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Crossing Boundaries: Building a Model to Effectively Address Difference in Community Practice

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Crossing Boundaries: Building a Model to Effectively Address Difference in Community Practice

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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Abstract

CROSSING BOUNDRIES: BUILDING A MODEL TO ADDRESS DIFFERENCE IN COMMUINTY PRACTICE

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Community organizing has a rich tradition within the field of social work. Prevailing community practice models, approaches, and frameworks remain primarily based on practice wisdom, experience, and intuition. Difference, pervasive in various contemporary contexts of practice, largely mediates interactions at the community level. Although difference is addressed at various levels of the practice continuum and within the IFSW and NASW codes of ethics, few methodologically driven tools exist within the literature to guide practitioners. This grounded theory study initiates early development of a community practice model based on forging alliances across boundaries of difference. The Critical Difference Engagement model is based on local community leaders' and organizers' experiences working across dimensions of power, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status, it provides practitioners with a framework for social change and building solidarity across difference in multiple contexts.

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

Project Overview

Throughout American history, community organization practice has been a vital part of the journey to creating a diverse democracy centered on the needs of the people. It has encompassed community efforts toward policy change, community development, social action, professional advocacy efforts, and coalition building. The goal of effective community organization practice has been to move from a problem state to progressive social development (Staples, 2004). In both historical and contemporary contexts, community organization practice has served as a mechanism to provide an eight hour work day, to eliminate child labor, to win the right to vote, to abolish slavery, to give equal rights to racial minorities, to protect our ecosystem, to give voice, and to shape a host of social and economic justice issues. This embrace of macro system change has shaped both ideology and the history of social work practice in many fundamental ways (Garvin, & Cox, 2001; Tilly, 2004).

Current perspectives, approaches, and models have risen out of those particular movements, and have been developed, researched, and implemented in diverse communities and settings. These settings have wide range and scope. For example, community organizers used the settlement house model, so pertinent to the history of social work which, in densely populated urban centers beginning in the late nineteenth century, integrally shaped the social work profession (Addams, 1910). The Saul Alinsky model, also important to the development of community practice, shaped labor as well as other critical social movements (Alinsky, 1972). Feminist organizing models that directed various movements for women's rights over time, and Freire's model of popular education organized rural farmers in Brazil through collaborative critical literacy training (Freire, 1970). Rothman (1996) provided a life's work of continually

adapting, shaping, and developing practice models to meet changing political, economic, and social conditions. These few examples, as well as others, offer insights into just how significant community practice perspectives, approaches, and models guide practice.[1]

As communities and community based organizations evolve, attentiveness to boundaries of difference has grown more urgent. As communities change and as neighborhoods become more diverse, how community organizers negotiate and manage these various boundaries play a major role in the successes or failure of certain community initiatives, efforts, and movements. Diverse perspectives and backgrounds offer many positive contributions to community practice efforts. Crossing boundaries of difference creates rich opportunities for learning and growth both individually and collectively. Additionally, it offers opportunities to see beyond difference, and to shape common identity that transcends race, socio-economic status, sexual identity, or various other difference boundaries. Differences offer opportunities to forge strong alliances (Barvosa-Carter, 2001).

Currently, the prevalent practice models within the literature focus on unity and solidarity, and few give proper attention to the often tense, uncomfortable, and conflicting processes which accompany crossing these various boundaries with the goal of building common unity in community practice settings (Dobbie, & Richards-Schuster, 2008). This proposed study embraces these conflicting views of diversity as both positive multiculturalism and a challenge to the status quo.

This dissertation serves as a guide through the research process from the theory base to the specific research design and development of a preliminary practice model. The chosen topic

[1] Perspectives, models, and approaches will be defined in later portions of this chapter, and relevant community practice models will be expanded on and discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

is practice model development, also referred to as developmental research (Thomas & Rothman, 1994). Chapter 1 discusses the study's purpose, how the topic was chosen and why, as well as give a thorough explanation of the problem addressed. It provides a detailed definition of theories, models, and approaches, and bound the study in a firm theoretical foundation and context. Necessary to the shaping of the research project is a brief overview of the history of Greater Fulton to ground the research within a specific context. This, too, is an essential part of Chapter 1, which will lead into brief overview of the research design, methodology, and implications for social justice work practice.

Chapter 2 grounded the study in the literature. It considered past research as well as the prevailing models within community practice. It identified key constructs within these models that informed the research process. This study used existing theories, models, and approaches to frame the research questions, the design, and interview questions, as to identify the key constructs within each model. Parts of the literature questioned diversity and cultural competence, and critically reviewed contexts where alliances were effectively forged in the presence of difference.

Chapter 3 is a detailed description of the research design and proposed methodology. It begins by discussing the values and ideology underlying the research. The overarching research questions guided the chosen methodology of grounded theory methods with the goal of developing a preliminary practice model based on findings.

Following data collection, chapter 4 discusses dominant themes inherent in the data related to process. It presents findings based on interview data of project participants to develop a preliminary practice model that deals directly with the various domains of difference and how

boundaries are traversed effectively in practice. Finally, chapter 5 covers the implications for social justice work practice as well as future research.

Purpose of the Study

The study is centered on the need for community practitioners, scholars, and social justice workers to more practically address issues related to difference across boundaries of culture, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability, and other boundaries of difference. Many can agree on the need to address these issues, but few can provide a framework for how precisely they should be addressed. A rigorous model of community practice that directly addresses how to effectively cross boundaries of race, class, culture, gender, age, orientation, and ability is a vital step in the development of evidence-based practice models.

Social justice workers in the field must have effective tools in an increasingly diverse and complex arena. This study fills the existing gap in effective community practice models, which defines boundaries of difference across multiple dimensions. The study further examines how these various domains of identity, such as race, class, culture, gender, age, orientation, and ability intersect and interact to create boundaries of difference, and how these boundaries are managed, negotiated, and dealt with in community practice settings.

A literature base informs models that address issues of both difference and multiculturalism. While these models ground the research, each has limitations related to their methods, focus, and/or transferability. First, Grossman (2001) developed a model based on organizing conducted between Native Americans and Whites in rural settings that dealt mostly with economic justice issues. Although the findings in these case studies are particularly helpful in constructing questions for the current analysis, transferability of findings to more diverse

community contexts are limited, due to the nearly singular emphasis on race apart from other constructs of difference including ability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Another model dealing directly with difference is Dobbie and Richards-Schuster's (2008) practice model for critical multicultural organizing. The model focuses on youth organizations as a unit of analysis, which has both strengths and challenges. Youth, particularly of recent generations, have a unique perspective recognizing, negotiating, and navigating boundaries of difference, since youth are more likely to have been in school with peers of different races, genders, and perhaps even sexual orientation (Dobbie, & Richards-Schuster, 2008). However, in limiting the development of the model to youth, significant dimensions of difference are absent, thus diminishing encountered layers of complexity. It is vital to consider a transferrable multi-generational model to use in broad contexts that include, but are not limited to, youth.

Therefore, this study is critical to the development of community practice, social work, and social work education in an increasingly diverse society. It brings to light multiple issues and questions related to socially just practice, cultural competence, racism, ageism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and other structural elements of oppression that pervade social interaction. The study articulates a new model of practice informed through a grounded theory process based on data collected and analyzed in the field. It builds on other models and approaches that exist currently, using key conceptual components to shape the inquiry to move beyond the gaps and limitations of the existing literature.

Rationale for Topic Selection

The first inklings of this project began in a community practice context. I began working as an organizer in Greater Fulton in Richmond's East End in September 2010. As we began the process of outreach, engagement, organizing, and planning, boundaries of difference were at the

forefront of issues that the community dealt with on a daily basis. It became particularly apparent as community members gathered around tables to collaborate on projects. How people managed these differences had an enormous effect on how well people communicated with each other at every stage of the organizing process. It was also clear that although this community was predominantly African American, it was very diverse along domains of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other aspects of difference. I then realized that this particular community development initiative offered a great opportunity for developing knowledge within a practice context. I knew what I had experienced in a practice context. I went to the literature to see what the guidance the research could offer.

After a thorough review of the literature related to multiculturalism, diversity, model development, and community organization practice, the significant gaps in the literature became glaringly evident. The first being the most concerning, is the overall absence of both empirically based and empirically tested community practice models and approaches. The predominant community practice approaches and models used in the field have been developed from historical precedent, practice knowledge, adult education methods, and early sociological concepts (Weil, 1996). Second is the issue of difference. Although the both National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the profession as a whole value and honor difference, diversity, and multiculturalism, they offer little guidance in terms of how to productively manage issues of difference in practice (Diaz, 2005).

A myriad of community practitioners and scholars discuss the need to build solidarity (Hardcastle & Powers, 2004; Mizrahi & Lombe, 2007). They stress it in their underlying philosophies of practice and in their values. Practitioners come to their work with both a broad base of ethics and values to guide their practice; however, values, although important, are not

sufficient enough to guide practice alone (Hardina, 2002). Principles aid in shaping practice, but they must be coupled with effective blueprints to guide practice. In summary, the following factors underscore the rationale for guiding this research inquiry:

- The development of practical knowledge utility for social justice workers, community practitioners, researchers, and educators.
- The need for additional evidenced-based community practice tools in increasingly diverse practice settings.
- The absence of community practice models that deal with effectively navigating boundaries of difference in various contexts.
- The use of community based research participants taking part in a community practice effort that informs the development of a practice model.
- The contribution of the model to practice literature and dissemination through the development of an effective multicultural community practice model.

Opportunity Statement

In an effort to balance a strengths perspective with the problem formulation that often shapes social work professional practice, it is critical to draw attention to power, difference, and diversity while offering an opportunity for learning, professional growth, and practice knowledge enhancement. Blundo (2009) asserts that the social work profession's focus on problem formulation has caused us to become obsessed with problems, labels, pathology, and social forms of control. This project offers an opportunity to play a role in shifting the perspective and focus from problem formulation to building strengths and opportunities (Saleeby, 2009).

The project offers many rich opportunities. The first is in the development of a model of community practice that demonstrates how to cross the many boundaries of difference

effectively in community organization practice. It offers the opportunity to address and expand issues related to multiculturalism, diversity, and differences in order to incorporate compelling evidence-based practice knowledge into the field. Additionally, there is an opportunity to create a cross-cultural model that can transfer to various practice contexts.

Theories, Approaches, Models, Strategies, and Paradigms

Theories, approaches, strategies, models, and paradigms, as well as various other terms are often used interchangeably without consideration to specific definition or level of abstraction. This inattention to appropriate terminology leads to a lack of clarity on the part of practitioners (Thomas, Netting, & O'Connor, 2011). This issue is particularly important because evidence-based practice is essential to community-based practice and not limited to micro practice settings. The following section will define and discuss these terms in relationship to the project, and then explore specific theories, approaches, and models appropriate to the development of the practice model.

Theory

Fawcett (1999) defines theory as a set of interrelated concepts and propositions organized inductively or deductively to describe or explain phenomena. It derives from the need to order facts in a meaningful way (Turner, 1996). Each specific type of theory has a unique focus, and each takes on a particular form and manifestation. Subsequently, there are many types of theories: explanatory theories, social behavioral theories, formal theories, reflexive therapeutic theories, socialist collectivist theories, individualist reformist theories, practice theories, and others (Fawcett, 1999; Payne, 2005; Walsh 2006). Making distinctions among theories is critical to demonstrating their relevance in research, education, and practice. Knowing the specific

function implied by theories is vital to using them appropriately as well as understanding their ultimate potentials and limitations.

In the case of this project, formal theories developed in the field and prevalent in the literature must inform the research process in order to offer a foundation of knowledge for the practice model. It is widely held that all people in any endeavor use theory to motivate practice, however formally or informally, conscious or unconscious (Payne, 2005). Formal theories are theories that have been conceptualized, externalized, and tested in the field. Informal theories, however, are guided either consciously or unconsciously by practice knowledge, intuition, or other factors, but have not been formally tested using empirical methods or documented within predominant literature (Payne, 2005).

Payne (2005) also articulates notions of theory specific to social work that are particularly relevant to this project. He uses three specific domains: individualist reformist, socialist collectivist, and reflexive therapeutic to categorize theory. Individualist reformist theories are examples of social work practice theories that are typically, but not always, used in direct practice settings rather than community practice settings. These practice theories work on reforming the individual to be a constructive member of society and leave it up to that individual to navigate systems mostly on their own. Socialist collectivist theories primarily focus on individuals consolidating power to achieve collective goals. Community practitioners heavily utilize these types of theories, as do some individual direct service practitioners. Reflexive therapeutic theories involve working through problems in collaboration with a social worker or clinician usually over time.

It is critical to emphasize that in using the term socialist collectivist Payne (2005) refers to a type of theory, and not to a particular economic system. Socialist collectivist theories are often

commonly applied within capitalist systems. These theories help practitioners, participants, and researchers to "recognize, understand, and explain new situations", and therefore provide particular relevance to this line of inquiry (Turner, 1996 p. 10).

Approaches

Although theories, approaches, and models may work in relationship to one another, there are fundamental differences between them. Theories guide practice by ordering empirically based facts (Turner, 1996). Hardina (2002) takes the position that many theories themselves are insufficient in guiding practice. Thus, specific linkages need to be made between theory and practice in order to develop effective community interventions. This application of theory to practice is where approaches and models play a significant role.

Approaches use certain interrelated theoretical assumptions combined with skills, practice knowledge, and values to guide practitioners in the field. For example, Lee (1996) describes the empowerment approach as being "based on values, principles, processes, and skills integrated into an overall conceptual framework" (p. 220). The framework in this particular case is conceptual, and it is less prescriptive and more flexible than a model. According to Netting, O'Connor, and Fauri (2008), approaches operate at a higher level of abstraction than models. Approaches also involve a specific strategy related to achieving specific goals or consolidating resources (Checkoway, 1997).

Models

Different than approaches, models determine strategy, and are much more specific (Hardina, 2002). Jeffries (1996) states, "A model is a simplification of reality that is intended to order and clarify our perception of that reality while still encapsulating its essential characteristics" (p. 101). Jefferies (1996) goes on to say that a model needs to identify principal variables in order

to demonstrate its analytic value, thus enabling prediction of likely outcomes. Models, therefore, provide guidelines for practice (Netting, Kettner, & McMurtry, 2008). It is essentially the architecture of the organization. It is the plan for how the practice is structured (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2001). Effective practice models can also be integral tools for organizing and teaching (Weil, 1996).

Mondros and Wilson (1994) go into great detail in identifying the vital components inherent in practice models: (1) A change goal, (2) specific roles for staff, leaders, and members, (3) a process for selecting issues, (4) an identification of the target of the change effort, (5) an assessment of how adversarial the target will be, (6) a change strategy, (7) an understanding of resources needed to produce change, (8) an understanding of the role of an organization in the change process (p. 240).

Strategies and Tactics

Strategies and tactics are used in conjunction with a model to bring about long term social change (Hardina, 2002). Strategies and tactics should be linked to the specific model being utilized (Netting, et al., 2008). Strategies are long range actions while tactics are short term activities launched as a part of an overall change strategy (Hardina, 2002). Strategies are highly specific and context bound, but fit within a practice model or approach. Bobo, Kendall, & Max (2001) contend that a strategy must include an analysis of power relationships. According to them, the main difference between a strategy and a plan are dynamics of power.

Paradigms

A paradigm is a set of assumptions, values, and beliefs about reality shared by a scientific community that determines what set or sets of research and practice are appropriate and acceptable (Fawcett, 1999; Kuhn, 1960). It has also been defined simply as a particular world

view (Netting & O'Connor, 2003). They are various large scale heuristics that serve as practical guides for analyzing paradigms in relation to theories, practice, and research methodologies (Burell & Morgan, 1970; Guba, 1990; Schriver, 2011).

Some of these guides are much more comprehensive than others. For example, Schriver (2011) merely divides paradigms into two categories of traditional and alternative. Others argue that this categorization does not give proper attention to the nuance needed in analyzing multiple ontological and epistemological positioning. In contrast, Burrell and Morgan (1979) offer a holistic and extensive "intellectual map" (p. xi) of the many dimensions of truth and reality related to theory, research, and other social phenomenon. Burrell and Morgan's paradigmatic framework consists of four paradigms, each with their own ontological, epistemological, methodological, and social change assumptions.

Burrell and Morgan organize their four paradigms along two intersecting continuum. The vertical continuum is related to social change. At the bottom is the status quo, graduating to incremental change, and culminating in Radical change. The horizontal continuum intersects the vertical at the middle, and the extreme right is objective, universal truth. To the extreme left of the horizontal continuum are subjective, individual notions of truth. These continuums work together to form four distinctive paradigmatic orientations, as shown in Table 1.

Radical Change

Radical Humanist Individual Emancipation Atheoretical- all theory is oppressive Reality is subjective to the individual	Radical Structuralist Collective Radical Change Systemic Change Truth is Objective Reality is outside of us
Interpretive Reality is Subjective Consensus Incremental Change Meaning and Experience	Functionalist Positivist/Post-Positivist Nomothetic Reality is Outside of us Truth is Objective

Status Quo **(Table 1)**

Functionalist Paradigm. As indicated above, each paradigm has its own specific sets of assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and truth. The functionalist paradigm is dominated by the idea that truth is knowable, objective, and operates outside of us. Truth as well as reality is ordered, linear, and distinct within this paradigm. Most practices within traditional science and medicine lie within this paradigm. It is where positivism and post-positivism are oriented. This paradigm focuses primarily on maintaining the status quo, and/or incremental change.

Interpretive Paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is focused on subjective, individualized interpretations of knowledge and reality. Within this paradigm are ideographic notions of

reality, truth, and knowledge building. There is a concern for meaning making, and within this context, all reality is subjective to the individual. It is built on the assumption that reality cannot exist outside of individual experience, and that truth is dependent upon context.

Radical Structuralist Paradigm. The radical structuralist paradigm maintains all of the assumptions inherent in the functionalist paradigm related to social order and reality existing outside of the individual, but is focused on radical change and upending the status quo. The radical structuralist paradigm is concerned with collective emancipation and liberation. It is an overturning of the existing system for a new system of thought and action. This is where certain theorists, such as Marx would fit here in terms of his focus on radically upending capitalism through means of a violent revolution to create a communist state.

Radical Humanist Paradigm. The radical humanist paradigm's notions of truth are also subjective to the individual. The main difference between it and the interpretive paradigm is its focus on emancipation at the level of the individual. Assumptions within this paradigm include the view that theory is oppressive, and it is therefore a strictly anti-theoretical orientation. It assumes that individuals develop their own set of rationalities that only need to make sense to them. It is oriented toward ultimate individual freedom. Many post-modernists rest within this paradigm.

