2008

Asset-Based Community Development: A Case Study

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Recommended Citation

Canada

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY

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Honours Psychology, Dalhousie University, 2006

THESIS

Submitted to the Department of Psychology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Master of Arts

Wilfrid Laurier University

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Abstract

This case describes an effort toward asset-based community development with an 'under-privileged' neighbourhood, including the responsive steps taken to deal with the realities and challenges of community change efforts. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including residents and external supports, this paper examines changes in community activity in association with their newly formed community centre. Through analysis of the community's challenges four 'enabling conditions' necessary for community development are identified including: balancing relationships with issues; effective 'citizen space'; maintenance of relationships and communication; and community readiness. These key lessons include ongoing considerations of patience, flexibility, and responsiveness that are necessary throughout the development of change efforts. Implications for informing community development work in similar communities are discussed.

Introduction

Traditional approaches to 'helping' communities, akin to the medical model, have historically had a deficiency orientation. These methods, designed to 'fix' community problems, were therefore driven by the needs of the community. The process and outcome of these traditional approaches focus on community weaknesses and inabilities, leaving images of numerous shortcomings as an unfortunate by-product that can be discouraging to community members (Beaulieu, 2002; Goldman & Schmalz, 2005). Further consequences of such assessment include communities' efforts to seek *outside* assistance to address their identified needs rather than looking to skills and agents for change *within* their communities (Goldman & Schmalz, 2005). While there are situations where some external resources may be required, the key to long-lasting resolutions comes from within the community (Rans & Green, 2005).

In reaction to these overly deficit-based approaches came an alternative capacity-focused practice. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) developed such an approach they termed *Asset-Based Community Development* (ABCD) on the belief that "every single person has capacities, abilities and gifts. Living a good life depends on whether those capacities can be used, abilities expressed, and gifts given." (Community Tool Box, 2001, np). With the asset-based approach, the core activity of attentive listening is used to identify community members' strengths, gifts, talents, skills, capabilities and interests (Goldman & Schmalz, 2005) that in turn become the basis behind the development of new community policies and activities. Furthermore, Goldman and Schmalz suggest when these assessments are combined with needs assessments they yield a better understanding of the community, and in doing so, better serve their residents.

The asset-based approach recognizes the capacity of individuals as the foundation for community building whereas traditional approaches, with their focus primarily on deficits, often neglect individual capacities and result in weaker communities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). With the active involvement of community members and recognition of their individual gifts comes a personal and collective investment on their part that can lead to sustainable second order (transformative) change. In contrast, when outside services make changes *to* a community as opposed to *with* them, the result is generally first order (ameliorative) change (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). The complement of capacity-based assessment to needs assessment can reveal missing assets that may improve community-wide well being (Goldman & Schmalz, 2005).

Finally, with a capacity-focused approach, empowerment and ownership lies within the control of individual community members, whereas waiting for outside support is often times futile and discouraging. Thus, the purpose should not be to 'help' community members, but rather to foster a different kind of community for all residents (Rans & Green, 2005). Practitioners of community change that uphold strategies of whole community organizing recognize the detrimental effects of inequality and power, and thus employ empowerment as a value orientation to guide community change efforts (Aigner, Raymond, & Schmidt, 2002; Zimmerman, 2000). With a focus on relationship building, community development that begins from within promotes citizen ownership for change by building capacity, and recognizing that residents need to be at the heart of the community engagement process. This ensures that the community drives the decision-making and remains in control of their existing resources, and resulting social capital (Tamarack, 2003).

What is a Community Asset?

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) suggest the key to community regeneration is to "locate all of the available local assets, to begin connecting them with one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness, and to begin harnessing those local institutions that are not yet available for local development purposes" (p. 6). They suggest that even the least fortunate of communities boasts a unique combination of resources upon which to build. In his 2001 Society for Applied Anthropology address (as cited in Hyland, 2005), John Kretzmann suggested the following alternative to deficiency-focused policies and strategies:

> Vital communities recognize and mobilize their own unique combination of five
>
> categories of community assets: the skills of local residents, the power of local
>
> voluntary associations, the resources of local institutions, their natural built
>
> physical resources, and their local economic power (p. 9).

Inclusion of all of these local assets encourages the community to try to solve their problems with internal solutions and resources (Goldman & Schmalz, 2005).

The process of mapping available skills, work experience, and natural resources can identify economic development opportunities and keep existing residents invested while drawing in new members, resulting in a less transient community (Green & Haines, 2002; Hyland, 2005). Moreover, this generates social capital; the concept that the consistent application of human resources such as skills, knowledge, reciprocity, norms, and values facilitate community interaction and productivity toward improved living conditions for the entire community (Hyland, 2005). Social capital, therefore, is a result of mobilized assets and a crucial component of community development (Putnam, 2000).

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) echo this idea in their own words: "significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort" (p. 5). Therefore the goal of identifying assets is to empower residents to recognize and make use of their abilities to build self-reliance and take control in the transformation of their community (Goldman & Schmalz, 2005). Aigner and colleagues (2002) suggest that when the focus is inside, rather than outside, it puts residents in control. Consequently, the development of the community is dependent upon, and a direct result of, the power of the people.

Project Overview

The concept of community is used in many different ways, but for the purposes of this research we referred to Mattessich, Monsey, and Roy (1997) who suggest community is defined as "people who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live" (p. 56). For this research, the community of interest included the residents of Paulander Drive, a neighbourhood that includes a mix of social, non-profit (co-op) and privately-owned, ground-level apartment units and townhouses, with a population of approximately 1,500 residents (see Appendix A for map of Paulander Dr.). This includes approximately 150 Ontario Housing units operated by Waterloo Region Housing (WRH). The Paulander community, located in the Victoria Hills ward of West Kitchener within the greater Waterloo Region, is a highly transient, densely populated community with a high concentration of subsidized housing, and higher than average rates of immigration, unemployment, single parenthood, and family and child poverty. According to the report, "A Community Fit for Children - A Focus on Young Children in Waterloo Region",

Paulander Drive has been identified as an area 'not doing as well' on the report indicators and overall falls into the bottom third of communities in Waterloo Region (Hoy & Ikaulko, 2005). This community has recently seen an increase in: new immigrant families; single parent families; addictions and mental health issues; criminal activity; and escalation of violence and property damage (M. Janzen, personal communication, March 3, 2007). The population of Paulander Drive includes a diverse mix of people with different capacity levels and a wide range of interests, skills and abilities. There is, however, potential to facilitate the growth of a strong community within their density and diversity by considering Paulander with a capacity-focused perspective.

Given this brief background on the Paulander community and capacity-focused practices, the research had two main objectives. First, the research sought to facilitate an asset-mapping project with the Paulander community and answer the first of four questions: 1) What neighbourhood assets are identified and what does Paulander plan to do with them? Second, the research aimed to document the strengths and weaknesses of Paulander's resident-driven process in the asset-mapping initiative. By facilitating and documenting the engagement and co-operation of the community, this research aimed to address the remaining questions: 2) What are the conditions and processes that facilitate or constrain the mapping of assets in the Paulander community?; 3) What impact does the role of the principle researcher have in the process?; and 4) How does the process promote community building and change? The research project, therefore aimed to facilitate the *outcome* of the production of an asset map, while simultaneously documenting the *process* the Paulander community undertook.

With a goal of mapping the assets of the Paulander community, and a responsive research approach, the project encountered a number of challenges not atypical of hands-on community work. These challenges and the subsequent changes in our responsive research approach are detailed in the current context section of the research approach chapter. Through an asset-based approach the case study of Paulander's experiences offers key insights and lessons for the Paulander community's development efforts as well as some general contributions to the ABCD field.

Epistemology and Standpoint

I believe that knowledge is created in the world around you, and that one is only aware and knowledgeable of what one is exposed to, whether that is through lived experience, media, books, or other forms of education. The relativistic viewpoint asserts that the human mind needs to categorize the world for understanding (Smith & Deemer, 2000), and as such, people fill in their gaps of knowledge with stereotypes in attempts to fulfill this need. Despite the objective facts to be discovered, and regardless of whether a universal Truth actually exists, human categorization is a construction that is not value-free (Code, 1991), and is bounded by time, experience, role, and culture (Hazel, 2004). Accordingly, the constructivist paradigm suggests that there are no universal laws; rather multiple realities are constructed by the stakeholders in the research and reality is relative to these constructions (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). It is the researcher's responsibility, therefore, to explore and critically analyze why she constructs the world the way she does. According to Smith and Deemer,

> The issue of who is making judgments, about what inquiries, for what purposes, and with whom one shares these judgments is of critical importance. As

individuals we must make judgments, and as members of social groups, however loosely organized, we must be witness to situations in which our individual judgments are played out with the judgments of other individuals. (p. 887)

This reflexivity is characteristic of the critical paradigm, examining the societal structures, and power relations that contribute to the construction of knowledge (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006). Therefore, I will engage in critical subjectivity in which I question my assumptions, conclusions, and categorizations that have formed throughout my life history and demographics as an educated, Caucasian, spiritual, healthy, able-bodied, heterosexual, married, middle-class Canadian-born woman raised in rural southwestern Ontario.

Growing up in a middle-class family in a small village I had many advantages, including a strong family network, opportunities for organized recreation, access to resources, and shelter from multiple risk factors. This shelter, although an advantage, fostered a naïve viewpoint of the world – one that was unconsciously accepted and not critically considered until much later in life. I was encouraged by my parents to always 'consider both sides of the story', which cultivated my appreciation of alternative perspectives and would be the basis of my beliefs on subjective truths. However, growing up in a small southwestern Ontario village with a population of 274 (my father and I listed each one of them by name), the 'alternative perspectives' that I was taught to consider were never coming from a position very far from my own. We were surrounded by people that I perceived to be of the same race, culture, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, and were following the same traditional gender roles and expectations of the previous generation. I did not think to question the world outside of my own.

As children growing up, my sister, brother and I never really wanted for anything. Looking back, I realize how unaware I was of my advantage, but at the same time, I was ignorant to the advantage of others over us as well. My naivety was grounded in my core belief that all people are created equal and all people deserve equal opportunity. It was not until my teenage years that I was exposed to more obvious examples of abuse of power and denial of rights that I began to think critically about my social environment.

Assumptions and Critical Considerations

Given my knowledge of, and interaction with, the Paulander community I had made some assumptions that influenced my research topic and gave those assumptions critical consideration prior to conducting my research. Most importantly, I recognized my assumption that the residents in the Paulander community would be interested in identifying and mobilizing their assets for community development, which I acknowledged may be challenging given that disenfranchised individuals or communities may be uncomfortable doing so. Secondly, the research was based on the assumptions that I would be able to engage members of the leadership team and other interested residents to work to form an asset-mapping team (AMT), and that we would be able to engender trust in participants such that they would be comfortable sharing their assets. Kirby and colleagues (2006) argue, "reflexivity requires that we embrace our subjectivity and actively identify its impact on the research process" (p. 20). Therefore, being aware of my standpoint, my biases and my assumptions I could continuously reflect on my role and the processes that the Paulander community experienced throughout the course of our research.

Due to the ubiquitous nature of power relationships in human dynamics, power imbalances are often considered normative. This research, although based in the constructivist paradigm, borrowed elements of the critical paradigm as well. Given that "power issues are central for all research originating from a critical paradigm" (Kirby et al., 2006, p. 14), the focus of empowerment and capacity building in this study was intended to be mindful to amplify the voices of oppressed individuals and groups in the community. Therefore, this research, with a basis in the constructivist paradigm, and elements from the critical paradigm, was designed to consider societal structures and power relations in the creation of knowledge and how they influence participation, action, and reflection in the Paulander community. Consequently, as a constructivist inquirer with a critical theory influence, I focused on subjective social knowledge and the residents' active construction and co-creation of such knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Although I have little experience with under-privileged communities (other than Paulander) I do have years of experience identifying and mobilizing the strengths in people. With this asset, and my efforts to engender a deeper trust and respect between community members and myself, I hoped to stimulate an excitement about ABCD and ultimately contribute to a stronger, healthier, more self-reliant community in Paulander.

Overview

The following literature review presents a framework designed to guide the documentation of the process and outcome of the asset-based research project with the Paulander community. Given the constructivist paradigm and participatory nature of the research, the project remained responsive to changes within both the community and

context. As such, the literature review provides an explanation of the theory behind asset-based community research (ABCR), and some empirical research that helped to inform both the proposed and responsive research approaches. I share the background literature in ABCR including the fundamental principles and key concepts behind this work. From there, I touch on some empirical findings and the implementation of ABCD. Finally, I communicate the research approach of both the proposed project and its eventual modifications including methods, findings and analysis, discussion, as well as implications for research and action.

Literature Review

Theory Base for Asset-Based Community Research

The theoretical basis for asset-based community research (ABCR) encompasses a web of interconnected, interdependent theories and concepts. This is not surprising given its relationship-driven nature. Not unlike the reciprocal, responsive, and dynamic characteristics of healthy relationships, ABCR gives careful consideration to a number of fundamental principles and key concepts vital in building caring, prosperous and healthy communities. To that end, ABCR is consistently interwoven with the principles of community development, whole community organizing, and community engagement, as well as the concepts of power, empowerment, capacity building, and social capital. A brief explanation of each of these is provided to clarify their individual importance while reinforcing their interdependent nature.

Community Development

Given the multidisciplinary nature of community development, it is not surprising that there are numerous definitions. However, Bhattacharyya (2004) describes most of these as vague, and often circular, revealing a historical reluctance to explicitly define the concept. Denise and Harris (1990) provide some clarification in their acknowledgment that "definitions of community development are not clear-cut; how one interprets community development affects one's orientation when initiating a development program" (p. 7). Mattessich and colleagues (1997) further refine this account explaining that:

> Community development definitions share the common elements of a process of
>
> bringing people together to achieve a common goal, usually related to changing the

quality of life. Some definitions involve the process of building networks and improving the capacity of individuals and organizations (p. 57).

Hustedde and Ganowicz (2002) identify three critical features to community development practice: structure, power, and shared meaning. Structure includes the community's social practices and groups/organizations; power refers to the community's connections with those who have greater access and/or control of resources; and shared meaning encompasses the social meaning the community applies to physical space, physical things, behaviours, actions, and events (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002). Communities and social change are both dynamic and complex; therefore, when fostering a new kind of community, steps must be taken to cater to the specific community and development must occur with respect to their cultural context. This reinforces Green and Haines' (2002) point that the *process* of community development is as crucial as the outcome. For example, concerns in relation to power are fundamental to citizen engagement, horizontal ties, and building community capacity. Hustedde and Ganowicz point out that power differences are an inherent part of community life and therefore must be considered throughout the dynamic process of community development.

Key Theoretical Concepts

The following section details four interwoven theoretical concepts that are fundamental to capacity-focused community development. Its aim is to demonstrate the connection between asset-based community development (ABCD) and the concepts of power, empowerment, capacity building and social capital.

Power and Empowerment. Speer and Hughey (1995) conceptualize empowerment as a manifestation of social power at the level of the individual, organization, and

community. Empowerment is considered a *process*, defined as: "the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives" (Rappaport, 1984, p. 3) as well as an *outcome* of the social power of people (Alinsky, 1971). These general definitions suggest empowerment can occur at multiple levels. Although there is a reciprocal relationship between the development of individual and collective empowerment (Speer & Hughey, 1995), it is important to note that community empowerment is not merely the aggregate of empowered individuals, but rather a unique process where individuals work together to achieve group goals and gain community control (Zimmerman, 2000).

Zimmerman (2000) details empowerment as a value orientation, based on goals and strategies of change that guides work within a community, as well as a theoretical framework from which practitioners organize their knowledge. In line with the value orientation of empowerment, the ABCD approach operates from the standpoint that many social problems are a result of unequal distribution of resources. Furthermore, these social problems should not be addressed by merely ameliorating the negatives, but by searching for, and enhancing, the positive aspects within the situation (Zimmerman, 2000). For example, mapping assets instead of logging risks, building and strengthening relationships instead of providing service, and encouraging and enhancing dreams instead of fixing problems are characteristic of the empowerment values associated with ABCD.

Speer and Hughey (1995) identify the strength of interpersonal relationships as the foundation of social power and empowerment. Specifically, they found that "relationships based on shared values and emotional ties between individuals produce bonds that are more meaningful and sustainable than relationships based on rational or

emotional reactions to community issues alone" (p. 733). This corresponds with others'

views of the interdependent nature of empowerment including the personal, interactional

and behavioural characteristics (Saegert & Winkel, 1996; Zimmerman, 2000). Individual

and community empowerment, which result in the self- and collective efficacy to engage

in social action, are achieved through changes in behaviour, cognition, motivation, and

commitment (Wallerstein, 1992). Moreover, community empowerment requires a

number of characteristics including a belief system based on the strengths of the group, a

network of peer social support, and active involvement and participation in the

community (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001). A number of additional factors

enhance community empowerment, including community capacity building.

Community Capacity Building. Frequently intertwined with community

empowerment is the concept of community capacity, which is simply defined as "the

capacity of people in communities to participate in actions based on community interest,

both as individuals and through groups, organizations and networks" (Williams, 2004, p.

730). Saegert and Winkel's (1996) belief that communities hold valuable sources of

strength within themselves aligns perfectly with Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) idea

that healthy communities are simply places where local capacities are recognized,

respected and used. Not surprisingly, an active resident base has been identified as a key

principle in building healthy communities (Foster-Fishman, Fitzgerald, Brandell, Nowell,

Chavis, and VanEgeren, 2006). Furthermore, Chaskin's (1999) more detailed definition

asserts, "community capacity is the interaction of human, organizational, and social

capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective

problems and improve or maintain the well being of a given community" (p. 4). This

reinforces that through capacity, comes action. According to Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2006), community readiness, or capacity for mobilization is a dynamic process that comes when residents "believe change is possible, recognize their part in creating change, and believe that programs support their dreams and visions" (p.145).

Unfortunately, despite good intentions, many external service programs generate labels for people, and doing so, build walls that disconnect those most in need of community life (Rans & Green, 2005). While top-down social planning may lead to change *in* the community, it often fails to build the capacity *of* the local community (Aigner et al., 2002). Rans and Green argue, "when people are kept behind the walls of service, perceptions or mobility, they become invisible to their neighbours…strangers in the midst of community" (p. 1). Unlike that of external service providers, the focus of ABCD is to build capacity through encouraging and educating others to generate their own goals and dreams (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002) while breaking down the physical and perceived walls built by external service (Rans & Green, 2005). Additionally, community developers can provide opportunity for *all* members to learn new skills and information as well as reflect on their actions. This process develops agency, "building the capacity to understand, to create and act, and to reflect" (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002, p. 3). Strategies such as these provide an environment for community members to participate in decision-making, share responsibility and leadership, and gain control over their lives (Zimmerman, 2000).

Social Capital. According to Mattessich and colleagues (1997), social capital quite simply, "refers to the resources such as skills, knowledge, reciprocity, and norms and values that make it easier for people to work together" (p. 62). Therefore, it is a

concept inherent in the work of community development, a feature of the definition of community capacity, and a product of the identification and mobilization of individual, organizational, and community assets. Furthermore, Putnam (2000) identifies the attitude of generalized reciprocity as the hallmark of social capital. Generalized reciprocity is the idea that I would do something for you expecting nothing specific from you in return but confident that I will receive payback from someone else in the future. In this sense, Putnam suggests "a society characterized by generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter" (p. 15). This being said, there is no social capital without relationships.

Ultimately, the interdependent nature of the concepts of power, empowerment, capacity building, and social capital assert that one cannot be addressed without acknowledging the others. They are all necessary components of the processes and outcomes of an internally-focused approach to community development and reinforce Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) position that development must start from within the community.

Related Fundamental Principles

Relationship-driven, Whole Community Organizing. While it is important to realize that all communities are composed first of individuals, ABCD involves more than merely taking inventory of individuals' gifts; it is about discovering ways to generate connections between gifted individuals (Rans & Green, 2005). Assuming that everyone has a stake in her or his own community, this process is richest with the inclusion of the voices, gifts and talents of *all* community members (Aigner et al., 2002; Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996, 2005; Rans & Green, 2005). Tamarack

(2003) suggests that multisectoral collaboration can lead to newly energized, creative communities and cultivate new relationships and networking. The whole community organizing strives to be inclusive in an approach that fosters positive relations among individuals and groups while strengthening the norms, resources, and problem-solving capacity of the community (Weil, 1996). Furthermore, Speer and Hughey (1995) report that relationship-focused community organizing is more likely sustained than deficit-focused organizing. When residents come together around a specific problem the groups are more likely to fall apart once the problem is addressed, whereas relationship-driven groups can benefit from the enduring nature of mutual relationships.

These horizontal relationships between neighbours as equal partners, the forces that connect community members, are unfortunately much less prominent in today's society than vertical relations with external, higher level forces (Newbrough, 1995). According to interpersonal behaviour theory, the strengthening of horizontal relations generates a better balance between support and power. Research indicates that social ties correspond with friendly behaviour among individuals, and less perceived powerlessness (Geis & Ross, 1998), whereas power is associated with dominant individual behaviour (Orford, 1992). For this reason Aigner and colleagues (2002) advocate whole community organizing which is characterized by the development of a *shared* vision of community change that includes the marginalized, not just the local leaders or elites who are typically responsible for the planning efforts. Wilkinson (1991) furthers this argument suggesting that the elemental bond of community is shared between neighbours that interact on matters of common interest. Moreover, research indicates that when a community forms more horizontal connections, it leads to additional networking and, in turn, potential

access to more outside resources (Aigner et al., 2002). It is important to keep in mind, of course, that social change is a *process*, rather than an end *product* (Rappaport, 1981).

