas so they detach from them and try to move on, almost ignoring the traumatic experiences, which does not make the pain or trauma go away but can be a means of functionally escaping when on the streets. Many of their incidents of survival are devoid of emotion. In many of the interviews, youth describe traumatic and high-risk experiences as though they are discussing a program they watched on television. The most common emotion that comes across in the

interviews and stories is pride: They made it through whatever the situation was. In detaching themselves emotionally from the negative events they are seeking safety. Affective detachment is a means of escape that allows the youth to live with the traumas experienced and still walk forward.

Drugs and alcohol are examples of dysfunctional escaping. Not only does drug and alcohol use or abuse anchor the youth to the streets, it serves as a means of escaping unpleasant conditions present in their lives. However, many youth do not see the addictive consequences of escaping through drugs until it is too late.



This little spot is where we come for a puff. It's just a quick escape from the street, then pop, we're back out again. – Jack

Just as drugs and alcohol or affective detachment are means of escape, lies and deception can work to a youth's advantage both in terms of seeking safety and emerging out of the streets. Using deception can help a youth escape the streets, as Eila explains:

I knew I had to get out of where I was living but with no job and no money that wasn't likely. So, I found me a job that came with a room. I took this job as a live-in housekeeper for this rich couple. I dressed nice for the interview and told them stories about a "previous job" I'd had and left because the family was moving to Manitoba for his work. My references were two other street kids, also great at lying I might add. They were dumb enough to hire me, I wasn't going to tell them the truth. It got me out of there. I stayed four months, bought a car then split. Spent the next year living in my car around B.C. I saw it as a move forward even if I was technically homeless again. – Eila, former street-involved youth

Firmly entrenched in street life, many of youth maintain an orientation fixed on the future. Examples from the data illustrate this as they recount how they imagine escaping from the streets:

I get a lot of practice being the normal kid just hanging out in the library. I sit there long enough and I know I don't want to go back to the drop-in, or Major's. I just want to go home like every other kid in the library is gonna do. – Alexa

I take off a lot. Hitchhike from Halifax to Toronto and everywhere in between. I could just pick one of those places and not get back on the highway. – Zander

Hiding out at my friend's place in the summer would be good. Her folks spend so much time at the cottage they'd never even notice I was there. It's my backup plan in case things here get too crazy. – Trina

Street-involved youth find many ways to escape. Of the five strategies in this framework, escaping is the one most likely enacted to assist them in seeking safety but least likely enacted to help them emerge out of the streets.

Provisioning

Provisioning refers to one's ability to find and use resources that will prepare and equip one to survive. At first, many street-involved youth struggle to find ways to meet their immediate needs in the context of the streets. In analysing the data, provisioning takes numerous forms:

- Attending to basic needs such as food, somewhere to sleep, and hygiene;
- Learning the rules of the streets;
- Acquiring belongings to provide comfort and assist survival;
- Creating a place of belonging;
- Emotionally preparing to leave the streets; and
- Establishing mainstream peer networks or support

Sure, I coulda gone to the Mission or the Sal but they might be easy but they're not good and I can't take my girl too. So that means we gotta find a place we can set up, outta the way a bit, yeah, but also near a water fountain is good. They are important. – Jake

All those worries I had before and never did I think about socks or underwear. It might be dumb but not having underwear can be a problem. Given the choice

though I'm gonna buy food or smokes so I need to find a place that gives out the other stuff, like new socks. – Adam

I'll admit it. I was scared shitless when I first starting walking around, realizing that I was going to have to make friends with these people if I was to survive. The homeless guys we used to see when we came down here on weekends now had information I needed. They weren't just some bum on the street now; they were who I needed to get to know. And quick. – April, former street-involved youth.

As youth settle into the streets many begin to experience a sense of pride in the makeshift homes they create for themselves. Zander described how pleased he was to make a sleeping spot hidden from view where he could leave his cats for short periods during the day and not worry about them. Sky talked about the squat they had built that she was quite proud of. In such a transient existence these types of places create anchors for the youth and provide a place they feel attached to.



The cops came and took my squat away . . . It was a real nice shanty too, we had it built up real nice. – Sky

Another youth spoke of provisioning through the creation of a home-like atmosphere:

We fixed up the tarp as a roof and then arranged the blankets and put our leaf pillows there and were so proud of the bed that we made. We were so proud of that damn, disgusting really, nest . . . it was perfectly normal and important.

– Brianna, former street-involved youth

Through provisioning, street-involved youth find a way to meet their basic needs each day. When they find something that works (eating breakfast at the drop-in, for example), they stick with it and this becomes a part of their routine. Accessing services is

a means of provisioning that helps contribute to their safety on the streets. They are gaining resources that will help them survive on the streets. However, as evidenced by their statements, while many youth are focused on their day-to-day needs, thoughts of the future are just below the surface. Provisioning is also a strategy to shift them from safety to emergence. Learning how and where to access resources not connected to street life, and beginning to accumulate provisions or belongings contribute to a gradual evolution beyond the streets.

I live in a tiny little room. I don't even have a couch (laughs). Yeah, (laughs) there is no couch. There is a chair. I keep getting stuff, slowly. I don't need a lot.
– LJ

Provisioning is a process of preparing or equipping and street-involved youth seek out more than material provisions as they work to emerge out of the streets. In this struggle, they need to attend to the emotional preparation required to leave behind their street support system and peers. Involvement and connections with agency staff and programs help them accomplish this.



You know these people [at the street drop-in] make time for us, when even our own family don't make time for us. It's kinda nice to have somebody who actually cares, because when that little bit of people who care, make us care just that little bit more and slowly and steady we are working our way out of this. You know, we may have issues but we still care. You know, we may do what we do to take care of ourselves, and we may hurt other people because of it, you know, but in order to ever get out of this shit, we have to get through it. You can't do one without the other. If we die out here, and friends of mine have, if you die on the streets you never get off, you get buried. That's not going to be us.
 – Jack and Carter

Agencies may help to equip youth but for many, the more deeply they entrench themselves in the streets, the further they are from the non-street world. Agencies and service providers who recognize this are better equipped to support the youth.

There seem to be some common steps that most of the youth take. . . . It is hard, but many of them will make 100 mistakes before they get something right and they need us to still be standing there after mistake #99. If we know they'll make the

100 mistakes we can give them more leeway to do so and not get as frustrated with them. – Juanita, youth worker

Provisioning often relies on the youth equipping themselves with informal resources to help them both survive on and get off the streets. As Bender et al. (2007) state, street-involved youth “are forced to pursue non-traditional resources and internal strengths to navigate this often precarious and hazardous street environment” (p. 37).

A number of incidents were present in the data describing the effect time of day or season of the year had on place and the youth’s ability to provision themselves on the streets. In living a street-involved life highly dependent on outdoor spaces, sleeping spots, sidewalk money-making places, and hours of outdoor roaming, season changes can bring dramatic effects that youth need to negotiate.

Jack: We’ve been in situations of being in the middle of a snowstorm: no shoes, no jacket. We’re sharing each other’s jacket. You know, five minutes one guy has got the jacket on, five minutes the other guy gets to wear it. You know, we’ve been through some pretty rough things together. Remember that night in the van?

Carter: Ah, that was awful.

Jack: Fucking minus 30 outside and we’re sleeping in a fucking ice cube box van. We would have done better cuddling ourselves in a snowbank.

Or as Sky describes:

I can keep this spot all year but when it's 30 below a tarp strung up doesn't do much to keep out the snow. It's like our home becomes inaccessible 5 months outta the year. – Sky

In addition to seasonal changes, time of day affects how places are perceived and used by street-involved youth.



Sky: We took a picture at night but then I figured it would be too dark to actually see what it looked like so we went back the next day to take another one. We did take the picture but it was not the same place. I'd never really seen it during the afternoon before and it is a different place then so we took more pictures that night so we could actually get a picture of the place we wanted.

Stephanie: What do you mean it is a different place during the afternoon?

Sky: It was different. It is not the place we sleep in. It didn't feel safe. There were a lot of people walking through and it looked different, and smelled different. It was just a different place, and uncomfortable. It's only ours at night. So we came back. Now, in this picture it looks right.

For these two youth (Sky and Jake), this place only becomes theirs at night. The time of day transforms this place into somewhere else.

The changes to space and place based on time and season can exacerbate uncomfortable and risky circumstances. Learning to adapt to these temporal changes increases safety for many street-involved youth; but for others they are just the thing needed to push them off the streets.