This research project is situated within the functionalist paradigm within Burrell and Morgan's multi-paradigmatic framework. It is post-positivist in its orientation as derived from the use of mainstream practice models, appropriate theories from within research and practice literature, and systematic use of grounded theory methodology in developing the model. As this model is focuses on incremental change within system contexts, its applicability to radical structuralist practice is also relevant. Certain uses of participatory action research methods as

well as community based participatory methods may become useful in future applications, evaluations, and testing of the model.

A Brief History of Greater Fulton: Then, Now, and a Look at Context

At the top of Powhatan Hill in Richmond Virginia's Far East End, an inscription commemorates the first meeting between John Smith, Christopher Newport, and Chief Powhatan in May of 1607. This hill lies adjacent to Fulton and provides a stark reminder of this community's vast history. Community members regularly remind each other in meetings that Fulton is the birthplace of Richmond, the same place that fed the engine of the largest industrial center in the south, and served as a confederate ship yard during the Civil War.

Abraham Lincoln first stepped onto the banks of Richmond here, marched with Union soldiers to declare Richmond as taken, and its enslaved African American population oppressed, as a part of the repugnant slave trade, as free. After the war, many working class African Americans who migrated to the city centers for work fueled by the industrial revolution made Fulton their home. Many worked at the rail yard in Fulton just by the James River as well as the old Cedar Works. Others worked in the factories just west in Shockoe Bottom (Davis, 1988).

As decades passed, Fulton grew into a self-sustaining community with thriving businesses, a grocery store, convenience stores, churches, barbershops, and an ice cream parlor. Yet segregation and impending urban renewal governed the realities of life in Fulton. The hill stood as a physical symbol of division between whites and blacks. Some people who still live in Greater Fulton today recall personal experiences of not being able to go to the top of Fulton Hill during their youth, due to segregation (S.E. Jones III, personal communication, September 14, 2010). Even today, the hill stands as a definite boundary among the three communities of Greater Fulton: Fulton, Fulton Hill, and Montrose Heights.

In the late 1960s, a series of floods swept through the East End community of Fulton, and the city of Richmond responded in partnership with the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) by establishing an urban renewal project. The effects of this project still haunt this community to the present day. The city and RRHA declared eminent domain, gave residents the market value of their homes and business, and upended an entire community. These same business, churches, and homes had been and utilized by residents from the industrial revolution into the better part of the twentieth century. RRHA and the city began the push for urban "renewal" in 1968 with funds from the federal government. It finally ended after nearly a decade of fighting, organizing, and litigation that included meetings, plans, and marching on city hall. What the city deemed urban renewal could be more aptly named as urban removal (Davis, 1988).

In the thirty years that the community, the federal government, RRHA, and the city have worked to rebuild the community; Phase III of the Hope VI project intended to rebuild Fulton, is still underway. A vibrant community of businesses, churches, playgrounds, a pool hall, an ice cream parlor, a grocer, and other economic anchors has been replaced with suburban style single family homes. Only one church remains. Mt. Calvary Baptist Church rebuilt in the early eighties now functions as the only place where the community can gather for a meeting in Fulton.

Desegregation, urban renewal, and white flight created shifts in the neighborhood, including a changing racial, economic, and social dynamic within the community. Currently, three communities make up Greater Fulton, which are comprised of approximately 75% African American residents. The remaining 25% is predominantly composed of white working class residents. Some businesses exist in Fulton Hill, but business to move in and out of the

neighborhood. Currently, eight vacant buildings populate Fulton Hill's business district at the intersection of Government and Williamsburg Rd.

Most of the organizing in recent years has taken place on Fulton Hill, and organizing outside of Fulton Hill itself has come from within Fulton Hill's resident community. Residents began the civic association began in 1981 in order to connect community members, build a community voice, and work with policy makers (M.E. Otto, personal communication, September 11, 2010). A few years later, the civic association in partnership with Carl Otto, a local business leader, began working with Parks and Recreation in 1989 to establish a park where old Fulton once stood. In the nineties, the community began to experience gang violence and felt the brunt of the crack epidemic. Community members worked with the civic association to start a Neighborhood Watch. A community member recalled being told by a police officer at the time that, "the police don't come into Fulton (Hill) quickly after a shooting, because we don't think the community really cares" (M.L. Decassaux, September 20, 2010). Greater Fulton residents then knew it was time to get organized.

When a post office on the corner of Williamsburg and Salem Street became vacant residents organized to create a commercial space and resource for Greater Fulton. The community and the civic association raised money, established a non-profit organization and began what is now the Neighborhood Resource Center. Fundraising began in 2002, and by 2004, they had raised enough money to buy the building. The center now houses a Montessori Pre School, a Job support lab, a library, a recording studio, a garden, a fully functioning kitchen, and a host of adult and afterschool programs for children. The Neighborhood Resource Center now operates as the convening agency for the community development initiative that the Local Initiative Support Corporation currently funds.

Greater Fulton as the context for this study is appropriate due to its history and the broader societal conditions that have shaped its existence. Many domains of difference that have traditionally been barriers to common unity, such as age, race, gender, and sexual orientation, exist in Greater Fulton. Past differences run very deep in this community, and often create barriers to both action and communication. As one African American participant stated, "My mother and grandmother used to scrub the floors in that house", while pointing to the oldest house in the neighborhood still owned by members of that same family. The family remains one of the wealthiest white families in the neighborhood, and active in both the civic association and the local business association. In many ways this community in many embodies both the oppressive and bright past in which Americans tend to struggle, ignore, or seek reconciliation.

The Research Process: An Overview

The following research questions frame the study, methodology, sampling, and analysis:

1. What elements do existing models provide in relation to the issues of difference boundaries? What gaps can be identified in existing models?
2. What are the key components of effective community practice across boundaries of difference?
3. How can the issue of difference in community practice be addressed more effectively during the engagement process?
4. What adaptations are needed in order for this model to be effective in various practice contexts?

Research Design

The chosen design of this project was model development or developmental research (Rothman & Thomas, 1994). The sampling frame used was purposive sampling using maximum

variation. Participants were chosen based on their work on a grassroots community development project in Richmond's East End and based on key domains of difference that include race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, and ability. The research methodology was qualitative grounded theory. Data was collected using in-depth, structured interviews, and specific interview questions were constructed based on a review of the prevalent literature as well as key components of other models that have been developed. Upon analysis a practice model was constructed based on findings, and then applied to another context. To pilot test and preliminarily evaluate the model focus groups of practitioners were used to address issues of transferability and model adaptation.

Implications for Social Justice Work Practice

The research question explored in this line of inquiry directly relates to the values and ethics embedded in social work education, practice, and research. According to the NASW Code of Ethics, Community practitioners must have tools that enable them to competently navigate the increasingly complex and diverse practice arena (NASW, 2007). Boundaries of race, culture, class, ability, orientation, and age intersect at the heart of effective community practice. They also exist at the center of deconstructing the elements of oppression that are all too often a part of so many people's daily lives. Deconstructing these elements of oppression and effectively addressing issues of difference are vital goals inherent in social justice work. This project yields many great possibilities to further the discourse, and to provide tangible practice tools to the engaged community practitioner.

The next chapter provides a detailed literature review that will distinguish community practice models from social movements, define community practice, and provide a detailed overview of community practice models. Additionally, it interrogates the construct of cultural

competence, and discusses in detail building alliances in the presence of difference. This review and discussion provides a strong foundation for the research linking key components to the research design and methodology in chapter 3.

CHAPTER TWO- THEORY, COMMUNITY PRACTICE, AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Introduction

This chapter is a summary of the relevant literature related to social movements, community practice models, and pertinent theoretical foundations to ground the research study. It begins with a discussion defining distinctions between social movements and community practice. Chapter two continues with a thorough summary of related theories appropriate to informing the development of the model, includes an overview of pertinent community practice models, while underscoring key constructs appropriate to the inquiry inherent in each. A discussion of cultural competence and building alliances in the presence of difference are also explored in detail in the final part of this chapter.

Community Practice, Social Movements, and Social Work: An Overview

Gaining an understanding of the relationships among community practice, social movements, and social work is vital in discerning the differences and the intersections of social movements and community practice. This section defines community, discusses community practice, social movements, and their relationship to both contemporary social work practice and its historical foundations. It also defines community practice and social movements, and highlights definitive characteristics of these often colluded terms. Additionally, it clarifies how to identify community organization practice from social movements, and various other forms of practice.

Community and Community Practice

Community as a concept is becoming an increasingly complex team in contemporary contexts. With the world becoming more globalized, the progressive speed of technological advancement and changes in patterns of interactions among people, community encompasses

various perspectives and multiple meanings (Pyles, 2009). It evokes a wide range of concepts and ideas related to relationship, such as culture, mutual support, political interest, social networks, group membership, and identity. It conjures thoughts of physical spaces, structure, and neighborhood. The term community is also associated with various organizations, such as schools, congregations, clubs, neighborhood groups, and town meetings. Defining community is challenging due to its multidimensionality (Hardcastle, Powers, & Wencour, 2004).

Fellin (2001), offers a formal definition that aids in reconciling these multiple conceptual dimensions of community by defining community as, "social units with one or more of the following three dimensions: (1) a functional spatial unit meeting sustenance needs, (2) a unit of patterned interactions, and (3) a symbolic unit of collective identification (p. 1)". "Communities can be thought of in terms of place, interest, and identity (Hardina, 2002 p. 88)". Hardcastle, Powers, & Wencour (2004) mirror this definition when they contend, "the common elements in sociological definitions of community are geographic area, social interaction, and common ties (p. 91)". Place, interest, and identity are the common distinction in community typology. Understanding these distinctions is essential to working to create collective positive social change in community practice.

Community practice encompasses community organizing, community development, social and community planning, community education, and community action (Popple, 1996). Netting, Kettner, and McMurtry (2008) also imply that community practice is an element of macro practice by defining it as "a professionally guided intervention designed to bring about planned change in organizations and communities" (p. 6). Hardcastle, Powers, and Wencour (2004) define community practice as "the application of practice skills to alter behavioral patterns of community groups, organizations, and institutions or people's relationships and

interactions with these entities" (p.3). Weil and Gamble (1995) define it as "empowerment based interventions to strengthen participation in democratic processes, assist groups and communities in advocating for their basic needs and organizing for social justice, and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of human services systems" (p. 577). To summarize these broad definitions, community practice takes place when the social justice worker works with community members to develop, link, manage, and locate resources to improve the social functioning of a community (Hardcastle, Powers, & Wencour 2011).

Historical Roots to Contemporary Relevance. Community practice's influence on social work history is indispensable. It is prevalent in its roots in the settlement house tradition to the traditions of mutual support and both rural and urban development in contemporary contexts (Hardcastle, Powers & Wencour, 2011; Weil, 1996). Jane Addams birthed social work when she founded Hull House on the corner of Halsted and Polk St. in Chicago in 1889 at the height of the industrial revolution (Addams, 1910). Her work stands as one of the first canonized examples of community practice efforts in the field of social work predating the field of sociology.

The earliest iterations of social work practice took place in community. These methods of practice developed within the context of the social problems of the day. The field of social work continues to place an emphasis on the person in society and places particular importance on the intersection of the social environment and the individual (Schriver, 2011). The profession has a strong tradition of working towards policy change, advocacy, and organizing. This has been apparent in social workers' roles in labor movements, the women's movement, civil rights, gay rights, and many other movements (Axinn & Stern, 2011; Garvin & Cox, 2001).

Social Movements

In order to fully explore the role of social justice workers in various social movements, it is imperative to distinguish between social movements and community practice in general. Tilly (2004) outlines the social movement as "an invented political form" made up of "various interest groups . . . as a counterweight to oppressive power" (p. 3). Tilly (2004) emphasizes that social movements consist of three essential elements. (1) Campaign- a long term collective effort making demands on specific targets of authority. (2) Demonstrations of various forms of political actions, for example coalition and organization building, media engagement, to vigils and rallies. These are the public performances of the social movement. (3) Dedicated public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (WUNC) to the movement on the part of themselves and those they represent.

Social movements coalesce in order to respond to the public realization that the mainstream political process has not proved adequate in achieving widespread social change. Social movements usually evolve to comprise a coalition or a group of organizations with many supporters united in a single cause. An evolution that takes place from informal staging of protests to formal organizations that speak truth to the interests of certain groups that seek to influence, and engage in legislative politics (Hardina, 2002).

In a social movement, ideas are communicated concise and simply enough that they spread very rapidly. Messaging is clear and direct, so that support for the movement can build quickly. Yet many organizations coming together do not constitute a social movement. Movements that have been deemed successful, such as the civil rights movement, have room in

them for various coalitions, organizations, and individuals. They are, in effect, large enough to be welcoming to multiple constituencies (Horton, 1998).

Historical Roots and Contemporary Relevance. Historically, when political elites do not have the needs, stresses, and injustices voiced by the people social movements are organized to draw attention to those concerns (Zinn, 2003). Social movements predate the field of social work as well as community practice. The first social movements coincided with the emergence of democracy in Europe when mass amounts of the population began making public claims. Although public claims began much earlier than the French revolution and the beginnings of Parliament in England, it was not until democracy took hold that the public could display outright opposition to particular political forces, programs, and oppressive regimes (Tilly, 2004).

Some of the hallmarks of early social movements in eighteenth century Europe and the United States included contentious gatherings (CGs), the birth of the organized street march, the rise of political entrepreneurs, and pamphleteering. From these beginnings, social movements developed and adapted over time to meet the needs of an ever changing, dynamic, and increasingly technological, interconnected, and globalized world. In the twenty first century, social movements have adjusted to the economic demands of capitalist societies with highly organized coalitions and paid staff. That being said, even though social movements have historically evolved, they have nearly always been associated with deep rooted political striving on the part of organizations, coalitions, and various public interests (Tilly, 2004).

Intersection of Social Movements and Community Practice

Community practice is not synonymous with social movements. However, the two terms do converge in some aspects. Community practice often happens within the context of a social movement, but one is not necessarily participating in a social movement when engaged in

community practice. It depends on the specific circumstances. Few theorists include social movements in their models of practice. Rothman (1996) includes social action, which can be associated with social movements. While Weil and Gamble (1995) also include social movements in their eight model framework, no theorists imply that community practice is analogous to social movements. Various aspects of community practice exist within social movements, and community practice simply may not involve participation in a social movement.

Theoretical Foundation: Informing the Model

Defining the use of the terms theory, approach, model, and paradigm is imperative when ambiguity surrounds the ways in which scholars use certain terms within the literature. Now that the uses of terms are evident[2], the question of which specific theories, approaches, and models will inform, shape, and ground the research project becomes significant. The following section will begin by using specific theories related to social justice, community practice, and critical theory. It will continue by discussing certain approaches that will inform the development of the model as well as the research questions. It will conclude with a brief overview of community practice models.

There is no overarching theory of community practice in social work, which is both a blessing and a curse. As a result community practitioners must use some theories that have not been developed in a community practice context, often theories derived from other disciplines. This problem, however, offers opportunities for theory construction, model development, and cross-disciplinary study (McNair, 1996). But it can leave many practitioners using informal theories and practice knowledge derived from personal experience rather than evidence-based research in the field.

[2] See definition of Theories, models, approaches, and paradigms in chapter 1

Theories explored in building the foundation for the proposed line of inquiry were chosen because of their applicability to community social justice work practice, their pertinence to model development, and their relevance to forging boundaries of difference. This section will cover systems theory, ecological systems theory, critical theory, and theories of social justice. Given the general need for formal theories to guide community practice and community based research, this section will discuss theories that practitioners utilize regularly in the field.

Systems Theory

The interplay of political, economic, and social systems is essential to the functioning of a community and a community organization (Fellin, 2000). A social system is a group of individuals interacting (Longres, 2000). Systems theory is unique in that it bridges the divide between traditional paradigm orientations and more alternative paradigms. It utilizes rational, linear, and quantitative forms of measurement typical in positivist positioning. It also honors the integration of holistic, circular, perspectives of environments consistent with more interpretive ways of knowing (Schriver, 2011).

Systems theory views an organization as "a complex and interconnected set of elements interacting in dynamic processes, influencing both internal elements and the environment surrounding the organization" (Schriver, 2011 p. 403). Systems always adjust, adapt, and interface; therefore, conflict and change are both apparent and inevitable in systems theory (Longres, 2000). Payne (2005) notes "systems interact with each other in complex ways. Exploring these helps to understand how individuals interact with other people in families and communities and in wider social environments." (p. 142).

Grief and Lynch (1983) outline many of the concepts related to structure, process, and states in systems theory. The structure of systems includes the proposition that systems have

boundaries. Within these boundaries, energy is exchanged both internally and externally across these given boundaries. In open systems energy is interchanged across boundaries of the given system. In a closed system energy has no transfer across boundaries.

Some interrelated concepts related to process in systems theory include the following:

(1) Inputs- energy fed into the system.

(2) Throughput- use of the energy in the system.

(3) Output- the effect of the energy on the environment as it passes outside the boundary of the system.

(4) Feedback loops- the result of the output on the environment, and its affect on the existing system. Essentially, it is the information gathered.

(5) Entropy- the system's energy. If the system does not take in new energy from outside its boundary, it eventually loses all of its energy.

States in systems theory deal with the quality of the functioning. For example, one term associated with the state of a system is its steadiness. Steadiness is defined as the ability of a system to maintain itself from the input it receives and uses. If an organizational system is steady, it can adapt to change without changing its fundamental identity. Other concepts associated with states in systems are nonsummativity, differentiation, and reciprocity. Nonsummativity means "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (Payne, 2005 p. 145). Differentiation refers to the notion that systems grow more complex over time as change takes place. Reciprocity also deals with change, and as a single component of a system changes, it affects all other component parts of the system (Grief, & Lynch, 1983).

Pincus and Minahan (1973), in an effort to make general systems theory applicable to social work practice, outline four basic social work systems. The first is the change agent system made up of social workers and the organizations in which they work. The client system, the second social work system, consists of the people, groups, and communities who social workers engage in the helping process. The third system, the target system, is comprised of people whom the change agent system is attempting to change. The client system and the target system may or may not be the same. The final system is the action system. These are the people the change agent system works with to achieve its goals. Recognizing both the effects and the interplay of these systems is vital to community practice, particularly in diverse settings, due to the added layers of complexity associated with navigating differences.

Systems theory is typically used in social work to analyze families and organizations. It also aids in examining the functioning of a community (Hardina, 2002). It contends that all elements of a system affect and are affected by one another (Walsh, 2006). The overall goal of systems theory is to change interactions with systems in order to improve social functioning. As the foundation of understanding communities' and organizations' functioning, it can also aid in gauging the effect of changing demographics, increased diversity in marginalized communities, and crossing boundaries of differences effectively in community practice.