The horizontal relations essential for a shared vision and fundamental bond can bring to light the realization that individual problems often have social causes and, more importantly, collective solutions (Bandura, 1982). Furthermore, connecting individuals who have formerly been on the margins through their shared interests and mutual goals can form associations and build new, enduring, multi-faceted relationships (Rans & Green, 2005). A literature review of 'neighbourhood effects' by Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley (2002) indicates the individual and community level benefits of social processes in less advantaged neighbourhoods include positive social interaction, increased feelings of safety, as well as collective efficacy and resources. Moreover, Pecukonis and Wenocur (1994) contend that the "efficacy embraced by the collective provides a unique structural arrangement that allows individuals with common needs to combine and maximize their efforts toward a common end" (p. 41).

Community Engagement. Community engagement can be defined as "people working collaboratively, through inspired action and learning, to create and realize bold visions for their common future" (Tamarack, 2003, p. 9). It exists on a continuum from passive approaches, which inform and consult with citizens, to more proactive approaches in which residents are given control of decision-making processes and actively participate in action plans to address their desires or concerns. Tamarack (2003) advocates for proactive engagement, including a diverse, multisectoral stakeholder group that is empowered to take on independent initiatives.

When individuals are involved in their community there is a direct influence on their interpersonal relationships including a sense of identification with the community that protects against feelings of isolation or anonymity (Wandersman & Florin, 2000). According to Brint (2001), with social relationships come: "a sense of familiarity and safety, mutual concern and support, continuous loyalties, even the possibility of being appreciated for one's full personality and contribution to group life rather than for narrower aspects of rank and achievement" (p. 2). Aigner and colleagues (2002) acknowledge what they call "critical modifiers of community" (p. 86). Informal, face-to-face social interactions are identified as one such critical modifier, supporting Williams' (2004) findings that these informal connections can shape not only communal relationships, but the identity of such communities.

It is imperative that efforts toward social change communicate with a broad-based representation of the *individuals* who combine to form the communities of interest. Recognizing that a significant portion of any community is moved to the margins due to disconnecting labels (Rans & Green, 2005) and that these people are more likely to have an informal participatory culture (Williams, 2005), Williams (2004) advocates more consideration be given to fostering informal community participation. With the whole community organizing approach to ABCD, special efforts must be made to appropriately engage the marginalized members of community and develop new relationships.

While it is a natural assumption to believe community members will get involved due to the importance of the issue, or its direct effects on them, that is not often the reason behind public participation. Green and Haines (2002) list two main reasons people become involved in their community: 1) social relationships, whether it be to meet new

people, or to join a friend or neighbour on a project; and 2) the specific activity and/or opportunity being offered. They also touch on constraints that limit involvement including lack of childcare, transportation, accessibility, and advance information. Although time is most frequently given as the reason community members do not participate, this is rarely the real issue (Green & Haines, 2002). Community developers should be aware of, and work to decrease, the common constraints to community involvement in order to engage as many community members as possible.

Another key component to successful community engagement is that members can see a direct, tangible benefit from their participation (Foster-Fishman et al., 2006; Green & Haines, 2002; Hausman, Becker & Brawer, 2005; Weick, 1984). Research demonstrates that when individuals experience a 'return' on their investment of time and resources, community initiatives are more likely to be successful and sustained (Hausman et al., 2005). This reinforces Weick's (1984) theory that working toward small wins is a more feasible way to engage community members and tap into their existing assets. Weick believes that as the magnitude of the problem increases, so do the residents' levels of arousal, frustration, and feelings of helplessness. Foster-Fishman and her colleagues applied Weick's theory and found that starting with smaller problems allowed for visible solutions and demonstrated to the community that resident-led change was possible. In addition, with the visible, incremental change came a snowballing effect into more projects and residents' increased interest, confidence, and most importantly, sense of possibility (Foster-Fishman et al., 2006).

Asset-based community development looks to the talents and gifts of individuals, the capacities of citizens' organizations and groups, the assets of local institutions, and

the resources of physical space in the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Rans and Green (2005) advocate that each and every community has gifted individuals and groups that can (and should be) supported by numerous local institutions: "parks, schools, libraries, churches, businesses – all have a role to play…as property owners, gathering centers, economic entities and incubators for community leadership" (p. 3). Without community engagement, however, none of these assets are accessible.

Critical Review of ABCR Theory

This section offers a critical review of some of the principles and key concepts of ABCR theory by problematizing their conceptualization and practice as they relate to the ABCD framework. While the basis of the ABCD approach offers many strengths there are some common assumptions and limitations that should briefly be addressed and not just blindly accepted. The assumptions addressed include: the geographical community as a unit of identity; the homogeneous nature of the concerns of the under-privileged; and the fact that residents *want* to contribute and possess the necessary resources to do so. In addition, a critical dialogue is presented around social capital and systemic influences on distribution of resources, as well as some of the binaries suggested in the ABCD literature.

First of all, one assumption inherent in community development work is that people in a given community have psychological ties with the geographical area in which they live (see Mattessich et al., 1997). Craig (2007) argues that viewing 'community' strictly as a geographical entity does not adequately or realistically address the diversity or connections within spatially defined communities. It is important to recognize that many people, particularly in areas deemed 'in need' of community development, are

already marginalized and may not feel connected to their locality for any number of reasons. Moreover, they may have a negative psychological tie to their community if they feel it exacerbates a marginality they are desperately trying to be free from.

Another assumption in community development work is that under-privileged people in a given context share common adversities, difficulties, and interests (Mason & Beard, 2008). For example, Speer and Hughey (1995) demonstrate how relationships based on 'shared values' and 'emotional ties' produce more meaningful, sustainable bonds. It is important to consider that a community full of diversity, including differences in age, gender, ability, sexuality, race, religion, fluency of spoken English, employment status, immigration/citizenship status, country of origin, cultural background, etc., will face countless challenges in finding these 'shared values' and 'emotional ties'. These same differences, and the consequent power differences within the community, provide a further challenge to achieving the strong horizontal ties many researchers advocate. While the theory of strong horizontal ties producing stronger communities is prevalent in the literature, the ease of accomplishing such a task amidst so many power differentials is not.

Furthermore, Mason and Beard (2008) suggest that 'people-centered approaches' used with disadvantaged populations often imply that the people want to contribute to the effort, and possess the capacities and resources to alleviate their hardships. In order to truly support the interest of a specific community, ABCD must not only identify and listen to the local 'voices', but in that, maintain the ability to be critical of established policy and political concerns (Craig, 2007). Accordingly, Craig's primary critique of community capacity building is based in his belief that the "problem lies not with the

communities but with the institutions, structures and processes which affect them" (p.352) and therefore, community development should pay less attention to communities identified as 'deficient' in their capacity, and focus more on the capacity of institutions to overcome inherent barriers to community engagement.

These critiques of political concerns and barriers to community engagement extend beyond the community itself to more systemic issues. Wakefield and Poland (2004) criticize the literature that focuses on social capital, relationships and shared values in isolation from economic and political structures. They argue that these same connections and desired cohesion are "contingent on, and structured by, access to material resources" (p. 2819) and as such the literature needs to address the fundamental inequities in access to these resources. While the ABCD approach does recognize the unequal distribution of resources, it could do more to emphasize social justice, and encourage the examination and challenging of current social systems (Rose, 2000).

While Speer and Hughey (1995) recognize the strength of interpersonal relationships as the underpinning of social power and empowerment, Wakefield and Poland (2004) highlight the need to "problematize the taken-for-granted assumption that more is better when it comes to the strength of social ties in local communities" (p. 2824). Likewise, the concept of social capital has been the subject of much critical dialogue. For example, Mathie and Cunningham (2003) identify social capital as a *latent* asset, suggesting that individuals can not only increase it, but can just as easily deplete it depending on their stance in the reciprocal exchange of social support. As such, the authors recommend its presence not be taken for granted and share how studies have shown under extreme conditions, households have been pushed beyond the limit of

sustaining reciprocity networks and eventually levels of violence increased, community activity decreased, people became isolated, and social capital eroded beyond its initial levels. Similarly, Wakefield and Poland take a critical view of the process of building social capital suggesting that it is exclusionary by nature; the formation of shared values, norms, and group identity inescapably excludes people with differing norms and identities. Therefore, while the strengthening of social capital and forming of bounded, internally cohesive groups can build member well-being (Putnam, 2000) and contribute to collective action (Mattessich et al., 1997), it inherently separates members from others outside the group. As such, researchers must recognize that while social capital can contribute to community development it could also reinforce existing inequalities (Mason & Beard, 2008).

A further critique of the ABCD literature is the suggestion of numerous binaries: inside versus outside the community; mapping assets versus logging risks; building relationships versus providing service; and encouraging dreams versus fixing problems. Critical reflection on the problematic nature of some of the assumptions underpinning key principles and concepts of the ABCD approach indicates more of a balance should be considered. Specifically, the issue with such binaries is that they often minimize, individualize, or localize the problem while neglecting the influence of larger, systematic or structural factors. For example, Goldman and Schmalz (2005) identify the goals of ABCD including finding solutions from within, specifically, empowering residents to recognize and make use of their abilities to build 'self-reliance' and to 'take control' in the transformation of their community. The idea of self-reliance, while empowering, completely individualizes the issue and neglects systemic concerns of power imbalances

that may impede the building of self-reliance. Without the strict binary of inside versus outside, the more systematic nature of interaction and interdependence could assist in the building of self-reliance. This example demonstrates the benefit of some balance within the binaries.

Summary of Theory Base for ABCR

All of the key concepts and principles inherent to ABCD reveal their interdependent nature in the literature. Although the ideas of engagement, community development, capacity building, social capital, whole community organizing, and empowerment appear to overlap, and are sometimes even used interchangeably, what is most important is that they all share some common elements. Specifically, all of these concepts linked to ABCD are speaking to a certain type of process, and certain end result. In each case they strive for a democratic and empowering process, where the residents of a given community work collaboratively and are the key players driving the initiative. They aim to achieve a change in the community's current condition such that these same residents have greater solidarity, more power, better living conditions, and increased access to resources. Given these fundamental elements, and careful consideration of some underlying assumptions, I will present some examples of these theories in practice.

Empirical Research on Asset-Based Community Development

Over the past 15 years the concept of community has changed significantly. Specifically, with municipalities in Ontario accountable for more of the welfare of local communities, and changes in Canadian education and health care, there has been a shift in responsibilities. In the company of this shift has occurred the practice of an alternative to needs-driven solutions — capacity-focused development. Numerous examples of

ABCD approaches have been applied to initiatives from youth engagement, and non-profit organization planning, to large projects such as steps to eliminate poverty. Here are just a few different examples of the lessons learned from using this approach.

Evaluation, Research and Outcomes

In Edmonton, Alberta in 1994 an arm of the Capital Health Authority known as the Community Development Office was part of a new movement toward community-centered health and in search of a community eager to actively participate in shared responsibility and local action for their own health and well-being (Dedrick, Mitchell, Miyagawa, & Roberts, 1997). Following the principles of Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) ABCD, the team of community members and practitioners worked toward learning new ways to make Glenwood, their local community, a more active and energized community. They set out to map the community assets by asking the question: "what supports for health do you have, and would you be willing to share with the citizens of your community?" (p. 2). Through the use of Glenwood as a successful pilot project, the team created the 'Community Capacity Building and Asset Mapping Model' including the first stage which incorporates the following six "Steps to Capacity Success: 1) Define the question and/or find the focus; 2) Initiating the capacity study; 3) Designing the questionnaire and data base; 4) Conducting the survey and data inputting; 5) Putting it all together – Asset Mapping; and 6) Communicating results" (p.5).

Utilizing these steps, many groups and communities have initiated their own asset-mapping project. Dedrick et al. (1997) documented the responses, reflections, outcomes and limitations of seven communities. The key conclusions they made were that asset mapping worked in each of the seven communities, stating it "nurtured an

atmosphere of discovery and sharing from which community-driven initiatives emerged" (p. 37). Additionally, they recommend that the six steps should be used as a resource rather than a rulebook, respecting that each community will be different, and the team should respond accordingly. Finally, they suggested future initiatives take a keener awareness of the facilitator and/or practitioners' role in, and withdrawal from, the project as it may have the potential to perpetuate dependencies. Specifically, in reflection of the seven communities, Dedrick and colleagues found the withdrawal of the Community Development Office may have been premature in some communities and discussed the importance of finding a balance between avoiding dependencies and leaving before the community is ready.

Another satellite project occurred a few years later in Edmonton when the Community Development Office joined forces with Westlawn Junior High School and Jasper Place Gateway Foundation. This "Keys to Community" project was driven by fifteen grade nine students based on ABCD. It was designed with a focus on "the discovery, connection, and mobilization of the students' assets and gifts and connecting these with those of people and groups in the communities" (Roberts, Dedrick, & Mitchell, 1998, p. 1). The students participated over the course of one term, one half day a week with the support of the Jasper Place Gateway Foundation's energized and socially diverse membership including residents, community groups and businesses who provided an ideal resource for the students in their hopes to connect and share assets for new community initiatives (Roberts et al., 1998).

The students created goals and accomplished a number of projects employing their own gifts and interests. Some of these included a presentation at "Healthy Kids

Learn Better" for the Alberta Coalition for School Health, organizing and planting

flowers in a local park with the community, and organizing a carnival for local daycare

children in the area. Based on feedback, the authors identified obvious gains for the

community such as stronger relationships with students and other residents who took part

in the activities, as well as a number of benefits for students, including increased self-

esteem and leadership capabilities, and a greater accountability to be receptive to the

local community. In addition, the authors put forward some recommendations for future

projects including increasing awareness of students, teachers and community, increasing

funding for the project, including regular reflection sessions, extending the time period of

the project, and having students develop a specific business plan as part of their goal

setting and capacity building ideas.

Richardson (2004) examined the usefulness of an asset-based planning approach

for small non-profit organizations (NPOs) through a comparison of those with asset-

based training and implementation to those without. The results indicated that the NPOs

who received asset-mapping training, and subsequently applied the approach, proved

more fruitful than NPOs who did not. The benefits of asset mapping included meeting

goals, and creating and monitoring efforts and successes. These results were determined

to be a direct result of increased capacity building (Richardson, 2004). According to the

feedback Richardson gained, the success was partly due to the versatility of the

techniques used in asset mapping, that they "can be made simple or complex depending

on the desired outcome" (p. 56). Another determining factor was that of 'buy-in' – both

the identification and mobilization of assets were dependent on people's belief in the

approach – greater buy-in resulted in much more production from the organizations' asset maps.

Another major ABCD project, known as 'Beyond Welfare' started in a small county of 74,000 people in central Iowa. It was, and is currently, designed to eliminate poverty in Story County by 2020 and to accomplish this goal, "Beyond Welfare is building relationships across divisions of class, ethnicity, and race, which exist between marginalized groups with insufficient income and groups with sufficient income to achieve their purposes in life" (Aigner et al., 2002, p. 100). With a mantra of "we all need money, friends, and meaning" (Rans & Green, 2005, p. 8), residents are invited to form 'partner' relationships with participants seeking self-sufficiency in order to end social isolation and help break away from poverty through the building of relationships (Aigner et al., 2002).

Beyond Welfare focuses on relationships and seeks to understand the whole person; in doing so it replaces the language of 'client' and 'provider' with more inclusive language of 'participant' and 'ally' (Rans & Green, 2005). Lois Schmidt, the founder, explains that Beyond Welfare is committed to:

> community engagement to build the capacity of ordinary unpaid community members to be involved in making Story County a safer, friendlier, and more supportive community for *all* its members…facilitating relationships that assist and support individual families….changing attitudes, human service practice, and policies (Rans & Green, 2005, p. 9).

With a local community-led Board of Directors, comprised by a majority of members currently or previously marginalized by poverty, Beyond Welfare welcomes participants

into community, encourages them to identify their assets and exposes them to the values

of relationship, reciprocity, and interdependent self-sufficiency and advocacy (Rans &

Green, 2005). An example of this exposure is the support group that Lois began for

female artists. She asks the questions: "What is your biggest vision for your art and your

life? What is your next step? What is in your way? What support do you need to make

sure you don't stop?" in order for participants to imagine 'dream paths'. The group

fosters participants' articulation of their dreams, and "supports a path to their realization"

(Rans & Green, 2005, p. 10).

Beyond Welfare has created numerous personal and collective success stories and

succeeded in removing barriers so that residents can improve their lives. Some examples

of programs that have emerged include: 1) a computer lab run by volunteers that teaches

participants computer skills and provides necessary connections for job readiness; and 2)

'Wheels to Work', a car donation program for which recipients volunteer their time in

other community endeavors in exchange for the use of a car. All such programs are based

in reciprocal relationships, so participants give as well as receive. Due to these successes,

Beyond Welfare has received significant funding to expand the project to the state

capital, Des Moines, Iowa. Lois Schmidt is now traveling around the United States to

teach other communities how to apply the Beyond Welfare program. They believe their

successes are owed to the following key considerations: 1) gifts and dreams, 2) citizen

space, and 3) connectors. By gifts and dreams, they are referring to the core of Beyond

Welfare: the support and articulation of every participant's dreams. Citizen space refers

to the places where residents can comfortably connect and make associations,

maintaining their constant commitment to a resident-centered approach, and connectors

refers to the connections between residents, something they refer to as "the currency of building strong community" (Rans & Green, 2005, p. 18).

Summary of Empirical Research

The above examples speak to the potential positive outcomes that can result from the process of ABCD. Kretzmann and McKnight (2005) have demonstrated through their research the likely development of voluntary associations in neighbourhoods that engage their citizens and form horizontal connections. Other theories support the basis for these outcomes including Cowen's (2000) suggestion that multiple and divergent solutions are necessary for the well-being of a community. Furthermore, Cowen (2000), and Peirson (2005) both indicate learning opportunities, significant social environments, and the broader context of support, such as community, as key contributing factors to well being. Given that the ultimate goals of community development include changing the quality of life, and improving individual and collective capacity (Mattessich et al., 1997), the above research exemplifies different ways these goals can be met, depending on the given population. Ultimately, the research points back to engagement, empowerment, capacity building and social capital, each of which needs to be specifically addressed with respect to the community of interest. Just as Rans and Green (2005) remind us, "strong communities exist everywhere…they come in all shapes and sizes, all economic levels, urban and rural – but they share in common one important understanding: they are possessed of many assets, which, once mobilized and connected, can make great contributions" (p. 2).

Implementation of Asset-Based Community Development

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) outline five basic steps that summarize the

process of ABCD:

1. Mapping completely the capacities and assets of individuals, citizens'

   associations and local institutions.

2. Building relationships among local assets for mutually beneficial problem-

   solving within the community.

3. Mobilizing the community's assets fully for economic development and

   information-sharing purposes.

4. Convening as broadly representative a group as possible for the purposes

   of building a community vision and plan.

5. Leveraging activities, investments and resources from outside the

   community to support asset-based, locally-defined development (p. 345).

The first of these steps speaks to identifying the strengths within a community,

simply put: to "start with what you know" (Dorfman, 1998, p. 3). Kretzmann and

McKnight (1993) bring up a key point that "strong communities are basically places

where the capacities of local residents are identified, valued and used" (p. 13). As

Kretzmann and McKnight argue, this is a result of the phenomenon that when an

individual uses her or his capacity, both the person and the community become more

powerful. The authors also point out that personal well-being depends on whether one's

"capacities can be used, abilities expressed and gifts given" (p. 13). The same applies to

the assets of associations and institutions. Beaulieu (2002) recommends that the best way

to address the challenges of any community is to accurately assess their available

resources, and suggests exposing and expanding the knowledge and skills existing within the community. The first step, therefore, is 'looking at the glass as half full' – in order to build a community beyond its deficiencies or needs the community must take an inventory of all of its strengths. Rubin's (2000) analysis of community-based development organizations found their main objective was the identification of material and social assets of communities due to their significant socially empowering effects.

Once these strengths have been identified, the next step is to make connections between the local capacities. In some cases, there is a natural process that will connect capacities. For example, neighbours often have a tradition of connecting through the trading of skill sets (e.g., one fixes the front step while the other watches the children). In other cases, more of an active effort is required to make connections between the identified capacities and the individuals, groups or institutions that could use them (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Green and Haines (2002) emphasize the importance of this step as it provides the opportunity for residents to learn the value of cooperation and civic worth. Richardson (2004) supports this idea finding significant value in the casual conversations among participants, which led to some of the most practical applications of the identified assets. When connections are made in this way, local residents and groups are encouraged to collaborate on how to respond to possible challenges and develop mutually beneficial relationships (Beaulieu, 2002). This is the core of ABCD.

Although the building of relationships is an ongoing process, once relationships have begun to form, the next step involves beginning to mobilize the community's assets. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) identify two main purposes behind this step: 1) development of the local economy, and 2) strengthening the community's capacity to

share and shape information. This step involves encouraging local associations and institutions to contribute to the local economy as well as identifying the locations where public (or at least semi-public) communication is likely to occur. This includes finding local leaders and gathering sites that could be validated, strengthened or expanded to increase the capacity of community exchanges (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The importance of this step is underlined by Foster-Fishman and her colleagues' (2006) finding that a lack of capacity to support citizen participation, in the form of few good leaders, associations, or low social capital, is a frequently encountered barrier to community mobilization. McKnight (1996) believes that this capacity is strengthened when a community acts as a network of informal and formal associations. These relationships provide the foundation for mobilization.

Step four looks to build upon the relationships, and identification and mobilization of assets. Specifically, it aims to assemble the community to develop a mutually held identity and commonly shared vision for the future. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) assert that the plan should be based on the assets and work to creatively solve community problems. Tamarack (2003) reinforces the creative processes that can be found through multisectoral collaboration, advocating that residents should join together as equal partners to generate positive solutions for their community. Tied in with this vision is the final step, which involves leveraging resources from outside the community. Although ABCD is true to its belief that development must start from within, there should be no limitations to how far the development can go. That includes using community-driven initiatives and expanding them with the support of external activities, investments and resources. Aigner and colleagues (2002) suggest that a community with

strong horizontal ties "open more networks that may lead to securing access to resources outside of the locality" (p. 93).