Anchoring and Routing

These strategies – anchoring and routing – are paired opposite concepts. These concepts explain street-involved youths' place attachment and mobility. The paired concepts account for the behavioural and attitudinal patterns that emerged from the data in relation to the youth's ability to connect to the streets, as well as seek out pathways and routes that move them through and off the streets back to mainstream society. Place attachment and mobility are opposing concepts that work to ground the youth in the street environment while also allowing them to take steps toward leaving.

Street-involved youth are both anchored to, and routing themselves away from, the streets back to solidifying a place in mainstream society. They are balancing their need for place attachment with their need for mobility and the paired strategies of anchoring and routing contribute to this. Properties of anchoring include anchoring devices, a sense of belonging, engaging experiences, and transitory comfort (people/places/things); properties of routing are place-based decision-making, fear-based mobility, orienting, and disengaging experiences that pull youth away from the streets.

These paired opposite strategies illustrate interrelated pathways through and between the streets and mainstream society and the notion of place attachment.

The relationship between person and place is mitigated by the personal meaning held for that place. Altman and Low (1992) define place attachment as a bond between people and places. Positive and negative experiences contribute to our attachment to the places in our lives. “Place attachment emphasizes the manner in which we *personally construct* our notions of place” (Gifford, 2002, p. 273, emphasis in original). As previously discussed in this chapter, street-involved youth are engaged in both the world of the streets and the world of mainstream society. As a result of negotiating a dual world, they are developing attachments to place in both realms, attachments that can either foster their dependence on the streets, or facilitate their emergence out of the streets. Talking to the youth about what their lives were like just before they came to the streets illuminated a parallel between their pre-street lives and their on-the-street lives.

Many of the youth speak of a struggle or tension in getting by each day and in dwelling on their future. The youth often come to the streets needing to start over, to find out who they are and where they belong. Most do not have a sense of belonging anywhere, of having a place to fit in or to be. The youth are thrown off course when they end up on the street and, as a result, must again struggle to start over or find a place to be by emerging back into a sense of normality, back into mainstream society.

In contrast to anchoring is the notion of routing – the pathways to, through, and off the streets are unique to each youth encountered in the course of this study, but there are patterns that can be identified from their stories. Routes lead from pre-immersion in

the streets to the paths they follow to emerge back to mainstream society and the patterns that emerged from the data will be illustrated throughout this section and in Chapter Eight. For street-involved youth, routing pertains to mobility, pathways, and the back and forth dance of being on-off-between the streets.

Anchoring

Anchoring is a strategy used to keep the youth in place, whether that is on the streets or in mainstream society. Anchors are what keep them tied to the environments of their lives. Street anchors help them feel safe and comfortable in the familiar spaces they have created for themselves. Feeling accepted is a strong motivator to stay street-involved.

They are seeking belonging, peers that will accept them or who resemble how they see themselves . . . somewhere to fit in. – Hazel, outreach nurse

As already described, drugs may be a form of escape, but they also serve as a device to keep them anchored to the streets. In order to move beyond the streets, they need to be able to find anchoring devices in the non-street world. From what I know of their stories, many of the youth in this study did not feel anchored to the families or communities they came from. So, they went to the streets, found anchors for themselves there, sought out daily means of safety, and then gradually attempted to disengage from the streets by replacing their street anchors with mainstream ones.

Many of the youth spoke of their daily routines while they were street-involved. Routines serve as a form of anchoring device and help the youth by adding stability to

their day but can also work against them if the routines become too comfortable. Somewhere amid their efforts to normalize and seek normality, the youth develop routines for surviving the streets that not only become a part of how they normalize their day, but also how they justify their activities. There are both functional and dysfunctional routines on the streets. A youth walking across the inter-city bridge six times a day to visit his crack dealer is a dysfunctional routine. The monotony and boredom of day-to-day street life also constitutes a dysfunctional routine. Dysfunctional routines may be difficult to break, but often the youth are aware of such patterns. The following conversation between Jack and Carter provides one example:

Jack: So, we been walking back and forth to H---, by the train yards, know where I mean? Yeah, so we been walking cross the bridge like six times a day, getting a puff, coming back saying that was it! Last time we're doing that. We came across and then we'd head up the parkway, you know where I mean, right? Yeah, so we end up out by the West river on the parkway, puff wears off and now we gotta either make it through or, you know, head back (laughs along with the other youth in the kitchen). Fuck, back and forth, crazy walking, six trips each day for, like – what day is this now? – Thursday, right, yeah so back to the apartments by the train yards. . .

Carter: (joining in the story now) Yeah and so we're walking last night, our last trip there, okay, and it's fuckin' pitch black, and I'm like, yo, bro, I can't do it, I gotta lay down. . .

Jack: . . . but we're nowhere, you know . . .

Carter: . . . we're nowhere, we're at the train yard, but I'm, like, stumbling around . . .

Jack: . . . and he tries walking across these train ties, you know, the big one piled up . . .

Carter: . . . only cuz I thought we could crash behind them out of the wind, like . . .

Jack: . . . and the fucker FALLS over them . . .

Carter: . . . banged up my face.

The data contains numerous other examples of how the youth get caught in dysfunctional routines. Many recount similar stories without suggesting an awareness of how the routine is causing greater hardship in their day-to-day life. However, not all routines on the street are negative. Functional routines are productive actions – visit the drop-in for breakfast in the morning, make money during the day, eat, look for an apartment, return to their familiar sleeping spot at night. A functional routine works toward their disengagement from the streets.

Breakfast is at SYC, lunch at the other drop-in, dinner at the Sal, got to check into the shelter by 8 p.m. to get a bed. Everything else I do has to fit into that. – Prada

It's the same thing every day. SYC 'til it shuts, then walk around. Nowhere open in the evenings, and I gotta make sure where I'm sleeping is there, you know, and not already occupied. I might know where I'm going everyday, but it doesn't mean I know what I'm doing. – Jake

Normalizing street life becomes routine and consequently routines may become dysfunctional. Dysfunctional routines work to entrench youth in street life. The notion of routine almost takes on a negative connotation.

We make six trips across the bridge a day. Got to go get drugs, walk back, puff wears off, and we got to walk back again. – Jack and Carter

Get up, pack all my shit before people start walkin' by, find food, fly a sign somewhere, hang out at the drop-in or Second Cup, try and find food again.

Food, sleep, crack, and maybe soap – that's really what each day is about. – Sky

Routines can centre on basic daily necessities, drugs, friends, visiting services or agencies. There are attempts to gain structure in their lives, but these attempts seem to be conscious shifts propelling them to break out of the routine. They need to be ready to move from the routine phase to the structure phase, but these overlap with a lot of back and forth. The data indicate that the youth develop routines quickly, but they say it takes them a long time (years in many cases) to attain structure in their lives. One difference is that the early routines they form tend to be risk-enhancing (or, rather, *not health-enhancing* at the very least) and do not contribute to their escaping the streets.

I think they begin to get bored. There really is not a lot to do once you've been on the streets for a while. They're not working, don't have an apartment or somewhere to relax, are often using most of the day, and they just walk around, or sit in the parks. They spend a lot of time waiting for things to open, or to happen.
– Hazel, outreach nurse

What was that word I was looking for the other day? Structure! That's it, structure! If we don't get structure soon it's all going to fall apart. – Carter

Some couldn't see the way out yet, you know. They couldn't see past the streets, they needed to be there because there was nowhere else for them to be. – Lee, former street-involved youth

Dealing with boredom is a consequence of the lack of routine or structure they have in their lives on the streets. Seeking safety may occupy a considerable portion of their day but they still encounter a great deal of boredom. Escapism is one strategy of seeking safety but it also counters boredom. When they succumb to the boredom they are more likely to get into troublesome or risky situations. But one could say that being bored is part of the routine of the streets. They may not be seeking out boredom, but they are experiencing it. Boredom is risky – it is a dysfunctional routine.

Getting comfortable in very uncomfortable environments is really about adjusting to where you are and dealing with it, becoming used to it. Street-involved youth get comfortable somewhere and then need greater motivation to move on. Even a very uncomfortable place, once a youth becomes used to it, takes on a familiarity, which leads to a sense of safety in a disquieting place. Moving away from places where they feel safe and moving off the streets can engender a sense of fear. Once they are used to something, change is frightening.

Youth who spend their day panhandling, finding their dealer, smoking crack, panhandling, etc. are in a routine. To stick to this, they need to be aware of the police, the best money-making locations, the perceptions others have of them, etc. All of these

decisions go into supporting their daily routine of escapism through drugs. To maximize the money they have available for drugs, they use services that provide free resources such as food, phone, Internet, showers, allowing them to provision themselves at the lowest cost.