Ecological Systems Theory

Very closely associated with systems theory is ecological systems theory. Ecological systems theory views the community as the human habitat, and the individual or the family must search and negotiate for resources within this habitat (McNair, 1996). It "draws on environmental, biological, and anthropological precepts to highlight interconnections between the social surround, geographic, and other factors" (Hardcastle, Powers & Wencour, 2004 p. 47).

It is particularly helpful because it simplifies complex transactions between the individual, parents, children, and various other units within the community ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Ecological systems theory also called population ecology, human ecology theory, and ecological theory, posits that both social structure and individual human development evolves through interaction with the physical environment, groups, individuals, and organizations. As changes take place, social forces will seek equilibrium to maintain balance as well as regular patterns of activities and behavior (Hardina, 2002). The ecosystem of a community is made up of all of its organizational and environmental units, such as housing structure, land use, population density, social structure, related community resources, and other complex social interactions (Fellin, 2000).

Bronfenbrenner (1979), a leading scholar in the field of psychology and an influential theorist in the development of ecological systems theory, holds that human development reflects the interplay of five systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. They are summarized below.

(1) microsystem- the pattern of relationships that one experiences, perceives, and interacts with in their direct environment. Examples include school, church, family, and the neighborhood. The individual is not a passive recipient within this environmental context, but rather takes an active role in co-creating the context.

(2) mesosystem- the interrelations of factors between contexts within the microsystem. It is the interplay of the school with the community, the church with the family, et cetera.

(3) exosystem- when two factors within the mesosystem interact and affect the individual outside of their direct sphere of control. For example, a parent may lose a job, and the child may have problems as a result.

(4) macrosystem- the individual's cultural context. This would include socio-economic status, beliefs, norms, values acquired through the socialization process.

(5) chronosystem- related to history as well as patterns of life transitions. This may include the effect of trauma, familial history, but as well as where someone may be in time. It may relate directly to how well they adapt to challenges and cope with particular social barriers (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979).

Many factors affect individual and social functioning within community's ever changing physical socio-cultural environments, and therefore affect orientations for community practice interventions. According to ecological theory, these factors include the importance of context, mutuality and interdependence extending beyond direct family interactions, analysis of community organization in self maintenance, and systemic causes of social problems (Hardcastle, Powers & Wencour, 2004). All of these factors intersect with the pervading condition of difference inherent in increasingly diverse community practice contexts.

Critical Theory

Both systems theory and ecological systems theory have been criticized for their lack of attention to various dimensions of power within social systems, organizations, and communities. They have also been criticized for not taking into account some of the oppressive elements of social systems such as social stratification, racism, and class dimensions (Payne, 2005). Many theorists have argued that the absence of such critiques imply that oppressive social elements are

inevitable. Additionally, the language of systems theory appears to be value neutral, which many theorists, particularly critical theorists, would argue is implausible (Ritzer, 2008).

Critical theory emerged from the work of the Frankfurt School of sociology in 1937, and is oriented towards critiquing society in order to change it. It rejects the development of knowledge for knowledge's sake and traditional theory that only serves to explain and interpret. Critical theory continues to be particularly concerned with oppression, power, domination, and the role of institutions in capitalist society (Pyles, 2009). Critical theory locates the source of all social problems within the institution (Mulally, 2007). It seeks to reveal the foundations of domination in oppressive practices and structures (Baines, 2001). The practice of hegemony through cultural production, mass communication, and industry as well as its relationship to power and differential social arrangements make up the foundation of critical theoretical orientations (Kincheloe, & McLauren, 2005).

Critical theory has often been associated with marxist and neo-marxist schools of thought, due to the parallel presupposition in both marxism and critical theory that theory should seek to change the world. Furthermore it seeks human emancipation "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982 p. 244). Critical theory takes steps away from Marxism in its focus on multiple forms of domination rather than a singular focus on political economy (Pyles, 2009).

Critical theory is also meant to be a practical form of theory and knowledge building (Horkheimer, 1982). This practical orientation gives it particular relevance to the field of social justice work and community practice. Mulally (2007) has gone to great lengths to link critical theory to social work practice by developing a form of social work practice based in critical

theory called structural social work. Structural social work has a primary focus on oppressive arrangements of social structures as the major source of social problems.

Fook (2002) relates critical theory to social work practice in her conception of critical social work practice. These two practical applications of critical theory applied to social work practice are strikingly similar. The issue of domination as created structurally, and experienced personally. This emphasis on the institution rather than individual as the source is inherent in both practical applications of critical theory in social work. Critical social work emphasizes people's agency which is defined as, "the capacity to achieve social change" (Payne, 2005 p. 242). This practical theory is particularly relevant to forging boundaries of difference in community practice due to its emphasis on the various forms of oppression, domination, power, and marginalization.

Theories of Social Justice

Of particular significance to community practitioners, social workers, and the profession as a whole is the role of social justice in both theory and practice. It is an essential part of the ethical principles and standards put forth by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). "Social workers promote social justice with and on behalf of clients" (NASW Code of Ethics, 2011). The powerful need to promote social justice in research, education, and practice cannot be understated, and is rarely debated. But social justice theory and practice are points where scholars, practitioners, and researchers' conceptions diverge. The purpose of this section is not to ally with any particular theorist as "right" or "wrong", but to discuss various social justice theories in relation to community practice, diversity, and forging alliances across boundaries of difference linking them to the line of inquiry.

Finding a consensus definition of social justice continues to elude the profession. Mondros and Wilson (1994) define social justice as "justice and fairness to individuals, a sense of collective and societal responsibility for the welfare of individuals, and a sense of altruism that accepts personal responsibility for solving problems" (p. 15). The NASW code of ethics associates social justice with a respect for diversity, equal access, advocacy, human rights, and the elimination of all forms of domination and discrimination (NASW, 2011). This is a principle that we must act upon in our practice.

Utilitarianism. One of the most prevalent classical social justice theorists was the eighteenth century English moral philosopher Jeremy Bentham. As the founder of the influential doctrine of utilitarianism, his theory continues to hold sway over contemporary policy makers, economists, and business executives (Sandel, 2009). Utilitarianism's main proposition is that the right thing to do is always what maximizes the greatest utility. According to Bentham, the foundation of any moral argument lies in the principle of utility. The master of all thought and action is maximizing pleasure over pain; this concept is known as the utility principle. He thought that his utility principle could offer a science of morality (Bentham, 1789). "If we add up all of the benefits of this policy, and subtract the costs, will it produce more benefits then the alternative?" (Sandel, 2009 p. 34). Politicians still use this system of weighing costs and benefits when crafting and passing legislation.

Rawlsian Theory of Justice. Perhaps the most dominant social justice theorist in recent years, and the most cited within the field of social work is John Rawls (Banerjee, 2011). In his seminal work *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1971) posits that members of society cannot come to an agreement on a just social contract unless people approach this social contract through a "veil of ignorance", an original position of equality. Rawls attempts to construct principles and rules

that govern society through a democratic process, without awareness of individual status in society. His position, if people gather as they are to choose the values, ethics, and principles that regulate their lives, they would choose those principles based on their own social status in society. He asks us to arrange our policies, laws, actions, and societies based on fairness (Rawls, 1971).

With this rationale, Rawls would not choose utilitarianism, and he stands in opposition to it as a form of social justice (Sen, 2009). Instead of viewing justice as maximizing happiness for the most people, he posits that policy must benefit the least privileged members of society (Rawls, 1971). In his view utilitarianism lays the groundwork for systematic oppression of minorities. Sandel (2009) uses the example of the early Christians being thrown to the lions as an example of utilitarian notions of social justice. This brings up the essential question of whether democratic systems of community practice have potential to oppress.

Capabilities Perspective of Social Justice. Perhaps the most prevalent of recent social justice perspectives, the capabilities perspective stems from the work of Sen (2009), and has been recently applied to international development. Championed by Martha Nussbaum (2003) using a feminist ecological perspective, it defines social justice from ten distinct capabilities based on human rights that all societies should possess. This perspective does not ask the question, what does this person have, and is it equal? But it asks, what can this person do, and be (Nussbaum, 2000)?

These ten distinctive capabilities according to Nussbaum (2000) include the following: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control. Although this section does not go into great detail regarding these, the dominant propositions the capabilities approach puts forth concern a focus

on distribution of opportunities, gender equity, turning resources into opportunities, and the supposition that oppressed people may need more resources to turn opportunities into products (Nussbaum, 2003). This stance takes a new look at how practitioners conceptualize and address social justice issues in the field.

Relevant Community Practice Approaches

As stated in the previous chapter, approaches operate at a higher level of abstraction than both theories and models (Netting & O'Connor, 2008). Certain theories and approaches used in community practice offer unique insight not only into community practice as a whole, but also into effectively crossing boundaries of difference in practice. This section will cover community practice approaches, such as strengths perspective, empowerment approaches, feminist approaches, and just practice approach. It will highlight key constructs within each approach that inform the research and, as an extension, the development of the community practice model.

Strengths Perspective

The strengths perspective offers a definite shift in social work knowledge and practice. The strengths perspective is a significant alteration of thinking for traditional social workers as well as students just learning social work practice. The strengths perspective emphasizes: strengths, possibilities, and resiliencies in egalitarian, collaborative relationships with clients rather than problems and deficits. Its three basic principles are summarized here: (1) People often do amazingly well given their circumstances, and do the best they can right now. (2) People have survived up to this point using their capacities, their will, their vision, and their strengths. Workers must understand these capacities and make alliance with this knowledge in order to help. (3) Change will only happen when practitioners firmly believe in clients'

aspirations, perceptions, and strengths and collaborate with them. It urges, to begin where the client is oriented rather than where a practice theory may first suggest (Blundo, 2009).

Saleeby summarizes the possibilities inherent in the strengths perspective: "The central dynamic of the strengths perspective is the rousing of hope, tapping into the visions, dreams and the promise of the individual, family, or community… assume that all humans, somewhere within, have the urge to be heroic; to transcend circumstances, to develop their powers, to overcome adversity, to stand up and be counted, to be a part of something that surpasses the petty interests of self, to shape and realize their hopes and dreams" (Saleeby, 2009 p. 7). Saleeby (2009) also outlines what he calls the lexicon of strengths. The central tenant of strengths perspective is in hope, possibility, and vision for a greater future. The lexicon of strengths outlines a particular foundation of principles rising to a point of freedom that lies in promise, possibility, positive expectations, and potential. Competence, courage, capacities, resilience, reserves, resources, and resourcefulness make up the foundation (Saleeby, 2009).

Strengths Perspective: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. The key components within the strengths approach that contribute to informing the inquiry relate directly to building common unity and crossing boundaries of difference. To begin, the collaborative nature of the approach is vital to working with people of varied backgrounds, culture, experience, and ideology. The emphasis on the worker as an equal, as a learner, and a collaborator is of essential importance. When working in diverse contexts, it is imperative that the worker remain open to learning new ways of communicating, interacting, and working with others. It is also critical that the worker model those behaviors in their interactions with community members and remain open to change. It also brings up questions that may be

valuable in the interview process, such as whether a community organizer is viewed as an expert or a collaborator in a practice context.

Areas where the strengths approach may be problematic could be in its tendency to look directly to solutions rather than getting a clear idea of what problems there may be in the community during the engagement process. The traditional role of a social worker in community practice is to be a problem solver (Blundo, 2009). There may be conditions within the community that members view as very real problems. Focusing on possibilities is laudable, but as Alinsky (1971) posits, it is important to start with the world as it is.

Empowerment Approach

Closely aligned with strengths approaches are empowerment approaches. Empowerment is a transformative phenomenon constructed through a process of dialogue and action (Saleeby, 2009). According to Hardina (2002) "the purpose of community organization practice is to empower members of oppressed groups"(p. 4). Solomon (1976) defines empowerment as "a process whereby the social worker engages in a set of activities with the client that aim to reduce the powerlessness that has been created by negative valuations based on membership in a stigmatized group. It involves identification of power blocks that contribute to the problem as well as the development and implementation of specific strategies aimed at either the reduction of the effects from indirect power blocks or the reduction of the operations of direct power blocks" (p. 19). Gutierrez and Lewis (1999) outline the elements of empowerment and place them under the overarching goal of social justice. They highlight the elements of power, psychological transformation, and connections or social supports.

A major contributor to empowerment approaches, Lee (2001) also discusses valuable concepts in empowerment practice. The importance of critical consciousness, the knowledge of

structures of power and oppression, is necessary within this framework. A conceptual framework, which involves a historical view of oppression, an ecological view of the person in environment, an eth-class perspective, a multicultural perspective, a feminist perspective, a global perspective, and a critical perspective, proves necessary to provide rigorous critique of the various forms of oppression and linkages to social change in this approach. These multiple dimensions of the conceptual model form what Lee (2001) calls the multifocal vision.

Lee (2001) describes three levels of empowerment in her framework: the personal, interpersonal, and political. The personal level deals with the multiple oppressions relevant to the worker's and community builder's daily experience. These multiple oppressions may be in the form of class differences, boundaries of ethnicity, race, or gender. The interpersonal level is made up of structures that mediate through communication against all damage caused by oppression, in particular the personal damage caused by direct power blocks. Within this level, individual power is dealt with mostly in the community member's ability to attain resources and achieve desired goals. An important element within this level is the level of the group. The third level, the political, involves taking power through collective action by building coalitions, consolidating power, and practicing advocacy (Lee, 2001).

The political level, in particular, focuses on grassroots and community organization practice. At this level, practitioners work alongside community members to share destiny and connection to all others to create the beloved community. This perspective takes pride in peoplehood. It recognizes common bonds that are local, community-oriented, and global in order for human liberation to be actualized. In order to be considered an empowerment approach, however, it must incorporate a multifocal vision, embrace values and principles of

empowerment practice, and reflect those principles in practice (Lee, 2001). These key components of this approach will serve to inform the development of this particular model.

Empowerment Approach: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. Drawing on the assumptions inherent in the empowerment approach to both shape and inform the research process, it is clear that the values are aligned with effectively crossing boundaries of difference in community practice. Many of the components of an empowerment approach also reflect knowledge and respect for difference in the multifocal vision. One of the strong points within the approach is the linking of the personal, the interpersonal, and the political levels of empowerment practice (Lee, 2001). Particularly in working with people of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and unique differences, all three of these levels of empowerment are critical to the process of crossing boundaries. It would be easy for even the seasoned community practitioner to focus mainly on the political level, due to its alignment with the priorities of community practice, while overlooking the need to do the personal and interpersonal work to build, manage, and nurture relationships.

Another fundamental part of the empowerment approach that greatly influences the research is the focus on dialogue and action (Saleeby, 2009). In this way the practice is deliberate, collaborative, and based on collective knowledge building. Other concepts serve to inform the research: the multicultural focus, knowledge of power and oppression, and the development of a critical consciousness (Lee, 2001). All of these aspects are pertinent not only to community practice, but also to effective community practice in the context of diverse communities. These key components are a critical part of the linking guide that link these models, approaches, and theories to the interview questions and prompts (See Table 4).

Feminist Organizing Approach

Women have a long tradition of organizing for power from the suffrage movement, to equal pay for equal work, and reproductive rights. The three historic waves of feminism have utilized multiple tactics and approaches, but they do have many overarching similarities. "The goal of feminist organizing is the elimination of permanent power hierarchies between all people that can prevent them from realizing their human potential. . . the elimination of sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression through the process of empowerment"(Gutierrez & Lewis, 1998 pp. 99-100). One of the major distinctions that make feminist organizing approaches unique is the use of women's social networks, and their views of community in relation to politics (Pyles, 2009).

Many feminist organizers and community organization scholars have outlined the factors that make feminist organizing approaches stand apart from other various approaches to community organization practice. These factors serve as some of the key components that inform the development of the model, via the linking guide, and line of inquiry. As in the steeped tradition of feminist theory all of these factors are viewed as vital holding equal relevance.

One study related to feminist organizing was a qualitative thematic analysis conducted with female community development workers. Six themes were found that included: (1) focus on human needs, (2) connectedness of issues, (3) holistic approach to development, (4) process orientation, (5) emphasis on community participation, and (6) networking (Gittell, Ortega-Busamente, & Steffy, 2000). Gutierrez and Lewis (1999) go on to also outline some of the standards of a feminist organizing approach: (1) utilization of a gender lens, (2) attention to process in practice, (3) empowerment through the process of consciousness raising, (4) a

grassroots, bottom up approach, (5) diversity is strength, (6) organizing is holistic. The final framework outlined is Pyles (2009) four dimensional framework. In it she outlines her view of the most important aspects of a feminist approach to community organization practice. The four dimensions include: (1) the primary concern of power, oppression, and ultimate liberation, (2) consensus oriented decision making, (3) valuing the group process, and (4) a focus beyond single issue organizing (Pyles, 2009).

It is still difficult in many feminist organizing endeavors for differentially situated women to come together in solidarity in order to bridge some divisions. These differences exist both within groups and across groups. Just because women share certain interlocking oppressions, it does not mean that feminist organizers do not often struggle to build alliances across boundaries of difference. Feminists also, similar to other groups, may have difficulty forging alliances in diversity. Differences among women have served as fundamental barriers to progress within the movement, and continue to be negotiated among feminist organizers (Mizrahi, & Lombe, 2007).

Feminist Approach: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. One of the reasons why this research is so critical is that even within various groups, cultures, and constituencies, boundaries of differences exist. These boundaries often stand in the way of progress to effective community practice. This is a definite paradox when examining the benefits of the feminist approach to organizing. There are many overlapping themes among the various approaches to feminist practice that are very relevant to effectively crossing boundaries of difference. Perhaps experiences within feminist community practice contexts, or the feminist movement itself, have influenced the way in which feminist practitioners negotiate differences and build alliances.

Some of the prevalent concepts within the feminist approach that are particularly influential in linking the concepts to questions in order to guide the inquiry include the emphasis on collaboration, networking, and relationships. Also, the notion of process repeatedly came forth in the various feminist approaches. This emphasis is in contrast to Alinsky (1971) who viewed the means as justifying the ends. Feminist organizers view the process itself as equally important to the ultimate goal. The notion of a holistic approach as well as consensus decision making, or decisions made as a part of the group process are examples of these core principles. This is particularly important to bridging boundaries of difference, due to the challenge of building common unity through difference. These key components reinforce the often divergent approaches to difference to community practice in various contexts.

Just Practice: A Practice Approach to Social Justice

The obvious questions that arise when attempting to make sense of how to use the both prevailing and opposing views of social justice include how do we effectively use social justice principles in practice? Although social justice is a vital component of the NASW code of ethics, there is little guidance on how the principle of social justice can be effectively used in practice.