The implementation of ABCD must begin with a positive outlook. Depending on the community, this could present the first big challenge. The alternative capacity-focused approach to community development provides residents the opportunity to take ownership and celebrate their gifts. From mapping the community strengths, to building relationships and capacity comes the occasion to develop leadership skills, mobilize assets and create a shared vision.

Summary of Literature Review

From the review of the theories and research surrounding ABCD, we can appreciate the dynamic properties and interdependent nature of multiple principles and concepts incorporated within its boundaries. The presented material also acknowledges the tension that exists between individual power and community power. According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005), this dialectical relationship necessitates a balance between the "power to assert ourselves", and the "need to belong to something larger than ourselves". Through both individual and collective empowerment, ABCD aims to find a balance among people as well as one between person and context. Further to the tension between individual power and community power, the literature speaks to the imbalance of power between people including the unequal distribution of resources. Mathie and Cunningham (2003) indicate that while a central theme of ABCD is "the relocation of power to communities – power that has otherwise been held by external agencies" (p.482), they also feel that ABCD neglects to *directly* confront the issue of unequal power at a structural level. With a value orientation of empowerment, ABCD

operates from the standpoint that these imbalances are a root cause of many social problems. For this reason, ABCD looks to uncover and enhance the positive characteristics within a community situation rather than merely ameliorating the negatives (Zimmerman, 2000). Through resident-driven initiatives and values of empowerment, ABCD seeks to balance the tension between individual power and community power, as well as the unequal distribution of resources.

With a shift in focus from problems to strengths it may appear to some that ABCD is not actively addressing the very real needs of the community. On the surface ABCD may simply seem to be a positive attitude toward a dismal situation; however, its goal of fostering a different kind of community for all residents (Rans & Green, 2005) is about more than mere assets – it is about relationships. However, Wakefield and Poland (2004) caution community developers to remember that in forming relationships "too much integration can result in a community which forces conformity and excludes those who are different" (p. 2825) reminding us that a complex relationship exits between social capital and social exclusion.

According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), the second step toward community development is *building connections* between local assets. Similarly, Beyond Welfare contributes their success to their focus on relationships, something they refer to as "the currency of building strong community" (Rans & Green, 2005, p. 18). Further support for this positive approach comes from Speer and Hughey (1995) who found relationship-focused community organizing more likely to be sustained than deficit-focused organizing. Bringing community together in this way encourages connection through understanding, reflection and creative action (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002).

With this focus on connections, and an awareness of potential social exclusion, comes a support system to reinforce community strengths. Consequently, the belief system necessary for community empowerment, one based on group strengths and a network of peer support and involvement (Dalton et al., 2001), can begin to develop.

These connections form the groundwork of the ongoing process of empowerment and change. While Wallerstein (1992) suggests changes in behaviour, motivation, and commitment are essential to empowerment, Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2006) point out that when residents believe change is possible, recognize their contributions toward potential change, and feel supported in doing so, they are ready for action to make social change. In this sense, change is necessary to be empowered, and empowerment is essential to make change. This reinforces Rappaport's (1981, 1984) arguments that both empowerment and social change are *processes,* not end *products.* This does not imply that smaller outcomes are not achieved throughout the process, rather it recognizes the dynamic and complex nature of community and social change, and strengthens Green and Haines' (2002) position that the *process* of community development is as vital as the outcome. The following research aimed to contribute to the understanding of these tensions, relationships, and processes.

Research Approach

Based on the presented body of knowledge on asset-based community research (ABCR), the research was designed with two main objectives. First, the research sought to work with the Paulander community facilitating the initiation of asset-based community development (ABCD) based on the first of Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) five main steps. Specifically, this research intended to assist the Paulander community in the identification and mapping of their unique individual, organizational, and community assets while concurrently completing its second objective of documenting in detail the processes the Paulander community experienced throughout the research project.

Beginning this process required an understanding of the community's goals to ensure that the proposed asset-mapping project and subsequent further community development was truly driven by the residents. By assisting in the design and implementation of the asset-mapping initiative, I aimed to set in motion the first steps to ABCD. Specifically, I sought to answer: 1) What community assets were identified and what does Paulander plan to do with them? In addition to this, three key research questions were designed to address the process taken in the asset-mapping initiative. These included: 2) What were the conditions and processes that facilitate or constrain the mapping of assets in the Paulander community? 3) What impact does the role of the principle researcher have in the process? and 4) How does the process promote community building and change? In this sense, the research was designed to report on both the process and the outcome of the asset-mapping initiative with the Paulander community.

Although we set out with the best of intentions to develop a resident-driven asset map for the community there were a number of challenges that altered our course. These are discussed in greater detail in the following current context section. In response to these difficulties, the research focused more on the processes the Paulander community experienced not only in the asset-mapping attempt but generally, including all other activities associated with Paulander's community centre, the Paulander Community Space (PCS). More specifically, the case study weighed heavily on an altered second research question, expanding the focus to include a better understanding of the successes and challenges of the PCS throughout its brief history.

The initial goal behind these research questions was to provide the Paulander community a strong base for further community development based on our findings, including a map of the community strengths and a better understanding of the important processes that enabled them to achieve it. Despite our altered course, in documenting the processes that the Paulander community experienced throughout the project, the research sought to provide an accurate picture and understanding of the Paulander community's journey through their attempt at the initial step of ABCD.

Current Context

Since the formation of Waterloo Region, in 1973, it has consistently ranked as one of Canada's fastest growing communities (Ginsler, 2006). In the last five years, Statistics Canada reports a population increase of approximately 9% -- over 7,900 people per year. Within this growing, ethnically diverse region are three urban municipalities (Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge) and four rural townships that combine to a population of approximately 475,000. According to the 2001 Census, the Victoria Hills

ward within the City of Kitchener ranks as the Region's highest concentration of new immigrants, and among the top (#3 or higher of the region's 72 neighbourhoods) in population density, single-parent families, and unemployment rates. It also ranks among the top quarter of neighbourhoods with respect to poverty levels and mobility (people relocating into and out of the area).

Moreover, based on regional reports, the Paulander community has been *specifically* identified as a neighbourhood within the Victoria Hills ward that is 'in need'. Over 6% of the growth of Waterloo Region in recent years is owing to the number of new immigrants to the area. This percentage increases to 21% within the boundaries of Victoria Hills. Although it is difficult to get specifics on the breakdown of the different cultures that make up the Paulander community, anecdotally community members have indicated significant numbers of immigrants from Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Vietnam. Given the transition and language barriers for these new Canadians, there are many implications including decreased opportunities for employment. In addition to the socioeconomic concerns listed above, the majority of residents in the Paulander community live in rental units, including significant numbers in subsidized housing (see Appendix A for a map of Paulander Drive). This makes for a densely populated, transient community, which Peirson (2005) suggests, often corresponds with increased problems typical of under-privileged neighbourhoods, and may result in less investment from residents into their community.

Starting in November of 2005, and until June 2007, the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council (CS&CPC) of Waterloo Region had been organizing and facilitating community meetings with the then, newly formed Paulander leadership team,

the residents, and community partners. In the beginning, they were working together to develop and implement a comprehensive resident-driven community action plan. Some of Paulander's key community partners at that time included Waterloo Region Housing (WRH) and the Waterloo Regional Police Services (WRPS). (For a complete list of community partners see Appendix B). On the surface this list of partners would suggest significant support for this particular community. It is important to note that while these partners have contributed support, they are committed in varying degrees, and the support can change considerably over time. Furthermore, most of these organizations act as external service providers and therefore provide more traditional help to 'fix' community problems rather than working *with* the residents to create the sustainable change that fosters a better community for all.

In the spring of 2006, the Paulander leadership team and community partners launched a community pilot project and opened a community centre, known as the PCS, in one of the Ontario Housing units at 60 Paulander Drive. The leadership team met biweekly and at that time was composed of the community coordinator from CS&CPC, a representative from Family and Children's Services (F&CS), a representative from WRH, and three community members. Of these community members, one was the Team Lead (head community volunteer) and the other two supported her in those duties. The community action plan that was developed was designed to support capacity building through various programs and services provided by community residents and partner organizations to offer practical resources for those who live in the Paulander community. Some examples of community projects that have been implemented since its inception are: a new playground in front of the PCS; homework club for kids (2 days/wk);

preschoolers' story time with the Kitchener Public Library; coffee hours for residents (1 day/wk); 'Incredible kids' program provided by Waterloo Region F&CS; 'Thrive' program for kids supplied by Lion's Club; a needs and resource assessment conducted by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS) (now called the Centre for Community Based Research); and in the spring of 2007 the 'Pathways to Education' program, with assistance from the Catholic Family Counselling Centre (CFCC), contacted the Paulander community to try to identify interest in their community. These activities were in response to the issues and concerns expressed by the community residents, as well as the Waterloo Region report on communities, and were achieved through collaboration with community partners.

Despite these changes, over 75% of Paulander residents surveyed still identified community saftey, crime, and neighbourhood stigma as their top concerns in the needs assessment conducted by CREHS in the spring of 2007. They also indicated a concern regarding the lack of relationships between housing complexes on Paulander Drive. With the efforts of different community partners, there have been small changes made *to* the Paulander community; however, it remains to be seen if these efforts will contribute to transformative change *within* the community. Interestingly, one of the most successful programs in the PCS has been their homework club. This program is run by volunteers from the community including their local schools, and those participating have taken great pride in both the interest generated from young community members, and the subsequent academic accomplishments.

It is essential to note that a number of changes occurred in Paulander's community context between the spring and late fall of 2007, which coincides with the

time between my initial proposal of this research project to the community and the time I was able to proceed with the research following ethics approval. Between the initial proposal of the asset-mapping project (Spring 2007) and when we were finally able to start our research (February 2008), there were a number of unfortunate circumstances that led to decreased participation and leadership at the PCS. Given the participatory nature of this community-led initiative, the project was greatly affected by these changes. The first major obstacle was when the 'Team Lead' took an initial leave of absence for six weeks in November 2007. Although we could have begun our research at this time, the core group at the PCS did not want to move ahead with any project without the Team Lead and I supported them in that decision and therefore, put my research on hold. Unfortunately, her leave extended bit by bit, through the holiday season, and eventually became indefinite. During this time, attendance decreased at community meetings, communication broke down between key supports in the community, and leadership team meetings ceased to occur.

Finally, I was faced with a deadline with respect to my research and needed to find out if I was going to be able to move forward with my proposal, or if I should be altering my course. I made a series of phone calls to Paulander residents that had previously been involved in PCS activities to inform them of the proposed project and personally invite them to the next community meeting. At the meeting I briefly summarized the research proposal for those who were not aware of the asset-mapping project and asked if the members that were sitting around the table would be interested in still pursuing it. This meant I would need a commitment from residents that were present; otherwise we would not go ahead. Two key community members, of the four in

attendance, stated that they were still interested in undertaking the project. I explained it would be a smaller asset-mapping team (AMT) than initially planned, but if they wanted to take it on I would support them through it. We decided to move ahead and try to encourage others to help us in our pursuit of ABCD.

Many of the challenges that followed were based in knowing when to push residents into action, and when to accept that these residents were burnt out. In my role as a facilitator I brought ideas and encouragement to the table, but my role as a participant and trusted friend to these residents made me empathetic to their frustrations and understanding of their limits. Therefore, after a number of roadblocks in our project, few successes, and what the team indicated as exhaustion, I altered my focus.

The few asset-mapping attempts that we did get underway demonstrated that participants were not ready to share their strengths, in that a majority of them elected not to participate at all, or when asked to list their assets, they did not want to admit their talents for fear someone would ask them to use them. The lack of participation despite the AMT's efforts only increased the already building frustration of the core group at the PCS. It was clear we needed to take a look at what was preventing community members from involvement with PCS activities, and what may encourage them to do so. For this reason, I altered my course to interview key stakeholders in the community in an attempt to create an accurate picture of what has happened through the history of the PCS. More specifically, I wanted to expand my research to include a focus on the recent changes in activity associated with the PCS. My goal in interviewing key stakeholders was to gain a better understanding of the successes and challenges of the PCS since its inception while

providing these members an opportunity to share their disappointments as well as their hopes for Paulander one-on-one.

Methodology

The research was designed to explore both the processes and outcomes of asset mapping in the Paulander community. In line with the beliefs of the ABCR presented, the asset-mapping project was designed to be conducted with a resident-driven practice that ensured community ownership of decision-making, learning, and action. Therefore, a participatory approach was imperative.

Additionally, a case study approach guided the documentation of the initial research goals, including the processes of engagement as well as the formation and implementation of the community-driven initiative. Careful consideration was given to the topic under study and the context-specific circumstances when choosing the method of research. As Yin (2003) explains, "case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). Flyvbjerg (2001) also advocates the power of a good example, suggesting that it is essential to explain the study of human activity through concrete, practical, and context-dependent knowledge, all of which can be gained from case study reporting. Overall, the case study approach allows for what Flyvbjerg refers to as 'studied reality' involving close proximity of the principle researcher as well as accurate feedback from those engaged in the study.

As the principle researcher, I took extensive field notes through participant observation to document both the process and content of the research activities with the

Paulander community. These notes provided documentation of the actual mapping itself, which was designed with the intent that the community could then use the documentation to mobilize the assets to meet their needs. In addition, the notes indicated strengths and weaknesses of the processes used to identify these assets within the community.

Community Entry and Relationship Building

Due to the participatory nature of both aspects of the research, a community entry route was vital. In this case, my community entry began in October 2006 when I began my student placement with CS&CPC. The community engagement coordinator suggested I attend a community meeting with her to get a first hand look at their involvement with Paulander. After the first meeting I became very interested in what was taking place in the Paulander community and I started attending community meetings regularly and sat on a committee to help organize Paulander's first "Winter Celebration" social and potluck. This entry allowed me the opportunity to gain insight into the community and the processes behind current projects, as well as to begin to develop relationships with community members. Given the personal, intimate nature of uncovering individual gifts, and acting as a participant observer, a certain level of trust and comfort was necessary. For this reason, I spent time at the PCS for community meetings, coffee hour, and social events believing that my exposure and relationship building with key people in the community would contribute to the foundation of trusting relationships between myself, as a collaborator in the research, and the community members.

With respect to the recommendations of Dedrick and colleagues (1997), I maintained a keen awareness of my role in, and the potential consequences of my withdrawal from, the community research. With consideration of the potential for the

community to form dependencies, the research project was designed to be driven and controlled by the community members. Therefore, my role as facilitator included providing support and information with the hope that the Paulander community could continue to carry the community development forward without my involvement.

Participatory Approach

A participatory approach was implemented for the asset-mapping initiative. This was initially designed to include the fundamental involvement of the Paulander community leadership team. In theory, this team of individuals, along side interested residents, would work to form an AMT and help to design the asset-mapping approach taken from the specific development of the research questions, to the methods used, selection and recruitment of participants, through to the analysis, dissemination, and particularly, the *use* of the asset-mapping results. Furthermore, the recruitment process of community assets would theoretically include as many residents as possible in response to Roberts and colleagues' (1998) recommendation to increase awareness of all potential participants as to the activities being initiated by the leadership team. Unfortunately, due to the significant changes at the PCS, the participation had drastically decreased by the time this project got underway and recruitment efforts were unsuccessful. This made for a very small AMT of individuals making decisions with little input from other residents.

A participatory approach was also important for the development of the partnership necessary for true participant observation. For the most accurate documentation of the process the neighbourhood went through, my aim was to observe and record their process as unobtrusively as possible. The case study reporting used to share the story of Paulander's experience provides a more complete story as it allows for

reporting on data from multiple methods. Yin (2003) highlights the unique strength of

case study reporting as its ability to manage a full range of evidence including

documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations. This was particularly important given

the participant-observation mode of research, as well as the resident-driven design of the

asset-mapping initiative.

Furthermore, Flyvbjerg (2001) maintains "if one assumes that research, like other

learning processes, can be described by the model for human learning, it becomes clear

that the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place

themselves in the context being studied" (p. 83). This further asserts the power of a good

example inherent in the participant-observation mode of case study reporting. It allows

for the preservation of the holistic and meaningful characteristics of the real-life

experience of community change (Yin, 2003).

The participatory approach highlights community partnerships and therefore

features collaboration between the stakeholders in the community and myself, as the

principle researcher. In this case, community-based participatory research (CBPR)

originates from a concern within the community, and utilizes the knowledge and skills of

community members through all aspects of the research. Peirson (2005) recommends

researchers place an emphasis on community participation in defining questions and

shaping solutions suggesting it enables people to grow, adapt, and attain a voice.

Similarly, Patton (2002) recognizes that participation creates a feeling of shared

ownership in all stakeholders. The classification of community as a unit of identity

encompassing features of both collective and individual identities is a key principle of

CBPR (Israel, Shulz, Parker, Becker, Allen, & Guzman, 2003). The fundamental

characteristics of the approach include its participatory, co-operative, co-learning, empowering process that builds capacity while striving for a balance between research and action (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003).

Methods

Asset Mapping

Given these principles and characteristics, and the fact that Paulander had expressed an interest in identifying assets, it was proposed that their leadership team, on behalf of the community members, would work to recruit interested residents to form an AMT (ideally 4-6 members). This team would ultimately design the methods used for the asset-mapping project. Some potential methods the AMT considered included: 1) collecting stories, informal discussions that draw out people's experience of successful activities and projects; 2) organizing a core group, use the network of relations from the AMT; 3) brainstorming at community meetings; 4) surveys or door-to-door informal interviews; and 5) focus groups. Furthermore, it was proposed that the relationship networks of the AMT would be fundamental to drawing others into the process. In keeping with the spirit of the theory and research presented, the specific approach for the asset-mapping initiative was decided upon by the AMT based on their knowledge of community members and context. Each phase, data collection, analysis and dissemination, was designed to be responsive and methodologically flexible in response to the collaborative decisions of the AMT.

Once again, the significant changes at the PCS resulted in an altered course. By the time the research got underway the leadership team had stopped meeting, and at the time of this paper had basically dissolved. Therefore, they did not act on behalf of the

community; rather, a couple of involved residents stepped up to act as the AMT. As a result, the relationship networks were compromised, and the workload of the two existing members was much heavier.

Once formed, in February 2008, the AMT began with scheduled meetings approximately once a week to develop our asset-mapping procedures. Taking into consideration the procedures behind the CREHS assessment, the AMT felt that one-on-one personal communication would be the best way to achieve our asset-mapping results. I presented them with different capacity questionnaires and we decided to adapt one from Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) to reflect the current context of the Paulander neighbourhood (see Appendix C). The initial questionnaires were filled out by residents who attended community meetings and other activities that were held at the PCS. From there we attended one of the monthly potluck dinners at 65 Paulander Drive to share with those residents our asset-mapping project and ask members to participate. There were 15 people in attendance, including the three of us on the AMT, and five of them participated in our one-on-one capacity inventory questionnaire. We included a small 'door prize' as an incentive to keep people interested but unfortunately many members wanted to participate in the door prize without sharing their assets. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete, but if we were able to get participants to 'share stories' about their assets (another technique recommended by ABCD) it did take longer. Following the potluck dinner our meeting we met to reflect on our successes and challenges of the evening. From there two more biweekly meetings were scheduled and the members really started to express their burn out from the lack of activity at the PCS.

At this point we decided we should alter the focus of the research and put the asset-mapping activity to rest.

Research on the Process

With respect to the case study, documents, artifacts, interviews and participant observations all contributed to the explanatory report on the process of the research project. Firstly, I took extensive field notes throughout the project, including but not limited to observations at community meetings, AMT meetings, informal discussions with community members, and documentation of changes to physical, emotional, and relational aspects of residents and the community. A contact summary sheet was created to guide my documentation of observations (see Appendix D). While these specific components assisted as a framework for the organization of my research, I was receptive to any supplementary aspects of the process.

The proposed study was designed to include, in addition to ongoing field notes, a series of reflection sessions, focus groups and interviews which I would lead throughout, and upon the completion of the asset-mapping project. In order to receive feedback from key stakeholders and residents with respect to the asset-mapping process, I would conduct three reflection sessions with the AMT throughout the process. These sessions were designed to provide information for the case study report as well as keep the AMT aware and responsive to the community's reaction to the asset-mapping initiative. In addition, a minimum of one, and a maximum of two focus groups (of six to ten people in each) would be conducted with community members upon completion of the project. The focus group(s) were to be formed from a broad representation of community participants in order to sufficiently cover the spectrum of views of those involved in the process. The

decision to include a second focus group would be based on two factors: 1) whether the first focus group was able to get enough perspectives; and 2) the community energy or interest around participating in a focus group. In addition to this, three face-to-face interviews with key stakeholders from the AMT would also be conducted upon completion of the project. For a clearer picture of how the methods used were designed to contribute to each of the research questions a Methods–Research Question matrix is attached (see Appendix E).

Once again, the changes in the PCS resulted in an altered course and based on limited success with the asset-mapping initiative the reflection sessions and focus groups were not conducted. Rather, one 45 minute interview with the two additional members of the AMT was conducted at the PCS to have them reflect on the process of asset-mapping, including the highlights and the struggles. Questions such as "What were your favorite experiences as a part of the Asset-Mapping Team?" and "What do you feel were your biggest challenges in driving this community project?" were asked (see Appendix F for AMT interview guide). In addition, a series of nine individual interviews with key stakeholders from the community were conducted at the PCS, or another mutually agreed upon location, in order to create a clearer picture of the changes that had occurred through the history of the PCS and how this had affected, not just the asset mapping, but all activities associated with the PCS. These interviews ranged in length from 30 to 60 minutes and included questions such as: "Can you describe for me, in your opinion some of the early concerns of the Paulander community as raised by the community meetings"; "Explain to me what situation(s) would best encourage you to contribute your time/energy to the community centre"; "What do you feel prevents community members from getting involved?"; and "What do

you feel helps community members become involved?" (see Appendix G for stakeholder interview guide).