A small number of youth describe surrendering to the streets, even if for a finite time while on living on the streets. This notion is related to getting comfortable in the situation, but it goes beyond comfort – it indicates that one is resigned to the streets – to acceptance of their street-involved life. Evan talked about this when he spoke of his:

Hobo years . . . hopping trains down in the States, it was a good life. I figured I could make a life out of doing that. It was a few years ago and only once I came to this city did I start to think that I might be able to get off and make something else of myself. – Evan

Whether by finding a job, getting an apartment or room, or reconnecting with non-street peers or family, anchoring is also a strategy that helps youth successfully emerge out of the streets.

The person I realized I missed the most was my grandma. So I called her from a pay phone one night and it was not a long talk but it helped. She was so happy to talk and didn't try to get me to come back, but, still, there was this idea that I was still part of a family that wasn't street. – Avery

In tandem with routing, we can understand the need to root themselves to the streets as a means of balancing their exploration, or routing through street and mainstream

places. By recognizing where street-involved youth anchor themselves to the street we come to understand what is important to them. Van Gelder (2008) states “exploration occurs only when it is rooted in safety” (p. 89). Once youth have anchored themselves, either to the streets or mainstream society, they are able to explore who they are and where they want to be.

Routing

Routing between the streets and mainstream society includes attending to place-based decision-making, fear-based mobility, orienting, and disengaging experiences that pull youth away from the streets. For street-involved youth, the struggle to emerge rarely follows a linear path. As depicted through the Mobius maze model, routing through the streets is a complex task. Routing is the strategy used in deciding where to go each day and how to get there. Routing is the pattern of routes the youth describe as well as how they make their way through the city.

I know the ways now to go to avoid running into the cops. I have a warrant so I need to stay out of their way. – Parker

I walk the long way around to get to SYC because I have to avoid walking past Sheps and that part of M----. I need to come here to eat, so I do, but I will not walk past that part of the street. I used to have a really bad coke problem and I was over there with them. – Sky

The cops are always harassing us so we can't go up B--- Street no more, so you know, now we just take the side streets or stay down around here and just watch out for them. – Jake



This is part of our regular routes. I probably walk up and down this street 50 times a day. It gets me where I need to go cuz it's close to where we fly a sign, eat breakfast, everywhere. – Sky

For some youth, their pattern of routing is dictated by fear and avoidance: Who do they *not* want to run into, what places do they *not* want to go to or be seen in, what paths are they *not* afraid to take? For other youth, their routing is directed by engagement and adaptation. They are enforcing their power, they want to be seen, they feel they have a right to be in certain places and they uphold that right, they choose the paths that provide them the least amount of resistance or the shortest distance to walk. The youth

are making place-based decisions as they plan their routes around the city. Three patterns of routing are manifested in the data.

1. Youth seek out what they need on their own.

This may be the category of the more service-resistant youth who exhibit a greater degree of independence. Examples of how youth seek out what they need on their own:

Not using the shelters. – Talib, Kinly, Zander, and Myles

I roam mostly on my own. It's safer that way, you always know what you are thinking and, really, you can't count on anyone else out here, no matter how much you think you can. – Kinly

I travel, just now from the Maritimes to here and I'll stick here a few days, then off again. I might head back to East this time, but maybe try out Winnipeg. I always manage to find what I need. Some cities you just got to look a little harder. – Zander

2. Youth find and/or follow their peers.

This may be the safest route to follow. While a number of youth-related risk incidents are recorded in the data, the majority of the youth describe how they were helped and guided by other street-involved youth (whether they knew them beforehand or not).

I brought Mel here today. I hooked her up with the schedules, you know, where you can eat and where to go. – Adam

I just came downtown to hang out with my friend. She's been living here for a while now and I just didn't leave. – Lee, former street-involved youth

3. Youth are found and/or directed by adults.

The data shows that this form of routing can have a positive or negative outcome depending on who the adult is and where or how they are associated. For example, youth speak of early encounters with street outreach workers who provide services, direct them to agencies, and provide accurate, trustworthy information.

Smith is pretty regular. He walks around most nights, has water, granola bars, socks, that stuff. He won't force you, but if you want, he'll walk you to the shelter. – Tami

I try to be one of the first they see. I know I'm the last person they want coming up to them, but I understand, I know that for many of them, the streets are better than where they were. I want them to run into me before they run into anyone who's out there to hurt them. – Officer Murphy

At the other end of the spectrum, there are incidents of youth being recruited by drug dealers and sex trade workers who seem to prey on their vulnerability and lack of knowledge.

I guess I just looked lost. I was sitting near the LRT [Light Rail Train station] hoping to make a bit of money, but really just wasting time because I did not know where to go. When Derek approached me he seemed so nice, knew exactly what I needed [food/money] and I guess I just looked like I didn't belong to anyone else.

He didn't look at all like what I expected a pimp to look like. – April, former street-involved youth

The dealers are everywhere. They know who's who, who's out looking for them, or avoiding them. They can also smell out the new kids. We try and find them first, but sometimes, we don't. – Carter

The paired strategies of anchoring and routing provide street-involved youth with a means of grounding and exploring the environments of the streets and mainstream society. Roger Hart (as cited in Van Gelder, 2008) noted that “children experience place both by being in the place and by manipulating the environment in a way that is pleasing to them” (p. 91). By anchoring and routing street-involved youth learn how to manipulate space and place for their benefit but also how to adapt to the needs of the environment.

Using (in)visibility

The need to be both visible and invisible is part of the tension inherent in living a street-involved life. Analysing the data revealed two sides to the strategy of using (in)visibility. Knowing when and where to be seen, or not seen, is a strategy used by the youth when seeking safety and as a means of emerging out of the streets. Closely tied to escaping, using both visibility and invisibility to one's advantage provide youth a way to stay under the radar. The strategy of playing with visibility was discussed by most of the youth participants in this study. In many of the conversations I had with the youth, they talked about how they use (in)visibility in their life:

- Hiding from peers, parents, drug dealers;

- Not drawing attention to oneself, trying to blend in and not stand out;
- Avoiding routes that will place them among street peers;
- Securing sleeping spots that are not so secluded as to be dangerous;
- Being present on the streets;
- Being seen to make money.

The youth often developed similar strategies to cope with the challenges of their pre-street homes so they could get through the day. They were playing with invisibility before they ever arrived on the streets.

I would hide out in my room. – Alexa

You had to stay real quiet when he came home drunk, and just hope he didn't come looking for you. – Zander

You know how they say kids should be seen and not heard? Well, in my house it was don't be seen, don't be heard. – Parker

I became really good at being a ghost. – Dani, former street-involved youth

Conversely, being visible is a necessary strategy often tied to provisioning. For example, in the interests of safety youth find sleeping spots that are out of the way but also provide some visibility. There is a balance in finding a sleeping spot that is safe, protected, and yet not too visible. The youth become familiar with the patterns of the security guards and know the best places to be out of their sight when they do their

rounds. The youth are keenly aware of how they fit in with society, how they experience their relationship to others, and how they believe others view them.



We wanted to take the picture of our sleeping spot, see the sleeping bag on the ground near the concrete wall? That helps make it invisible because security only opens the door and looks out here or walks around this side. But, look in the background. People pay hundreds of dollars in the Westin and they are right next to the guy sleeping on the ground. Quite a paradox, eh? – Anders and Sierra

As the fifth bifocal strategy, using (in)visibility most strongly reflects the youth's awareness of, and context within, their surroundings. Emerging out of street life requires a shift in their degree of visibility on the streets. Balancing a physical presence and visibility on the streets with the invisibility of blending back into mainstream society is part of negotiating duality.

Tipping the Balance

These five strategies illustrate how street-involved youth negotiate the tension of living a bifocal life. The more efficiently a strategy works toward achieving emergence for the youth, the less likely they are to use that strategy in seeking safety on the streets. As they gradually emerge out of street life, more and more of their strategies will pertain to living in mainstream society and away from the streets.

An “accumulation of experiences” was how Hazel described their process of working themselves off the streets. They heavily use their bifocal strategies, initially, toward seeking safety on the streets. As they begin to balance their focus between the present (street context) and the future (mainstream context), how they use the strategies shifts.

How long do you have to sleep under a bridge before your body forgets what a bed feels like? – Sky

So what breaks this pattern? Evidence from the data illuminates the value of street-involved youth maintaining their bifocal strategies but a rebalancing must occur for them to emerge.