Finn (2008) outlines a just practice approach to social work practice that is rooted in social justice. The author emphasizes five domains: meaning, history, power, context, and possibilities. It is based in critical theory and revolves around these five interconnected concepts. Meaning is essentially how we make sense of the world and our experiences in it. Context centers in the idea that people and their actions must be understood within a specific context. Power means that we must be able to understand the dimensions of power and the interrelated power structures that affect our daily lives. History emphasizes how perspectives and experiences of the historian shape us, and also how we are makers and keepers of our own

history. As possibility enables us to look at what can be done, we can envision a new path for social work education that challenges us to see what can exist. These domains of social justice practice are also imperative elements of effective community practice in an increasingly diverse society.

Just Practice: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. Ironically, given the emphasis on social justice in the profession of social work, the literature has very few examples of social justice practice. Also in the context of the individual, these elements of socially just practice could be helpful in guiding dialogue among community practice participants in diverse settings. Many of the components inherent in the just practice approach are key components in other approaches, such as the emphasis on power, history, and context.

An Overview of Community Practice Models

Models, as the guidelines for practice, have shaped various community practice interventions over time (Netting, Kettner, & McMurtry, 2008). They are very effective in that they serve as the plan for how the practice is structured (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2001). This section will discuss Rothman's models, Mondros and Wilson's models, Fisher's Neighborhood Organizing model, Saul Alinsky, Highlander Model, and Friere's Tranformative Model. All of these models, mentioned because of their relevance to the current study, will be discussed briefly. Key components will be utilized from each in order to inform the proposed line of inquiry.

Rothman's Three Pronged Model of Community Intervention

Jack Rothman (1968) developed the most cited community practice model, adapted and developed over time, within the literature (Rothman, 1995; Rothman, 1996; Rothman, 2007). The three essential characteristics of Rothman's model have been developed and

reconceptualized to honor the many changing dynamics of community practice; however, its fundamental characteristics have not been changed. These three basic elements are locality development, social planning, and social action (Rothman, 1995).

Locality development "presupposes that community change should be pursued through broad participation by a wide spectrum of people at the local community level in determining goals of civic action" (Rothman, 1995 p. 28). It promotes process oriented goals, consensus, community competency, and social integration (Rothman, 1995). This is particularly valuable to the development of a practice model focused on bridging necessary boundaries of difference. Social integration is vital to effective locality development in communities.

Social planning has been described as a more rationalistic and linear planning process (Thomas, Netting, & O'Connor, 2011). This specific prong of the model is expert driven, and requires the planner to have a certain level of professional expertise and resources to collect all the necessary data to evaluate and choose the most viable practice option (Hardina, 2002). It requires a technocratic, rational, objective, empirical orientation rooted in social science and an emphasis the development of formal plans and designs. It does not involve community participation as a core ingredient of the change model (Rothman, 1995).

Social Action is potentially the most well known form of community organization practice, but may be the least understood (Hardina, 2002). It involves the redistribution of power, conflict, and oppression, with a particular concentration on the plight of the marginalized. Its most widely used strategies are direct action and oriented around winning concrete improvements in people's lives, to altering relations of power, and to giving people a sense of their own power (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2001). It also utilizes confrontational tactics, such as

civil disobedience, sit ins, walk outs, and boycotts, which have been used by various groups and social movements (Rothman, 1995).

Rothman's Key Components: Informing the Inquiry. On first reading of Rothman's particular set of models, it may seem easy to disregard them as simply explanatory models and not necessarily models of practice, due to their simplicity. However, upon closer examination, some of the components characteristic of this model may to be helpful in informing and shaping the research process. For example, at the foundation of Rothman's model of locality development are the principles of broad participation, consensus, and process oriented methods of practice (Rothman, 1995). Not only are they found in many of the other models and approaches, but these principles are vital to practice in diverse contexts and may also play a role in building alliances across boundaries of difference.

Rothman's social planning model stands in contrast to his locality development model. This model has an expert driven approach and does not include broad community participation in planning (Rothman, 1995). This model is not likely to be effective in practice with diverse groups in community contexts. In this particular model, power is concentrated in the hands of technocratic pseudo-experts who may not have cultural awareness, knowledge of the community context, which greatly increases the potential to do harm. This model likely opens the door to various forms of oppressive practice.

The social action model, on the other hand, offers great potential to bring people together in solidarity and shared interests. The key components that can be most utilized in influencing the development of the model would be the attention to power, the altering of power relations, and attention to marginalization and oppression. This model could serve as a tool in not only changing the dynamics of a community, but also in bringing people together for a common cause

(Rothman, 1995). It falls short, however, in its lack of attention to answering the question of how to create alliances while effectively navigating boundaries of difference. In many ways, these models are explanatory models of practice rather than process oriented practice models.

Weil and Gamble's Eight-Model Framework

Weil and Gamble's eight model framework provides an example of a more comprehensive model of community practice. It builds on the foundation laid by Rothman (1995), and extends it slightly to increase its specificity (Hardina, 2002). The eight model framework can also be accurately characterized as made up of eight separate models based on roles and tasks that serve to guide strategies, staff roles, and goals. These models are: (1) neighbor and community organizing, (2) organizing functional communities, (3) community, economic, and social development, (4) social planning, (5) program development and community liaison, (6) political and social action, (7) coalitions, and (8) social movements (Weil & Gamble, 1995). The need to navigate and manage both diversity and difference in everyday practice exists within all of these individual models.

Each of these eight models focuses on a specific aspect of community practice and are defined based on their individual change goal. Below are brief definitions of each model within the eight model framework. The first, neighborhood and community organizing, is primarily concerned with improving the quality of life within certain geographic boundaries. Organizing functional communities is generally made up of constituents advocating for a specific issue not confined to a particular geographic region. The third model, community, economic, and social development, has a more varied and complex definition, but is mostly centered on social supports related to income, economics, education, and leadership development. Social planning is the deliberate planning of coordinated human service programs or networks. Program

development and community liaison is closely associated with social planning, but involves establishing services for specific population groups to improve or create effective service delivery. This often occurs at the agency level. The sixth component within Weil and Gamble's framework is political and social action which concentrates on consolidation of political power and changing social institutions. Coalitions are singularly focused on issue advocacy mostly at the policy level. Finally, social movements' overarching goal is social justice through populism, taking action, and building a strong power base of people.

Hardina (2002) discusses a few ways in which the eight model framework builds on Rothman (1995). First, it recognizes the differences present in organizing functional communities based on both common function and similar attributes, as well as geographic communities based on location. Weil and Gamble (1995) also go into further detail in characterizing the various typologies of social change. Their framework adds three classifications of social change: political and social action, coalitions, and organizing social movements. It also goes a step further in classifying economic and social development as a model of organizing.

Weil and Gamble's Key Components Informing the Inquiry. Although this framework is extensive and comprehensive in its ability to identify the various roles and tasks of the organizer, it is not explicit in recognizing the ways in which organizers may be challenged by difference within their practice. Many examples of models within the framework where difference is likely to be a key obstacle in the organizing process exist. It could even be said that organizers must have the ability to cross boundaries of difference throughout all dimensions of the eight model framework. Difference is so pervasive in an increasingly diversifying society that organizers must gain the ability to navigate those boundaries effectively.

Yet Weil and Gamble (1995) provide an indispensable contribution in clarifying the multiple roles, tasks, and goals of the community organizer in various contexts. Their contribution is most beneficial in these realms and possible adaptations within their model could take place without compromising their fundamental focus. Within all of these individual models, organizers must know how to manage, negotiate, and navigate across boundaries of difference that may often challenge the organizing process. Weil and Gamble (1995) do provide a detailed, multidimensional heuristic to guide the goals, tasks, and roles of the organizer, thus offering a springboard to analyze potential contexts where differences may occur.

Mondros and Wilson's Models of Social Action Organizations

Mondros and Wilson (1994) identified three models that demonstrate another way of thinking about community organization practice. These three models are models of social action organizations. They include: (1) grassroots, (2) lobbying, and (3) mobilizing. All are influenced by other models and approaches and involve crossing boundaries of difference to build support for issues relevant to each organizational type.

The first model of social action organization is the grassroots model. It is also known as the populist model and derives much of its influence from the work of Saul Alinsky, which will be discussed further in later sections of this chapter. The ultimate goal of this model is for citizens to work together to target power holders with authority. It highlights the differences between people who are privileged and others who live in the margins of society. Successes in this model depend on a high level of grassroots participation and leadership (Pyles, 2009).

The second model is the lobbying model of social action organization. This model tends to have more funding, operate with highly organized staff, and make regular use of the government and the legal system. These organizations tend to have a minimal amount of

participation from the marginalized or those who experience the particular social problem. It utilizes advocacy strategies, which are fundamentally different from engaging community constituents in solving a particular social problem or condition (Mondros, & Wilson, 1994).

The third model of social action organization is the mobilizing model. This model, which is very similar to Rothman's social action model, focuses mostly on activism (Mondros, & Wilson, 1994; Pyles, 2009; Rothman, 1995). Confrontational, disruptive, and direct action oriented tactics are used in the fundamental assumption that victories are won from those in power through the use of disruptive tactics, not through building effective organizations (Mondros & Wilson, 1994).

Mondros and Wilson Models of Social Organization: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. Important aspects of this particular model that inform the inquiry have to do with the emphasis on leadership and broad participation among resident leaders experiencing the social problem. Parts of these particular models stand in contradiction to one another. For example, the grassroots model and the mobilizing model are in opposition in one basic assumption. Social change victories happen in the mobilizing model through disruptive tactics, while social change happens in the grassroots model through the building of effective organizations. These apparent contradictions suggest that what model the practitioner uses depends upon the relationship between the goal and the process. These models leave much for both the seasoned and the novice practitioner in terms of choice, but not much guidance in terms of bridging boundaries of difference.

Fisher's Neighborhood Organizing Models

Fisher (1994) formulated three models of community practice. These three models share many characteristics with both Rothman (1995) and Mondros and Wilson (1994). They are: (1)

social welfare model, (2) the political activist model, and (3) the neighborhood maintenance model (Fisher, 1994).

The social welfare model has been closely associated with social work and tends to focus on lobbying, advocacy, and access to services. Additionally, it tends to depend on professionals and the maintenance of status quo social arrangements. The political activist model is oriented towards the restructuring of power, attaining power, confronting institutions of power, empowering citizens, and developing alternative organizations as a component of social change. Neighborhood maintenance is mainly concerned with neighborhood improvement and maintaining property values as well as the status quo. It is generally carried out by middle and upper class individuals focused on infrastructure improvements, utilities, road repair, and advocacy with less of an emphasis on marginalized communities (Fisher, 1994).

Fisher's Neighborhood Organizing Models: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. Although Fisher's models are among the prevailing models of community practice, in an increasingly diverse society where crossing boundaries of difference is inevitable, Fisher (1994) mentions little about how to build solidarity across these often complex boundaries. His framing of the social welfare model is in many ways a critique of the social work profession's role in community change efforts. The political activist model, however, could offer some important insights into building organizations that act as models for effectively building alliances across boundaries of difference. A major component of the political activist model is, similar to Alinsky (1971) discussed in more detail below, developing organizations as a vital component of social change (Fisher, 1994).

The neighborhood maintenance model offers both opportunities and challenges to the current line of inquiry. In Greater Fulton, as in other communities, significant socio-economic

divisions often lead to conflicting priorities in terms of expressed needs, problem formulation, project selection, forging and maintaining relationships, and building solidarity. High resource community members are needed due to the many assets they may bring to the table. However, their priorities in terms of using a neighborhood maintenance model may not necessarily benefit some community members, specifically members of traditionally marginalized groups. For example, an attempt to expand tutoring programs for children will not bring more economic development to the neighborhood yet such program may be greatly needed. How do we bridge these divides to form a more comprehensive model of practice that incorporates these notions of difference? How do practitioners deal with community members' various differential positions?

Alinsky Model

Saul Alinsky's influence over community organization practice cannot be overstated. To him, the purpose of community organizing is to organize with middle and low income communities so that they benefit from capitalism just as the rich do (Alinsky, 1971). His was a pluralist, non-ideological model that organized communities based on mutual self-interest (Bradshaw, Soifer, & Gutierrez, 1993). His main tools for consolidating power to achieve positive change was building powerful people-based organizations, and using creative, confrontational, direct action oriented tactics. (Alinsky, 1971). He lays out his model of organizing in his seminal text, *Rules for Radicals*. In it, he states its purpose; "*The Prince* was written by Machiavelli for the haves on how to hold power. Rules for Radicals is written for the have nots on how to take it away" (Alinsky, 1971 p. 3).

His model prescribes that the community organizer, develop indigenous community leaders and identify existing community leadership and groups. He also drew a serious distinction between the organizer that worked for, rather than with, the community (Bradshaw,

Soifer, & Gutierrez, 1993). Alinsky, even though he emphasized developing indigenous leaders, still focused on the organizer as expert through his fundamental assumption that organizers were important for both building and maintaining organizations. His methods of practice were populist and ends oriented, and he was also very concerned with winning victories as the sure way to build an organization is to win victories (Alinsky, 1971).

Alinsky Model: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. In terms of boundaries of difference, he tended to downplay differences, and sought to navigate differences in such a way that focused on similarities. In some ways he sought to avoid differences and instead focused on building solidarity through mutually shared self interest. In this type of organizing, issues of racism, sexism, ability, and other domains of difference tend to be avoided (Bradshaw, Soifer, & Gutierrez, 1993). This poses a very relevant question. Is it more effective to build solidarity in a diverse organization by cultivating mutually shared interest?

Downplaying differences and choosing to navigate community practice efforts in such a way as to avoid differences altogether are not viable options either. Freire (1970) discussed notions of neutrality, making the point that to remain silent means to side with the oppressor. Alinksy's practice of pushing class, race, and gender differences on the sidelines of the practice effort was a glaring contradiction in his product vs. process focus. This illustrates his concentration was much more on ends (Alinsky, 1971).

Highlander Model of Popular Education

Educator and organizer Myles Horton established and pioneered the Highlander Model. He established the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee in 1932. Horton saw that the traditional models of education did not work for rural people challenged by poverty. Additionally traditional models of education did not take into consideration rural people's unique ways of

developing knowledge. He decided to start a school that acted as an alternative to the mainstream top down educational system, based on the assumption that people are the experts of their own experience. He was interested in education for social change that was grounded in the experience of the learner and based on questions used to stimulate reflection, self-examination, and analysis of social systems and the individual's relationship to those systems (Horton, 1998).

Pyles (2009) outlines many of the key features of Horton's model of popular education. These key features are at the core of what would become the Highlander model. They are (1) leadership development, (2) social analysis, and (3) the experience of learning and the subsequent development of social meaning based on that learning. In this way, all of the fundamental features of the model are linked from the development of leaders to the experience of learning. "Because Horton was interested in building a social movement for social change, the development of leaders to implement that change was imperative. Success in Highlander's teaching meant that former students would become leaders in their community or enhance current leadership skills. If leaders were to change social systems, it was necessary to be able to critique social systems . . . the purpose of popular education is not to support the status quo, but it is to critique and alter it. Thus, social analysis included a long range analysis of the overall social and economic structure of society and an analysis of a learner's local situation back home" (Pyles, 2009 p. 67).

Highlander Model of Popular Education: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. Myles Horton was at the forefront of organizing in the South from the Great Depression until his death in the mid-nineties. He was a part of many social movements in his lifetime from the labor movement to civil rights and the anti-war movement. Horton did this with a great respect, love, and admiration for differences. He worked to racially integrate labor organizing from as early as

the thirties. During the civil rights movement, he developed the citizenship schools in conjunction with Esau Jenkins and Septima Clark, and the Highlander Folk School became a major gathering place for organizers from all walks of life (Horton, 1997).

An early strategy he used that could be useful to organizers, particularly organizers from a traditional oppressor group working with marginalized people, was finding indigenous leaders. This means not only local leaders, but also leaders who were of the same race or gender of the people that he sought to reach. He employed this strategy in organizing miners in the south. He quickly realized that the best way for workers to get their demands addressed was for black and white workers to stand together. The method he employed was to work within the black leadership convincing them of the need for the unity of all workers, both black and white (Horton, 1997).

Freire's Transformative Model

Along with the work of Myles Horton, another educator and organizer developed a similar model based on increasing understanding of oppressions and social systems. Paulo Freire (1970) developed this model of education, literacy, and consciousness-raising as a tool for individual and collective social change. Through working with people living in poverty in Brazil, he began to come to the same conclusions as Horton- that the education of people had to do with the lived experiences of the learners. Many of the important concepts inherent in Freire's model were the banking model of education, dialogue, the culture of silence, praxis, and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970).

The first concept is the banking model of education where Freire (1970) refers to the student/teacher dynamic as one in which the teacher deposits information into the student, and the student views the teacher as the expert. The banking model "transforms students into

receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads men and women to adjust to the world, and limits their creative power"(Freire, 1970 p. 77).

Dialogue, described as a practice of freedom, is a central component in Freire's model. It is essential in building trust, requires an intense faith in people, a necessary element of the democratization of knowledge and action, and works hand in hand with hope. Dialogue is vital in the development of an individual and collective critical consciousness (Freire, 1970).

According to Freire (1970), a hegemonic system of dominant social relations constitutes an environment where oppression is internalized on the part of both the oppressor and the oppressed. When oppressed people begin living according to this system of dominant social relations, it creates a culture of silence. This culture of silence can only be broken by dialogue on the part of the learner in order to develop a critical consciousness. This critical consciousness allows learners to understand that this culture of silence is imposed upon them by the presence of the oppressor. Without this ongoing development of critical consciousness, the gateway to true liberation remains forever blocked by many barriers to power including a culture of silence (Freire, 1970).

Paramount to the development of a critical consciousness is the notion of praxis. Praxis is thus the practice of reflection and action. It is the linking of theory and practice, and of knowledge and practical application (Freire, 1970). It is also outlined as "the unity between what one does, and what one thinks about what one does"(Pyles, 2009 p. 69). Freire proposed that the proper use of praxis will transform the world (Freire, 1970).

Hardina (2002) demonstrates many of the primary components of Freire's Transformative model. These five components have been vital to applying the model to various practice contexts. They are as follows:

1. Dialogue to gain insight into cultures and values in instances when group members come from a variety of diverse ethnic groups.
2. The requirement that the professional (teacher or social worker) become an active learner, gaining knowledge about the lives and cultural backgrounds of group participants.
3. An acknowledgement that professionals who lead groups should participate in the groups as equal partners.
4. The purpose of community work with groups should be to create an environment that promotes the development of critical consciousness among group leaders.
5. The recognition the participation in the process of education for social change leads to personal as well as political transformation (Hardina, 2000 pp. 77-78).

Freire's Transformative Model: Key Components Informing the Inquiry. The first key component of Freire's transformative model to inform the proposed inquiry echoes many of the previously discussed models and approaches. Dialogue is perhaps the most informative element of Freire's model that serves to guide the research. This is not just any kind of dialogue. Freire (1970) proposes that dialogue must be approached out of love, humility, hope, and with an intense faith in humankind to build trust. Dialogue cannot exist in a power differential of hierarchy or domination, and "true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking – thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people" (Freire, 1970 p. 92).