Following the completion of the AMT interview, our discussion was transcribed and I coded and analyzed it to identify main themes. I then shared my interpretations of the interview with the members of the AMT for review. This process, referred to as 'member checks' allowed those participants an opportunity to hear the researcher's interpretation of what was said and a chance to make any alterations or clarifications if they wished (Kirby et al., 2006). The additional nine interviews with key community stakeholders did not have an official member check although I have shared with them, casually at coffee hour or community meetings, my overall interpretations of the series of interviews for their reflections. These were recorded in my field notes.

Participants

The proposed project was designed to use purposive sampling to encourage the leadership team and other interested and involved community members to form the AMT. From there, the goal was a snowballing effect of recruitment, with specifics to be developed from the AMT. However, reality differed from the proposed design. Given the changes in the Paulander community, including the subsequent lack of leadership team involvement and decrease in participation the purposive sampling resulted in two active and interested members becoming part of the AMT. The snowballing effect of recruitment for more members was ineffective despite efforts.

In order to develop a thorough map of the Paulander community assets, the asset-mapping project was proposed to reach as broadly across the community as possible in order to accurately represent Paulander's strengths. The recruitment and engagement

strategies for these participants were decided upon by the Paulander AMT, but unfortunately due to low numbers, low energy, and little interest from the community the asset-mapping in actuality did not reach broadly across the community.

The scope of the research from the asset-mapping initiative, to the individual views and experiences of key stakeholders, resulted in a number of participants in different capacities. These are specified below.

The first group of participants includes the residents that formed the AMT. In addition to me the AMT included two more women from the community. One is a homeowner in her sixties who has lived on Paulander Drive for eight years, and the other is in her late twenties, has been on Paulander Drive for about two and a half years, and lives in Ontario Housing. The AMT took part in an interview where they were invited to reflect on the process and share their observations of the processes taken. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to review the interpretation I derived from the analysis of their transcriptions and my field notes.

The second group of participants includes community residents that took part in the asset-mapping project itself. This included a total of 14 adult participants; 11 female and 3 male. Of these participants, eight were from Ontario Housing, three were from co-op housing, and three were homeowners. The ages were fairly evenly spread and ranged from twenties through seventies.

Finally, the last group of participants includes the nine key stakeholders in the Paulander community that took part in one-on-one interviews. This group included three external stakeholders who had all been involved with the PCS from the early stages of its inception, two of which were key community partners who provided significant

resources. The other six stakeholders were residents of Paulander Drive who are either currently still a part of the core group, or had been regularly involved but decreased their participation in the past year when things began to change at the PCS. This group included the Team Lead volunteer who has stepped down. There were two males and seven females, a ratio representative of the general participation over the PCS's history. The resident stakeholders were equally representative of all types of housing, and had an age range of approximately late-twenties through sixties.

Case Study Reporting

The case study reporting methodology provides the story behind the project by describing the occurrences that led to its inception, as well as the results. It acts to highlight successes or challenges throughout the project, providing the context and a more complete picture of the research (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006). It details what led to the project, how it was carried out, the research tools used, steps taken to make decisions, the results, the challenges, and the lessons learned (Yin, 2003). Given the qualitative characteristic of this participatory and educational approach, Patton (1997) recommends the methods used should be responsive to the nuances of the research questions and the stakeholders' needs. Given the dynamic nature of community research, and the specific situation the Paulander community experienced throughout my involvement with them, the case study reporting methodology was an excellent approach, enabling a responsive approach to both the stakeholder's situation and alteration to the research questions.

Recognizing the 'how' and 'why' nature of the research questions, case study reporting is the preferred strategy to provide a detailed explanatory report including the

direct participant observations as well as the feedback of those community members involved in the process. As a research strategy, case study reporting is used to contribute detailed information to our knowledge base of individual, group, organizational, and social phenomena (Yin, 2003). Therefore, my goal, as the principle researcher, was to document the process as I supported the community collaboration through their planning, initiating, and restructuring of ideas.

Trustworthiness

The triangulation of multiple sources, including transcription of interview notes and the documentation of the asset map, helped to establish trustworthiness in the data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Within these methods were the extensive field notes that tracked my persistent observations as a participant. This technique was designed to effect purposeful, assertive investigation that works to ascertain trustworthiness (Elandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Another process used in the data analyses, referred to as 'member checks', allowed members of the AMT an opportunity to review the main themes and interpretations I felt had emerged from the transcript and my field notes, and gave them a chance to make any alterations or modifications if they wished (Kirby et al., 2006).

In addition, as the principle researcher, and a participant observer, I kept a reflexive journal to document my decisions and reactions to the processes taken. This included a focus on my role in the research in order to maintain awareness of any changes, and work to avoid premature withdrawal from the project. Elandson et al. (1993) also identify reflexive journals such as these as measures to ensure trustworthiness in the data. Further to these measures, is peer debriefing. Through sharing with my

colleague and thesis supervisor the common themes, reflections, and conclusions I had

generated, peer debriefing provided another form of triangulation in which to achieve

trustworthiness.

Findings

This research was designed to utilize a participatory approach to document the successes and challenges of a community-driven asset-mapping initiative. The emphasis on a community-led approach was to ensure that residents drove the decision-making and maintained control of their existing assets and resources. In doing so, the research held two main purposes. First, I, as the principle researcher, would facilitate the Paulander community asset-mapping team (AMT) in their design of the asset-mapping approach, methods, recruitment of participants, dissemination and eventual use. Furthermore, the case study report would ultimately explain the story of the Paulander community's process in this, their first step toward Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD).

Identifying Assets in Paulander

The first research question was designed to generally identify assets of the Paulander community and what plans they had for these assets. The asset-mapping project faced numerous challenges and as a result, was not as thorough as we had intended. Although the process was not exactly what we anticipated, we did find the following assets based on those who participated. As per Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) recommendation, this has been broken down into individual talents, neighbourhood strengths, and broader community-level assets.

Assets of Individuals

A majority of individuals who participated had assets in health care, including caring for the sick, elderly, or mentally ill, as well as child care from newborn up to 13 years of age. A significant number indicated competence in general office duties, basic computer skills, general household cleaning, and planting and caring for gardens and

lawns. Many residents indicated strengths in food preparation, serving, and cleaning for large groups, as well as supervision tasks such as filling out forms, planning work for others and keeping records of activities. Also a significant number of community members shared creative talents such as painting, sewing, and baking. The community activities that triggered the most interest among individual residents included yard sales, church suppers, community groups, community gardens, and neighbourhood organizations. Fifty percent of participants indicated having participated in, and future interest in participating in those activities.

Furthermore, residents provided a list of assets they would be willing to teach other community members, as well as a list of talents they would enjoy learning. Members were willing to teach such talents as healthy eating, English as a second language, the Somali language, a babysitting course, a self-esteem course, environmental concern and recycling. Residents of Paulander expressed their interests in learning about cooking, particularly from different cultures, first aid, computers, English, and sign language.

Neighbourhood Assets

In addition to these individual assets, we did identify some general neighbourhood assets. These strengths include physical spaces such as the Paulander Community Space (PCS), the newly installed playground in front of 60 Paulander Drive, the meeting room and kitchen available at 65 Paulander Drive, and the community garden. Within the PCS the neighbourhood found such assets as a computer room with free internet access, a small library of books for children and young adults, some meeting space to run programs or classes as well as supplies for teaching/instructing such as dry erase boards

and learning tools for school-age children. Additionally, there are neighbourhood resources such as a community newsletter that enables the PCS to advertise activities and programs to interested residents.

Community Assets

Furthermore, we did identify some general community resources available to Paulander residents. These were identified in advance of the asset mapping activities with individual community members and support staff who attended community meetings. Included are the many community partners that have had, and in some cases still have, relationships with the Paulander community. Generally speaking these includes resources to help with PCS programs, education, the community garden, and research. In addition, there are region-wide external resources available, such as Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council (CS&CPC) and social services, as well as more local external resources available, such as community centres, religious/spiritual organizations, and condominium corporations. There is a detailed list of these resources, under the headings of: 1) Programs; 2) Education; 3) Community Garden; 4) Research; 5) Region-Wide External Supports Services; and 6) Local Supports in Appendix H.

Reflection on the Asset-Mapping Process

Our challenging process of asset mapping left many of the assets present in the Paulander community unidentified, however, the members of the AMT did find the process beneficial. Moreover, my field notes indicate the general mood during all of the early AMT meetings was productive, energetic and positive. One member of the AMT optimistically explains, "it was interesting just to learn about others and yourself". Upon reflection with the AMT we concluded the asset-mapping process was very difficult due

to significant changes in leadership, and support at the PCS, as well as decreased interest and participation in PCS activities. Due to the unfortunate circumstances of a series of changes in the leadership roles, including the departure of the CS&CPC community engagement coordinator, the 'Team Lead' community member, the Waterloo Region Housing (WRH) representative, and the Catholic Family Counselling Centre (CFCC) representative, the remaining community group members were left feeling unsure of the direction of the PCS.

During the course of these changes, which occurred over a seven month span, participation decreased significantly. Once again, members that remained were left feeling, "every single thing that we've been trying to do here, we seem to run out of people...everything works better if you have more people". Due to situations such as these, energy was low among remaining members and the momentum that had been building at the time of the initial proposal of the asset-mapping activity (Spring 2007) was lost by the time the project was able to get underway. One member of the AMT described her feelings:

> If more people were involved...one person knows the next person who knows the third one and this sort of thing...things balloon. We certainly started out sincerely and thinking it was a good idea, because there are things that are needed to get this centre going, and um ... my lack of energy (laugh), seems to have affected the whole street. I mean, I'm feeling ... well, we said we were tired, or fatigue sort of set in.

On account of lower participation, the low energy of remaining members eventually resulted in burn out. These sentiments were reflected in my field notes on the general

mood at the later AMT meetings which included descriptions such as exhausted, defeated, unsupported, and overworked. These factors led to the subsequent shift in the direction of the asset-mapping project. One AMT member reflects on the situation:

> Life is pretty hectic for many of the folks here on Paulander Drive, and sometimes family and health and that sort of thing become a priority, and even though your heart may be in a project, um, your physical strengths or your family priorities become more important at times, and therefore you bow out, which is where team work comes in and becomes more important.

Hopes and Future Capacity-Based Plans

Despite the lack of participation and consequent lack of information gathered in our asset map attempt, the members of the AMT remain enthusiastic about the capacity-focused practice and viewpoint of asset mapping and hope a similar sort of activity could take place in the future. They enjoyed the strengths-based position that ABCD exposed them to, and expressed their inclination for this new way of thinking. One member explained:

> I never particularly thought about assets until I got working with that [capacity survey from Kretzmann and McKnight] that you presented us, but you know, it's kind of funny the things that popped off the page...you know, 'this is a talent that might go to use here in the community'.

While another suggested:

> You sometimes don't think about the assets you have until you have to actually mark them on a paper...once you actually write down all the things you can do, it's like a pretty big list, but people never do that.

The AMT also expressed how this new viewpoint has remained with them since the asset-mapping project concluded: "I'm just kind of more conscious of it...because of the fact that I now think 'oh yeah, that's a little talent our street has'".

In the face of a relatively unsuccessful first attempt at asset mapping, the AMT and key stakeholders in the community still hold out hope to someday identify Paulander's assets. For example, one AMT member suggested: "if there were events that people actually came to...it would have been fun to ask people the same [asset mapping] questions, it was interesting to meet people and talk to people about their strengths". If these assets could be identified, with the help of more participation from a core group as well as more community readiness from residents, the AMT and key stakeholders in the community plan to develop a community exchange program and to host different programs/workshops based on the identified community strengths.

Conditions and Processes that Facilitate or Constrain the PCS Activities

The second research question was initially designed to clarify the conditions and processes that facilitated or constrained the mapping of assets in the Paulander community. Given the challenges the AMT faced during the asset-mapping project, the initial design of the research was altered to reflect and speak to these challenges. Therefore, the stakeholder interviews were designed to address a more broadly defined second research question. More specifically we wanted to know, based on the history of the PCS, what conditions and processes facilitate or constrain the *activities in general* associated with the PCS. These 'activities' would include such things as leadership team meetings, community meetings, as well as the running of, and attendance at, different PCS programs and activities. The interviews with key stakeholders in the community

uncovered four main causes for the overall changes in activity at the PCS. These reasons, broadly defined, were 1) changes in participation; 2) changes in external support; 3) changes in internal leadership; and 4) changes in organization which I refer to as 'dis-organization'. Each of these four main factors: participation, external support, internal leadership, and organization, have acted to both facilitate and constrain PCS activities, depending on the stage the PCS and its relative change efforts were at. The changes in each, and the shift from facilitating factor to constraining factor, are detailed below.

Given the grassroots nature of the PCS, the activities associated with it rely heavily on community participation for their success. In this sense, participation acted as a facilitating factor in the early successes of the PCS and its activities. In view of the fact that participation at the PCS decreased significantly between the spring and late fall of 2007, it is not surprising that meetings, programs, and activities began to fall apart. In addition to the decrease in participation, my analysis indicated numerous recent changes in support and leadership also contributed to the changes in activity at the PCS. Almost all stakeholders mentioned similar concerns about these changes, and one particular stakeholder summed up his thoughts in the following way:

> But maybe here there has been, at least in recent months, the lack of a visionary leadership that can sort of pull enough people together to make things start happening and draw people out, so, as a result, apathy just gradually swallows everything up. We seem to be in danger of lapsing back into what the community was a few years ago, which would be a real shame.

These changes in leadership included both external and internal supports of the community, which subsequently led to a 'dis-organization' of the remaining core community group members. Each of these changes is represented in detail below.

Changes in Participation

The obvious recent decrease in community participation at the PCS has had a significant effect on all activities and the overall energy at the PCS. For this reason, my expanded research focus sought to capture both the personal motivation of stakeholders as well as their perceptions of what motivated their fellow community members to become involved. Analysis of stakeholder interviews demonstrated that the *initial* motivation for community participation in the PCS fell into two main categories: 1) fear/ safety concerns; and 2) relationships.

Safety Concerns. All of the stakeholders I interviewed mentioned the existence of safety concerns in the neighbourhood and there was a prevalent theme that one's concern for their safety was a key motivator for Paulander residents to start participating, and in turn, facilitated community meetings and activities. For example, when discussing the concerns expressed by residents at the early community meetings (late 2005/early 2006) one community member expressed, "there was a lot of concern about crime…there was almost a sense of fright or fear or something, and sort of 'how are we going to handle this, or can it be handled?'". Another resident recalled the following from the early community meetings: "I guess all the people that came to the meeting…they were all interested in yeah, the safety thing, they were all trying to make the neighbourhood safer". In addition, another stakeholder weighed in with these thoughts:

I guess what galvanized them initially was fear…often fear is a really good motivator. [People] are more focused on something tangible and knowable, and when they see family members or friends in danger or their own property and well-being in danger, then they're prepared to get out from their own lives and work together to make something happen.

Looking deeper into the theme of safety concerns, my analysis suggests that these initial concerns expressed at early community meetings were focused around the area of 60 Paulander Drive, the complex which hosts the PCS. My analysis also indicates that the majority of the attendees were from that area. For example, when discussing safety issues from the early meetings, one stakeholder mentioned,

> 60 Paulander is where we focused, and that's where we found more of our attendance came from. So, if there were concerns down the street, they weren't heard as much because they weren't attending the community meetings to let us know what their concerns were.

According to stakeholder interviews, there are currently some differing opinions on whether or not these initial safety concerns have been addressed. The majority of stakeholders suggested that those early issues have been dealt with to some degree. For instance:

> I think some of those early concerns about safety and that sort of thing have been addressed. Now whether it was good policing or not, I choose to think it might have been, it helped, and I think just a little bit of pressure from the people that live here in this complex and the people that live in my complex and that sort of thing.

However, further analysis indicates that while some of the specific issues around 60 Paulander may have been addressed, a general concern for safety in the Paulander community remains. For example, one stakeholder mentioned the following with regard to specific issues at 60 Paulander Drive:

> where those kids were standing in the stairwells, and people were feeling intimidated and they were smoking drugs right there, and nobody was reporting it to police and no one was going outside…those kids aren't there any more, because there's a playground there and there's activities, and there's eyes.

Nonetheless, many stakeholders recently spoke of an ongoing safety concern, for instance this resident indicated,

> Some of my concerns, like my personal concerns about living on Paulander, I don't think they've changed. I've been told they've changed, and I'd like to believe they've changed, and I want to ask somebody 'oh, did it really change for you?' because…I don't feel safer.

Furthermore, my field notes over the course of my research indicate different residents continue to speak of neighbourhood activity, such as vandalism, loitering, and aggressive groups of youth that leave them feeling unsafe.

Overall, my analysis would suggest that while the initial upswing in participation, and facilitation of PCS activities, may have been driven by fear and safety concerns, the perceived reduction in these concerns has had an effect on current participation levels. If the concerns around 60 Paulander Drive have been addressed to some extent, and those people were the majority of the attendees at the meetings, then their decrease in safety

concerns may have resulted in lower participation, a constraining factor for community meetings and activities. One stakeholder sums up the current situation well:

> sort of what I sensed here [is] there was…a time when things were going bad, and there were some neighbourhood issues and problems and people came out and got involved. Those problems seem to have resolved themselves or at least moved down to the lower levels since, and you just almost get a sense of people retreating back into their own little homes, their own little lives.

Unfortunately, if safety concerns near 60 Paulander Drive have diminished in the eyes of residents, then the community involvement these concerns provoked does not appear to be sustained. Sadly, as one stakeholder suggests, "people are…more motivated [to participate] by what they're in danger of losing than maybe things that they might gain".

Relationships. The second theme that emerged from the data with respect to participation was based around relationships. This theme was raised as both a facilitating and constraining factor toward participation in PCS activities.

Firstly, the majority of key stakeholders *initially* became involved with the PCS through existing relationships with a member of the community group or through a personal invitation and therefore, highlighted relationships as a key motivator for participation. For example, one member recalled:

> My friend, who I knew prior to moving on Paulander Drive, is much more active in many groups and things like that, or involved in community things, and she phoned me up, said that the group was forming, and did I want to come.

Another new resident of Paulander reported the following: "I couldn't find [the community centre] so I walked down with someone and they showed me". Similarly,

during my involvement with the PCS activities, I would occasionally make calls to residents who had attended meetings in the past; on occasion these personal calls reactivated interest in those people I spoke with, and they would return to the PCS, facilitating community activities.

Furthermore, my analysis suggests many people became involved with the PCS activities in order to form relationships. For example, one member stated:

I mostly started just to meet people, so now that I'm here by myself, it's like really boring. If there were more people here, it would be more fun because you would be helping and talking at the same time.

Another reveals, "having another woman to talk to is a good thing". These relationships, whether pre-existing or not, still remain strong among the core group of members at the PCS and as such, facilitate their involvement in activities. One resident shared with me how the relationships extend beyond the walls of the PCS. She takes pride in being able to offer help to her neighbours and new friends, whether it be making a meal (using her community garden grown vegetables) for a family going through a tough time, or sewing on a button for the child of a mother she has befriended. Similarly, another member shared these sentiments:

I just kind of started [the group] so that people will get together and meet people and chat because a couple of the friends that I have now, I met them at groups and it's like well, if you don't make a group, if you don't attend one, how do you meet people?

Alternatively, my analysis also suggests that relationships, or rather their deficiency, may constrain residents' involvement with the PCS. An emerging theme

among the majority of stakeholder interviews is that people are not involved because of a 'divide' amongst Paulander residents. This divide is perceived to exist between residents in different types of housing - Ontario Housing versus co-op housing versus homeowners (see Appendix A for map of Paulander Dr.). One member speaks strongly about her feelings on this division:

> I think that we've all been stigmatized...I know there is a big 'us' and 'them' kind of thing...because it matters, apparently, what address on Paulander you live in. I've always made it a point actually, when we go around the circle and identify who we are and how we're connected with the Paulander community group, I always say 'I live on Paulander', and everyone else says 'I live at 60 Paulander' or 'I live at 40 Paulander', 'I live at 50'. I live on Paulander, that's all you need to know, where exactly, I'm not certain it matters.

Another stakeholder weighs in on the divide and its consequences:

> There was almost a vulcanizing of the neighbourhood, you know, well, 'I'm from 51', 'I'm from 39', 'I'm from 60 or 40 or 20', and there isn't really a whole lot of communication between those entities and there may not be a whole lot within them, but at least there's more within them than there is among them, and I think that sort of vulcanizing can be preventing the neighbourhood from really coalescing around a common vision or a program of action that would really mobilize tremendous resources because the resources are here, we've seen them come out in different activities that we've had in the past, where people come along with talents, with stuff, with contacts, whatever it happens to be to make

things happen. But it's hard to do that when people are operating in isolation, where any of us has quite limited resources.

This divide is a contributing factor to much of the rationale stakeholders suggested keep residents from participating at the PCS including: 1) residents do not understand who the PCS is for; and 2) residents do not want to be associated because of where the PCS is located. Many stakeholders mentioned something similar to this community member's comment:

> When the centre did open up, people thought it was just for people who lived in [Ontario] Housing. And they realized that it wasn't just for people at 60 [Paulander Drive], but they thought it was only for people at 40 and 60 and 65, well, and perhaps 39 because they're a co-op [housing unit].

Additionally, stakeholders suggested the divide between housing types may have negative consequences with respect to participation in the following way:

> I think the location, being in Ontario Housing, has a bit of a detrimental effect...there is, I think, a bit of prejudice from across the street that I maybe don't have to the same extent as others might. Um, that 'oh, that's Ontario Housing' and that sort of thing.

As demonstrated, the 'us' versus 'them' theme is prevalent among stakeholder interviews, and one member reported how far this outlook extended: "Some people had the view that each complex on Paulander should have its own community centre and I'm thinking 'no, like we want to break down these barriers, not enforce them'".