Once they’ve accumulated enough bad experiences it’s like they reach their tipping point. Their body says “enough”, and their mind follows. – Hazel, outreach nurse.

There is no road map to “the streets”. You have to navigate by feel, groping around in the dark without a flashlight, only catching glimpses of light shining

through cracks to guide you. A lot of stumbling and bruises before you find the door out. – Sierra

Caught between meeting their need for safety in the context of the streets and a struggle to emerge back into a place within mainstream society, street-involved youth negotiate duality either intentionally or as a consequence of the conditions they are living in and between.

Summary

Negotiating daily survival with future emergence, the four stages of street life, and the five bifocal strategies are best viewed as a social process actively lived by street-involved youth. It is a bifocal process where youth balance between their ability to seek and find safety on the streets on the one hand, while simultaneously struggling to emerge fully back into mainstream society.

In summary, the youth in this study feel caught between two worlds. They shared a concern and ability to negotiate between this ever-present duality, with some ultimately making their way back to a singularly mainstream life. The youth had a strong sense of awareness of their own place in life and of how society perceived and placed them. This awareness was often used to their advantage as they manipulated people and services to fit their best interests. The process of being safe on the streets while struggling to leave them behind and regain a place in mainstream society is not a simple, linear path for any of the youth. Many of them refer to the process as moving through a maze with many dead ends and unforeseen obstacles. The theory of *negotiating duality* captures the active process of keeping oneself alive while on the streets and gradually emerging out of street

life. Street-involved youth become aware of the boundaries blocking access and inviting one into or off the streets, while balancing the immediate with the future.

Chapter 8 - Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

One's destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things.

– Henry Miller

This final chapter has three purposes: (a) to discuss the findings in relation to existing relevant literature on street-involved youth, (b) to indicate the contributions of the *negotiating duality* grounded theory to the literature, and (c) to present the implications of this study in terms of practice, policy, and future research. The chapter will end with the researcher's reflections and concluding remarks.

Support and Contributions to the Literature

A factor in determining the relevance of a grounded theory is to demonstrate its fit within the existing literature on the substantive area of study. In situating the theory within the broader knowledge base concerning street-involved youth, links can be made between the theory's core category and key social processes identified in current literature regarding this population of young people. Literature on street-involved youth provides confirmation for the key categories and social processes of the negotiating duality theoretical framework. This section will review selected literature pertaining to the core elements of this theory: negotiating duality, seeking safety, the struggle to emerge, and bifocal strategies.

The abundant research with street-involved youth has already identified and described many aspects of their lives. For example, studies have provided descriptions of various dimensions of street youths' lives such as drug abuse, sexuality, criminal involvement, mental health, and causes leading to street involvement (Hagan &

McCarthy, 1998; Kelly & Caputo, 2007; McCreary Centre, 2001, 2007; Slesnick, Bartle-Haring, Dashora, Kang, & Aukward, 2008). There have also been explorations during the past decade providing insight into how the youth make meaning of their street-involvement (Karabanow, 2006; Kidd, 2009; Mayers, 2001; Robinson, 2005), or offering rich descriptive narratives of their challenges and resilience (Bender et al., 2007; de Oliveira, 1997; Kidd & Evans, 2010). A number of categories evident in this study are reflected in the literature and some of these links will be discussed.

Notions of Space and Place

In Chapter Two, it was noted that few studies have focused on the spatiality of street life. The majority of the literature focuses on individual aspects of street-involved youths' lives, or on their lived experiences. There are pockets of the literature that take a spatial focus, in particular studies conducted by researchers with a geographical background (e.g., Gibson, 2007; Robinson, 2002a). Space and place do however show up in the broader literature, often as peripheral notions. This study adds to that literature focusing on space and place, and brings these notions to the forefront. A further result of this study is the conceptualization of the relationship between the streets and the broader society as a Mobius maze that street-involved youth negotiate. The imagery of the Mobius maze contributes a spatial orientation to the understanding of street-involved lives and illustrates the interconnectedness of the street milieu and mainstream society.

One way social sciences literature on street-involved youth introduces notions of space and place is through exploration of the trajectories and pathways youth follow on the streets and when returning to a non-street based life. There have been a number of

qualitative studies which examined street-involved youths' experience of entering and exiting the streets, with particular emphasis on critical incidents and important time periods within this journey when effective intervention may be achieved (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002; Conticini, 2008; Hyde, 2005; Karabanow, 2005; Lucchini, 1996; MacKnee & Mervyn, 2002; Yonge Street Mission [YSM], 2009). This study's theoretical framework proposes that the notion of *negotiating duality* is a key process of street life, and that it needs to be added as a central construct to our understanding of street-involved youth. A thorough literature review indicates that the process of *negotiating the duality* inherent in living between mainstream society and the streets is neither clearly identified nor elaborated upon as a central and fundamental process in the current literature. The theoretical framework presented in this study provides both a newly conceptualized core element and a coherent framework to aid in understanding the lives of street-involved youth.

At the same time, a number of elements of the framework are already identified in the current literature. It is well understood, for example, that street youth move onto, through, and off the streets, and this study's four-stage model from pre-immersion to emergence encompasses this process. This model complements current literature (Auerswald & Eyre, 2002; Karabanow, 2005; YSM, 2009) and also embeds the stages street-involved youth move through into an integrated framework which explains how youth negotiate their way from one stage to the next.

Research on street-involved youth has begun to move toward an understanding of street-involved youth's experience of spatiality and use of space and place. Prior studies have noted the importance of mapping marginal spaces used by these groups and

exploring the significance of how the youth understand and claim space (Gibson, 2007; Robinson, 2002b; Ruddick, 1996). This study's findings corroborate the work of previous researchers and the explanations captured by the visual data illustrate strong connections between street-involved youth and the spaces and places of their daily environments.

Bifocal Strategies

A key construct in the theoretical framework of this study is the notion of bifocal strategies (i.e., escaping, provisioning, anchoring, routing, and using (in)visibility) used by the youth to negotiate the temporal duality between seeking safety and struggling to emerge out of street life. There is a notion of bifocal perspective in the literature, though this term is not used. Researchers address the youths' sense of hope and desire to get off the streets, their confidence that living on the streets is not a long-term situation, and the challenges or barriers that stand in their way (Higgitt et al., 2003; Karabanow, 2003; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; McCay, 2009). These elements relate to the bifocal notion inherent in this study, but this research tends to reflect a future orientation rather than a bifocal perspective.

The negotiating duality framework aligns with the findings of the Yonge Street Mission (2009) and Martinez (2010) who found that youth are making intentional use of the places they occupy. The construct of negotiating dual space and place emphasizes the reality that youth are not passively occupying space on city streets but rather are making tactical decisions about where they choose to be. For some street-involved youth, place-making through resistance (Ruddick, 1996; Young, 2003) is one example of how street

youth acknowledge and mediate the power and structural dynamics in urban environments. Patterns evident in this study corroborate those of Fast, Shoveller, Shannon, and Kerr (2010) recognizing the youth employ strategies to ensure their survival on the streets. The findings of Fast et al. included spatial tactics such as avoidance, mobility, and carving out niches of safety within the drug-soaked milieu of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The *negotiating duality* framework also contributes the construct of dual logic to explain how the youth frame their awareness of rules of inclusion/exclusion, resistance, and contradictory social conventions. As we know from dos Santos' (2008) work, "street youth have a peculiar way of straddling legitimate and illegitimate worlds" (p. 71). They use legal and illegal means to subsist on the streets. The contradictions inherent in this reality are subsumed within the category of dual logic.

Street life abounds with contradictions and challenges. Street-involved youth describe contradictory beliefs and engage in strategies aimed at both addressing their current need for safety as well as setting the stage for their future emergence from the streets. Understanding street-involved youths' behaviour through consideration of the five bifocal strategies integrates the notions and processes already confirmed in the work of researchers including McCay (2009), Beazley (2003), and Mayers (2001). Researchers have identified single or complementary strategies and tactics used by street-involved youth, most often best understood as addressing immediate needs. The five bifocal strategies (escaping, provisioning, anchoring, routing, and using (in)visibility) address

current short-term needs of the youth, but may in addition simultaneously address long-term needs pertaining to the struggle to emerge from a street-involved life.

As McCay suggests, “it is important to recognize that many youth may hold both feelings of despair and hope simultaneously, although which perspective is at the foreground may vary depending on the immediate set of circumstances” (p. 5). The same can be said for the use of bifocal strategies. The outcome of the strategy depends on the current circumstance and need of the youth when employing a given tactic, such as escaping, routing, or using (in)visibility.