Additionally, the second component is aligned with many of the other models and approaches that have been discussed as a part of this chapter. The worker as learner is expected to be a critical component of shaping the research design and overall process. Although Freire

wrote primarily on education for social change, the principles inherent in his work are also aligned with the values and ethics of progressive social work practice. In fact, early in his career, he was a social work educator (Freire, 1988). His emphasis on development of a critical consciousness, on process, personal and political transformation, egalitarian relationships of power, and dialogue shape much of the inquiry as demonstrated in the linking guide and moving into the next chapter.

Table 2. - Community Practice Models, Approaches, and Perspectives: An Overview

Approach/ Model	Role of Worker	Focus	Diversity	Process vs. Product	Issue Emphasis	Decision Making
Strengths Approach	Collaborator, Learner, Equal	Possibilities, Resiliencies, Potentials.	Honors identity as strength	Process	Holistic View, Various issues	Democratic
Empowerment Approaches	Building and Nurturing Relationships Collaborator	Liberation, Collective Knowledge Building, Dialogue	Multicultural, Linking personal, interpersonal, and political	Process	Holistic View, Various Issues	Democratic and Consensus
Feminist Approaches	Collaborator, Partner	Networks of Relationships, Power, Gender, Dialogue	Diversity is Strength	Process	Holistic View, Various Issues	Consensus, Democratic, Group Process
Rothman's Locality Development	Support participants, Refrain from posing solutions	Geographic, Improving social and economic conditions	Broad Participation	Process	Grassroots, Community Expressed Needs	Consensus
Rothman's Social Planning	Expert	Task Oriented, Bureaucratic	Lack of knowledge of culture	Product	Task oriented	Autocratic
Rothman's Social Action	Trainer, Participant	Confronts power differentials	Attention to socially vulnerable	Both	Oppressive Practices	Varies
Weil and Gamble: Neighborhood and community organizing	Organizer Teacher Facilitator	Leadership Development Capacity Building	Seeks broad participation	Both	Improving quality of life in a geographic area	Autocratic
Weil and Gamble: Organizing functional communities	Advocate Organizer Facilitator	Advocacy	Mostly like minded people	Product	Policy Changes Government Public	Democratic Consensus Group Process
Weil and Gamble: Community economic and social development	Teacher Planner Manager Negotiator	Leadership Development, Capacity Building, Education	Oppressed populations	Product	Economic Improvement Business Development	Autocratic Democratic Group Process
Weil and Gamble: Social Planning	Researcher, Proposal writer, Manager	Develop programs; create networks for service coordination	Work on behalf of marginalized groups	Product	Addressing social problems	Autocratic Group Process

Approach/ Model	Role of Worker	Focus	Diversity	Process vs. Product	Issue Emphasis	Decision Making
Weil and Gamble: Program Development	Planner, Spokesperson, Manager	Improve Services	Not Addressed	Both	Service Development Specific Populations	Varies
Weil and Gamble: Political/social action	Organizer Advocate Candidate Researcher	Policy change Social change	Attention to socially vulnerable	Both	Development of a political power base, Change institutions	Group Process Democratic Consensus
Weil and Gamble: Coalitions	Mediator Negotiator Spokesperson	Building a multi-organizational power base	Not addressed	Product	Policy change	Democratic Group Process
Weil and Gamble: Social movements	Advocate Facilitator	Social Justice	Varies	Varies	Taking action to promote social justice	Democratic Group Process
Mondros and Wilson: Grassroots	Equal Partner	Populism, Grassroots Participation	Privilege and Oppression	Product (ends oriented)	Targeting Power	Varies
Mondros and Wilson: Lobbying Model	Professional	Pluralism	Diverse groups applying political pressure	Product	Government and the legal system, Policy Planning	Autocratic/ Hierarchy, Organizational
Mondros and Wilson: Mobilizing Model	Participant in social activism	Activism, Disruptive Tactics	Broad array of constituencies	Both	Government as resistant to change	Varies
Fisher's Models: Social Welfare Model	Professional	Lobbying, Advocacy, Access to services,	Status Quo power arrangements	Product	Government, Policy Change	Varies
Fisher's Models: Political Activist Model	Professional, Collaborator	Building Organizations	Broad array of constituencies,	Product	Obtaining and Restructuring Power	Varies
Fisher's Neighborhood Maintenance	Professional, Collaborator	Neighborhood Improvement	Middle to upper class emphasis	Product	Neighborhood Issues	Stratified, Hierarchical,
Alinsky Model	Expert, Develop leaders	Pluralism, Building Organizations,	Avoided differences	Product (ends oriented)	Poor People's issues	Autocratic Democratic
Highlander Model	Collaborator, Equal, Co-learner	Leadership, Experiential learning, Dialogue	Love and Respect for Differences,	Process	Education for Social change, People's education	Democratic Consensus
Freire's Model	Learner, Equal partners	Dialogue, Education, Praxis Consciousness	Egalitarian relationships, Honors difference	Process	Critical consciousness Transform	Democratic Consensus

Community Practice Models, Approaches, and Perspectives: A Broad Review

In Table 2 above, an overview of community practice models, approaches, and perspectives show distinctive characteristics of each model, approach, and perspective. The portions highlighted in the above table include the unique role of the community worker, the focus of the model or approach, the use of diversity or differences, the priority placed on product or process, the critical issue emphasis, and how decisions are made among participants in the change process. These dominant characteristics aid in examining the models, approaches, and perspectives for their key components pictured in Table 3 as a part of the research design covered in chapter 3.

Difference and Questioning Cultural Competence in Community Practice

The issue of cultural competence is at the core of social work practice, research, and education, and is a fundamental component of the NASW code of ethics (CSWE, 2001; NASW, 2007). It cannot be fully explored without a comprehensive understanding of culture as it relates to social work, community practice, and boundaries of difference. This critical portion of chapter 2 will examine issues of culture, cultural competence, and difference related to the proposed line of inquiry. It will also highlight the vigorous debate taking place within social work, community practice, and the helping professions of using cultural competence as a guide for practice across boundaries of difference.

The discussion begins with an overview of culture and cultural competence. It goes on to cover the history of the cultural competence as a practice construct within the helping professions, and its effects on cross-cultural practice in the field. Epistemological positions are outlined to add clarity to the complexity of practice across boundaries difference and culture. Critiques of culturally competent practice within the literature are also presented along with

proposed alternatives and solutions for practice. This body of literature will guide the line of inquiry by integrating the proposed solutions as guidelines for practice as a major component of the linking guide, the formulation of the research questions, and will guide data collection by using the effective intercultural practice recommendations into the constructing of the interview questions along with the key components of the practice models and approaches. This section begins with concise definitions of terms, moves on to critique the strengths and limitations these concepts in practice, and offers alternative solutions to using cultural competence as a heuristic to guide cross cultural practice.

Culture

The terms culture, race, and ethnicity are complex, and often used interchangeably (Schriver, 2011). Providing a clear definition of culture is vital to any conversation regarding cross-cultural practice. There is no broad singular definition of culture. Various disciplines and professions use the term in many different ways. A precise definition of culture lays the foundation of a salient discussion and thorough critique of cultural competence in practice.

Culture is defined as "a historically created system of meaning and significance…a system of belief and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate, and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life." (Parekh, 2000 p. 143). Longres (2000) defines culture as an incorporation of "all the symbolic meanings, beliefs, values, norms, and traditions that compose the working agreements of a community and govern social interactions among community members or between members and outsiders" (p. 78). Geertz (1973) a trained anthropologist, in his seminal text *Interpretation of Cultures,* defines culture as the means by which people ''communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life. Culture is

the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action (p. xi)''. Culture, therefore, is passed through communication, not through any genetic or biological factors, and it is made up of a distinct lifestyle of a specific group of people (DeVito, 2009). Culture is complex, individual in nature, and evokes various ideas about difference (Harrison, & Turner, 2011). Culture is in a constant state of flux, and is directly related to time and context. It is very much about how people define their experience, create meaning, establish values, and guide their interactions.

Various social groupings within cultures compose, mediate, and manage the content of their own cultural group which relate to power and identity formation at the individual and group level. Any discussion of culture is incomplete without an acknowledgement of power differentials, the experience of oppression, and its many elements including, but not limited to individual and structural components (Parrott, 2009). Parrot (2009) describes culture as "a site of struggle around which different groups seek to imprint their values as the cultural norm upon less powerful others (p. 617)". Thus, culture is dynamic, it is context bound, integral to identity formation, evokes ideas about difference, and is related to power (Harrison, & Turner, 2011). Culture still, however does not encapsulate all differences inherent in social interactions and functioning. Many differences transcend culture.

Competence

Competence has been generally viewed as referring to a set of skills to be mastered. The term competence is also taken to mean both capabilities, and abilities to be identified, cultivated, and assessed (Harrison, & Turner, 2011). According to Lum (2000), competence means "capability, sufficiency, and adequacy (p. 6)". Competence "refers to ways of living acquired by various groups to survive in their environments and includes their abilities to function

successfully (Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010 p. 257)". Broadly competence is associated with learning and mastering sets of skills in order to acquire certain abilities.

Other scholars go a step further in attempting to operationally define competence. For example, Guthrie (2009) argues that competence is highly context dependant. In effect, what is competent in one time or place could be viewed as incompetent in another. In this way, given the dynamic, ever-changing, subjective nature of culture, competence is insufficient in characterizing effective cross-cultural practice.

Cultural Competence: An Evolving Practice Concept

The profession of social work has historically been concerned with matters related to race, ethnicity, and equality since its early beginnings. Evidence of this can be found in early writings from gatherings of the first National welfare groups as well as the first settlement houses. Social work education as a whole began to turn their attention to racial minorities in the 1960s at the height of the civil rights movement. Due to the prominence of the movement, difference within social work education as well as the social work profession was primarily associated with racial differences (Johnson, & Munch, 2009). Likewise, the helping professions traditionally used the term cultural competence in practice with groups from non-white racial origins. Cultural competence and its derivation cultural sensitivity stemmed from the need for practitioners to practice in a culturally appropriate way with members of diverse groups (Harrison & Turner, 2011). Thus, the term has transformed in the last twenty years to refer to a myriad of differences (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

Definitions of cultural competence are offered below from a historical perspective. The definitions demonstrate how the term cultural competence has changed over the course of its brief history. It takes into account its various uses in professional, policy, and practice contexts,

and how the term has been institutionalized and enshrined in both organizational policy and practice. The various definitions are outlined, and a sense of the term's evolution provided, various critiques of cultural competence are discussed in greater detail in later portions of this section.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the conversation around cultural competence is so complicated is that it has no singular definition. In fact, there are numerous definitions used in a variety of the helping professions. The term cultural competence has been used in public health, medicine, nursing, psychiatry, and many other professional orientations (Johnson, & Munch, 2009). Due to its increased popularity, it has been incorporated in to legislation at the local, state, and federal level including policies within health and human services (National Center for Cultural Competence, 2012).

One of the earliest definitions of cultural competence holds that cultural competence is the ability to honor differences as positive while guarding against measuring every individual by a single standard (Cooper, 1973). Another frequently cited early definition stems from the field of childhood development and defines cultural competence as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professions to work effectively in cross cultural situations (Cross, Baron, Dennis, & Issacs, 1989 p. iv)". In its early usage in the field of social work, it was first described as social work practice with people of color (Lum, 1992). Most of the definitions that arose from those early conceptual constructions of cultural competence suggest that practitioners must value diversity, have the capacity for honest self-assessment, be aware of dynamics that may arise as a result of cross cultural interactions, and be willing to institutionalize intercultural

knowledge by adapting organizational practices to reflect an understanding of diversity (Ben-Ari, & Strier, 2010).

The last two decades have seen a large amount of discourse, debate, discussion, and reframing in policy and practice literature within social work and various other helping professions (Harrison & Turner, 2011). The United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has worked to institutionalize the use of cultural competence within policy since the term began to be used in the mainstream professional policy and practice circles (Hart, Silva, Tein, Brown, & Stevens, 2009). Hart, et. al (2009) claim that Cross and colleagues definition of cultural competence cited above is the most influential definition, and use this definition in their use of the term cultural competence. One of the main features of this particular definition is that it offers a contested answer to effective cross cultural practice in its definition of cultural competence. Cross, et al. (1989) offer, "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals (p. iv)". This will be discussed further in following sections, but this definition assumes that congruous systematized organizational behavior will lead to effective cross cultural practice which is not always the case. This can have consequences that reverberate across numerous professions, organizations, and can heavily influence practice.

Further definitions of cultural competence have been enshrined in policy both at the professional and organizational levels. Cultural competence is described by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) code of ethics as "the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the

dignity of each" (NASW, 2007 pp. 12-13). So when having a discussion of culturally competent practice, these discussions include differences that are not limited to cultural differences. According to the NASW (2007) there are five essential elements that a system must have to develop culturally competent practice: (1) valuing diversity, (2) capacity for self-assessment, (3) conscious of the interaction of cultural dynamics, (4) institutionalization of cultural knowledge, and (5) develop programs and services that reflect and understanding of diversity both between and within cultures (NASW, 2007 pp. 13-14).

The irony of the NASW definition is that this set of values and definitions have incorporated previous criticism of both the conceptual construction of cultural competence and its use in practice to establish a revised definition without explicitly acknowledging this distinction. Without acknowledging both the imprecise operational definition and the contested nature of cultural competence, the NASW has reinforced the ambiguous nature of the term. Although informed practitioners and educators may be able to point to these values and definitions to guide their practice, what message does this send to social work students and practitioners looking for guidance for effective cross-cultural practice?

Cultural Competence: A Contested Concept

Cultural competence has been highly regarded as an integral part of many organizations, funding bodies, human service professions, and disciplines in its very brief two decade life as an accepted conceptual practice construct. Even with this privileged and regarded status within the helping professions, as evidenced above, it remains a source of heated contentious debate (Furlong, & Wright, 2011). The highly relevant questions numerous critics and scholars ask include, with the myriad of definitions cultural competence, discourse tends to be dense in ambiguity, so how does this murky concept get transferred into practice? How can a concept as

indeterminate as culture be coupled with a definitively concrete term as competence (Harrison & Turner, 2011)?

Guthrie (2009) argues that the nature of cultural competence is "intangible", and it is more critical to understand "the extent to which what they mean is widely understood (p. 18)". Other critics, such as Johnson and Munch (2009), argue cultural competence has conceptual underpinnings that are counter to established social work principles and practice, and question whether or not a social worker can be culturally competent. Furlong and Wright (2011) propose that the use of the term cultural competence privileges dominant western language and thought patterns, thus having its opposite intended effect. Pon (2009) boldly argues that the language of cultural competency has promoted a new form racism that has now become institutionalized in our professional values, language, and professional practices. Below these criticisms are discussed and expanded in further detail. Issues explored include achieving competence, language and thought patterns, institutional racism, organizational constraints, and ingrained knowledge.

Achieving competence. As a part of a recent qualitative study conducted by Harrison and Turner (2011), respondents were asked their thoughts on the term cultural competence. "While endorsing the general principles associated with cultural competence, most participants expressed ambivalence about the use of the term itself. They suggested that it is ambiguous, implies an end point and is suggestive of something that can be measured. The issue of competence versus incompetence was also raised, and on what basis and whose authority someone's practice could be deemed to be culturally incompetent. (p. 343)".

This ambiguity in operational definition has led to a lack of clarity in what constitutes effective cross-cultural practice. Johnson and Munch (2009) in highlighting essential

contradictions within cultural competence argue in what they call their evidence contradiction, the definition of cultural competence itself is not sufficient and may be untenable, due to its indeterminacy. It deals with whether or not cultural competence is achievable. Further complicating this dilemma is the expectation within the profession that social workers be able to demonstrate competence in the application of services to people of various cultural groups. The argument for further development of empirical support and methods to measure cultural competence are needed to support the relevance of cultural competence in practice (Johnson, & Munch, 2009). This is in large part why cultural competence is not conceptualized in a way that can effectively guide practice (Williams, 2006).

Language and thought patterns. Another primary critique of cultural competence in the dominant western orientation is the characteristic patterning of western language and thought. Due to its linguistic architecture, the English language accentuates individual action and interpersonal separation. This attention serves to privilege these individualist values. There is an established first world belief that individuals are separate entities. At the foundation of these embedded belief systems lies a core assumption about the nature of existence. Languages and meaning systems within many non-western cultures stress values of interdependence beginning at the level of linguistic construction. Language shapes meaning, therefore culture (Furlong, & Wright, 2011).

Language differences as a cultural phenomenon are evident in various iterations of cross-cultural community practice. For example, especially when among peers, youth speak a different language than their adult counterparts. They create vastly different metaphors and systems of meaning, due to their divergent experience to that of grownups. The same is true for those of

various educational, socio-economic, or racial backgrounds. This is particularly complicated when taking into account the privileging of specific linguistic meaning systems.

When various cultures intersect in practice settings, the potential for impasses, communication gaps, and misunderstandings becomes more pronounced and likely. This brings into it various dimensions of power, and in this case power is generally concentrated in the hands of those with access to the dominant language system (Harrison, & Turner, 2011). These can impede effective practice interventions (Williams, 2006). It can also open the door to oppressive practice, and often these language differentials can be invisible to the practitioner. Effective communication is an essential component of effective cross cultural community practice, and without it building trust is severely impeded (Friere, 1971).

Characteristic patterns of language do not determine the very nature of culture, experience, or existence, but they are a fundamental factor in constructing meaning, in creating culture, and in the process of socialization. Therefore, overlooking these linguistic differences has many negative drawbacks in particularly practice (Furlong, & Wright, 2011). As stated earlier, but worth emphasizing, cultural competence is a concept that is often incomprehensible, and its meaning is intangible (Guthrie, 2009). Practitioners may make the mistake of assuming that they speak the same language as the people with whom they practice. All too frequently, the exact opposite is true.

Color-blind and institutional racism. McPherson (1999) states institutional racism is "the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their color, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be or detected in processes, attitudes and behavior which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people (p. 6.34)".

Collins (2009) has pointed to the emergence of laws and policies protecting the rights of minorities, rise of a black middle class, school integration, the disproportionate number of minorities incarcerated, increased health disparities among minorities, and other factors has given rise to a new kind of racism much more latent in our everyday interactions and social systems which she calls color blind racism. Color blind racism has come to prominence in a response to minorities given certain protections under the law, and has given rise to the appearance of a color blind society within the predominantly white patriarchal dominant culture. Collins (2009) goes on to point out that in a society where color blind racism persists, those who believe that we live in a color blind society often are unable to see the results, practices, and existence of institutional racism.