Fortunately, despite this divide in the Paulander community, which is implicated as a constraining factor toward participation, the core group of members at the PCS

includes people from all forms of residence on Paulander Drive. One stakeholder speaks to this fact:

> I would be remiss to not say that there were probably equal representatives from different parts of the road. There were definitely, I mean, one person was from the owned complexes, another person was from co-op and other representatives were from Ontario Housing. So, there were representatives from the different areas.

Referencing my field notes from the community meetings I attended in late 2006, it is apparent that one of the primary objectives of the PCS was to bridge the gaps between community members, including all forms of housing, different languages and diverse cultures. The above quote demonstrates a small example of the relationship objective many stakeholders are striving for – bringing all types of people from the community together to work toward common goals.

Overall, my analysis reveals that relationships are a both a facilitating and constraining factor toward participation. The strength of its effects as a facilitating factor is demonstrated through the breaking down of barriers between different forms of housing for many stakeholders which has led to sustained relationships and investment in the community. This is evidenced by the following resident's comment:

> I personally have got to know more of my neighbours…years ago, I didn't know anybody on this side of the street and the one end of Paulander Drive seldom speaks to the other end of Paulander Drive, but I have met people from both ends of the street and one side of the street and the other. Part of that's my personality, but other parts are the contacts I've made here. And I now feel more comfortable because I know more people…the more people I know, the safer I feel here.

Furthermore, stakeholders repeatedly suggested that this divide ought to be mended in an effort to encourage participation and collective positive action for the community. For example, one member recommends, "I'm thinking well, we can at least extend the invitation...I think someone has to extend that olive branch, and I think both sides are reluctant to do that". Another stakeholder reminds me of the goal behind the social activities planned by the PCS: "I think that it was to bring...people from all of those different housing complexes together to work at a common goal and to create a sense of 'we're all here and let's work at this together'".

Changes in External Support

At the time that the PCS was started, there were a number of external supports, identified as community partners, present and active in a process of initiating change – a significant facilitating factor. Unfortunately, over time many of these external supports began to be less of a presence at meetings and activities. Part of this is simply the nature of external supports and the fact that they are designed to support multiple communities, not just one. Therefore, support will eventually change over time, and in such a case, Paulander may not remain a priority for the external agencies. One stakeholder, who is also a community partner, had this to say about her situation:

> My attendance at the meetings became less after the big event, the community barbeque [Summer 2006]. As I got further into my position, Paulander wasn't my only community that I was responsible for, so, once we had completed the successful barbeque, I attended less. I still was a part of the neighbourhood, but I had other responsibilities and I found biweekly meetings to be too much of a commitment. I also found, when speaking with [Waterloo Region] Housing, a

representative from [Waterloo Region] Housing had indicated the same and had stopped coming to the meetings prior to myself just because of time. So, when you were saying about [community] partners, and for future, I understand where those partners are very important, but if one particular community draws a lot on just a few particular resources, those resources can be there for you long term, but that time commitment has to be divided between other projects in the community.

My analysis indicates many of the stakeholders raised their concern over the change in external support. One resident provides specific thoughts on this:

I think sometimes we get these community agencies that come in to help, but they're in there for a very short time, and so, okay, 'we've come in, we've swooped in, we've helped you', and now they swoop out, but they weren't there long enough to help it...address the concerns, show us where the resources are, and then slowly wean out over ten years, you know, or five years, not like okay, 'here we are, we'll give you all these resources and stuff, and then we're gone', but none of us really have the ability to keep it going. Like...a community centre was great, so it's there, the structure is there, but I don't think we really know where to go with it.

Although community partners had begun to step away to some extent for almost a year prior, one of the first major changes in external support occurred in the spring of 2007 with the departure of the community engagement coordinator from CS&CPC. The coordinator decided to move on to new challenges, and when she left her job at CS&CPC, there was nobody replacing her role with the Paulander community. In the

time following her exit, many of the community members commented on the void that remained. One stakeholder recently expressed these thoughts in her interview,

> I think what's really lacking right now is that [the community engagement coordinator] left, I mean…that mediator, that facilitator, that, she was identified kind of as a coach, like she kind of guided us in the right direction, or hey, you know, 'what do you think the need is?', 'how do you think you could achieve that goal?', and she was truly neutral…I think [that] is the greatest thing lacking right now.

Fortunately, following the loss of the CS&CPC community engagement coordinator role, the representative from WRH at the time, unselfishly stepped up her responsibilities to help out with meetings and things. However, this was not officially part of her role, and before the winter she too had to leave her position due to sick leave. Once again, there was nobody who replaced her role with the PCS, as she had stepped up beyond her official duties with WRH.

These changes had a constraining effect not only on the activities at the PCS, but on the communication between community partners as well. Part of the successes which facilitated activity in the early days of the PCS revolved around communication between the external supports of community partners. With a number of changes in staff, a fair bit of communication was lost. For example, one community partner stakeholder informed me of the following:

> I also worked with [Waterloo Region] Housing very closely at that time, and now that that representative has changed, and then changed since then, the communication also between us in regards to Paulander has decreased, so,

information that they would have, or I would have, we could bounce off one

another, that hasn't continued.

Furthermore, this loss of communication left residents in the dark about important issues

with the PCS, including a grant that they had received in order to fill a coordinator

position at the PCS. This grant was awarded in October 2007, and due to the fact that the

external supports involved had two different staff on sick leave, the position was not

posted until May 2008. The position was just recently filled (late June 2008). However,

the coordinator came to the position with the understanding that a lot of programs and

activity were underway. This is due to the fact that the grant proposal and job description

were written in the summer of 2007; a very different time than the current context of the

Paulander community. Not surprisingly, residents were left frustrated by the lack of

communication and delay in the placement of their coordinator. For example, one

mentioned,

> When things started to fall apart, nobody knew what was happening...nobody
>
> knew what happened with the funding, hiring the staff person, and then [the
>
> representative from WRH] ended up going and so everything kind of just fell
>
> and...the meetings weren't happening and a whole bunch of things.

My analysis concerning these changes in external leadership, and the shift from

facilitating to constraining factor, suggests a tension that exists between the initial

commitments of community partners and the expectations of community residents on one

hand, and the reality of the community partners' need to manage their time with

community residents taking on more responsibility on the other hand. While this is a

difficult tension to balance, my field notes indicate that perhaps more communication

between all parties – all community partners and residents – would have resulted in clearer expectations, and more understanding of responsibilities. As it was, the changes to external supports resulted in residents' perceptions of being left stranded and unsupported, while I believe the community partners perceived the PCS had things under control and a positive momentum building.

Internal Leadership Changes

In addition to these external changes, there was also a significant internal change with the PCS. In November 2007, the 'Team Lead' community member had to step away from her duties with the PCS due to a family situation. She was an incredible asset and strong facilitating factor for the PCS and her duties with the Paulander community group leadership team as the lead volunteer included chairing meetings, organizing events, monitoring finances, and much more; a commitment that she estimates took over 40 hours a week. All stakeholders felt the effects of her stepping away and referenced her knowledge and abilities. Part of what made her such a great leader is her outlook on her community, "that change is possible and that...instead of just living beside somebody and not knowing them, you know, take an active role to know, and help each other".

The unfortunate circumstance of the Team Lead stepping away from the PCS left other members a little bit lost, and considerably constrained PCS activities. My analysis demonstrates the majority of stakeholders were left not knowing what to do, or who was responsible for what duties. Residents' feelings are summed up in this stakeholder's comment, "no one knows who's in charge, and maybe the point is we're all in charge, but no decisions happened because nobody knows who's supposed to make them". Other members mentioned they accidentally fell into responsibility, such as, "when did I all of a

sudden get this role? Like I didn't volunteer for that, it just kind of happened".

Furthermore, stakeholders suggested a large hole was left when the Team Lead stepped

away and nobody wanted to step in and fill her place, rather they each wanted to be a

smaller part of a larger team. For example, one stakeholder shared the following:

> The theme I heard was that 'I'm afraid to call because then it will all be on my
>
> shoulders'. Everyone's willing to maybe put in three or four hours, nobody wants
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> to put in 40, right, so I think that's a barrier…there's not enough people, so people
>
> are afraid to commit…even when you want to delegate that responsibility, you
>
> have no one to delegate it to, so either you keep doing it or it falls apart and then
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> it's of course viewed as your failure.

Dis-organization

The organization of PCS with numerous external supports, strong internal

leadership, and consistent communication had initially facilitated the early activities, and

successes. Unfortunately, another consequence of the changes in external supports and

internal leadership is the lack of what had been bi-weekly leadership team meetings.

When one of the stakeholders was asked if she was part of the leadership team, she

responded, "I was, but we haven't had a meeting for so long that I don't know if they

consider me on it or not. I don't even remember the last time we had a meeting".

Furthermore, the bi-weekly community meetings began to have less and less attendance

over time because members felt that nothing was getting accomplished at them. The

majority of residents who had attended the meetings felt that little was being done. For

example, one resident who had stopped attending meetings regularly admitted, "Well, I

just found that we sat at meetings and nothing got done. I really have to be honest with

you". With little being communicated to external supports given the lack of meetings, residents were feeling frustrated and disappointed, for example:

> Some of the people weren't feeling that we were being listened to, and that was kind of one of the primary goals…like 'people from Paulander *for* the people of Paulander', it wasn't about, you know, someone coming in, sweeping in and telling us what the problem was and fixing it for us, and, and there were a few times that people felt that way, that things were happening for us without our consent, without our opinion, without our consult even.

> While all of the stakeholders expressed frustration with the lack of

communication and activity, not all residents felt the external supports were not listening. One resident had the following divergent opinion: "some people felt that the agencies weren't listening to us…but I felt that when I called an agency and asked a question I got an answer". In support of this finding, my field notes indicate that in my dealings with community members and community partners together, residents never spoke up to share an opinion of not being listened to. In conducting the interviews I began to hear more of this frustration, but in the defense of the external supports, I was never in a meeting that residents openly shared a view that was not acknowledged. This analysis would suggest that while members were struggling with legitimate feelings of not being listened to, they may not have been assertive enough in expressing their valuable input to the external supports. Therefore, the consequence of 'things happening without Paulander residents' consent' was a shared responsibility between members, needing to share their thoughts, and external supports needing to keep in mind, 'people of Paulander *for* the people of Paulander'. This perspective requires a conscious effort on behalf of the external supports

to shift the power from themselves to the residents as well as an active consultation with members in search of their invaluable, lived experience and thus, 'expert' opinions.

Consequent to the changes in support, leadership, lack of communication, decrease in participation, and frustration, was burn out on behalf of the core group at the PCS. The majority of stakeholders made reference to feelings of exhaustion, disappointment and lack of energy. For example, one member admitted, "there's a small core group, and I think that core group is getting burnt out, and I think that sometimes those people feel they *have* to stay". Furthermore, the burn out led some to feelings of resentment:

> I think I [contribute] now out of...I don't know, I'm starting to resent it, actually. I realize it's a long process, but I feel like we've gone backwards and I think it's hard to stay focused, stay enthusiastic when you see things sliding...when you don't feel that it's going anywhere.

Some even started to lose hope: "maybe there's a little bit of hopelessness too...again, it all comes down to the number of people".

Overall, the consensus among stakeholders was that the changes in external supports and leadership contributed to changes in activity for the PCS. Generally, the lack of leadership resulted in unused resources, both internally and externally; yet another shift from facilitating to constraining. One member had this to say: "I don't think that the people who reside on Paulander can do it without support of different ... resources, so whether they offer time, whether they offer their staff person, whether they give, provide money, or something". Another stakeholder weighed in with the following thoughts on the consequences:

Sometimes change just doesn't happen fast enough for some people, and sometimes being told just wait, just wait, just wait, or it's on the way…I think that that really wears down the enthusiasm created, and the hope created from some of the accomplishments and honestly, I think that it could have been a lot better than it has ended up right now, but I think a lot of the changes and a lot of the waiting has taken its toll.

On the other hand, despite the frustrations, burn out, and decrease in enthusiasm, the majority of stakeholders shared an overall positive attitude toward the PCS and its future. The idea of hope for positive change within the Paulander community, and the strength of bringing people together were repeated many times. These key stakeholders became involved in the process when they made a committed choice to make a difference, and thus believed in their own capacity. One stakeholder shared these relevant thoughts:

I think that the community members in Paulander have a lot of capacity, I really do, and I think it's all about helping them understand that, and…as much as organizations want it to be a quick fix, it didn't take Paulander overnight to get to the way it is, and it won't take Paulander overnight to make changes in a positive way, unless they get the support, and the support that is a *capacity-building* support.

Impact of the Principle Researcher's Role

The third research question was designed to address the impact my role, as principle researcher, had on the research process. My role as principle researcher was intended to facilitate the resident-driven process of the asset-mapping initiative while

acting as a participant-observer in order to accurately and unobtrusively record

Paulander's processes. By placing myself in the context being studied I was able to

experience first hand the challenges that the community members of the PCS were facing

as they went through a series of leadership changes and a significant decrease in

participation.

As a part of my role I provided the knowledge and information around different

asset-mapping initiatives while trying to encourage participation and buy-in. As a

participant-observer of the Paulander community I was faced with some challenges. The

first major challenge involved the decision to put my research on hold while the Team

Lead took a leave of absence. While her initial leave was only to be six weeks, it was an

easy decision to support the core group at the PCS in their wishes to not move ahead

without her on any new projects. Given her presence is an incredible asset to the group

and she acts as a key 'connector' in the community, her involvement would be very

valuable and therefore, worth the wait. Unfortunately, as her leave extended

progressively through the holiday season and eventually became indefinite, attendance

decreased at the community meetings, communication broke down between key supports

in the community, and the leadership team meetings ceased to exist. Throughout this time

I continued to attend community meetings and volunteer at homework club, trying to do

my part as an invested member of the community and support the residents through some

difficult changes.

With the Team Lead stepping away I often felt an urge to step up my

responsibilities in order to keep momentum going. This feeling was a struggle for a

number of reasons. Primarily, I felt strongly that I should maintain my role as a

facilitator, and participant-observer. While the pieces of the puzzle began to fall apart for the group at the PCS, I tried to actively increase my support toward the remaining community members to try and fill some of the Team Lead duties. Despite an instinctive desire to step in and 'fix' things, I was mindful not to take on the role of the Team Lead for the following reasons. First, the group at the PCS already had a history of external supports taking on Team Lead duties and then leaving the community. I was acutely aware of the fact that my involvement with the Paulander community had a timeline and I did not want to contribute to this same pattern and the consequent negative feelings it leaves with community members. Second, both my research and my personal standpoint value the importance of empowering the community members over fixing things for them. Although the group was struggling, I felt that for their best long-term interest, they did not need rescuing from me, as an external support, as much as they needed my encouragement that they were valuable assets themselves.

In my role as a facilitator and participant-observer the challenges that I faced throughout the asset-mapping project were based in knowing how to balance, and not confuse, 'facilitation' with 'leadership', knowing when to push residents toward action, and when to accept that these residents were burnt out. As a facilitator I brought knowledge and encouragement to the table, but as a participant and authentic friend to these residents, I was empathetic to their frustrations and understanding of their limits. If my role had been more of an outside researcher I may have felt more determination to push through at all costs for data, but as an involved member of the community for the past year and a half, I felt the health of my AMT members, and my relationship with the community were more valuable. Consequently, following a number of hurdles, limited

successes, and what the team indicated as exhaustion, I altered my focus from our original asset-mapping project.

My altered course, interviewing key stakeholders in the community, provided members an intimate opportunity to share their disappointments as well as their hopes for Paulander. I enjoyed this process greatly because I felt the interviewees took pleasure in being able to share their thoughts and purge some of their frustrations. I believe it was a beneficial experience for all involved, and I feel that my role as a participant-observer was stronger because of this process. The relationships that I had been forming over the last year and a half flourished in that time. I have realized one of *my* greatest assets is my ability to listen and to empathize, and I believe the stakeholders I spoke with benefited from this. By identifying with them as an invested part of the community and providing them an opportunity to share, with a neutral party, their concerns and successes I believe the stakeholders had a chance to safely reflect on their involvement. When a member of the AMT was asked what she most enjoyed about the project, she had this to say: "Well, we kind of liked getting to know you. Because, you know, you brought a good outlet, you know, a good outlook to the street of the things we're trying to accomplish".

Promoting Community Building and Change

The final research question was designed to encapsulate the ways in which the asset-mapping process promoted community building and change. Given the challenges throughout the asset-mapping process, the map itself did not provide much substance for community building and change. Despite the challenges we faced in the creation of the asset map, the AMT remains committed to the community and framing the PCS progress

in a capacity-focused manner. One member spoke of her outlook despite the ever-present challenges:

> You kind of build on your successes, and we've had some, but it's taking time to build it and you've got to kind of prove that it will do so. And we're, I think we're living in a very negative neighbourhood.

Fortunately, the stakeholder interviews did shed some light on some of the key struggles in the community and the context of the PCS and that information combined with the knowledge and viewpoint of ABCD may provide the necessary outlook for a later attempt at creating an asset map. If the community can address some of the existing challenges that arose from the interviews, such as the apparent tension between changes in external support and internal leadership responsibilities, effective citizen space, and community readiness, while recognizing and building on some of their small wins, I believe, as do a majority of the key stakeholders, that change is possible for Paulander. Recommendations to prepare Paulander to deal with some of these challenges are presented in more detail in the following discussion section.

Summary of Findings

The PCS embarked on an asset-mapping initiative with the best of intentions. However, several challenges emerged that limited their ability to fully implement their plans. Overall, despite the challenges faced in the asset-mapping project, my analysis, based on the views and experiences of key stakeholders in the Paulander community, as well as my own reflections as a researcher and participant-observer, delivers a better understanding of the Paulander community and the context of their development efforts. The discussion section to follow further explores the themes that emerged from the

findings. Specifically, it provides insight into some of the 'enabling conditions' necessary for successful community development activity, some significant temporal considerations for community change efforts, as well as a more articulate look at the role of the community psychologist in research situations such as these.

Discussion

The current research set out to achieve Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) first

step to Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) with the Paulander community.

Specifically, our asset-mapping team (AMT) was created with the goal of "mapping

completely the capacity and assets of individuals, citizens' associations and local

institutions" (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 345). A number of challenges prevented

the successful completion of a comprehensive, multifaceted asset map of the Paulander

community. However, the case study allows for the preservation of the holistic real-life

experience of community change efforts (Yin, 2003) and as such, the process

documented during our attempt at this community initiative accurately demonstrates how

humbling and incessantly complex community development work can be. Furthermore, it

provides a valuable example for social scientists to recognize the inherent challenges of

applying theory to real-life practice.

By taking an asset-based approach and recognizing the strengths of key

stakeholders in the community we sought to generate a comprehensive picture of

Paulander's experiences through the history of the Paulander Community Space (PCS).

More specifically, the research project was expanded to include a focus on the recent

changes in activity associated with the PCS by interviewing key community stakeholders

to gain a better understanding of the successes and challenges of the PCS since its

inception. Out of our efforts emerged some insights and lessons for the Paulander

community as well as some general contributions to the ABCD field. Based on the

thoughts and experiences of key stakeholders in the Paulander community, including

residents, volunteers, and external service professionals, as well as my own reflections as

a researcher and participant-observer, this section endeavors to better understand the context of Paulander's community development efforts.

Specifically, the case study provides insight into some of the necessary 'enabling conditions' for successful community development activity that were identified as missing in Paulander's current situation. These enabling conditions, recognized through my analysis, have been summarized under the following headings: 1) Balancing relationships with issues; 2) Effective citizen space; 3) Maintenance of relationships & communication; and 4) Community readiness. In addition to these enabling conditions, my analysis also revealed some important ongoing considerations for community development given complications that relate to temporal circumstances. These important temporal considerations indicate that all stakeholders working toward community change must make continual efforts to be responsive, flexible, and patient. These topics are expanded upon and linked with relevant research in the following discussion section. Additionally, I share more detailed insights into my role as a community psychologist in this research process and its effects on community change efforts. Finally, I build on these thoughts as implications for research and action, impart some of the project's challenges and limitations and conclude with my final remarks.

Balancing Relationships with Issues

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the findings was that of relationships. Accordingly, my analysis of the necessary enabling conditions was strongly influenced by this. As such, I interpreted the first of these enabling conditions to be the ability to balance relationships with community issues. A number of themes fall under this overarching condition including issue-driven versus relationship-driven organizing,

the importance of maintaining a focus on community issues, and the idea that community issues can impede relationships from forming.

Issue-driven versus Relationship-Driven Organizing

A significant concept that became apparent through my analysis of the findings was the importance of relationship-driven organizing. Speer and his colleagues (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Speer, Hughey, Gensheimer, & Adams-Leavitt, 1995) examined community organizing efforts in order to differentiate between those with a relationship focus versus those that were issue-focused. They found when people formed a group around relationships they were more likely sustained than those that formed around an issue. Relationship-driven organizing benefits from the enduring power of relationships (Robinson & Hanna, 1994) whereas with issue-driven organizing, once the issue is addressed, the group no longer has anything binding them together (Speer & Hughey, 1995). Given the current situation with the PCS, it appears that the relationships formed in the core group of members remains strong and sustains their involvement with each other, as well as the PCS. On the other hand, it seems the residents that were initially involved with the PCS due to their concern of safety issues around 60 Paulander Drive no longer maintain their association with the PCS. For this reason, Speer et al. (1995) recommend community organization efforts support relationship development including the promotion of more interactions both within and outside of the organization. Specifically, they suggest that social interactions that are more intimate than controlling will encourage the expression of intrinsic capabilities.

The findings from the asset-mapping project demonstrate how more intimate interactions can, at an individual level, encourage participation and facilitate the

expression of inherent assets. Firstly, it was significantly more difficult to encourage residents not associated with the PCS, than regular members, to participate in our asset-mapping questionnaire, even after sharing conversation and a meal with them. Secondly, while a majority of the residents surveyed were hesitant to admit their talents and strengths when asked, the individuals with more intimate involvement with the PCS were not only more likely to reveal their assets, but also to expand upon them and consider sharing them with others through PCS activities.