In brief, the *negotiating duality* framework highlights a number of key processes and constructs, many of which are identified in the existing literature, and integrates them into a coherent understanding and explanation of the lives of street-involved youth. Thus the contribution of this study is primarily the integrative framework itself, and the manner in which it demonstrates the interconnectedness of elements.

Health Enhancement in a Street Context

A growing subset of homelessness literature looks beyond the inherent risks of the streets and emphasizes strengths-based notions (for example Bender et al., 2007; Benoit et al., 2008; Panter-Brick, 2004). In recent years increasing attention has focused on exploring youths’ ability to cope on the streets and demonstrate resilience despite the high-risk nature of their lives (Kidd, 2003; Bender et al., 2007; Kidd & Davidson, 2007; Rew et al., 2001; Ungar, 2004a). It is possible to view both coping and resilience within the framework of *negotiating duality*. Through actively negotiating space and place,

identity, logic and normality, street-involved youth are exhibiting an ability to survive and, indeed, make use of high-risk, adverse situations.

Research into the resilience of at-risk youth in 11 countries by Ungar, Brown, Liebenberg, Cheung, and Levine (2008) revealed a pattern that illustrates the potential for health enhancement in high-risk situations and choices: “what looks like dysfunction to outsiders is often a child’s only solution when health resources are scarce” (p. 3). Patterns of behaviour have been identified as health-enhancing or risk-enhancing. The strategies and steps taken that work toward improved well-being and youths’ emergence from the streets can be understood as health-enhancing, whereas the strategies and actions that further entrench them on the streets or reinforce potentially dangerous health-compromising behaviours can be seen as risk-enhancing. Whether greater focus is placed on the risk-enhancing or health-enhancing strategies, youth are using these bifocal strategies to cope with high-risk living circumstances.

In the literature on street involvement, health-seeking behaviour most often refers to the initiative youths demonstrate in visiting health service professionals or hospitals. Seeking formal supports for physical or mental health needs is the primary indicator for health-seeking behaviour (see Barry et al., 2002; Ensign & Bell, 2004; Karabanow et al., 2007). This formal understanding is one health-seeking factor but taken alone it is limiting. Health seeking is more than attending to physical health needs and seeking out medical services. Broadening our understanding, we can see health seeking or health enhancement in the personal actions taken by the youth to promote wellness or recovery (Moorhead, Johnson, Maas, & Swanson, 2008).

Means for understanding health enhancement arose in this study. While not a central category of the framework, there was evidence of spatially-related health-enhancing behaviour in the lives of the youthful participants. Examples include: the incidents of place attachment, avoiding pathways and places that bring the youth into contact with people or things they want to remove from their life (i.e., drugs), escaping from the downtown section of the city and placing themselves in quieter neighbourhoods to relax and recharge, the intentional use of familiar locations as a means of ensuring personal safety, and creating places of privacy and intimacy. This study provides an alternative way to look at the streets and, consequently, to consider alternative ways to interact and intervene that may aid street-involved youth attempting to escape the streets.

It appears that there are potential developmental opportunities and therapeutic elements for the youth entangled with the risk and adverse conditions. Moreover, these elements are rarely studied or discussed in the literature and then, as noted below, usually only through the lens of resilience or capacity to succeed (Bender et al., 2007; Kidd, 2003; McCay, 2009; Ungar 2004a). In acknowledging, understanding, and explaining the developmental potential and health-enhancing opportunities that exist in a street environment, we may improve and strengthen these opportunities and thus help youth move through their street journey in a shorter period of time.

Extending our understanding of what constitutes a positive or therapeutic element on the streets challenges current discourse and may offer increased opportunity for intervention. Sampson and Gifford (2010) discovered places of opportunity, restoration, sociality, and safety all contribute to a young person's overall well-being. As evidenced

through this study, such places exist in the lives of street-involved youth. Robinson (2000) stresses the ability of youth to use and manipulate space to create places of comfort and stability amid the streets. Though not a study of street youth specifically, Masuda and Crabtree (2010) explored the inner city of East Vancouver and determined therapeutic value did exist amid the streets, “fostering the assertion of more locally meaningful and counter-hegemonic discourses about the inner city as a complex and often health promoting environment, rather than merely as a place of absolute risk and depravity as perceived by outside interveners” (p. 663). The findings of this grounded theory study and those of Ungar (2004a) and Gibson (2007) do not contradict the literature that emphasizes the high-risk nature of the streets, yet they do propose an alternative perspective that positive, health-enhancing opportunities nonetheless exist amid dangerous spaces .

Viewing the street environment from a perspective of enhancement lends sharp focus to the notion that there is therapeutic potential even in a street-involved life. What alternative discourses of the streets are these youth sharing with us? By shifting how we view the actions of street-involved youth, and recognizing their strategies and use of space as having health-enhancing qualities, we broaden our understanding and advance our ability to work more effectively with this group of young people.

Summary

While most of the elements of the *negotiating duality* framework can in some manner be identified in the current literature, the framework offers an integrated understanding of how the various elements can be understood as interrelated and

interconnected. It is suggested that the addition of this theoretical framework to the literature contributes a concise yet holistic understanding of the ecology of street-involved life.

Contributions to Methodology

In addition to the theoretical contributions discussed above, this research also offers methodological contributions. Two contributions will be described: first, the contribution of understanding that arose from the use of visual and spatial methods, and second, the value inherent in making transparent the struggle and decision to include auto-ethnographic data in a grounded theory study.

Further Understanding of Visual/Spatial Methods

The use of photographs and walking interviews facilitated an examination of the spaces and places of the youths' lives and an understanding of their relationship with these environments. The integration of these visual strategies moved the research into their environment rather than confining data collection to standard interview locations (e.g., the office or the counselling room at the drop-in). "Taking it to the streets" brought greater detail and richness to the data. On the walking interviews, youth stopped and shared stories connected to a given location. Youth not only answered interview questions, but led the direction of the interview by taking me on walks through their environments. The photographs brought a visual element to the study and many of the photographed locations illustrate places that hold deep meaning for the youth. Providing the youth with cameras gave the study a way to meet them on their own turf in a manner that was safe. Allowing an outsider into daily living spaces necessarily increases

vulnerability, but that barrier was lowered with the cameras. Data were captured but safety and privacy was maintained.

The incorporation of photographs into theory development also contributes to the grounded theory literature. Photo-elicitation and visual methods are most commonly used in ethnography, narrative, and participatory action studies (Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Dodman, 2003; Pink, 2008; Wang et al., 2000; Young & Barrett, 2001c). In a review of the grounded theory literature, the researcher was unable to find studies that developed a theory using photographic data. Some studies integrating visual data claimed to be informed by grounded theory, but no actual theory or theoretical framework resulted (Konecki, 2009; Suchar, 1997).

Grounded theorists frequently study social phenomena, and the social world is a visible world. Including visuals adds another layer of data to be compared and analyzed. In this study, the photographs were used as raw data and in photo-elicitation, via the walking interviews. As outlined in Chapter Four, the photographs were coded, first by the author and again based on the accompanying stories told by the youth when they viewed their photographs. The use of photographs supports theory development by allowing the researcher to visualize patterns and relationships in the data and in this instance, the inclusion of visual data played an important role in the evolution of the resulting theoretical framework. In the exploration of social phenomena, researchers are encouraged to ask themselves how a visual depiction of the participants' experience might add to the study data. This study offers one example of how theory can be developed with the assistance of visual data.

Further Understanding of Auto-ethnographic Data

This study contributes to the methodological discussion of incorporating auto-ethnographic data into qualitative studies. The choice of research topic and the passion with which I approached it stem directly from the experiences I had during my adolescence and early adulthood. It is not uncommon for researchers to explore areas of strong personal connection, yet it is common for them to leave their own data out of the study. As previously discussed, I decided to include my own experiences as data rather than take an alternative approach, to hide my history and not reveal my past street life. The issue was discussed during meetings with my supervisor and at times I questioned whether it would not be easier to consciously set “myself” apart from the data.

In grounded theory, memos afford the researcher the opportunity to work through their thoughts and analysis. In this study, memoing also provided me a place to work through my anxiety about the decision to include personal experience as another piece of data. In Chapter Four I described the struggle to place my own adolescent street experiences in the study, as well as my rationale for the decision to include both historical and current data, in the process exploring an important issue for researchers who contemplate work in areas of strong personal connection. Based on this study, I suggest that researchers should carefully consider whether to include personal experience as data, and that it is probably useful and important to be transparent about where such experience may impact the study.