Many social workers unknowingly reinforce systems of unconscious, unintended color-blind racism in their practice. A major critique of the cultural competence mandate is that it does not do enough in addressing systemic institutionalized oppressions (Abrams & Moio, 2009). For example, another quote from Harrison and Turner's (2011) study of social workers' perspectives on cultural competence contain some alarming connotations. "For others, cultural competence was seen to be tokenistic or, worse, exclusionary because it implies the 'other' (Harrison, & Turner, 2011 p. 343)". Critical race theorists also argue that cultural competence is ineffective due to its tendency to equalize oppressions and promote a color-blind mindset that perpetuates institutionalized racism (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

Findings from a study of services in ethnic minority communities recently found that minorities still experience service provisions were mono-cultural, based on false assumptions, and stereotypical (Chahal, 2004). Barn (2007) holds that social work in recent years has taken a cultural relativist approach or a cultural deficit approach to cross-cultural practice. This has lead

interventions to being either unnecessarily hesitant as in the first instance or too interventionist as in the latter (Chand, 2008).

Johnson and Munch (2009) argue that the overuse of classification systems to categorize, differences serve to stereotype, marginalize, and perpetuate inaccurate representations of individuals and cultures. They outline this as one of their major contradictions embedded within cultural competence through an analysis of social work ethics and identity politics, and call it the classification contradiction. In it they contend that these labels involve a contradiction in collective identity. One may not belong to just one group, but many, and the notion of cultural identity is one that is ever-changing and occurs in the context of relationships. Both the fluid nature and the relational group context make culture difficult to study. Intersectionality can aid in understanding some of these multiple identities and cultural distinctions at play in various integrating cultural contexts (Collins, 2000). In an increasingly diverse society, many intergroup and intra-group differences interact in uniquely distinct ways fundamentally shaping the individual, forming complex notions of identity, collectivity, and culture. As a result, framing differences with such broad sweeping generalizations can place clients at undue risk, place clients into categories in which they do not belong, and perpetuate various elements of oppression (Johnson, & Munch, 2009).

Practitioners need to guard against essentialist, generalized notions of culture. Presuming that western culture can be reduced to individualism or all of astern culture is representative of collectivist cultural orientations would be an example of practice that is prejudiced, discriminatory, stereotypical, and lacks clear respect for the individual (Parrott, 2009). "Unwitting racism can arise because of lack of understanding, ignorance, or mistaken beliefs. It can arise from well intentioned but patronizing words or actions. It can arise from unfamiliarity

with the behavior or cultural traditions of people or families from minority ethnic communities. It can arise from racist stereotyping of black people as potential criminals or troublemakers. Often this arises out of uncritical self-understanding born out of an inflexible police ethos of the "traditional" way of doing things. Furthermore such attitudes can thrive in a tightly knit community, so that there can be a collective failure to detect (McPherson, 1999 p. 6.17)".

Institutional and organizational constraints. Scholars also argue that the term cultural competence is too frequently construed in terms of individual practice, and infrequently oriented within the context of organizational practice. As a result, there has been little investigation on the effect of organizational factors on effective culturally competent practice. Organizational constraints to culturally competent practice are often easily overlooked. To address this concern and others, Harrison & Turner (2011) conducted a study with a group of social workers to capture their understanding of cultural competence as well as its limitations and ambiguities in practice. Social workers interviewed "highlighted organizational and system constraints that thwart their ability to practice in a culturally responsive manner. Although the literature commonly laments the cultural incompetence of social workers, the findings from this study suggest that such an individualized focus detracts attention from the broader system and organizational responses needed to respond appropriately to the needs of clients from diverse backgrounds (Harrison, & Turner, 2011 p. 333)". Deadlines, policies, bureaucratic barriers, and organizational timelines have often been barriers to culturally competent practice. Organizational models were also found to be a very large barrier to culturally competent practice (Harrison & Turner, 2011).

These organizational constraints often overlooked include systemic limitations, such as funding streams both private and public, power hierarchies internal and external to the

organization itself. These external pressures affect practice in significant ways generally invisible to both the client and the practitioner. In many organizations the very structure of the organization as well as the way funding streams are organized decide who is in and who is out, and are often detrimental to the oppressed people they purport to serve. Lethabo-King and Osayande (2007) argue the various ways in which the progressive philanthropic movement has shifted "protects white wealth and undermines the work of oppressed communities of color (p. 80)". This means that many social justice workers have been complicit in the practice of racism, oppression, and exploitation through their organizational practice.

Ingrained knowledge. It is impossible to practice cross-culturally without critically reviewing the ingrained epistemology of a particular culture, the practitioner's culture, and helping professions as a whole. These ingrained epistemologies include notions of personhood, human development, indigenous psychology, and pathology (Furlong, & Wright, 2011). In their critiques of received dominant knowledge of autonomy, individuation, and notions of "the self" Furlong and Wright (2011) point out that there are a myriad of anthropologies and psychologies, and that there is no universal notion of selfhood even within dominant societies.

There is a debate going on internationally as to whether or not global standards for social work education are effective responses to diversity in social work practice. One of the primary arguments against establishing global standards is that these policies reflect Western practice approaches, knowledge, skills, and values. At best, they argue, that these would be inappropriate in various cross-cultural practice contexts, and at worst a representation of cultural imperialism (Parrot, 2009).

Johnson, & Munch (2009) offer examples of major contradictions in their analysis of cultural competence, social work ethics, and identity politics. One of their most prominent is the

epistemological contradiction. This criticism of cultural competence has to do with how practitioners come to know about culture, and how knowledge about a culture is obtained. The process of learning and knowing about another culture is limited in its accuracy. When emphasizing a priori knowledge, we are acting contrary to learning from the client. Dean (2001) proposes maintaining an idea of one's own lack of competence as the worker, and lack of knowledge rather than one's own competence.

NASW (2007) strongly suggests that practitioners "develop specialized knowledge about the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of major client groups served" (p. 21). Additionally, current cultural competence literature instructs that there is specific information that the worker can learn about culture and competently apply to practice. That being said, knowing about versus learning from cannot go so far as to assume that the worker can ever know a client's cultural experience, patterns, and practices, particularly a client that does not share the same cultural background or heritage. Thus, knowledge about the other is limited, and what we assume to be true about cultures different from our own may or may not be true. (Johnson, & Munch, 2009).

The emphasis on attempting to fully understand difference holds the risk of additional unintended consequences. It can place added, unnecessary distance between the client and the social worker, and be a barrier to building relationship. The assumption of adequate knowledge of culture may cause the worker to be unaware of what the client is truly communicating (Johnson, & Munch, 2009). This further complicates practice, due to the fundamental belief at the core of community practice that effective communication lays the foundation for trust (Friere, 1971).

Epistemological Roots: Paradigms, Culture, and Practice

Given the use of knowledge in perpetuating the negative effects of uninformed cross cultural practice, a detailed discussion of epistemology in relation to productive cross cultural practice is needed due to the vital link it has in effective cross cultural practice. Epistemology is a critical aspect of culture. It is defined as the study of the nature of knowledge (Williams, 2006). Epistemology can also be thought of as how we come to know, or the nature of assumptions related to how one comes to know (Burrell, & Morgan, 1979). Epistemological position dictates what can be known, how knowledge is acquired, based on what criteria information can be rejected, and what methods are appropriate for both gaining and guiding knowledge (Guba, 1990). Therefore, "an epistemological understanding of cultural competence defines beliefs and worldviews that guide us in choosing methods for investigating culture, and working with it in practice (Williams, 2006 p. 211)".

Knowledge plays an integral role in shaping meaning. Therefore, its role in shaping culture is substantial. Key aspects of culture are values, beliefs, various methods of structuring and organizing life, and the effects of those (Parekh, 2000). Likewise, the role of epistemology is essential to shaping behavior. In this way all social interactions are mediated by knowledge systems shaped by culture. Meaning, culture, and knowledge are inextricably linked, so in developing effective cross-cultural community practice techniques, an analysis of epistemology from a multi-paradigmatic perspective becomes beneficial. It simplifies epistemological and ontological positioning without being reductionist, spurring the development effective cross cultural practice methods. These methods can be highly relevant tools particularly for community practitioners who come from a place of privilege or a traditional oppressor group.

Williams (2006) posits that "cultural competence should be defined by the capacity to work across multiple paradigms to find ways to engage with clients (p. 209)". Although this author would slightly amend the previous statement to replace effective cross cultural practice with cultural competence, Williams rightly emphasizes the need for greater flexibility in working cross-paradigmatically as well as cross-culturally.

To review: a paradigm is a set of assumptions, values, and belief about reality shared by a community. These decide what behavior, knowledge, practice, or beliefs are appropriate in a given setting. It can also be viewed as a world view (Fawcett, 1999; Kuhn, 1960; Netting & O'Connor, 2003). Each individual paradigm contains its own assumptions about the nature of knowledge along with the nature of reality and truth. For this reason analysis of paradigms can act as essential guides for practice. The need for a relevant framework of effective practice in multicultural contexts is necessary to shift the trend from well intentioned practitioners perpetuating oppressive systems of domination to culturally informed, socially just practice.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) as well as Guba (1990) provide their own paradigmatic frameworks that have similar ontological, methodological, social change, and epistemological assumptions. Burrell and Morgan's orientation is outlined in chapter one, and Guba (1990) relied heavily on their assumptions in constructing his own schema. Williams (2006) proposes an epistemological foundation for approaching cross-cultural practice, and suggests an epistemologically based framework for organizing concepts into a comprehensive set of actionable strategies for multicultural practice. William's paradigmatic framework is influenced heavily by the work of both Burrell and Morgan (1970) and Guba (1990). The overall goal: to develop a typology of effective cross cultural practice to situate specific ideas and practices into appropriate paradigms (Williams, 2006).

Using the previously outlined Burrell and Morgan (1970) multi-paradigmatic orientation from chapter one, this brief portion explores cross-cultural practice techniques within each paradigm, thus allowing the cultural outsider practitioner to select effective practice methods based on the epistemology of the participant's culture. That being said, these paradigms are not meant to provide prescriptive, one size fits most modes of practice. They are meant to inform practitioners along with the proposed solutions and alternatives covered in later portions of this section. It is also critical to point out that these practice suggestions have not been thoroughly researched beyond the level of case studies, and are on the less rigorous end of the spectrum of evidence based practice. Much more research needs to be done in this area, as stated in earlier sections, to effectively cross boundaries of difference in community practice settings.

Burrell and Morgan's Multi-paradigmatic Framework: A Review. Burrell and Morgan (1970) arrange the four paradigms in their multi-paradigmatic framework along two intersecting continuum. These continuums represent social change and truth assumptions. One end of the social change continuum symbolizes radical change, and the opposite end, status quo. The continuum that exemplifies truth assumptions, at one end represents objectivity, and the opposite end expresses subjective notions of truth. Within each of these four paradigms there are individual notions of truth, knowledge, and world view.

Functionalist cross-cultural practice. The first is paradigm is one that has played an integral role in shaping western culture and traditional knowledge systems in positivist and post-positivist science. In this paradigm truth is wholly knowable, can be observed and operates outside of the individual (Burrell & Morgan, 1970). It proposes that we can, "pursue knowledge that is uncontaminated and reasonably stable" (Williams, 2006 p. 211). In this orientation, "culture is made knowable by privileging the experiences that are common to everyone, and

asserting these experiences as the core of cultural identity" (Williams, 2006 p. 211). In this way effective cross-cultural practice stems from gaining precise knowledge of a specific culture (Husband, 2000).

Social work skills within this paradigm incorporate self-awareness, empowerment, power analysis, critical thinking, and building working alliances. In this paradigm, the effective community practitioner gains knowledge of the values, beliefs, and behaviors consistent within the community context. This acquired knowledge brings with it an understanding of cultural rules and expectations. The role of practitioner is both learner and expert. Essential practice methods in this orientation are gaining knowledge, and using that knowledge to inform and formulate effective interventions (Williams, 2006).

Functionalist cross-cultural practice limitations. As with any paradigmatic orientation there are limitations. Often these limitations in positivism and post-positivism involve stereotyping, generalization, and essentialist views of a certain culture. Additionally, some information that is collected and acquired can be inaccurate, irrelevant, or unrepresentative of a specific culture. Practice originating from this paradigm is almost always highly influenced by the practitioner's cultural background and dominant Euro-American modes of practice. That being said the functionalist iteration of cross-cultural practice allows for the creation of tangible tools based on systematically gathered information. Therefore, it opens doors to sophisticated knowledge generation and the ability to transfer that knowledge into practice that can be evaluated and tested (Williams, 2006).

Interpretive cross-cultural practice. The interpretive paradigm is present and more dominant in many non-western countries. Through this lens, reality is subjective to the individual, and meaning is socially constructed. Reality is constructed through social interaction

and dialogue. It is built on the assumption that reality cannot exist outside the individual (Burrell & Morgan, 1970; Williams, 2006). Knowledge in this paradigm is based on shared group experience, and directly linked to those taking part in the knowledge construction (Guba, 1990). Knowledge in this sense is specific to a local context, due to it being grounded in direct experience. Culture in this lens is, "a set of group based experiences and expectations used to make sense of the world" (Williams, 2006 p. 212).

Cross-cultural practice within this paradigm requires a willingness to accept alternative notions of truth and significance to gain a credible comprehension of reality. In this way effective cross-cultural practice is not based on traditional notions of acquiring knowledge. It must be based on the lived experiences of the specific community culture. Interventions in this orientation must be co-constructed according to language systems and symbols inherent within the specific cultural context. Interpretive cross-cultural practice is congruent with social norms, behaviors, and rules of the client culture, and is culturally specific. The role of the practitioner in this paradigm is that of a cultural insider, so practitioners in this case would either refer services to an insider or seek expert consultation from a cultural insider. Interventions here are dependent upon immersion of cultural experience, and using an insider frame of reference (Williams, 2006).

Interpretive cross-cultural practice limitations. Practice limitations are also present within the interpretive paradigm. One of the primary limitations is broad application or appropriation of culturally specific interventions within this paradigm. Interventions in this lens are not meant to be generalized, or appropriate to all contexts. Therefore, they are not universally applicable in mainstream practice contexts. For example, what is an appropriate practice intervention within on community context may not be appropriate for another based on the cultural dynamics at play. A second major limitation is the assumption that matching clients

and practitioners according to their matching identities is superior or should be a preferred practice when working in multi-cultural contexts. To wholly endorse this view is to accept the assumption that cultural insiders have the expertise to use their cultural backgrounds effectively in practice. Taken to the extreme this could lead to practitioners being confined to work only with people who share their own cultural heritage, and reinforces the fallacy that cultural practice is best when conducted by insiders. The great advantage to interpretive cross-cultural practice is that it acknowledges the convergence of professional expertise and cultural immersion based in the embodied reality of a certain group. Additionally it allows us to evaluate our cross-cultural work based on research methods that align themselves within the interpretive paradigm (Williams, 2006).

Radical structuralist cross-cultural practice. This particular paradigm is based on objective views of truth, reality, knowledge building, and social order. Change within this orientation is collective and based on systemic social transformation (Burrell, & Morgan, 1970; Guba, 1990; Mullaly, 2007). Mullaly (2007) describes radical structuralist practice as, "changing material conditions and oppressive structural patterns such as patriarchy, racism, and ageism (p. 331)." Likewise, "the social circumstances that exist now are understood to be reflections of a deeply embedded structure that serves the purposes of the powerful. The people who are marginalized in these structures are led to believe that existing social arrangements are natural and unassailable, but true knowledge lies in exposing the relations of domination that create this virtual reality (Williams, 2006 p. 213)".

Practice within this paradigm calls for engaging with the political, economic, and historical systems that contribute to the formulation of ethnic and cultural identity. Its emphasis is not on the effects of the culture itself, but the oppressive nature of the system in which the

culture exists. Radical structuralist interventions in a social justice work context are generally targeted at the elimination of all forms oppression, discrimination, domination (Williams, 2006). The practitioner working in this paradigm must be careful not to focus exclusively on the negative aspects of marginalization, and emphasize the development of a critical narrative based on strengths, internal assets, and resiliencies rather than merely focusing deficits and other negative aspects associated with group membership (Blundo, 2009; Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999; Lee, 2001). Effective cross-cultural practice within this perspective is dependent on a practitioner's ability to foster positive identity, facilitate a process of empowerment, and working against social systems that reinforce oppressive systems of power (Gutierrez and Lewis, 1999; Lee, 2001; Mullaly, 2007).

Radical structuralist cross-cultural practice limitations. Although radical structuralist practice has undergone limited criticism within the social work profession, due to its commitment to social justice, it is not without its limitations. The primary focus on ideology can conflict with other social work principles. For example, interventions overly focused on political ends have been criticized for their inattention to the needs of individuals. Likewise, activism, advocacy, and organizing may appear to be a convenience to those who are struggling with survival. Conflict can also arise when organizational values do not align with individual values. Radical structuralist cross-cultural practice can offer a path toward systemic social change that empowers people to build skills, alter oppressive systems of power, and work towards social justice (Williams, 2006).

Radical humanist cross-cultural practice. The radical humanist paradigm is also associated with notions of transformative change and anti-oppressive practice; however, its fundamental distinction is its emphasis on the individual. Its focus is on radical transformation at

the individual level. Theory within this paradigm is oppressive, due to the inextricable links between knowledge and power (Burrell, & Morgan, 1970).

A radical humanist practitioner in a cross-cultural context rejects any generalizations of culture. Likewise, there are no essential core cultural values, because values are subjective in nature, therefore, fundamentally different for each individual. Accordingly, culture is linked to meaning, and is therefore changeable. The individual must be the focus of radical humanist cross-cultural practice, and macro practice in a radical humanist paradigm is very limited. In fact, from a macro perspective, it's not realistic in most organizations. It is rarely used in effective community practice, but can act as a catalyst, or a precursor to motivate an individual to move to collective action.

Although more research needs to be done in the many practice contexts related to the various paradigms, and testing effective cross cultural practice in all of these individual paradigms is beyond the scope of this particular inquiry, these aid in providing a set of practice skills and techniques that can be used in various practice contexts. In order to provide a clear frame of reference, these practice skills will be referenced in the appendices using Burrell and Morgan's (1970) multi-paradigmatic framework along with a brief summary. The development of knowledge is crucial to effective cross-cultural practice. Knowledge or limited use of knowledge is mentioned in every portion of this section and is integral to practice in multicultural contexts. The role of epistemology is integral, and cannot be over looked or under estimated. The use of knowledge is also critical to developing alternatives and solutions to the pitfalls of cultural competence among many other vital tools.