Interestingly, the involvement of external supports is almost always issue-driven, and consequently not sustained to the same extent as relationship-driven involvement. Craig (2007) describes the work of external community partners as relatively short-term and focused on particular issues, suggesting that these groups "constitute *issue-based communities*" (p.338). It is important to recognize that despite the positive connotations that accompany the ideas of 'partnership' and 'collaboration' each external partner perceives Paulander's needs through the lens of the services they offer (Payne, 2004). Consequently, Payne advocates a productive and successful partnership requires external supports to work together to meet the needs of the *community* rather than simply meeting the needs for which they offer services.

Many researchers and community organizing institutes stand behind the importance of relationship-focused organizing. The Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), established by Saul Alinsky in 1940, is the headquarters for numerous community organization projects throughout the United States all of which now operate under values-based organizing with a 'relational' theme. There has been significant reflection and transition from Alinsky's original 'conflict approach to community organizing' in which

his radical approach challenged people of power while providing new ways of organizing the 'poor and powerless'. What remains at the core of the IAF today is above all, their advocacy that community organizing is the "building and reordering of relationships", defining the unifying features of all social interactions as: "the conception of power; the nature of personal contacts; and the creation of a sense of community" (Robinson & Hanna, 1994, p. 70). Speer and colleagues (1995) also found that successful community organizations made it a priority to take the time to develop one-on-one relationships among members, acknowledging that the strength of interpersonal relationships is the foundation of social power and empowerment (Speer & Hughey, 1995). These findings are demonstrated in the actions and comments of a majority of the resident stakeholders I interviewed. For example, residents expressed feeling more comfortable and supported in the community having gotten to know some of their neighbours, acknowledging that the people at the PCS "are really helpful, and they've got lots to give". This is exemplified in the many ways core members have supported the Team Lead during her leave of absence due to a difficult family time.

The involvement that residents have with their community has a direct influence on their interpersonal relationships and creates a sense of identification with the community that protects them from feeling isolated or anonymous (Wandersman & Florin, 2000). Furthermore, a 'critical modifier of community', as identified by Aigner and colleagues (2002), are the simple informal, face-to-face social interactions that can shape not only mutual relationships, but the identity of a community (Williams, 2004). Some powerful examples of this fact are the personal invitations that brought out many of the core members to their initial PCS meeting. Whether it was a new social opportunity

between old friends, a call from an old acquaintance, or a neighbour taking the time to walk a new resident of Paulander down to the PCS, these simple one-on-one interactions were catalysts for the creation of a core group of committed community members who also developed enduring relationships.

Another benefit of relationship-driven organizing, particularly in under-privileged communities, is that participation can provide a new outlook on social power, challenging residents' preconceived ideas while at the same time offering a supportive group environment through which to reflect on that power (Speer & Hughey, 1995). This is evidenced by the hope that remains in much of the PCS's core group members. Despite their setbacks and frustrations, the majority of the PCS core members continue to see the benefit from their previous small successes and maintain their positive belief that change is possible in their community. For example, when asked why they continued to contribute their efforts to the PCS, one resident said:

> [We] care about the community and I think it's right that people continue to show they care about wherever they live, you know, and if you have a bit of pride in your community, yourself...well, my grandmother always said soap and water was cheap, it just takes work! (laugh).

Another member offered the reasoning behind her choice to stay involved:

> There's two things - you can say "you know what, this neighbourhood's really bad, so I'm gonna just move", or you can say "well, this neighbourhood's bad, but it's *my* neighbourhood so I'm gonna stay and fight and try to make it better" and you just kind of have to pick which one.

My analysis of the findings suggests that their interpersonal connections and the strong ties they have developed to the PCS have provided them with a sense of social power, even if it has been tested at times.

While relationship-driven organizing has demonstrated its benefits, there are some critical considerations to the formation of these relationships. In the building of shared values and cohesion it is important to recognize the complex relationship between social capital and social exclusion, recognizing that "the development of bridging social capital which links disadvantaged groups with advantaged ones thus seems both difficult and essential" (Wakefield & Poland, 2004, p. 2827) to effective community development.

Importance of Maintaining an Issue Focus

While the benefits of relationship-driven organizing have been unmistakably emphasized by many, it is important to recognize the value of maintaining some focus on issues as well. Traynor (2002) reminds us that community development efforts that occur without an agenda are often episodic and disconnected, leaving the group fragmented. Instead, he promotes the use of a change agenda to bring focus to critical issues for a broad range of residents. In relation to Paulander's situation, several stakeholders mentioned that a number of collective issues raised at the time of the PCS's inception have been lost or forgotten. One resident speaks powerfully concerning this:

> If you look back at the minutes from the early meetings, I think we lost sight of the goal somewhere...I think when the center developed, it was more about running programs in the center, which is important, but it's not the only thing, and I think sometimes we got too scattered, and then we forgot what some of the earlier concerns were.

In accordance with Traynor's (2002) views on the importance of a change agenda, the IAF created an effective values-centered method, designed to organize groups around a common set of values from which they could form a collective vision. In this sense, a community group can build a 'permanent power' on top of the interpersonal relationships such that the organization will not be burdened by the transient nature of various individual issues (Robinson & Hanna, 1994). Currently in Paulander's case, particularly without the neutral influence of the community engagement coordinator from the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council (CS&CPC), the few remaining core members are suffering from the lack of that 'permanent power'. This member shares some key reflections concerning the burdens of individual issues:

> [The community engagement coordinator] role, I think is the greatest thing
>
> lacking right now because everyone's in it for themselves, right, and certainly we
>
> should be…you know, you join things for self-serving reasons, but we don't see
>
> the other side…so that neutral perspective is really important.

Furthermore, a collective agenda for change with defined issues can eliminate barriers to participation and thus further increase social power (Speer et al., 1995; Traynor, 2002).

Ultimately, there is value in both relationships and issues for effective community development. Based on the research presented, a fundamental task for both external supports and leaders within the Paulander community is to continue to build interpersonal relations within and beyond the PCS. In doing so, the group will be building on the lasting power inherent in relationships as well as a larger social power required for sustaining community change efforts. Speer and Hughey (1995) remind us that

communities, by nature, are the product of constantly shifting sets of players "who combine and recombine around issues within their organizational self-interest" (p. 745).

This dynamic nature presents a challenge that requires responsiveness on behalf of all community stakeholders to effectively deal with the shifting of players and organizational interest. With respect to these shifts in the Paulander community, my analysis suggests that the necessary responsiveness quality is lacking. In contrast, the natural shifting of players has resulted in remaining core members unsure of their responsibilities, external supports unaware of the extent of the PCS's struggles, and overall decreased participation in PCS activities. Ideally, Traynor (2002) emphasizes that "mutuality in the relationships between and among people, and interdependence that calls on all parties to lend their skills and capacities" (p. 15) is the key to overcoming these collective challenges. Accordingly, the task of external supports should not be strictly to continue with predetermined goals and programs, but rather to listen to Paulander's concerns and requests (Craig, 2007).

When Issues Impede Relationship Formation

An added reason to be aware of community issues is that unfortunately, these issues can actually create barriers to relationships within neighbourhoods. Peterson and Lupton (1996) offer a critical look at participation in community development suggesting that disadvantaged groups are more likely to face constraining factors such as family responsibilities, income, disposition and training, or prejudices that limit access and participatory involvement. In accordance with this view, Wakefield and Poland (2004) found that "even when opportunities to 'join' are widely offered, only individuals with specific habits, dispositions and self-perceived competency…would feel at home" (p.

2826) suggesting there are often numerous "unacknowledged skills and vocabularies needed to participate 'appropriately'" (p. 2825). Therefore, participation levels and relationship formation are a result of a combination of factors and it would be misleading to assess relationships without accounting for some of the reasons people may not be interacting.

The Divide among Residents. Another prevalent theme that emerged from the stakeholder interviews was that of a divide among residents on Paulander Drive; specifically, a division between different types of housing. Similarly the assessment conducted by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS) also indicated a lack of relationships between housing complexes with those surveyed providing a "common definition of community by complex" (CREHS, 2007, p. 17). Correspondingly, my analysis highlights this divide as an issue that needs to be addressed in order to establish the enabling condition of balancing relationships with issues. Rans and Green (2005) highlight the importance of breaking down the physical and perceived 'walls of external service' such that community change efforts reach all members of a community, particularly those that are labeled. In the case of the Paulander community, the walls are not so much a barrier excluding the residents labeled by Ontario Housing as they are a barrier to members outside of Ontario Housing. Either way, the barriers are very much a reality in this community and as such, are limiting strong horizontal relationships from forming between different types of housing. Without these horizontal relationships, the collective vision that Robinson and Hanna (1994) suggest builds that 'permanent power' is severely jeopardized. As such, community efforts are burdened by

the transient nature of various individual issues, and thus community development is also jeopardized.

In the case of the Paulander community, it is important to recognize the multi-level nature of stigmatization that the residents experience. Firstly, there is a general negative stereotype of all residents of Paulander Drive from outside communities. Several stakeholders indicated one of the early motivating factors for community change efforts was to dispel 'outsider' opinion that Paulander was a bad place to live. Many residents reported receiving negative reactions when telling people what street they live on. Further to this, Paulander residents in Ontario Housing often feel stigmatized by those residents on Paulander who own their homes, or live in co-op housing. As such, stereotypes have developed, as have patterns of behaviour between different types of housing in the community. According to my findings, these stereotypes have contributed to judgments and a consequent divide between fellow community members as well as what appears to be apathy and disengagement on behalf of many Paulander residents. Nowell, Berkowitz, Deacon, and Foster-Fishman (2006) suggest that community leaders would benefit from acknowledging that resident apathy is, at times, an adaptive strategy –

> Such disengagement not only protects residents from the sense of shame resulting from negative judgments of the neighbourhood but it also allows them to direct their energies at upward mobility to a better neighbourhood. Through this lens, change agents can work to foster residents' willingness to invest time and energy in improvement efforts by helping residents generate sources and feeling of pride and address sources of shame in their neighbourhoods (p. 42).

Place-Identity. Further to this divide among residents comes the concept of place-identity. Naturally, given Mattessich and colleagues' (1997) definition of community as "people who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live" (p. 56), the majority of community development initiatives operate within geographically bounded areas. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) postulate that researchers' widespread focus on place-based programs is derived from their belief that the quality of a place has a strong influence on the well-being of individuals who reside there. Likewise, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model indicates that person and place are interdependent such that the context of a place serves to define the behaviours within it. It should not be surprising then that place characteristics such as types of housing have such a profound effect on the residents of Paulander Drive. Interestingly, Dixon and Durrheim (2000) found a direct relationship between one's sense of self and their physical surroundings such that "questions of 'who we are' are often intimately related to questions of 'where we are'" (p.27). This finding is underscored by the fact that many Paulander residents admitted they were often reluctant to disclose what part of Kitchener they lived in. Accordingly, Nowell and colleagues (2006) advocate that place-based change efforts require a thorough understanding of communities as *contexts*. In line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, these contexts include consideration of the effects such places have on their residents.

In a study conducted by Nowell et al. (2006) participants revealed that place characteristics "communicate messages about the value and character of the community and its residents; defined social norms and behaviour within the community; and

provided markers that could remind residents of who they are" (p. 29). The authors' findings indicate that the conditions of where you live can reflect on your personal identity both positively and negatively. Therefore, social identities dictated from place characteristics can implicate insider and outsider distinctions (Simon, Kulla, & Zobel, 1995). As mentioned earlier, the Paulander community experiences these distinctions on multiple levels, including 'inside' Paulander Drive versus 'outside' in other communities, and within the context of Paulander Drive, 'inside' home ownership versus 'outside' in social or non-profit housing. In accordance with these insider/outsider distinctions, the CREHS assessment also revealed common themes of a prominent 'negative stigma' of the Paulander neighbourhood, and lack of relationships between complexes. Besides these distinctions, Dixon and Durrheim (2000) propose that place-identity should be considered a "collective construction", such that it is "produced and modified by human dialogue" (p. 40). Once again, the collective construction is relative to the perspective of those who are dialoguing. Therefore, place-identity can be constructed by Ontario Housing residents on Paulander and as such form a distinction between themselves and residents in co-op housing or homeowners.

Additionally, in their study, Nowell and colleagues (2006) found the negative physical conditions of a place to have a more profound, invasive effect on residents than positive conditions. Specifically, a sense of shame and frustration as often experienced either directly through feedback from others, or indirectly through perceived attitudes from the general public. This would be an example of the collective construction the authors spoke about. In addition, it is an example of the negative effects Rans and Green (2005) suggest result from the 'walls of service'. Nowell and colleagues found additional

consequences to these negative physical conditions, including people's behaviour toward

the community. According to the 'broken windows' thesis of Wilson and Kelling (1982),

evidence of neglect in a neighbourhood invites further neglect. Unfortunately, Norwell

and colleagues' findings indicate that negative physical conditions not only invite further

vandalism, but their occurrence weakens residents' desire and self-efficacy toward

community improvement or development. Themes such as these emerged from my

analysis of the findings and are explored in further detail in the section on effective

citizen space which follows.

Other Identity-Related Factors. In addition to place, there are a number of other

constructs that can contribute to identity and thus influence residents' belonging and

participation in their community. Craig's (2007) critique of geographical 'community' as

identity recognizes this fact we he states: "within and between geographical communities

there might be a wide range of communities of identity which may have differing needs

and interests" (p.338). Although these issues were not specifically detailed in the

stakeholder interviews it is important to critically reflect on the population studied and

recognize that the individuals currently and historically invested in the PCS do not

necessarily represent, or speak for the community as a whole. Participatory methodology

can potentially prove problematic when the issue of who speaks for the community is

ignored or it is assumed that communities are socially homogeneous (Hayward, Simpson,

& Wood, 2004). As such, researchers have raised concerns about the representativeness

of those who participate in community development (Wakefield & Poland, 2004).

Without critical consideration, there is the "potential to reinforce and reproduce existing

sociopolitical structures if [participatory methods] only promote the voices and values of

those who are most articulate and easily accessible in a community" (Hayward et al., 2004, p. 104).

Some of the constructs that contribute to identity and thus influence relations and participation in the Paulander community may include: age, gender, ability, sexuality, race, religion, fluency of spoken English, employment status, employment type, family connections and responsibilities, immigration/citizenship status, place/country of origin, and cultural background. While these constructs may act as lines that divide the group, they may also be points of congregation and bonding. For example, Wakefield and Poland (2004) found that despite their differences, residents of different ethnic minorities often share experiences of racism and these similarities can serve to strengthen horizontal relationships. Furthermore, Crow (2002, as cited in Wakefield & Poland, 2004) focuses on the transient and compound nature of identity and has found growing examples of groups that form identities through the integration and celebration of their difference (e.g., AIDS organizations, disability awareness groups, women's organizations). The authors also note that while these horizontal ties may have value in social change by bonding 'excluded' members of society, they do not, in themselves, link these minority groups to mainstream society, and can therefore reinforce existing social classifications.

One of the major challenges for ABCD therefore, is fostering inclusive participation (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003) particularly when common forms of participation are unreflexively promoted by a homogeneous core group. Wakefield and Poland suggest community development often applies participatory methods more similar to the group's own "taken-for-granted class-based assumptions than those of the populations they seek to engage" (p. 2826) and in doing so, run the risk of pathologizing

the participatory behaviour of the marginalized members of the community. More work must be done to discover how to reconcile the necessary respect for diversity with the need for group identity in developing social capital.

Effective Citizen Space

The second enabling condition my analysis indicated the Paulander community needed to develop was that of effective 'citizen space'. In their collection of successful ABCD stories, Rans and Green (2005) indicate 'citizen space' as one of the three 'very important things' necessary for effective community development. They describe citizen space as the areas where residents interact and work together to initiate change efforts, the 'home' of connections and associations. The authors also point out the key to building the bridges that connect community is finding places that encourage participation so that residents can comfortably be present, and contribute on the basis of mutual interest. Furthermore, they liken the process to fishing: "*where* you fish has everything to do with whether you catch a fish" (Rans & Green, 2005, p. 88). Mathie and Cunningham (2003) support this opinion suggesting that the degree to which norms of trust and reciprocity extend depend upon the enabling environments created by community development work. Under the enabling condition of effective citizen space my interpretations address considerations of place-identity and other aspects of identity, as well as efforts to extend relationships beyond the physical space of the PCS.

Considering Place-Identity

Given the concerns on Paulander Drive of vandalism, unkempt yards, and loitering in the parking lots around the Ontario Housing units, it is plausible that these place characteristics have contributed to insider/outsider distinctions between types of

housing. Rose (1996) suggests that place-identity can also develop from a 'dis-identification' with others' space; a conscious choice to *not* to identify with the space of someone they deem as 'other'. Therefore, some of the divide on Paulander Drive may be consequent of residents 'dis-identifying' with the negative physical conditions around Ontario Housing. Unfortunately, the PCS is held in an Ontario Housing unit, and therefore is affected by the negative associations. This is an important consideration, given the significance of citizen space to community development. If residents do not want to identify with the citizen space designed to connect neighbours, the Paulander community is missing a key factor necessary for the resident mobilization that is required for place-based change efforts (Traynor, 2002).

Nowell and colleagues (2006) suggest that place-based initiates should be aware of issues of place-identity when structuring their programs, as residents with a "diffuse sense of place-identity are likely to experience particular challenges in coming together for collective planning and problem solving" (p. 42). Furthermore, they indicate that:

> Neighbourhood conditions that threaten residents' self identity can promote disassociation from the neighbourhood and, in turn, reduce motivation and energy for working to improve neighbourhood life. Such disassociation may have an additional aggregate effect if, as suggested by participants, collective disengagement generates further physical evidence and subsequent norms of neglect (p. 41).

Based on these findings, the PCS may need to make some adjustments to their citizen space. For example, continuing community efforts such as neighbourhood cleanups will

act to improve the physical environment around the PCS as well as demonstrate that residents do want to invest in, rather than neglect, their physical space.

Extending Relationships beyond the PCS

In addition, the PCS should consider having more activities in different public areas around Paulander Drive that include more positive physical places such as the public garden, or common areas near the co-op and privately owned homes. One key stakeholder had an excellent idea to bring other residents out to PCS activities; she suggested hosting an outdoor movie night with a family-friendly film projected onto the side of one of the buildings on Paulander Drive. This event would foster some more informal community participation as recommended by Williams (2004). As Speer and colleagues (1995) suggest, community organization efforts should support relationship development by including the promotion of interactions not only *within* but outside of the organization as well. Furthermore, understanding that there is a strong relationship between resident identification and community physical conditions is important to invoking a sense of community and resident engagement (Nowell et al., 2006).

Considering Other Aspects of Identity

The same could be true of other aspects that make up identity. If residents form a dis-identification with 'others' based on any number of constructs it will have direct impact on their interaction, and therefore create a less effective citizen space. In this sense, it is not merely neighbourhood *physical* conditions that can contribute to, or threaten residents' self-identity, but also *social* conditions. Accordingly, relationship efforts should consider extending not only beyond the physical dimensions of the PCS, but their current participatory methodology as well.

Maintenance of Relationships and Communication

Based on my analysis of the findings, I identified the third necessary enabling condition the Paulander community needs to be the maintenance of relationships and communication. Robinson and Hanna (1994) define community organizing as the "building and reordering of relationships" (p. 70). Although the Paulander community has had, at one time or another, the support of many different internal and external community members or partners, most of these relationships have changed over time. Naturally, without regular, or even occasional 'maintenance', these relationships can dissipate to the point that the remaining PCS members feel abandoned and alone. Within this enabling condition, I will address the tensions that have built among internal and external supports of the PCS, and challenge the current organizational system to implement strategies in an effort to maintain the relationships they have worked so hard to build.

Addressing Tensions

Another prominent theme that emerged from my interpretation of the findings was the tension that exists between the initial commitments of community partners and the expectations of community residents on one hand, and the reality of the community partners' need to manage their time with community residents taking on more responsibility on the other hand. This quote from a resident stakeholder highlighted earlier in the findings section is a good example of the tension that is surfacing:

> When things started to fall apart, nobody knew what was happening...nobody
>
> knew what happened with the funding, hiring the staff person, and then [the
>
> representative from Waterloo Regional Housing] ended up going and so

everything kind of just fell and...the meetings weren't happening and a whole

bunch of things.

My collective analysis of both resident and external stakeholders' comments is that

increased communication between all community partners and residents may have

resulted in clearer expectations, and more understanding of responsibilities.

Unfortunately, a lack of communication resulted in residents' perceptions of being left

stranded and unsupported with the changes to external supports, while community

partners perceived the PCS had things under control and a positive momentum building.

In situations such as these Craig (2007) would suggest that the term community capacity

building should apply to both neighbourhoods *and* the external supports that must "listen

to, engage with and share power with communities effectively" (p. 352).

Robinson and Hanna (1994) use their research on the IAF to identify some

'essential concepts' to community organizing that are applicable to the case of the PCS.

Specifically, they highlight relationships as an essential concept, explaining the

importance of clarity on the roles in relationships and that "organizing consists of

initiating, developing, and dropping relationships" (p. 80).

Given the changes that occurred at the PCS, it would be important to clarify roles

as they changed including what the expectations were – was the relationship being

'dropped', or was it 'developing' into something different. Moreover, if the relationship

was developing, the differences in existing roles should be explicitly stated. For example,

there was a time that community partners such as Waterloo Regional Police Services

(WRPS), Waterloo Region Housing (WRH), and Family and Children's Services (F&CS)

consistently attended community and/or leadership team meetings. These external

stakeholders were a regular presence in the PCS activities and with that presence, came a certain perception of commitment or involvement. When the presence of these external supports faded, members eventually developed a new perception of lack of support that may not have accurately represented the assistance available from these community partners. On the other hand, when the community engagement coordinator from the CS&CPC left her role with the PCS, members were aware that her departure would be permanent and that the role of the CS&CPC would remain as a holder of the United Way education grant money and as a contact for specific assistance if necessary. Although the loss of this role was felt significantly by the PCS, the members were aware of how the relationship was changing, and what to expect in the future.