Implications of the Study

A number of implications for practice, policy, and future research are suggested by the theoretical framework developed in this study and several will be presented here. However, the real test of the framework will be in its utility in generating ideas and strategies in the minds of practitioners and this will only be known over time, when this study is published and made available to a wider audience.

Street-involved Youth Work and Services

There appears to be considerable homogeneity of street youth services available from city to city throughout North America. Youth in this study reveal their frustration with the lack of services that meet their needs in a most beneficial way. The literature abounds with messages that street-involved youth are a heterogeneous population (Benoit et al., 2008; Hyde, 2005; McCreary Centre, 2007) yet the homogeneity of services offered does not reflect this. In any given North American city that provides services to street-involved youth, one is likely to find shelters, drop-in centres, and outreach programs. Innovation in service does exist, but needs to become more prevalent in light of the realities of street life explored in this research. Specifically, the youth and adult participants in this study expressed a need for increased peer-based services, agencies that accommodate youth and their pets, shelter programs that recognize the value of allowing couples to remain together, and drop-in programs that provide services into the late evening and early weekend hours, the most dangerous hours of the day. In addition to services aimed at current street-involved youth, implications are also prevalent for services aimed at youth emerging out of the streets. Such services would include

employment readiness and job search skills, housing, mental health and support services; and programs aimed at assisting youth in their transition out of the street context and into a settled position in mainstream society.

It is also suggested that this grounded theory framework can serve as a planning tool for agencies working with street-involved youth. A key component identified in the framework, the five bifocal strategies used by the youth, could be used as a means of assisting street-involved youth to increase their opportunities for social enterprise. It seems likely that building on strategies youth are already using, and strengthening their means of emergence, will assist in decreasing the amount of time they spend negotiating the temporal duality of seeking safety while struggling to emerge.

A further implication arising from this study is the identification of safe and risky spaces. As the photographic portion of this study demonstrated, street-involved youth perceive safe and vulnerable places differently than most adults. Professionals in the service fields tend to categorize through a mainstream filter that does not provide the same understanding and experience of space as the youths' street-based filters. Taking this into consideration, service providers and funding agencies are encouraged to seek out the street youth voice and use the youths' perspectives when designing and determining the location and layout of programs.

Policy and Societal Implications

Currently, street-involved youth services are on the periphery of social services (Gharabaghi & Stuart, 2010). The conceptualization of the streets and mainstream society as a Mobius maze, and the recognition that youth are negotiating dual space and

place while living a street-involved life, calls attention to the need for increased services from the mainstream that address street issues and accommodate the needs of street-involved youth. There is a current demarcation between services for street-involved youth, and services for non-street-involved youth. Enhancing the access and availability of street-involved youth to mainstream societal services may help them to increase their use of mainstream service providers and de-emphasize their reliance on street-based resources. From a policy perspective, consideration should be given to a reallocation of funding for current services that modifies programming to better address the realities identified in this study.

Current trends in public safety and policing across Canadian cities have seen an increase in anti-panhandling laws and a number of the youth and adult participants in this study referred to these laws. The enactment of such laws move street-involved youth further from the public view, in turn decreasing the availability of public space that they can access. As seen through the lens of negotiating dual logic and the strategy of using (in)visibility, youth respond to this restricted access by avoiding detection by the police and increasing their mobility, actions that further distance them from both the police and potential service outreach providers. Municipal policy-makers and police agencies are asked to consider the messages communicated by anti-panhandling bylaws and signage. As they attempt to decrease the presence of street-involved youth (and adults), these policies contribute to the invisibility of the homeless. However, such bylaws do not reduce the factors that contribute to panhandling and serve only to further marginalize and stigmatize the youth as well as possibly expose them to increased safety risk.

A related implication pertains to the policies of businesses that ban street-involved youth and the homeless from their premises. The findings of this study demonstrate that the practice of banning youth from businesses has detrimental effects on their well-being and sense of self. As illustrated in Chapters Six and Seven, youth can experience short-term or lifetime banishment from coffee shops, bookstores, and shopping malls. Such banning practices contribute to the youths' negative sense of self and further set them apart from the normality of mainstream society. What alternatives could be considered to replace the practice of banning youth from public places? It is suggested that increased dialogue involving business associations, policy-makers, and street-involved youth could lead to better understanding and more effective policies.

Finally, policy-makers are encouraged to establish awareness campaigns aimed at educating the public about the issues facing street-involved youth and working toward decreasing the stigma that attends this population. To be most effective, it is recommended that current or former street-involved youth be part of the process that creates such a campaign.

Limitations of This Study

While this study provides a valuable theoretical framework explaining how street-involved youth negotiate the duality of living a street-involved life, it is not without limitations. These include: (a) recruiting the majority of study participants through a single site; (b) limited data on the pre-street lives or family lives of the participants; (c) a focus on how adults perceive and respond to street-involved youth; and (d) potential shortcomings pertaining to the researcher's personal experience with street life.

The sample of youth in this study is not representative of all street-involved youth. This limitation, first discussed in Chapter Three, was due to a heavy reliance on the researcher partnering with a single youth-serving agency. Some youth were recruited through the researcher's presence in the community, as well as through respondent-driven means, but the majority of the participants are associated with the SYC agency. This reliance on a single site for recruitment may have limited the researcher's ability to attract service-resistant street-involved youth or those who do not feel welcome or comfortable at the SYC agency.

The data gathered, and the resulting grounded theory, primarily focus on the time spent living street-involved. This focus on the street-life time period necessarily limits an understanding of how the youth came to the streets in the first place. Minimal data was gathered pertaining to their pre-immersion lives or family circumstances. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the youth and some did discuss their connections to family and the lives they lived before immersing themselves in the streets. However, this was not a focal point during data collection. This study began with the premise that there are street-involved youth in North America and it was not the intention to explore why or how youth arrived on the street. Arising from this is an inability to understand the heterogeneous circumstances that lead youth to the streets and whether those pre-immersion conditions were factors in how they moved through the streets and ultimately negotiated the duality of living street-involved. This certainly limits the scope of the study.

A third limitation became evident near the completion of the study. Upon reflecting back over the written dissertation, it was noted that the thesis is slanted toward seeing street-involved youth through the eyes of adults. The study participants often spoke of how they felt adults in society viewed them or reacted to their presence and attempts at engagement. The theoretical framework and discussion address the stigma and dual identity youth negotiate in response to their interactions with adults. This study manifests an understanding of how the street-involved youth experience interactions with adults, and how adults see these youth, but might there have been added value in exploring how other youth view and respond to street-involved youth? This study is limited in its understanding of how non-street-involved adolescents view their street-involved peers.

Finally, this study is limited by circumstances pertaining to the researcher's life experience. I am aware of the ways my personal history on the streets has intersected with the research study. On the one hand, it has placed me in a first-person position to understand the experience of living street-involved. Without having lived this experience, I would not have pursued this doctoral study. I consider my personal and professional experience with the streets of value to this study. On the other hand, however, I recognize the potential shortcomings that past experience of the streets can cause. Collecting data, I was hearing the stories and experiences of the participants through the filter of former street-involvement. This required a conscientious focus on maintaining distance and clarifying my understanding of the data.

Memoing throughout the study provided an opportunity to capture researcher bias and assumptions. Two memos in particular illustrate the researcher's reflexivity of her position in the study.

October 25, 2008

Whereas other researchers may experience anxiety from entering an unfamiliar world and conducting a study with a population outside of their experience or comfort zone, my *anxiety* stems from the familiarity that I have with the subjects' and my own experience of street life. Glaser (2001) states that "there are several ways that personal predilections distort descriptions... Personal predilection variables simply emerge as variables in the theory and are put into relief by constant comparison and theoretical saturation" (p.151). Glaser continues, adding that in grounded theory there is no such thing as "personal experience as data. It is just another interview or observation to be compared..." (p. 151). I bring a different personal involvement with the material, much more so than a researcher who does not have a street history of their own. I need to be able to determine how my personal involvement with the material is potentially distorting the data.

November 1, 2008 – Maintaining Distance

Brianna is the first former street-involved youth interviewed for the study. Brianna is close to my age and her interview was about her past life as a street-involved youth. In many of her responses she was reminiscing and telling stories about what her life was like. It was a greater challenge to stay in the role of researcher in this interview. Many of the stories that she told reminded me of things that happened to me or similar circumstances.