Proposed Alternatives and Solutions

Conflicts in cross-cultural practice are inevitable (Parrot, 2009). From the ambiguity of definition, to the privileging of dominant language systems, thought patterns, and western epistemologies, to perpetuating institutional racism and pejorative labeling, to undue organizational constraints, and disparate power differentials, cultural competence is saturated with problematic practice effects. For proponents of cultural competence to defend their position, advocates must conclusively argue that using it to frame effective intercultural practice leads directly to socially just intercultural practice. In this way, proponents are confronted with various obvious dilemmas, not the least of which, are mentioned above. It would be insufficient, however, to present critiques of cultural competence derived from both the field and the literature without offering another path for effective cross cultural practice. As a result, this section would be incomplete without a thorough review of the prevailing cultural practices that offer both solutions and alternatives to many of the embedded false assumptions inherent in cultural competence. These include: developing a critical awareness, culturally informed practice, anti-oppressive practice, and open, honest, and humble intercultural dialogue.

Critical awareness. It is impossible to do effective cross-cultural work without developing a capacity for reflective self-scrutiny. Critical awareness encourages the interrogation of knowledge and the lifelong process of learning about one's own cultural location (Furlong, & Wright, 2011). Furlong and Wright (2011) go further suggesting two reasons for preferring critical awareness rather than cultural competence: "(1) an attitude of critical awareness encourages the practitioner to work to the principles of curiosity and an informed not knowing; and (2) this orientation establishes a context for practice that regards "the other" as a

mirror upon which the practitioner can see the outline of their own personal, professional, ideological, and cultural profile (p. 39)".

A principle component of effective cultural practice is self-awareness, and professionals must continually examine their own bias. In this way, a practitioner is continually learning, adapting, and relearning their notion of culture, the other, and their own use of self in the helping process (Johnson, & Munch, 2009). It requires complex, dynamic, and critical interrogation of one's own presumptions, biases, privileges, and cultural positioning as an individual and a practitioner that is often uncomfortable and de-centering. This requires recognizing historical, ideological, and hegemonic specificity to identify the potentially colonizing effects of one's practice, discipline, and knowledge (Furlong, & Wright, 2011). It is only with this critical awareness that practitioners can begin to cultivate culturally informed practice.

Culturally informed practice. Social workers need to learn about other cultures to avoid unintended racism while at the same time guarding against one dimensional, reductionist, and essentialist views of identity (Harrison & Turner, 2011). This proposed alternative could act alongside what Furlong and Wright (2011) call an informed not knowing. This position advocates the practitioner as a learner, and accepts the worker's lack of knowledge of as a tool for knowledge building. In this framework, generalizations and grand summaries statements are avoided and problematic. Informed not knowing can mitigate universalism, essentialism, generalizing, and stereotyping that if not careful can dominate cross cultural practice. This perspective also places "the other" in the role of the expert, that is, the client as an expert in their own cultural experience as well as the social problem (Furlong, & Wright, 2011). It is with this commitment to culturally informed practice that practitioners can begin to develop anti-oppressive practice skills.

Anti-oppressive practice. Anti-oppressive practice is the core component in linking social justice with culture. Parrot (2009) posits that effective social work demands a more complete conceptualization of culture. In order for practitioners to become culturally competent, Parrott (2009) believes that they have to move beyond cultural competence to an anti-oppressive approach. This requires an honoring of the complexity of social justice between and within specific cultures.

Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) is directly associated with achieving social justice in relation to culture. It seeks to eliminate inequality in power, so the social worker cannot be the "rescuer" by focusing solely on the oppressed client as a victim of power. The principles of AOP are partnership, empowerment based on client strengths, and focus on working with clients to find solutions to their own problems. In doing work in partnership means that practitioners must be able to discern who to work with as partners.

Parrott (2009) emphasizes the need for a conceptual framework that can aid in distinguishing among practice behaviors that are oppressive vs. empowering. Parekh (2000) has a conceptual framework made up of four general overarching principles used to evaluate cultural practices in societal contexts. These principles can be easily applied in the community context, however, as with many general frameworks, they have limitations. They are: (1) a dedication to universal human rights based on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (2) notions of embedded core societal values, (3) the no harm principle, and (4) dialogue.

The first principle, dedication to universal human rights based on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, calls for endorsing its basic values. Examples of these basic values are respect for human life, recognition of basic human worth, and respect for human integrity. It advocates prohibition of slavery, torture, genocide, freedom of association, and

equality under the law. It is critical to emphasize in this instance that supporting specific values does not mean sanctioning institutions. For example, a dedication liberal democracy in this case would not equate to affirming a value, but an institution. This is where many westerners may run into trouble, because endorsing certain values can become imposing if left unchecked or done in a way that is uncritical (Parekh, 2000).

The second principle uses embedded societal values as a key component to gauge the effectiveness of specific cultural practices. Questions asked in this context include the following: (1) Are universal values contrary to core cultural community values? (2) What character has the society or community built over time, and what values are at the foundation? (3) What happens when these embedded core values are counter to those of the practitioner? (4) What happens when these same core values are oppressive to certain individuals within a certain society?

Parekh (2000) offers insight into these difficult questions, "since different societies may legitimately define, trade off, prioritize, and realize some of the universal values differently and even occasionally override some of them, the question arises of how we can prevent them from engaging in specious and self-serving moral reasoning and reinterpreting the values out of existence or emasculating their critical thrust. There is no full proof way of doing so. All we can do is ask their spokes people to justify their decisions when they appear unacceptable to us. If they can provide a strong and reasonably compelling defense, we should respect their decisions. If not, we should remain skeptical and press for change (p. 136)". This is an ongoing dialogue internationally in the social work profession. The discussion is generally concerned with the question of whether or not social work values, ethics, and principles should be universally applied, and are they universally relevant (Healy, 2006). This is known as the

universalism versus cultural relativism debate, and there are proponents at all points along the continuum between universal and totally relativist position. In many ways it mirrors similar cross paradigmatic debates. Although this is a point of divisive dialogue and debate, it must be done with the greatest of care, and it is helpful if done in the guidance of a cultural informant (Healy, 2006).

The subjectivity of the universalism versus cultural relativism debate along with making sense of some of these embedded core cultural community values is often what makes the third principle such a substantial barometer. The no harm principle is not only at the heart of social work values and ethics, but is also an effective measure of values. It qualifies the effects of cultural actions based on cultural community values and ethics. Some of these values are so implanted within societies that they can only be completely disavowed if they cause no harm to individuals taking part in those practices. This principle is neither culturally relativist nor universal. Specifically it does, however, rely on a set of fundamental rights and uses values and their effects as a heuristic to guide practice. It also serves as a guide to discern certain cultural practices which may run the risk of pathologizing individuals against a seemingly universal dominant norm (Parekh, 2000).

The fourth principle put forth by Parekh (2000) is the principle of dialogue, and such an often cited component of effective cross-cultural practice that an entire portion of this section is dedicated to exploring it as a proposed solution to the question of cultural competence. Parekh (2000) offers dialogue, because according to him there are no universally morally valid principles, and that harm may also be differentially evaluated. He outlines three major principles of dialogue. These are: open mindedness, open channels, and consensus driven outcomes.

Hinman (2008) builds on Parekh's framework by proposing another framework of anti-oppressive practice. Hinman (2008) offers a set of principles that can serve useful to practitioners, and can serve to augment Parekh's more general framework. As cited in Parrot (2009), these help guide student social workers in responding to moral conflicts: They are: (1) the principle of understanding, (2) the principle of tolerance, (3) the principle of standing up against evil, and (4) the principle of fallibility.

To summarize each, the principle of understanding means seeking to understand the moral practices of other cultures within their own context. The second principle of tolerance accepts that there are various ways of achieving a valuable life, and that cultures may offer different ways of achieving a life well lived. Groups choose what is appropriate for them. The third principle of standing up against evil, like Parekh's do no harm principle, opposes all cultural practices that perpetuate oppression. Hinman's final principle is perhaps the most powerful. The principle of fallibility includes within it the notion of dialogue, but adds to that approach humility, self-evaluation, and reflection. It accepts the idea that if practitioners evaluate the cultural practices of clients, then practitioners must also expect to have our own cultural practice evaluated and judged as well (Hinman, 2008).

Intercultural dialogue. Understanding of cultures means pursuing education that takes place through open and honest dialogue (Freire, 1970; Taylor, 1994). Rather than recycling the modernist regressive construct of cultural competence, Furlong and Wright (2011) offer a more progressive approach to diversity practice. They argue that "one has the power to act as a mirror to the practitioner (p. 49)". Dialogue has also been mentioned as a key component of many of the models and approaches discussed in previous sections of this chapter. These models and approaches include feminist approaches, empowerment approaches, the Highlander model, and

Freire's transformative model. Any discussion of cross-cultural community practice is incomplete without an emphasis on intercultural dialogue.

Vital to the intercultural dialogue process is not simply the use of dialogue itself, but the quality of the dialogic interaction. Freire (1970) contends that cultural dialogue must be approached with an attitude of humility, love, honesty, free of anger and resentment. As stated in the above, dialogue must be consensus driven, communication channels must be open, and those participating in the dialogue must be open minded enough to be willing to learn (Parrot, 2009). According to Parrot (2009) dialogue must also critique the norms of both cultures.

Proposing Solutions and Questioning Cultural Competence Summarized

The need for practitioners to effectively navigate differences across boundaries, to mediate cultural conflict, and practice cross culturally is at the forefront of social work education and practice. In this case words matter, and how we frame, label, and characterize our practice matters to not only those we serve, but also those we work alongside. Cultural competence is enshrined in the practice literature, in various professional codes of ethics, and in the overall helping professional ethos. However, its practice effects, its conceptual underpinnings, and its perceived advantages have to be seriously reconsidered.

Many of the critiques of cultural competence presented in this section include a practitioner's ability to achieve competence, language and thought patterns, institutional racism, organizational constraints, and questioning ingrained epistemologies. Along with these critiques, solutions and remedies are posed to realign practitioners' assumptions about effective cross cultural practice based in the most recent literature. These solutions include establishing a critical awareness, developing culturally informed practice, steadfast dedication to anti-oppressive practice, and a commitment to intercultural dialogue. These proposed solutions to the

cultural competence debate will be incorporated into the linking guide as critical conceptual components of effective intercultural practice, to shape the interview questions along with key components of the models and approaches covered in earlier portions of chapter 2. Cultural competence as a practice concept is too contentious, too contradictory, and too ambiguous to guide the current inquiry, and more work needs to be done to mitigate the contradictions within the current intercultural practice climate and debate for cultural competence to obtain the relevance it once claimed in the echelon of evidence based intercultural practice.

Summary and Conclusion

All of these models of practice are critical to informing the proposed inquiry and have many key components necessary for developing a community practice model based on forging alliances across boundaries of difference. Not only are cultural differences particularly significant but inter-group and intra-group differences are also potentially divisive in community practice. It is these differences that often transcend culture and potentially complicate our notions of difference that are at the core of the development of the model. Often a multicultural perspective may not be sufficient in capturing the essential elements necessary in a community practice model that truly honors all forms of diversity. This is why a discussion of how the social work profession has navigated these boundaries, both cultural and otherwise, is imperative to the current review.

Now that the appropriate theories, models, and approaches have been examined and presented, demonstrations of how the key components were shaped into a sophisticated methodology and design can be discussed in greater detail. The next chapter will show how relevant research and interview questions were shaped based on previous literature and practice to guide data collection and analysis. The theories, models, and approaches previously covered

offered a sound foundation for the inquiry laying the groundwork for the development of a solid, effective practice model.

Subsequently, the next chapter covers the research questions, the proposed design including methodology, and the research context. It discusses some of the factors associated with community engaged research as well as the necessary components of model development, and is a detailed overview of how data will be collected, analyzed, and how the model will be developed based on the analysis. The upcoming section also discusses the role of the researcher as insider and the potential transferability of the practice model to other contexts.

CHAPTER 3- FRAMING THE STUDY: METHODOLOGY, DESIGN, AND CONTEXT

Introduction

The previous chapters serve to initiate a review of relevant community practice theories, models, and approaches and their relation to effectively crossing boundaries of difference. Setting the stage for informed community engaged research, chapter three sets the context for the study, frames it, integrates the theories, models, and approaches summarized in chapter two into viable research questions, and outlines methods and design to guide both data collection and analysis. It begins by defining community engaged research, and engaging in a brief discussion surrounding traditional research, community based research, and community engaged research. Then, research questions align with the key components embedded within the review of the literature in chapter 2 on crossing boundaries of difference, and outline the rationale for data collection, analysis, and the development of the practice model. Following the research questions, the research design and methodology, the context, and the sampling frame are introduced.

Research in the Community Context

Research takes place in many contexts. Pitts and Smith (2007) whose focus is researching within marginalized communities define research as "purposive knowledge generation" (p. 4). This definition is very broad, and it allows for research to be conducted in various contexts by various people. Traditional research within the academy is dependent on specific expert driven models of knowledge generation, development, and dissemination. Research within that frame treats research participants as "human subjects" rather than people in a social context taking part in a process or a particular social phenomenon.

Mainstream research textbooks used in social work education emphasize social research as being based in analyzing empirical data that has been systematically collected. Furthermore these systematic ways of collecting and analyzing data have to be organized and recognized by scientists as acceptable means of obtaining knowledge (Drake, & Johnson-Reid, 2008; Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2005). This traditional view of academic research has often been in direct conflict with the perceived needs, desires, and perspectives of people challenged with living everyday life in marginalized communities. A rigid view may create very real barriers in communities historically may privilege dominant systems of knowledge generation that failed to recognize people outside the academy as capable of effective knowledge production (Pitts & Smith, 2007).

To add to those barriers, has contributed to distrust learned within minority communities, among people of color, and other marginalized groups, have social injustices committed by the hands of researchers. The twentieth century in particular saw its own share of human tragedy in the name of research, scholarship, and human progress. There have been many instances when the thirst for knowledge has taken precedent over basic human rights. These dark periods of research history have been well documented, and hold relevance in their relation to social research, building trust, and research in a community context. Some of these atrocities include the holocaust, the Japanese war crimes of unit 731, the Tuskegee syphilis experiments, and Milgram's obedience studies, as well as many others (Jones, 1993; Migram, 1963; U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949; Williams, & Wallace, 1989). Due to the recent history of some of these studies, and our own government's very recent acknowledgment of these unjust experiments, many communities are justified in their wariness related to the presence outside researchers.

Community Based Research

These missteps by past academics using expert driven approaches have created many barriers in conducting social research within marginalized communities. Recently mainstream researchers, scholars, and practitioners have begun to recognize these dynamics in the traditional researcher/subject dynamic, and have attempted to find ways to mitigate those differences through listening and building relationships as an integral part of the research process. In attempts to address and fully understand social problems in communities, researchers have begun to recognize the need to work with communities experiencing social challenges to formulate practical solutions. This approach to research has taken time to take hold in predominant universities and research institutions, but has been a tool to aid in effective community work since the settlement house movement. This form of research still privileges traditional research methodologies, but takes into account community as the context where social research and knowledge generation are centered (Brzuzy & Segal, 1996; Pitts & Smith 2007).

Community Based Participatory Research. Community based participatory research (CBPR) is a collaborative approach to research between community members and researchers to bring about new knowledge related to a community condition, issue, or problem. It is based on core principles that include: relation to relevant community issues, utilization of community decision making, it must be planned and systematic, take on existing community problems, and create new knowledge. It is essentially research based in a community, implemented with community groups (Hills & Mullett, 2000).

Other scholars describe the use of the following principles as integral elements of CBPR. They are stated here as distinct, but are often an integration of these elements (Isreal, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen, & Guzman, 2003). (1) "CBPR recognizes community as a unit of

identity. (2) CBPR builds on strengths and resources within the community. (3) CBPR facilitates collaborative, equal partnerships in all phases of the research. (4) CBPR promotes co-learning and capacity building among all partners. (5) CBPR integrates and achieves a balance between research and action for the mutual benefit of all partners. (6) CBPR emphasizes local relevance of public health problems and ecological perspectives that recognize and attend to the multiple determinants of health and disease. (7) CBPR involves systems development through a cyclical and iterative process. (8) CBPR disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners and involves all partners in the dissemination process. (9) CBPR involves a long term process and commitment"(Isreal, et al., 2003 pp. 55-58). This essential shift in focus from the traditional researcher/subject interaction has contributed greatly to recent social research studies in community contexts.

Community Engaged Research. Many concerned community members, researchers, scholars, and community practitioners have taken the underlying values and philosophy of community based research further adapting them to emphasize community engagement as an indispensable component of research in communities. "The goals of community engagement are to build trust, to enlist new resources and allies, create better communication, and improve overall health outcomes as successful projects evolve into lasting collaborations" (NIH, 2011 p. 2). Community engagement's core principles are aligned and greatly influenced by the values of community organization practice. Those core principles include: empowerment, social justice, equal participation, self-determination, and fairness (NIH, 2011). These core principles go a step beyond community based research, and honor community members' ability to take an active role in confronting community issues by not only taking action, but also being cohorts in the

development of new knowledge. This particular research project, while not explicitly using a CBPR lens aligns itself with the core principles of community engaged research.

Research Questions

Research methodology, design, data collection, and analysis logically follow the inherent intent embedded in the overarching research questions that guide research inquiry. This same is true for this as well as other studies. Lines of inquiry begin with questions that shape the intent, the goals, and the methodology of innumerable given studies in diverse fields and disciplines. The following research questions carefully constructed reflect a progressive movement through the research process leading to the model development.

1. What elements do existing models provide in relation to the issues of difference boundaries? What gaps can be identified in existing models?
2. What are the key components of effective community practice across boundaries of difference?
3. How can the issue of difference in community practice be addressed effectively during the engagement process?
4. What adaptations are needed in order for this model to be effective in various practice contexts?

The first question was addressed primarily in the literature review in chapter two, and was used to construct semi-structured interview questions as well as to inform existing theory which may be supported or challenged by the data collected in this study. Other questions were particularly relevant to both the community engagement and data collection process.[3] The

[3] An interview guide that includes structured interview questions is included in the appendices under appendix 4.

research questions were constructed from an exhaustive review of community practice literature, cultural competence, and social justice theories. The prompts and in depth structured participant interview questions were constructed by linking key components of the models and approaches reviewed in chapter two (see Tables 3 and 4).

Research Design

The following section provides a detailed explanation of the research design, methodology, and analysis. The discussion begins with an examination of model development including Rothman and Thomas's (1994) integrative perspective on design and development. This section continues with a detailed review of grounded theory research using Strauss and Corbin (1998) to guide the inquiry, defining the specific methodology, and outlining both rigorous data collection and analysis methods. The final portion of this section sets the context for the study.

One of primary goals of this study was to generate practical theory rather than verify it. This goal was also aligned with much of the grounded theory research of both the past and present (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998). Although it was at the bedrock of the research design, theory generation was only one aspect of the overall model development process. Specific guidelines used to inform the development of the model included Rothman and Thomas's (1994) integrative perspective on intervention research.