Challenging Current Organizational Systems

Through my analysis of stakeholders' comments and my intimate involvement with the Paulander community for the past 21 months, I believe there are some important strategies that the PCS group could implement to challenge the current organizational system for their benefit. Like many others, Speer and Hughey (1995) draw attention to relationships in their research advocating an important structural element to community organizing is the intentional rotation of roles among individuals. They suggest that throughout the development of an organization, participants should be encouraged and supported by other members to occupy various roles, indicating that this prevents entrenchment of individual leaders within the organization. In the case of the PCS, the stepping away of the Team Lead volunteer resulted in the group feeling unsettled and unsure of who held responsibility. Consequently, the activity associated with the PCS decreased and communication with external supports diminished even further. If the

Team Lead responsibilities had been spread among other core members (as they were attempting to do before the Team Lead took her leave), or if roles had been rotated, the group would not have been as significantly affected by her absence.

Furthermore, Robinson and Hanna (1994) identify another one of their 'essential concepts' as leadership, indicating that a leader, or organizer, is the person "most needed by citizen organizations" and requires someone who acts as "a mentor to and agitator of others, developing in others the leadership ability that everyone possesses to some degree" (p. 81). Paulander's Team Lead volunteer is an excellent example of how leadership abilities can be developed and/or encouraged through other leaders. When asked how she became involved in the PCS she had the following to say:

> I wanted to help, and I figured help in my own yard before I start helping anywhere else. So, I wanted to make Paulander a better community-oriented place before I went on to any other plans down the road. I had finished my Live and Learn program, I had been there twelve years, and I decided, I mean it's something else to do. My leader at the time said "why don't you go to this coffee hour up there", and I went...and we ended up sharing, and that was the beginning.

The Live and Learn program she speaks of is offered through the House of Friendship, a vital part of the social service network in the Region of Waterloo. The program is designed to provide opportunities for support, personal growth and friendship for women who are living on a limited income (House of Friendship, n.d.). Her leader at Live and Learn acted as a mentor and agitator for her, and I believe that she possesses the skills to mentor other members at the PCS in order to continue the developmental cycle of leadership. In this sense she would have been a great asset to one of the challenges

Mathie and Cunningham (2003) identified for ABCD – the ability to foster community leadership. The authors indicate in order to do so, internal and external community members must understand the qualities of essential leadership in terms of the specific members involved as well as the nature of leadership itself.

In addition to improved communication, clarity in relationships, and rotation of roles, the objective of keeping residents at the core of community change efforts is imperative for successful community organizing. Researchers remind us that "residents must define and drive the agenda for change" (Traynor, 2002, p. 14), and that all programming efforts are strengthened when run by the community (Foster-Fishman et al., 2006). In accordance with these findings, Nowell et al. (2006) advise that resident insight is an invaluable asset, as outside 'experts' do not possess sufficient familiarity to fully understand the needs of the community, their context, or the range of area resources that could be utilized to address those needs. Furthermore, Craig (2007) warns that all too often communities are engaged in programs with predetermined goals rather than democratically developing 'bottom-up' community interventions specifically designed to suit their needs. Therefore, it is essential that the core group at the PCS ensure that they challenge the current organizational system such that they remain at the heart of PCS activities. Throughout the changes they have experienced, many members felt things were happening without their consent or consult. This goes against one of their primary goals: "people from Paulander *for* the people of Paulander" and takes the power out of their hands. Given that one of community development's main purposes is to empower individuals and communities, the members of PCS need to maintain, and strive to

strengthen, the group's power. As such, they need to take an active stance to stay at the core of all community change efforts.

Successful community development, by nature, alters the dynamics of relationships between the community and the support systems outside its boundaries (Traynor, 2002). As a community develops, they should develop new capabilities, and expand existing responsibilities for new challenges. Speer and Hughey (1995) advise that the community should be aware of the shifting of equilibrium in these relationships over time. My analysis of the findings indicates that perhaps Paulander was not aware, or at least not prepared for the shifting that occurred between their internal core group and their external supports. In their defense, the necessary communication and clarity of relationships for successful community organizing was lacking. However, Traynor indicates that successful community development calls for a "clear, collective agenda for change that challenges existing service and resource delivery systems" (p. 7). With the support of the recently placed PCS community coordinator, I believe that the core group should take the opportunity to build on their capacity to form an agenda for change with clear roles defined for both themselves and their external supports.

Community Readiness

The final enabling condition that needs to be achieved in the Paulander community is community readiness for mobilization. This condition includes such key aspects as the specific stages of community readiness, keeping residents at the core of activity for community engagement, and the importance of small wins. While the PCS has had a series of small successes in the past it is important to keep in mind that "communities are fluid – always changing, adapting, growing: they are ready for different

things at wholly different times" (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oerring, &

Swanson, 2000, p. 291). Although some of the early activities of the PCS had been

building what felt like a momentum toward community development, some key factors,

specifically leadership and participation, quickly changed. The significance of these

changes is underlined by Traynor's (2002) suggestion that a lack of support from resident

leaders and neighbourhood associations equates to a major barrier for resident

mobilization. In contrast, efforts made to develop resident leadership and increase access

to resources can build community capacity for residents to engage in change (Foster-

Fishman et al., 2006).

Stages of Community Readiness

Edwards and colleagues (2000) have described and thoroughly tested nine stages

and dimensions of community readiness from 'No Awareness' to 'Professionalization'.

They make an assessment on which stage a community is at by conducting four or five

semi-structured interviews with key informants. Although our research project did not

conduct these *specific* interviews, based on their dimensions and my interview findings I

would interpret that the Paulander community is currently in the third stage - 'Vague

Awareness'. Edwards et al. describe this category in the following way:

> There is a general feeling among some in the community that there is a local
>
> problem and that something ought to be done about it, but there is no immediate
>
> motivation to do anything. There may be stories or anecdotes about the problem,
>
> but ideas about why the problem occurs and who has the problem tend to be
>
> stereotyped and/or vague. No identifiable leadership exists or leadership lacks

energy or motivation for dealing with this problem. Community climate does not

serve to motivate leaders (p. 298).

My analysis of the findings suggests that there is currently limited motivation to take

action in the Paulander community, that leadership, both internally and externally, are

lacking, and consequently the remaining members are burnt out.

Included with each stage of community readiness is a defined goal that a

community can adapt to fit their local conditions, including their needs, values, and local

resources (Edwards et al., 2000). The goals Edwards and colleagues defined for the

'Vague Awareness' stage seems obvious - to raise awareness that the community has the

ability to do something about their concerns. It includes suggestions such as:

1) Present information at local events & to unrelated community groups

2) Post information on flyers

3) Initiate events (potlucks, etc) to present information on concerning issue

4) Conduct informal surveys with community people to gather information

5) Publish articles with general information, but relate it to local situation

These tools are designed to maximize community resources while minimizing

discouraging setbacks along the way (Edwards et al., 2000). Interestingly, the first four of

the suggested actions are activities that the PCS has taken on in the past, a time when

more momentum was building. Edwards and colleagues provide an example that speaks

to the current struggles of community readiness in Paulander and how local action teams

can use these concepts to their advantage. In particular, the authors mention one group

that found they were not progressing, so in order to find out why they were blocked, they

reassessed their community readiness, took a step back, and discovered they were able to move on easier from there.

This example reflects one of the lessons Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2006) provide about creating a community that is ready and able to mobilize. Specifically, that the process takes time, requires continuing consideration at multiple levels, and must operate with a flexible and responsive approach. Within this lesson, the authors point out one major challenge as the need for more skilled resident leaders. Given the number of recent changes at the PCS, including their struggle with ongoing communication between external supports, and internal members' hesitations with taking on responsibility, it is not surprising that Paulander is not at the stage of community readiness that they may have been in the spring of 2007. Fortunately, according to the research there is promise to be found in a flexible and responsive approach that takes a step back to readdress a previous stage of readiness.

In accordance with Foster-Fishman and colleagues' (2006) lesson that readiness demands ongoing attention at many levels, Nowell and colleagues (2006) suggest that no one source of motivation develops readiness, but rather it is a cumulative effect of various sources that each contribute to a community's belief that change is possible. Edwards et al. (2000) further this idea of readiness and advocate that the steps toward community change must include involvement of multiple systems and make use of within-community assets in order to be effective and sustained. Therefore, the research reinforces several key factors necessary for reaching community readiness. Specifically, it requires the continuous attention from multiple resources, the active involvement of

numerous resident leaders, and community participants, and a responsive and flexible approach to community development.

In Paulander's case, I would suggest that there was a time that the PCS had continuous attention from multiple resources, and active involvement of resident leaders and community participants. During these times, the PCS successfully hosted community barbeques and cleanups, their Winter Celebration Potluck, and well attended meetings, as well as being involved with successful programs including the 'earn a bike program' through WRPS; 'Incredible Kids' provided by F&CS; 'Thrive' supplied by the Lion's Club; Kitchener Public Library story times, and more. Unfortunately, these conditions have changed and the necessary responsive and flexible approach to community development was not strongly apparent. As such, none of the above programs currently continue at the PCS.

Community Engagement

The common thread among all community organizing is the belief that residents are the fundamental feature for effecting change - holding the power, proficiency, and strengths to shape their collective destiny (Traynor, 2002). Unfortunately, the PCS has been struggling with community engagement, a process that brings residents together to work collaboratively and create goals for their common future (Tamarack, 2003). Without community engagement, even those assets that we did manage to identify in the Paulander community cannot be mobilized. The findings of this study indicate more success in the past with community engagement at the PCS, particularly during the times of involvement from the community engagement coordinator at CS&CPC. A number of resident stakeholders made mention of the coordinator's contribution as a 'coach' or

'facilitator' who took a more proactive approach to engagement, giving residents control of the decision-making processes. Tamarack (2003) promotes proactive engagement over more passive approaches, encouraging residents to actively participate in plans of action for change. Many of the members at the PCS expressed their disappointment over the community engagement coordinator stepping away, and all have felt the effects of missing their 'coach'. This change was the first of many that contributed to a decrease in their community engagement efforts. The findings would suggest that this first change significantly affected the *proactive* dimension of engagement, leaving the PCS without a 'facilitator' and struggling through a more passive approach.

Consequent to this passive approach to community engagement was decreased resident participation and the subsequent decreased energy of remaining members at the PCS eventually resulted in burn out. This quote, highlighted earlier in the findings, reflects their situation:

> Life is pretty hectic for many of the folks here on Paulander Drive, and sometimes family and health and that sort of thing become a priority, and even though your heart may be in a project, um, your physical strengths or your family priorities become more important at times, and therefore you bow out, which is where team work comes in and becomes more important.

Without a larger group of participants to share the workload, the frustrations from the decline in activities at the PCS combined with everyday life stresses left the PCS almost at a standstill. Nowell and colleagues (2006) suggest that "impoverished neighbourhoods may not only be lacking in resources and tools for creating opportunity, but they may be

additionally anemic in their ability to promote a psychological sense of possibility in residents" (p. 42).

The cumulative effects of no longer having the guidance of a 'coach', the Team Lead stepping away, the lack of community participation, and the burn out of remaining PCS core members brought any momentum toward community development to a halt. For example, despite having earned a competitive United Way grant to hire a part-time community coordinator in October 2007, no action was taken to post or fill the position for over six months. This consequence rests not only on internal PCS members, but more so on the external supports assisting with the grant, and is evidence of a group that was lacking in participation and proactive engagement. Likewise, Edwards and colleagues (2000) found that many times communities would be successful in getting funding to provide a program or intervention, but if the communities were not engaged and invested, even the good ideas failed.

Small Wins

Another issue linked to community readiness that emerged through my analysis was members' need to see a tangible benefit from their participatory efforts. For example, one stakeholder shared her thoughts concerning how change often does not happen fast enough for community members, and constantly being told to wait by external supports can wear down the enthusiasm and hope created from the accomplishments the community has made. Many of the resident stakeholders mentioned the importance of small successes to keep members involved and momentum building toward other community change efforts. Specifically, as one resident indicated: "knowing that, at the end, the reward is going to outweigh all the work that's been put into it".

Foster-Fishman and her colleagues (2006) learned from residents in their study that small-scale improvements and quick wins energized the community, and helped residents to rise above feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. On a related note, when the size of the group or project is kept small, it creates a "pipeline for participation" building stronger relationships (Rans & Green, 2005, p. 26) and participants are able recognize manageable efforts leading to more visible accomplishments (Weick, 1984). In contrast, when the magnitude of projects or problems is increased, the "quality of thought and action declines, because processes such as frustration, arousal, and helplessness are activated" (Weick, 1984, p. 40). My interpretation of Paulander's current situation is that the loss of energy and resulting burn out from the core group of PCS members was due to these very reasons.

Beyond the issue of 'waiting', as raised by the stakeholder mentioned above, there is another factor that dampened the energy from previous small wins at the PCS. The findings suggest that some of the community's initial safety concerns around 60 Paulander Drive were successfully addressed, and that this is perhaps why some residents stopped coming to meetings. Based on the research of Weick (1984), Rans and Green (2005), and Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2006), the small success of addressing safety concerns would suggest the community *should* have been energized and feeling more powerful. However, with each small win, the crucial factors of community readiness and capacity may change, given their dynamic, multi-level nature (Foster-Fishman et al., 2006). Interestingly, in Paulander's case, it was the issue-driven participation that decreased and lacked the motivation to continue on with other projects after the small win of addressing safety concerns. Alternatively, many of those that participated due to

relationship-driven motives were inspired to continue and remain involved to this day. Given the dynamic nature of the community, it is necessary to be responsive to changes and make efforts to reach the required level of community readiness before looking forward to the next small win. Otherwise, if the residents are not engaged and ready for action, the problems continue to grow, and consequently so do feelings of frustration and helplessness (Weick, 1984) as was the case for the core group at the PCS.

Ongoing Temporal Considerations

In addition to the four necessary enabling conditions derived from my analysis, there are three important considerations all Paulander community stakeholders require to deal with temporal issues. It is obvious to see the shift in activity, and momentum toward community development, that occurred in the Paulander community throughout the past year. Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2006) indicate that creating a community that is ready and able to mobilize is a process that takes time and requires continuing consideration at multiple levels. In line with their lessons, and others (Rans & Green, 2005; Traynor, 2002), I suggest that community development efforts must operate with a responsive, flexible and patient approach.

As Traynor (2002) suggests, by nature successful community development alters the dynamics of relationships between a community and their external support systems. Therefore, as a community develops, all parties need to be aware of the shifting of equilibrium in these relationships (Speer & Hughey, 1995) and responsive to these changes. In addition, communities are fluid, and the result of constantly changing, adapting, and shifting sets of players, ready for different things at different times (Edwards et al., 2000; Speer & Hughey, 1995). Furthermore, it is important to recognize

that building the connections necessary for effective community development takes time. In accordance with this, Rans and Green (2005) demonstrate through a series of successful community development stories that forming relationships and establishing trust between members may not show immediate benefits, but that the commitment to community change also requires patience. As such, community partners need to be made aware of the responsiveness and flexibility required throughout the altering dynamics of the community development process. Accordingly, these external supports should recognize the patience necessary for successful community change efforts including their long-term commitment to the process. In addition, key resident stakeholders and leaders also need to acknowledge the importance of patience, flexibility and responsiveness in doing their part in dealing with the challenges of community development.

My Role in Community Change Efforts

The AMT for the PCS set out to identify the strengths and talents within their community and faced a number of obstacles. Despite the challenges with the asset-mapping project, my findings were still able to remark upon the process that the PCS was experiencing, and as Rappaport (1981) reminds us, social change is a *process* rather than an end product. My involvement with the Paulander community over the past year and a half has been more than just researcher and participant observer.

In accordance with Nelson and Prilleltensky's (2005) roles for community psychologists working with small groups (see Appendix I), I would suggest that at different times throughout the process my role was similar to *inclusive host, visionary*, and *asset seeker*. As an inclusive host, I "abandon the role of expert and share power with group members" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 221). These characteristics also fall in

line with my research approach as a participant-observer, and help to create a safe, comfortable, and friendly climate for member participation. I believe based on analysis of my field notes that I was able to achieve this role early on in my involvement with the PCS and it was something I maintained throughout my research. As a visionary, I "collaboratively clarify values and vision to guide work" while expanding the realm of alternative possibilities (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 221). This role developed as I took on more of a facilitator's position with the group, both through the asset-mapping project and when their current facilitators (community engagement coordinator, Team Lead, and WRH representative) were no longer available for community meetings.

Finally, as an asset seeker I worked to "overcome self-doubts and mistrust of group members" while valuing residents' experiential knowledge as well as identifying and building on the strengths of the group (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 221). This role was something that developed as I became more involved in the asset-mapping activity with the group. Through the process of interviewing the key stakeholders I became even more aware of their strengths, and how much of their trust I had gained since my initial involvement with the group. I felt that this role was my greatest contribution to the Paulander community group, as a collective as well as individuals. On the individual level, I was able to work to overcome their self-doubts and gain their trust and as a group I feel that identifying their assets and teaching them about the asset-based approach will help them move toward community change once they attain their enabling conditions.

As a reflexive researcher, I must also problematize my position and role within the community. Given my background has more in common with 'advantaged' groups

than the people of Paulander, I must recognize the heightened potential for me to (inadvertently) encourage community members to implement preferred forms of participation and social engagement that resemble my assumptions versus the realities of those we are attempting to engage. For example, the concept of place-based identity was a much more obvious consideration in my research than other equally important identity constructs. This was partly due to its identification as a common theme in stakeholder interviews, but also I believe a consequence of my 'advantage' (or lack of minority status) in many of the other constructs (i.e., age, ability, sexuality, race, religion, employment status, citizenship, English fluency, etc). While I am aware of the difficulty for people to move between social groups and understand from research that people in dominant positions in the hierarchy have a much easier time doing so (Wakefield & Poland, 2004), there were times I became so comfortable in my role with the Paulander group that I would forget to keep in mind my advantage.

Furthermore, as the Paulander community group and AMT faced more and more challenges throughout the course of the research I found myself quick to identify deficiencies and failures within the community. While I empathized with the members that had put in effort, and understood their frustration and feelings of being unsupported by their community partners, my initial instinct when reviewing the research was to identify what was 'missing' in the community. I believe these patterns of thought came from a few places: 1) the prominent idea of community development coming from 'within' Paulander; 2) my position as someone from outside the community; and 3) my unreflexive acceptance of structural factors. With time, and more critical reflection using my constructivist stance I was able to identify the Paulander community's challenges and

'deficiencies' as co-constructed including the influence of my own personal framework, the ABCD framework, as well as the constant presence and reproduction of dominant societal structures.

Dedrick and colleagues (1997) suggested that ABCD initiatives keep a keen awareness of the facilitator's role in, and withdrawal from, the project as it may have the potential to perpetuate dependencies. I believe I maintained an awareness of my role as facilitator and participant-observer throughout my research with the Paulander community. Specifically, I made tremendous effort *not* to step in and take over when things appeared to be falling apart. Rather, I made efforts to encourage existing resident members to take on responsibilities and reach out to external supports. In reflection of my time with the Paulander community I believe this awareness helped to prevent dependencies that I believe have previously caused them to have challenges when relationships started to change. My withdrawal from the community will be gradual as I continue to attend community meetings and the occasional coffee hour. I have made significant efforts to inform the new community coordinator of the history of the PCS and am hoping that my presence during her initiation into the community will help to build clear roles and communication among members.

Implications for Research and Action

The case study reporting format of the research contributes to the literature by providing detailed information of the resident-led process of the asset-mapping attempt, as well as the picture it provides of the community processes throughout the history of the PCS. By documenting the reflections and views of the participants, the principle researcher, and the AMT, the case study, through example, was able to identify four

enabling conditions necessary for effective community development in the Paulander community. In addition, the small-scale production of the asset map from this community provides an example of the strengths of Paulander, but more importantly the process demonstrated the value in an asset-based approach to community development and provided core members with tools to create an asset map once the community is ready. Secondly, the knowledge generated from this case study can be used as a theoretical example for other communities in future community development practices. Finally, the research also offers some critical reflection on the ABCD framework including the problematization of some of its inherent principles and concepts.

Summary of Recommendations to Paulander and Supporters

The current research project demonstrated that applying a theoretical framework to a real life community is challenging. Regardless of the depth of literature reviewed, it cannot reveal the effort required to sustain the motivation of the various stakeholders involved and the momentum of the community development initiative proposed. Despite an altered course, our asset-based approach recognized the strength in the views and experiences of key stakeholders and generated some recommendations for the Paulander community and their external supporters. Specifically, the analysis identified four enabling conditions necessary for successful community development activity.

These conditions include balancing an emphasis on relationship-driven organizing with maintaining a focus on the community's relevant issues, recognizing that issues may actually impede relationship formation. The second enabling condition is the creation of effective citizen space appreciating the concept of place-identity and other aspects of identity, and as such, making efforts to extend relationships beyond the physical space of

the PCS. Maintenance of relationships and communication is the third enabling condition and this speaks to the dynamic nature of community development, and the shifting of players and reordering of relationships (Robinson & Hanna, 1994; Speer & Hughey, 1995). The history of the PCS includes the involvement of many different community partners whose relationships have changed over time. This enabling condition addresses the tensions that have built among internal and external supports of the PCS, and challenges the current organizational system to implement strategies to maintain and make effective these relationships. The last enabling condition is community readiness for mobilization which includes acknowledging the specific stages of community readiness and implementing the complementary goals, keeping residents at the heart of community engagement, and the importance of small wins. Finally, an ongoing recommendation for all of Paulander's stakeholders is to recognize that patience, flexibility and responsiveness are all necessary components to deal with the challenges of community development.