I have not experienced this in the interviews with the current street-involved youth participants. I wonder if the difference is that they are describing their current life, their current experience and when I am with them I am focusing on my current position of researcher. Their stories do not elicit my own memories, but

with Brianna, she is far distanced from her past street life and her interview was focused on her past experiences. When she was talking about her past, I was much more conscious of the role I used to have and my past was at the forefront of my mind. This was the first circumstance where I recognized the struggle and need to maintain distance.

One way to address the potential blind spots that exist in this study was writing grounded theory memos and sharing them with my doctoral supervisor. There are potential shortcomings to this in the possibility of limiting the analysis of the data through the lens of my own experience.

Future Research

On the basis of the framework emerging from this study, future research is proposed in four areas:

1. Recognizing the study limitation associated with focusing on how adults view street-involved youth versus how other non-street youth might understand and respond to this group, I recommend future research to explore how youth in general view street-involved youth. A qualitative study exploring the perception and experience of non-street-involved youth toward the streets would increase our knowledge of whether the stigmatization of street-involved youth begins in adolescence or adulthood.
2. In 1996, Connolly and Ennew stated that “the western image of ‘the street child’ is a barrier to understanding the varied conditions in which children live and work on modern streets in different parts of the world” (p. 136). Fifteen years have passed and the limited images held by Western society continue to affect the lives of street-

- involved youth. Given the awareness street-involved youth have of society's perception of them, the stigma they face living a street-based life, and the behavioural outcomes stemming from that awareness which were found during this study (particularly negotiating dual identity), future research from a participatory action perspective is recommended. It became evident throughout this study that society and the perceptions of citizens play an important role in the lives of street-involved youth. This study echoes the literature that identifies stigma as a barrier to the well-being and development of street-involved youth. Accepting this premise, future research using participatory action methodologies can potentially help us to move beyond "knowing" to creating means of "undoing". Consistently, studies confirm the presence, and impact, of stigma on street-involved youth. We know it exists. What current research is not producing is a way to help eliminate this stigma from society's perceptions. Participatory action research with street-involved youth may be an approach that could begin to undo some of the damage caused by the stigma directed toward them.
3. Expanding beyond the street-involved youth population, a recommendation is made for a qualitative video and community mapping exploration of whether other adolescent populations experience similar challenges finding and using positive space and place. The incorporation of visual and spatial research methods may be useful strategies to enable other researchers to explore how adolescents experience and intentionally use space and place in their communities. For example, the techniques of community mapping, participatory video, and narrative/photographic storytelling could continue to expand our knowledge of the ecology of adolescent environments.

4. Finally, components of the framework could be studied in more depth, and perhaps from different methodological perspectives. This study produced a substantive theoretical framework explaining negotiating duality. Within the framework are constructs such as the bifocal strategies (escaping, provisioning, anchoring, routing, and using [in]visibility), and the four forms of duality (normality, identity, space and place, and logic). Each of these constructs could serve as a focus for future research, either with street-involved youth or with other populations of marginalized young people or adults. Other studies including Anglin (2002) have noted the importance of the youth's "sense of normality" and this concept appears worthy of further exploration, for example by examining a larger cross-section of youth in terms of the normality construct. Also in this study, street-involved youth outlined a process through which they struggle to integrate and assimilate "street normality" and "mainstream normality". Future research might usefully explore this process in greater depth, and perhaps examine how other populations of marginalized youth deal with their developing sense of normality.

Summary

Studies of street-involved youth have shifted from focusing primarily on risk and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Research into the street environment and the lives of street-involved youth will continue to elucidate the challenges and dangers associated with this life but the incorporation of a strengths-based or developmental perspective has increased knowledge about the agency, resilience, and abilities of this population. Practitioners working with street-involved youth already know much of what

is now coming forth in the research – these youth are stronger and more capable than many in society realize. They survive situations that many adults would struggle to comprehend, much less cope with. Service providers with a holistic view of the streets and street-involved youth see both the risks and the opportunities.

As a group, street-involved youth are incredibly perceptive. Studies, including this one, have shown they are aware of how society views them and often choose to compensate for this through their decisions and actions. They often know a lot about what they need to navigate and emerge from the streets. We need to accept the place street-involved youth have in our cities, to see them for who they are and where they are, and to recognize that we can begin to improve their lives by shifting, or eliminating, our stigmatization and stereotyping of them. This shift in perception will not solve the problems of street youth, but it may be a first step toward making the streets a safer place by more effectively addressing the drug abuse, violence, and involvement in the sex trade.

Some Reflections on Using Grounded Theory Method

Based on the experience of undertaking this study, it does indeed seem that grounded theory is best learned by doing (Glaser, 1998; Holton, 2007a; Schreiber, 2001). It is not a quick or straightforward route to a completed dissertation or research study, but it is a creative and satisfying one. Four suggestions are offered to students or researchers considering using classic grounded theory:

1. Find a mentor, whether through a supervisor, advisor, or involvement in a grounded theory group. There are many researchers who attempt to master and use the method without a mentor; this is definitely a challenging way to proceed and one that has left

- many studies incomplete or of questionable quality. Having the guidance and feedback from a mentor familiar with the intricacies of the method allows one to carry out the study with greater confidence and clarity of direction.
2. Complementary to the notion of mentorship is the value to be found in the camaraderie of fellow grounded theory students and mentors. Attending a grounded theory seminar led by Barney Glaser was a turning point in this study. Connecting with other doctoral candidates working on grounded theory studies, regardless of their discipline or location, decreases the sense of isolation that often accompanies solo doctoral studies.
 3. Make your theory development process transparent. One challenge I faced during the analysis and writing phase was in understanding *how* the theory emerged from the data. I believed in the method and was often reminded of Glaser's adage to "trust in emergence" but I struggled with what that looked like in practice. In this dissertation, I have presented the iterations my theory moved through from early analysis to completed framework. By increasing the transparency of the theory development process in this dissertation, it is hoped that future grounded theorists may experience less confusion and frustration when they realize their early conceptualizations need to be adapted, discarded, or expanded over time. From my experience, a final theoretical framework does not emerge in its entirety until well into the analytical process.
 4. Finally, be persistent. The resultant theory will make worthwhile all the days spent staring at and probing into pages of data, diagrams, and charts, wondering if anything

coherent is possible. Many published studies speak to being “informed by” grounded theory but acknowledge stopping at the pre-conceptual stages. These studies are written up as qualitative findings and theoretical pieces but fall short of completed grounded theories. There were moments when I questioned whether I could settle for, and be satisfied with, an “almost there” ending. Thankfully, sticking with it won out in the end.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, three key elements emanating from this substantive theory seem worth highlighting. First, *negotiating duality* suggests that street youth are not mere victims of circumstance. They are actively striving to achieve day-to-day safety while seeking a way through the maze of street life leading to emergence back into mainstream society. Duality is an ever-present tension in the lives of street-involved youth. As a constant in their life, it is something that we can work with rather than against in an effort to help them find their place and emerge fully from the streets. Second, this theory suggests that street-involved youth are not as far from *normal* as we may believe. In fact, they are continually finding their way through two normalities – street normal and mainstream normal. Third, the theory reinforced the notion that it is possible to view aspects of the streets from a health-enhancing perspective. It proposes that in shifting our perspective of what adds positive value to space, we come to see that even the most apparently inhospitable places can contribute to the well-being of youth who make it their home.

Finally, this study echoes Gibson's (2007) sentiment that society must help street-involved youth be secure where they are today in order to help them move forward into a better place tomorrow. Street-involved youth are already negotiating the duality inherent in living between spaces. To help them succeed, we must recognize and pay more attention to where they are and how their inhabitation of space and place influences their choices, actions, and well-being.

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Human Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

Principal Investigator: Stephanie Griffin, Ph.D. Student
Department/School: CHIL
Supervisor: Dr. Jim Anglin
Project Title: Beyond the Sidewalk: Developing a Theoretical Framework for Understanding Therapeutic Environments in the Lives of Street-Involved Youth.
Protocol No.: 08-188, Approval Date: 31-Jul-08, Start Date: 31-Jul-08, Expiry Date: 30-Jul-09
Certification: This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Extensions and/or amendments may be approved with the submission of a "Request for Annual Renewal or Modification" form.
Dr. Richard Keeler, Associate Vice-President, Research

08-188 Griffin, Stephanie

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Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Renewed Approval

<u>Principal Investigator</u> Stephanie Griffin Ph.D. Student <u>Co-Investigator(s):</u>	<u>Department/School</u> CHIL	<u>Supervisor</u> Dr. Jim Anglin	
<u>Project Title:</u> Beyond the Sidewalk: Developing a Theoretical Framework for Understanding Therapeutic Environments in the Lives of Street-Involved Youth.			
<u>Protocol No.</u> 08-188	<u>Original Approval Date</u> 31-Jul-08	<u>Renewed On</u> 30-Jun-09	<u>Must Renew By</u> 29-Jun-10

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Extensions and/or amendments may be approved with the submission of a Request for Annual Renewal or Modification form.