Dissemination Plan

With respect to the asset map, itself, again there was little success in developing a comprehensive map of Paulander's strengths. However, the core community group is aware of the asset-based approach to community development and hope to some day conduct another attempt at creating an asset map. Most importantly, we want the Paulander community to be able to identify and mobilize these assets. Their eventual plans include possibly developing a local exchange program (Williams, 2004) and starting evening classes at the Community Space to share the gifts of the community. As a facilitator in the current process, I offered the AMT different strategies for practical

applications of the identified assets, and making further connections between their local

capacities. This information has been recorded and provided in a document for later

reference to the PCS. In addition, a summarized document of key successes, challenges,

and lessons learned from this research will be presented at a community meeting for

review and discussion as to its dissemination to the entire community. Furthermore, these

findings are reported in this Master's Thesis document with potential for an academic

journal article.

<div align="center">Limitations and Challenges</div>

The findings from this case study do need to be considered while taking some

limitations into account. Firstly, it can be assumed that the resident stakeholders that were

interviewed may differ in certain respects from the average Paulander resident. This

acknowledges that community-led development may be flawed by assumptions of

homogeneous communities that automatically work towards the common good (Oxfam,

2004). In this particular case, all stakeholders were involved with the PCS, a number of

them committing significant amounts of time and energy to help with activities and

programs at the centre, all of them were Canadian citizens that spoke English as their first

language, and all of them had made the choice to take action to try to make a change in

their community. However, I do feel that the selection of stakeholders did represent

people involved with the PCS in different capacities, from different types of housing, and

different ages, genders, employment status, employment type, family situations and

financial situations. While I do not think that a potential bias in stakeholder selection has

limitations on the validity of the perceptions and experiences of the participants, it is not

clear if the experience of these participants differs significantly from the average resident.

Naturally, Hayward and colleagues (2004) identify one of the main contributing factors to the complexity of designing, implementing, and analyzing community development research as the multifaceted nature of participation.

Secondly, community development is a long process, and the time frame for this case study was relatively short. If the project had taken place over a longer period of time we could have attempted to address some of the enabling conditions and the documentation of that process would have provided even more information. As it were, the research project was left developing theory with too little time to invest in some of the changes necessary for more successful community change efforts.

Finally, while the case study method has often been criticized for its lack of generalizability, this limitation applies only to cause and effect. Although the research may not be directly generalizable to other communities, the documentation of strengths and weaknesses of the community processes and the enabling conditions for community development are generalizable to theory. In this sense, the power of example derived from the case study of the Paulander community is an excellent opportunity to develop theory applicable to the process of other community development initiatives.

Final Remarks

The identification of Paulander as an area 'not doing so well' in Waterloo Region (Hoy & Ikaulko, 2005) and the momentum that had built from activities conducted in association with the PCS leading up to my research proposal, made it an ideal location for the proposed asset-mapping project. Unfortunately, our goal of mapping Paulander's assets did not progress as hoped. However as a result, our complementary goal of a case study was rich with the reality and humility of how relentlessly intricate community

development work can be. We used an asset-based approach that acknowledged the strengths and experiential knowledge of key stakeholders in the community and created a comprehensive representation of the successes and challenges throughout the history of the PCS. In doing so we included a focus on the recent changes in activity associated with the PCS and as a result provided insight into four enabling conditions necessary for community development. Specifically, the case study indicated these conditions need to be improved in the Paulander community: 1) Balancing relationships with issues; 2) Effective citizen space; 3) Maintenance of relationships and communication; and 4) Community readiness.

Although we did not achieve our initially proposed outcome, Green and Haines (2002) remind us that the *process* of community development is as crucial as the outcome. As such, our enabling conditions contribute to future efforts and the long-term goals necessary for transformative change in community development. According to Traynor (1995) the promise of community development cannot fully reveal itself without at least a generation of sustained support, dialogue, and major investments in evaluation and peer- learning. It is clear that the Paulander community has had its share of successes and challenges, but relatively speaking, the PCS is in its infancy. If the community group and its external supporters are able to build upon the knowledge of past experiences, work to attain the enabling conditions, and maintain a responsive, flexible and patient approach, I believe that community change efforts are very possible. There is a core group of residents with great capacity and a commitment to make their community a better place. Armed with the knowledge from this research and an asset-based viewpoint I hope they can be the catalyst of sustainable community development efforts.

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Appendix A

Map of Paulander Community
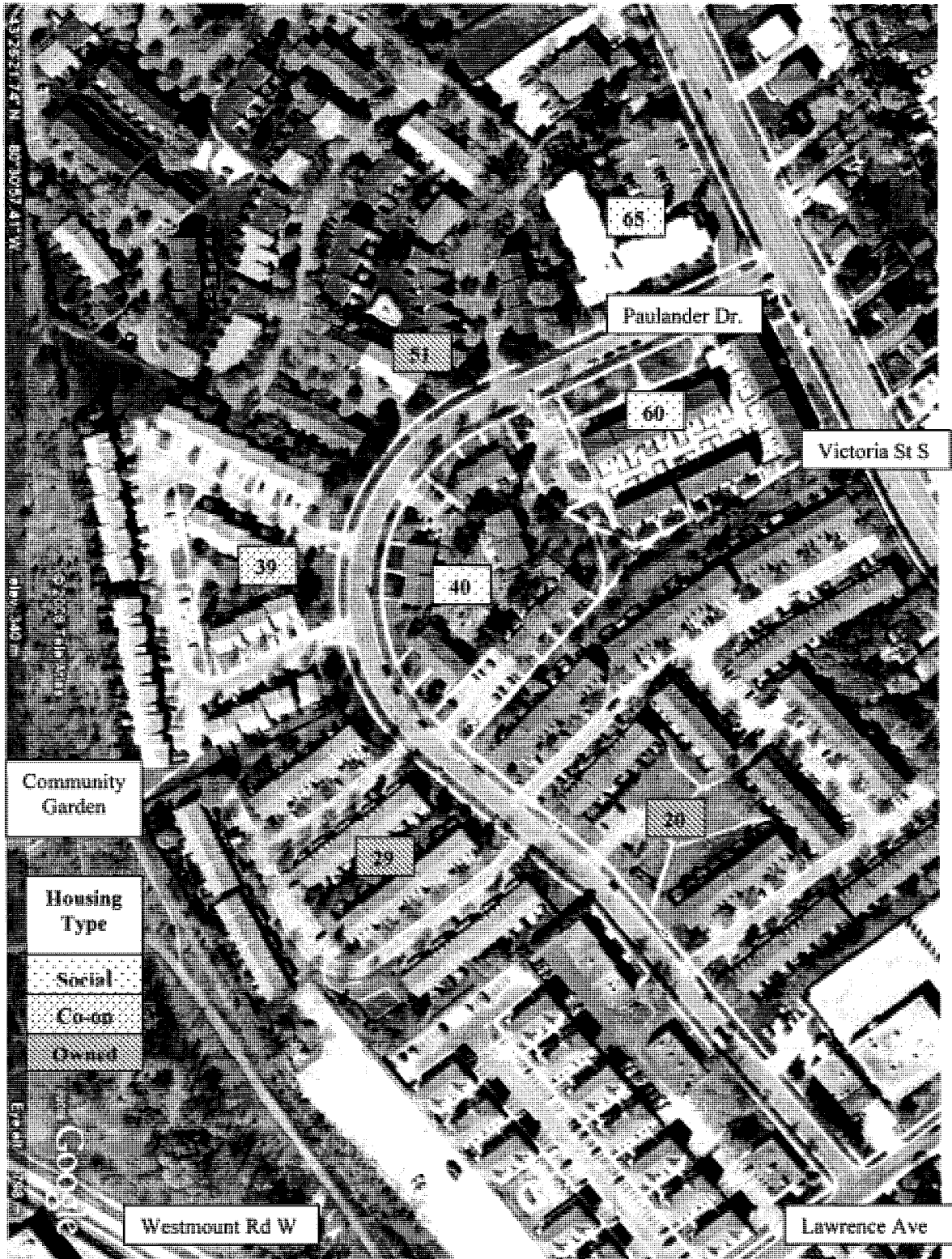
Appendix B

Complete List of Paulander's Community Partners

- Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council

- Region of Waterloo Housing

- House of Friendship

- Victoria Hills Community Centre

- Waterloo Region Police Service

- Waterloo Region District School Board

    o staff at J.F. Carmichael Public School (local elementary school)

- Region of Waterloo Health Department

- Region of Waterloo Social Services Department

- Family and Children's Services

- Kitchener Public Library

- Centre for Research and Education in Human Services

- Salvation Army and other faith communities in the area

- World Wide Opportunities for Women

Appendix C

Asset-Mapping Questionnaire/Capacity Discussion Guide

Hello. I'm_____, and I'm a member of the Paulander
Community Group. We're talking to local people about their skills and talents. With this
information we hope to contribute to improving our neighbourhood, strengthening
relationships, and starting new programs at the community centre. May I ask you some
questions about your skills and abilities?

Part I – Skills Information

I'm going to read you a list of skills. It is an extensive list, so I hope you will bear with
me. I'll read the skills and you just say "yes" when we get to one that you have. We are
interested in all of your skills and abilities. They may have been learned through any of
your life experiences, whether in the home, the community, at school or on the job.

Health

Caring for the Elderly   _____
Caring for the Mentally Ill   _____
Caring for the Sick   _____
Caring for People with Physical
   or Developmental Disabilities _____
(If answered yes to items 1, 2, 3 or 4, answer the following)

Kind of Care Provided

Bathing   _____
Feeding   _____
Preparing Special Diets   _____
Exercising and Escorting   _____
Grooming   _____
Dressing   _____
Making the Person Feel at Ease   _____

Office

Typing   _____
Operating Adding Machine/Calculator _____
Filing Alphabetically/Numerically   _____
Taking Phone Messages   _____
Writing Business Letters (not typing) _____
Receiving Phone Orders   _____
Keeping Track of Supplies   _____
Shorthand or Speedwriting   _____

Bookkeeping   _____
Computer Skills   _____   (If yes, what skills?)
    Understand Computer Software, Hardware & Programs   _____
    Perform Basic Operations (use keyboard, mouse, etc)   _____
    Data Entry   _____
    Conduct Internet Search   _____
    Create/Edit Reports & Presentations   _____
    Use Computer to Communicate with Others   _____

Construction and Repair

Painting   _____
Wallpapering   _____
Knocking out Walls   _____
Furniture Repairs   _____
Repairing Locks   _____
Bathroom Renovation   _____
Building Room Additions   _____
Tile Work   _____
Installing Drywall & Taping   _____
Plumbing Repairs   _____
Electrical Repairs   _____
Bricklaying & Masonry   _____

(Stop here if no affirmative responses to this point)

Cabinetmaking   _____
Kitchen Modernization   _____
Furniture Making   _____
Plastering   _____
Soldering & Welding   _____
Concrete Work (sidewalks)   _____
Installing Floor Coverings   _____
Heating/Cooling System Installation   _____
Installing Windows   _____
Carpentry Skills   _____
Roofing Repair or Installation   _____

Maintenance

Window Washing   _____
Floor Waxing or Mopping   _____
Washing/Cleaning Carpets/Rugs   _____
Routing Clogged Drains   _____
Caulking   _____
General Household Cleaning   _____

Fixing Leaky Faucets   _____
Mowing Lawns   _____
Planting & Caring for Gardens   _____
Pruning Trees & Shrubbery   _____
Floor Sanding or Stripping   _____
Wood Stripping/Refinishing   _____

Food

Catering   _____
Serving Food to Large Numbers (over 10)   _____
Preparing Meals for Large Numbers (over 10)   _____
Clearing/Setting Tables for Large Numbers   _____
Washing Dishes for Large Numbers (over 10)   _____
Operating Commercial Food Prep Equipment   _____
Bartending   _____
Baking   _____
Do you have a favorite recipe?   Yes / No
If so, would you mind sharing it with us?   Yes / No
    How can we get it from you? Phone / Email / Drop Off / Pick Up

Child Care

Caring for Babies (under 1 year)   _____
Caring for Children (1 to 6)   _____
Caring for Children (7 to 13)   _____
Taking Children on Field Trips   _____

Transportation

Driving a Car   _____
Driving a Van   _____
Driving a Bus   _____
Driving a Taxi   _____
Driving a Tractor Trailer   _____
Driving a Commercial Truck   _____
Driving a Vehicle/Delivering Goods   _____

Operating Equipment & Repairing Machinery

Repairing Radios, TVs, VCRs, CD & DVD players _____
Repairing Computers   _____
Repairing other Small Appliances   _____
Repairing Automobiles   _____
Repairing Trucks/Buses   _____
Repairing Auto/Truck/Bus Bodies   _____

Using a Forklift   _____
Repairing Large Household Equipment (fridge, etc)   _____
Operating a Dump Truck   _____
Fixing Washers/Dryers   _____
Assembling Items   _____

Supervision

Writing Reports   _____
Filling Out Forms   _____
Planning Work for Other People   _____
Directing the Work of Other People   _____
Making a Budget   _____
Keeping Records of all Your Activities   _____
Interviewing People   _____

Sales

Operating a Cash Register   _____
Selling Products Wholesale or for Manufacturer   _____ (If yes, what products?)
    Selling Products Retail   _____ (If yes, what products?)
Selling Services   _____ (If yes, what services?)
How have you sold these products or services?   _____
    (Check mark, if yes)
        Door to Door   _____
        Phone   _____
        Mail   _____
        Store   _____
        Home   _____

Music

Singing   _____
Playing an Instrument   _____ (Which instrument?)

Sports

Playing Sports   _____ (If yes, which ones?)
Coaching Sports   _____ (If yes, which ones?)
Scoring/Judging Sports   _____ (If yes, which ones?)

Security

Guarding Residential Property   _____
Guarding Commercial Property   _____
Guarding Industrial Property   _____

Armed Guard   _____
Crowd Control   _____
Ushering at Major Events   _____
Installing Alarms of Security Systems _____
Repairing Alarms or Security Systems _____
Firefighting   _____

Other

Upholstering   _____
Sewing   _____
Dressmaking   _____
Crocheting   _____
Knitting   _____
Tailoring   _____
Moving Furniture of Equipment to Other Locations _____
Managing Property   _____
Assisting in the Classroom   _____
Hair Dressing   _____
Hair Cutting   _____
Phone Surveys   _____
Jewelry or Watch Repair   _____

Are there any other skills that you have which we have not mentioned?

Priority Skills

1. When you think about your skills, what three things do you think you do best?
a)
b)
c)

2. Which of all your skills are good enough that other people would hire you to do them?
a)
b)
c)

3. Are there any skills you would like to teach?
a)
b)
c)

4. What skills would you most like to learn?
a)
b)
c)

5. What three qualities would your closest friends and family most likely use to describe you? (patient, energetic, organized, motivating, etc)

a)

b)

c)

Part II – Community Skills

Have you ever organized or participated in any of the following community activities?

	EVER	FUTURE
Scouts/Girl Guides	____	____
Church Fundraisers	____	____
Bingo	____	____
School-Parent Associations	____	____
Sports Teams	____	____
Camp Trips for Kids	____	____
Field Trips	____	____
Political Campaigns	____	____
Block Clubs	____	____
Community Groups	____	____
Rummage Sales	____	____
Yard Sales	____	____
Church Suppers	____	____
Community Gardens	____	____
Neighbourhood Organizations	____	____
Other Groups or Community Work?	____	____ (If yes, what?)

Read the list again. Which of these you would be willing to participate in the future?

What other Community or Regional Programs/Activities have you found to benefit you?

Part III – Enterprising Interests & Experience

A. Business Interest

1. Have you ever considered staring a business?   Yes_____ No _____
If yes, what kind of business did you have in mind?

2. Did you plan to start it alone or with other people?   Alone_____ Others_____

3. Did you plan to operate it out of your home?   Yes_____ No _____

4. What obstacle kept you from starting the business?

B. Business Activity

1. Are you currently earning money on your own through the sale of services or products?   Yes_____ No _____

2. If yes, what are the services or products you sell?

3. Whom do you sell to?

4. How do you get your customers?

5. What would help you improve your business?

Part IV- Personal Information

Name_____ Age_____ Sex: F____M____

Address_____

Phone_____ Email_____

Thank you very much for your time.

Source_____

Place of Interview_____

Interviewer_____

* adapted from Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993

Appendix D

Contact Summary Form

Contact Type: **With whom:**   Site: _____

Visit _____   _____   Date: _____

Meeting _____   _____   Written by: _____

Phone _____   _____   'Success' Rating (1-10) _____

What were the main issues or themes in this contact? _____

Summarize information from each of target questions/topics (*note information you failed to get) _____

    Question/Topic   Information _____

What was the general mood/feeling of this contact? _____

productive   happy   anxious   uninterested

energetic   serious   negative   other:

Anything else that struck you as interesting, obvious, or important in this contact? _____

What questions were raised, or are remaining for consideration in the next target session? _____

Appendix E

Methods-Research Question Matrix

Method *Research Question*	Participant observations & reflections of principle researcher	Reflection sessions with research team	Focus group with resident participants	Interviews with key Stakeholders	Documents & artifacts
1. *What community assets are identified & what does Paulander plan to do with them?*	Exact methods to be determined by the asset-mapping team				
2. *What conditions & processes facilitate or constrain mapping assets in Paulander?*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ potentially
3. *What impact does the role of the principle researcher have in the process?*	✓	✓		✓	
4. *How does the process promote community building and change?*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ potentially

✓   this method contributes to answering this research question

Appendix F

Interview Guide for Asset-Mapping Team Interview

I would like to give you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences with this asset-mapping project in a little more detail than you could in our group reflection session. I have specifically invited you because of your intimate involvement in the project, and I believe that your views on the project will offer additional insight into the process of asset mapping with Paulander.

- Can you describe for me what it was like being involved in the asset-mapping project?

- What feeling has this process left you with as a Paulander community member?

  o Would you say you feel more or less connected to the community as a result of the project?
    - Explain.

- What were your favorite experiences as a part of the Asset-Mapping Team?

  o What did you get out of being a driving force behind the community project?

  o What do you feel would have made this process even more beneficial?

- What do you feel were your biggest challenges in driving this community project?

  o Do you have any ideas on how they could be addressed if you had the chance to do it differently?

- Do you feel differently about your community and community members since the start of this project?

  o How so? Describe a specific example for me.

- What do you think the next steps are for the Paulander Community based on the results of your project?

  o What do you personally want to get out of this asset map?

  o What do you want to get out of the asset map as a part of the community?

- How do you feel about the information that was share here today?

- Do you have anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for all of your contributions to this project. I wish you all the best in your next steps, as a Paulander community member.

Appendix G

Interview Guide for Key Community Stakeholders

I would like to give you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences with the Paulander Community Centre and neighbourhood processes and activities. I have specifically invited you because of your intimate involvement in the community, and I believe that your views on the processes will offer additional insight into the potential community development of the Paulander community.

- Can you describe for me the role you play/relation you have to the Paulander community?

- How long have you been a part of/involved with the community?

- Are you still involved/(insert their role description)?
    o If not, when did your involvement/role end?
    o Can explain why it ended?
    o If so, has your role changed?
        ▪ If so, explain how? Why? When?

- Can you describe for me, in your opinion some of the early concerns of the Paulander community as raised by the community meetings

- Do you feel those concerns were addressed?
    o If so, provide an example
    o If not, describe a scenario that demonstrates the concern

- Do you still feel those concerns exist?
    o Please describe an example to explain

- Explain to me what situation(s) would best encourage you to contribute your time/energy to the community centre.

- Do you feel you still contribute?
    o If so, explain how
    o If not, please explain what situations changed to alter your contribution

- Do you feel the community as a whole/your neighbours contribute?
    o If so, provide some examples
    o If not, in your opinion/ based on discussions with them, could you explain why that is.

- What do you feel prevents community members from getting involved?
    o What do you feel helps community members become involved?

- Do you have anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for all of your contributions to this project. I wish you all the best in your next steps, as a Paulander community member.

Appendix H

Community Assets by Category

Programs

Kitchener Public Library
Literacy Group of Waterloo Region
Mad Science
Catholic Family Counselling Centre
Working Centre

Education

Waterloo Region District School Board
      Staff at J.F. Carmichael Public School (local elementary school)
      Staff at A.R. Kaufman Public School (local elementary school)
      Staff at Queensmount Public School (senior public school)
Working Centre
Catholic Family Counselling Centre

Community Gardens

City of Kitchener, Community Gardens
Victoria Park Homes

Research

Centre for Community Based Research
      (formerly Centre for Research and Education in Human Services)

Region-wide External Support Services

Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council
Region of Waterloo Health Department
Region of Waterloo Housing
Region of Waterloo Social Services Department
Family & Children Services
House of Friendship

Local Supports

Sanderson Management Inc.
The Dwelling Place
Victoria Hills Community Centre
Salvation Army

Appendix I

Roles for community psychologists working with groups

Roles	Work with Small Groups
Inclusive host	• Abandon the role of the expert and share power with the group • Create a safe and friendly climate, reducing barriers to participation • Develop working principles and ground rules for work
Visionary	• Collaboratively clarify values and vision to guide work • Expand realm of possibilities for alternative ways of being
Asset seeker	• Work to overcome self-doubts and mistrust of group members • Value the experiential knowledge of group members • Find common ground & respect differences; bridge worlds of different group members • Identify and build on strengths of the group
Listener conceptualizer	• Collaboratively define & analyze problem in terms of power, oppression & injustice • Reconcile differing views and build consensus regarding a plan of action • Build ownership and support for actions
Pragmatic partner	• Share knowledge from literature about successful interventions • Ensure community psychology values are respected throughout the project • Enable the group to problem-solve as it moves through stages of change • Balance attention to process with attention to outcomes
Research partner	• Institute continuous cycle of reflection in the group process • Reaffirm commitment to change and process • Engage in self-reflexive analysis of personal values • Be open to being challenged, aware of value incongruence and strive to reduce it
Trend setter	• Move beyond pilot stage and consider sustainability a priority • Think long term even while confronting the challenges of short term

* adapted from Nelson & Prilleltensky (2005)