Dr. Richard Keeler
Associate Vice-President, Research

08-188
Griffin, Stephanie

Appendix B – Demographic Portrait of Participants

Demographic Portrait of Current Street-Involved Youth Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age (at first contact)	Means of Recruitment into Study	Type of Participation	Notes
Jake	Male	24	Through SYC	Interview Photographs and walking interview	In relationship with Sky Exited street during study
Evan	Male	24	Through SYC	Interview Photographs	dog Layla, relationship w/Alexa, returned home during study
Adam	Male	22	Through SYC	Interview	Dog Six
LJ	Male	23	Through SYC	Interview	In SYC work program, very political, rooming house
Jack	Male	24	Through SYC	Interview Photographs and walking interview	Always with Carter, jailed during study
Carter	Male	24	Through SYC	Interview Photographs	Always with Jack
Anders	Male	20	Through SYC	Interview Photographs	In relationship with Sierra, wants to live with sister
Jorge	Male	24	Through SYC	Interview	Has 5 year old son
Zander	Male	20	Through SYC	Interview	Travels with 2 cats
Bones	Male	17	During outreach	Interview	Dog Cactus
Aiden	Male	21	Through SYC	Photographs Informal conversations	Living in shelter, looking for employment
Harley	Male	23	Through SYC	Photographs Informal conversations	
Aaron	Male	22	Through SYC	Informal conversations	Dog Cuddles

Mathieu	Male	18	Through SYC	Photographs Informal conversations	CAS ward status
Gray	Male	23	Through SYC	Informal conversations	
James	Male	20	Respondent-driven	Informal conversations	
Albi	Male	23	Through SYC	Informal conversations	Relationship w/Avery, in SYC work program
Dax	Male	19	During outreach	Informal conversations	
Neem	Male	21	Respondent-driven	Photographs	Moved to Montreal
Alex	Male	18	Respondent-driven	Informal conversations	
Jarod	Male	21	During outreach	Informal conversations	
Luke	Male	20	Through SYC	Informal conversations	Pet rat Snickers
Kenny	Male	21	Respondent-driven	Informal conversations	
Tony	Male	17	Through SYC	Observation	
Ryan	Male	23	Through SYC	Observation	
Devon	Male	16	Through SYC	Observation	
Parker	Male	24	Through SYC	Informal conversations	Has son, just became housed
Myles	Male	16	Respondent-driven	Informal conversations	
Tolvy	Male	22	Respondent-driven	Observation	
Grim	Male	19	Through SYC	Informal conversations	
John	Male	19	During outreach	Informal conversations	
Malek	Male	22	Through SYC	Informal conversations	Kai's twin
Kai	Male	22	Through SYC	Informal conversations	Malek's twin
Talib	Male	20	During outreach	Informal conversations	Dog Fluke
Sky	Female	18	Through SYC	Interview Photographs and walking interview	In relationship with Jake, exited street during study
Sierra	Female	17	Through SYC	Interview Photographs and walking interview	In relationship with Anders, moved to residential drug treatment during study
Alexa	Female	19	Through SYC	Interview	Relationship w/Evan, returned to Evan's

					hometown
Shya	Female	16	During outreach	Interview	Does not like accessing services
Kinly	Female	20	Through SYC	Informal conversations	
Alexa	Female	19	Through SYC	Informal conversations	
Jocelyn	Female	23	During outreach	Informal conversations	
Avery	Female	22	Through SYC	Informal conversations	In relationship w/Albi
Prada	Female	18	Through SYC	Interview Photographs	In transitional housing, looking for job
Sab	Female	18	Respondent-driven	Informal conversations	In transitional housing
Lina	Female	20	Respondent-driven	Informal conversations	
Hailey	Female	21	Through SYC	Informal conversations	
Stripe	Female	19	Respondent-driven	Informal conversations	Pregnant
Erica	Female	22	During outreach	Informal conversations	
Jazz	Female	19	Respondent-driven	Informal conversations	Just had baby boy
Jenna	Female	18	Through SYC	Observation	Pregnant with second child
Trina	Female	17	Through SYC	Informal conversations	
Tami	Female	20	Through SYC	Informal conversations	Has infant daughter

Demographic Portrait of Former Street-Involved Youth Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age at First Contact	Means of Recruitment	Type of Participation	Notes
Brianna	Female	28	Referred through SYC	Interview	In university for social work
April	Female	26	Respondent-driven	Interview	
Dani	Female	37	Referred through mutual acquaintance	Interview	Has 17 yr. old daughter, works full time, single
Vince	Male	35	Referred through mutual acquaintance	Interview	On disability, not working, has 6 yr. old son
Lee	Female	36	Referred through mutual acquaintance	Interview	Married, 11 yr. old daughter and 4 yr. old son, owns a business
Eila	Female	36	Referred through mutual acquaintance	Interview	In grad school, has 11 yr. old daughter

Demographic Portrait of Adult/Service Provider Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Type of Participation	Position
Juanita	Female	Interview	Youth worker at SYC
Frannie	Female	Interview	Youth worker at SYC
Hazel	Female	Interview	City employee, Outreach Psych Nurse
Smith	Male	Interview/Outreach	Street outreach volunteer, formerly homeless and addict
Candace	Female	Interview	Executive Director of SYC
Margo	Female	Interview	Volunteer at SYC
Gayle	Female	Interview	Youth Shelter manager
Officer Murphy	Male	Walking interview	Police Officer

Appendix C – Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Street-involved Youth

Criteria

Are you between 16-25 years of age?

Do you identify yourself as being street-involved?

- living without family support
- non-attendance of a regular school program,
- the majority of their daily social and economic activity taking place in a street context.
- living arrangements will include shelters, on the street, couch-surfing, rooming houses, or have no steady or consistent sleeping accommodations beyond the street.

How long have you been actively involved in street life?

Review consent letter and have consent form signed.

Demographics

Pseudonym :

Month and year of birth

Gender:

Current living situation (i.e. family, shelter, couch-surfing, own place, outside):

Attending school?

Means of getting money?

Interview Guide

Interviews will be loosely structured by a few general questions.

1. Could you describe your current living situation?
2. Could you describe a typical day in your life? Where do you go, what would you do?
 - a. What variations might there be to this schedule knowing no two days are exactly alike.
 - b. Do you have different categories of places that you use each day? For example, places to hang out, to sleep, to make money, to have fun, for privacy, etc.

3. Can you tell me about places that are important to you?
 - a. Where do you feel safe? Where do you receive support? Where do you feel happiest? Where do you feel peace of mind? etc?
 - b. What spaces in your life right now would you say are “good” for you?
 - c. Can you tell me about spaces in your life right now would you say are “not good”?
 - d. What places or environments do you avoid? Where do you not like to be?
 - e. Where are you comfortable being? Uncomfortable? Why?
4. Who do you share space with? Who do you interact with each day?
5. Can you describe how you decide where to spend your time?
6. How do you feel about the term “street kid”? “street-involved youth”? Do you feel this label fits you? What would you call yourself?
7. What or where do you think of when I say “street kid spaces”?
8. How do you think society views you? Do you have any examples or stories that illustrate this?
9. What does being healthy mean to you? What does being healthy on the streets mean? What aspects of street life do you see as being positive for your health and sense of well-being?

Conclusion

Thank them for their participation

Outline what I will be doing next and potential of follow-up interviews

Appendix D - Interview Guide For Staff/Volunteers

Review consent letter and have consent form signed.

Demographics

Gender:

Staff or volunteer:

What agency are you associated with?

Interview Guide

Interviews will be loosely structured by a few general questions.

1. What or where do you think of when I say “street kid spaces”?
2. Where do you think street-involved youth in this city spend most of their time?
3. What challenges do you think face this population of youth?
4. Through your work with this population, what places or environments would you identify as healthy, positive, or good for them to frequent?
5. What about places or environments which they are frequenting do you believe are negative, dangerous, or unhealthy?
6. How do you believe street-involved youth go about claiming space, or making a place for themselves in the city?
7. Of the services available to street-involved youth in the city, what spaces or environments do you feel are lacking? Which services or spaces are well-represented?
8. Do you feel there are adequate “street kid” spaces? If not, what is missing?

Conclusion

Thank them for their participation

Outline what I will be doing next and potential of follow-up interviews