This study employs Rothman and Thomas's (1994) integrated model of design and development as a heuristic that guided the development of the practice model. Their model of design and development outlined six phases of intervention development, defined as: (1) problem analysis and project planning, (2) information gathering and synthesis, (3) design, (4)

early development and pilot testing, (5) evaluation and advance development, and (6) dissemination (Thomas & Rothman, 1994 p. 9).

Model Development

Gaining specificity around what constitutes a model is critical to its effective subsequent development. In this section specific stages of the model development process are also outlined, and how exactly they are used with the data to build an effective practice model. Below there is a brief overview of model development, Rothman and Thomas' (1994) integrative perspective on design and development, and a detailed description of how it is used in conjunction with the data in this particular study.

Definition. As also stated in chapter one, a model is defined as a set of guidelines to guide practice (Netting, Kettener, & McMurtry, 2008). It is also known as the plan for how the practice is structured (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2001). Although a model is intended to guide practice, as Weil (1996) states, "a model is not intended to signify a "boxed in", isolated, or fixed approach with impermeable boundaries" (p. 7). It is however, meant to be clear and provide primary guidance, so that concepts, theory, and research can strengthen and adapt practice interventions (Weil, 1996).

Rothman and Thomas: An Overview. This form of applied research, according to Rothman and Thomas (1994), has various iterations of model development: intervention design and development, intervention knowledge development, and intervention knowledge utilization. These three types of model development can also be thought of as the three distinct facets of intervention design. The first, knowledge development (KD) is mainly used to build knowledge of social behavior. Knowledge utilization (KU) is meant to apply that knowledge and intervention design and development is meant to be used to create new technologies, programs,

and systems of practice that are rigorous, empirical, and evidence based (Rothman & Thomas, 1994).

This particular study focused on the first four phases of the integrated model of design and development. Problem analysis and project planning, information gathering and synthesis, design, and early development and pilot testing fell within the scope of this study. In terms of feasibility, the information gathering and synthesis stage involved data collection and analysis using grounded theory methods, however subsequent developmental pilot testing used focus group data in an alternative context to assess the likelihood of transferability of the model to other contexts.

Thomas and Rothman (1994) suggest in their model that further replication may include using an experimental design, collecting and analyzing data, replicating the intervention model, and refining it based on findings. Though, these stages of replication are beyond the scope of this dissertation, they may be conducted in subsequent follow up studies. For feasibility purposes and to focus the study, the decision was made to concentrate on the development of the practice model and to attempt to begin early development and pilot testing to support evaluation and replication for future inquiries. Rothman and Thomas (1994) were used as a guide to structure the first four stages of design and development, to develop a practice model of difference, and to qualitatively evaluate both its efficacy and transferability to other contexts of community practice. As demonstrated in chapters 4 and 5, this allowed for the further improvement of the model through the development of evolving interventive social technologies.

Grounded Theory Methodologies

Grounded theory methodology was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in an effort to generate theory from systematic data collection and analysis in social research directly from

the field. The main emphasis of social theorists up until that point was the development of theories based on a priori assumptions and logical deductions, but they were not grounded in systematic data collection and analysis within the given field of social study. As a result, mainstream sociologists, social researchers, and scholars' primary concern was verification of theory rather than theory generation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded theory is a qualitative research practice whose goal is to generate theory through an evolving research process as a result of the interplay between data collection and analysis. The result of a grounded theory project is a set of plausible relationships among concepts in the form of a theoretical model (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Creswell (2007), "the intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover theory in an abstract analytical schema of a process" (p. 63). The advantage of using grounded theory is that theory is generated from "systematic discovery from the data of social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 p. 3). Grounded theory is valuable to the proposed line of inquiry, because it is grounded in the social interactions and processes of people. In this case, it is an ideal methodological tool to not only offer comprehensive answers to vital research questions, but also to build a community practice model based on effectively crossing boundaries of difference in various contexts.

Paradigmatic Orientation and Grounded Theory. Various grounded theory orientations exist with specific underlying paradigmatic assumptions. Paradigmatic assumptions refer to world view, how best to order the world, and each contain distinct suppositions related to ontology and epistemology (O'Connor, & Netting, 2009). Since the inception of grounded theory as a social research methodology, much in the way of criticism and adaptation has taken place within scholarly circles based on these assumptions (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, &

Corbin, 1990; Strauss, & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin, & Strauss, 2008). Given the divergence among various types of grounded theory research, it is necessary to clarify specific sets of assumptions guiding the research design methodology (O'Connor, Netting, & Thomas, 2008). Burrell and Morgan (1979) serve as a viable guide to explore paradigmatic assumptions within this chapter. Both the functionalist and the interpretive paradigms remain the fundamental paradigmatic focus due to their application to grounded theory research methodologies. Due to their relevance, each dominant paradigmatic orientation of grounded theory deserves mentioning along with detailed rationale for the specific grounded theory iteration chosen based on the overall goals of the research project.

The functionalist paradigm is positioned from an objectivist positivistic position grounded in traditional notions of science, and assumes that knowledge is linear, rational, and reality exists outside the individual (O'Connor, & Netting, 2009). Central assumptions within this paradigm include that all knowledge is concrete, generally known, and people are products of their environment. Glaser and Strauss (1967), the forerunner of grounded theory, and later iterations of the methodology focus on the generation of theory through a specific set of fundamental assumptions in line with a positivist orientation situated within the functionalist paradigm[4]. Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998) begin to move from a strictly positivist orientation within the functionalist paradigm to a more post-positivist position.

Positivism rests on the notion that research can be generalized, and that analytic methods, comparative procedures, and underlying conceptual assumptions of the external world is discernable, objective, and unbiased (Annells, 1996). Post-positivism asserts that reality surely exists, but cannot be fully known, only in the probabilistic sense. Objective knowledge is an

[4] See Chapter 1- Burrell and Morgan's Multi-paradigmatic framework

epistemological ideal through the accumulation of knowledge through modified experimental research, theory generation, and peer review (Annells, 1996; Guba, 1990). The functionalist paradigm spans the positivist/post-positivist continuum.

Other recent iterations of grounded theory methodology fall within the interpretive paradigm (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin, & Strauss, 2008). Within this world view social reality is soft, subjective, and is a product of the individual mind (O'Connor, & Netting, 2009). Reality must be experienced, and the interpretive paradigm assumes that people create their own realities and participate in the social construction of those realities. Various scholars have written about grounded theory from this perspective (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). In practicing the interpretive grounded theory research process data are reconstructions of experience through an ongoing dialectical research/participant interaction process. It is assumed that meaning shapes action and action further shapes meaning. The researcher takes on an interpretive understanding of the data rather than an explanation as within the positivist/post-positivist positioning. Within this orientation, data are presented in a more narrative format focused on meaning of social processes (Charmaz, 2006).

The current study used a post-positivist orientation of grounded theory guide theoretical sampling, data collection, analysis, and the initial development of the community practice model. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) post-positivist approach was ideally suited due to its goal to develop theory transferable to various contexts, its recognition of certain elements of subjectivity, and attempts to control those elements. The major advantage of using Strauss and Corbin (1998) is that they offer very clear suggested procedures for conducting grounded theory research which are more than flexible than Glaser and Strauss (1967). Although their approach is systematic, it also puts more emphasis on the data than prescriptive research techniques. It provides a structure

that is flexible (Liamputtong, 2009). Strauss and Corbin (1998) are quick to point out that the structure provides a guide, but the data should take precedence over techniques.

Sampling. In order to effectively generate theory, an iterative process of data collection, coding, analysis, and planning was necessary. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling using maximum variation. Theoretical sampling was called for in Strauss and Corbin (1998), but the researcher was unable to use this sampling technique, due to concerns about privacy and protection of participants. A simultaneous process of data collection, coding, and analysis allowed the data to guide the research through each essential step of the research process. In this way, the process allowed the researcher to be guided more fundamentally by the data directing the inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Liamputtong, 2009).

This study uses the key components of dominant community practice models to shape questions, provide a preliminary conceptual foothold on the topic, and guide sampling in the beginning stages of the research. As data collection ensues there must be criteria to guide sampling and theory generation (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998). The criteria for theoretical sampling in the case of this project are as follows:

- Participants were chosen from a diverse group of volunteer resident leaders and paid community workers of a community organizing project in the Greater Fulton neighborhood in Richmond, VA.
- Sampling was based on the principle of maximum variation of difference within the sampling frame.
- The researcher selected interview participants based on where the data leads, and on differences. Each interviewee led to the next based on both differences present and what discoveries were made via the data.

- Based on Creswell (2007), the researcher chose 18 participants within the community organizing project in Greater Fulton to interview before changing contexts to evaluate the preliminary model.

By using purposive sampling based on achieving maximum variation of differences among the participants, the researcher collected varied data based on differences that both diverge and intersect. Due to the topic under investigation, it is wholly imperative that participants were chosen based on their differences. As shown in Table 3, these differences included age, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, culture, and socio-economic status.

Early Pilot Testing Sample. During the early pilot testing stage of model construction, practitioners from multiple typologies, backgrounds, and areas of community practice were sampled based on their professional contexts and expertise. Using maximum variation, the sample captured the professional practice typology, ethnicity, age range, and gender of each participant. As in the earlier stage of data collection, in this stage the researcher recruited participants using purposive sampling.

Four participants participated in the focus group. One was a middle age (36 to 60 years) African American female professional working in neighborhood community practice. Another was a young adult female (under 35 years) professional working in state level advocacy on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) issues. The third was a young adult female with experience in working in organizing with LGBT youth and in academic scholarship. The fourth was a middle aged white male (36 to 60 years) professional with experience in organizing within public housing projects.

Table 3. Sampling Frame: Participant Characteristics

Expertise	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Economic Status	Sexual Orientation
Community	African Amer	34	Male	Low SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	60	Female	Low SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	78	Female	Low SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	63	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Community	White	74	Female	High SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	57	Female	Low SES	Heterosexual
Community	White	62	Male	Low SES	Gay
Community	White	76	Male	High SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	63	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Comm/Prof	White	32	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Community	White	44	Female	Low SES	Heterosexual
Comm/Prof	White	33	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Professional	White	25	Female	Middle SES	Lesbian
Professional	African Amer	55	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Professional	African Amer	60	Male	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Professional	White	27	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Professional	White	26	Female	Low SES	Lesbian
Professional	White	63	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual

Totals: 18

Expertise/Power

Professionals- 8
Community Leaders- 12

Race/ Ethnicity

White- 10 (6 Professionals, 6 Community Leaders, 3 Lesbian/Gay)
African American- 8 (2 Professionals, 6 Community Leaders, 0 Lesbian/Gay)

Sexual Orientation

Lesbian/Gay- 3 (2 Professional, 1 Community Leader, 3 White, 0 African American)
Heterosexual- 16 (11 Community Leaders, 6 Professionals, 8 White, 8 African American)

Age

Young Adult (Under 35 years) – 6 (1 African American, 5 White, 2 Gay)
Middle Aged- (36 to 60 years) – 5 (4 African Americans, 1 White, 0 Gay)
Senior Citizen- (61 years and over) – 7 (3 African American, 4 White, 1 Gay)

Socio-Economic Status

Low Socio-Economic Status- 7 (4 African American, 3 White, 5 Female, 2 Male, 2 Gay)
Middle Socio-Economic Status- 9 (4 African American, 5 White, 8 Female, 1 Male, 1 Gay)
High Socio-Economic Status- 2 (2 White, 1 Male, 1 Female)

Data Collection. Data collection consisted of in depth structured interviews that sought to answer the overarching broad research questions. The interview questions were constructed based on the key components of other prevalent models used within the field. The dominant characteristics were used to build open ended interview questions as well as prompts to guide participants responses based on existing models within the literature and the conversation between participants and the researcher. The prompts and questions arose from the key conceptual components of dialogue, collaboration, power and oppression, knowledge development, and group decision making as shown in Table 4 below.

Also shown are the specific models, approaches, and intercultural practice concepts from which the key components originated. From these component concepts, prompts were chosen to support the in depth open ended interview questions in order to illicit discussion regarding the key components within each existing model and approach. Table 4 serves as a linking guide that critically connects key component aspects of prevalent models and approaches to the line of inquiry.

All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder, transcribed, and subsequently coded during analysis. Each interview took between an hour and an hour and a half. The researcher took field notes during the interview while recording, noting general themes to use at the end of the interview to review dominant topics of conversation. A positive aspect of using the recorder was it allowed the researcher to focus on the conversation and his use of prompts.

Upon completing the analysis and the model, practitioners were sampled to take part in a focus group to discuss the applicability of the model to other contexts. The goal was to discuss transferability of the model to various contexts. The five practitioner participants were chosen based on their diverse community practice backgrounds and expertise. The specific interview

questions can be reviewed in the interview protocol section of the appendices (Appendix 3). Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis, and participants made suggestions regarding strengths and challenges inherent within the practice model.

Table 4. - Linking Prevalent Practice Models, Approaches, and Intercultural Practice Concepts to Interview Questions and Prompts

Key Component and Definitions	***Models, Approaches, and Intercultural Practice Concepts***	***Prompts***	***Interview Questions***
Dialogue Subtle form of power sharing using questions and discussion Based on liberation theology (Freire, 1970).	• Empowerment Approaches • Feminist Approaches • Highlander Model • Freire 's Transformative Model • Intercultural Dialogue	1. How did people talk in a group setting? 2. Were there any specific words or phrases people said? 3. Were there certain triggers or cultural phrases that were used or to be avoided? 4. What was the tone of the language used?	1. Tell me a few things that come to mind when you think about community work and difference. 2. Tell me about a time when you took part in a community organizing project with people different from you that was very effective or successful. 3. Tell me about a time when you took part in a community organizing project with people different from you that did not go as planned. 4. What are some things you would have changed?

Collaboration
 	
• Broad Participation
• Grassroots Leadership
• Partnership
	• Empowerment Approaches
	• Feminist Approaches
	• Mondros and Wilson-Grassroots Model
	• Alinsky
	  ○ Shared Self Interest
	  ○ Downplayed Difference
	• Highlander Model
	  ○ Indigenous Leadership
	  ○ Love and Respect for Difference
	• Freire's Transformative Model
		1. How did community members and organizers work together with those different from them?
		
		2. How was leadership structured among organizers, residents, and community leaders?	

Table 4. - (Continued)

Key Component and Definitions	*Models, Approaches, and Intercultural Practice Concepts*	*Prompts*	*Interview Questions*

Power/Oppression
• Equality: Worker and community as equal
• Worker as expert
	• Empowerment Approaches
	• Feminist Approaches
	• Rothman- Social Action
	• Mondros and Wilson- Mobilizing
	• Fisher- Political Activist
	• Fisher- Neighborhood Maintenance
	• Freire's Transformative Model
	  ○ No Power Differential
	  ○ Equality- worker and community member are equal.
	• Strengths Approach
	Anti-oppressive Practice
		1. How was power used?
		2. In a positive way?
		3. In a negative way?
			1. Tell me a few things that come to mind when you think about community work and difference.
			2. Tell me about a time when you took part in a community organizing project with people different from you that was very effective or successful.
			3. Tell me about a time when you took part in a community organizing project with people different from you that did not go as planned.
			4. What are some things you would have changed?

Knowledge Development • Learning Process Co-Learning	• Highlander Model • Freire's Transformative Model • Empowerment Approaches Critical Awareness (Intercultural Practice)	1. What learning took place? 2. How should learning be used in community work?	
Group Decision Making • Democratic • Consensus • Group Process • Expert Driven	• Feminist Approaches • Empowerment Approaches • Rothman- Locality Development • Highlander Model • Mondros & Wilson- Grassroots • Alinsky Weil & Gamble	1. How were decisions made? 2. How should they be made?	

Data Analysis. The method of analysis used in this study is known as constant comparison. Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe it in this way, "each incident in the data is compared to other incidents for similarities and differences. Incidents found to be conceptually similar are grouped together under a high level descriptive concept . . . this type of comparison is essential to all analysis, because it allows the researcher to differentiate one category theme from another and identify properties and dimensions specific to that category or theme." (p. 73). This is how the theory, and thus the model will be generated based on an analysis of these conceptual categories, and their relationship to one another.

Creswell (2007) suggests that Strauss and Corbin's structured procedures for conducting grounded theory analysis is helpful to researchers wishing to carry out this particular type of practical post-positivist qualitative research. The data collection and analysis will take place almost simultaneously (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998). This is one element that differentiates grounded theory from some other qualitative research methods where data analysis generally ends before analysis begins (Liampattong, 2009). The researcher will also make memos writing about the data analysis.

There are three types of coding that are recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998) in their systematic structure of grounded theory. The main distinction is the structure that Strauss and Corbin offer in their system. They are: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. They each have their own procedure and purpose. The first step in the coding and analysis process is open coding. It is essentially the first stage in initial coding. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define it as "breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data; at the same time, one is qualifying those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions" (p. 195). They also outline it as "taking apart an observation, a sentence, a paragraph, and giving

each discrete incident, idea, event, or a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 p. 59). This method allows for bit by bit analysis of incidents, and allows the researcher to establish relationships between concepts, ideas, and events, and examine interactions. In this step categories and subsequent sub-categories are established among the data.

The next step in the coding process is axial coding. Its goal is to examine the codes at a more conceptual level. The purpose of axial coding is to arrange data "in new ways by making connections between a category and its sub-categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 p. 97). Although it does not seek to make links between codes, it assures that codes are fully elaborated upon. In this way researchers can ask, questions like why, what, and how of the social process under investigation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Liampattong, 2009). In this case the process under investigation is that of crossing boundaries of difference in community practice.

The third procedure in the process is selective coding. It seeks to unify all of the themes into one central theme or "core category" that "represents the main theme of research" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008 p. 104). The core category forms the substantive theory that is grounded in the data (Creswell, 2007). Many researchers demonstrate this substantive theory is various ways. Some use a narrative, some write a story, a visual picture, some make a series of propositions, and others develop a theoretical conceptual framework (Creswell, 2007; Liampattong, 2009).

In this study, all three coding systems were utilized in the analysis. Data collection were used in conjunction with open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to develop the model. As stated above many researchers demonstrate theory derived from the data in various ways. In this study it was demonstrated through the development of a theory, a set of propositions, and a practice model based in the relationships among the categories of data and process. This model

discussed in great detail and outlined through a visual theoretical practice framework in the subsequent chapter, followed the structure of open, axial, and selective coding outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Research Memos. As an integral part of the analysis the researcher kept a thorough record of research memos, and maintained a record of the research process that greatly aided the development of ideas, analysis, and process. This was a vital step, and an integral a part of the coding process and overall data analysis process. "The more we write memos and continue to deconstruct and construct our data, the clearer we will become about our categories, and eventually we will be able to construct theory from our data" (Liampattong, 2009 p. 218). This is an important step in between analysis and writing, and provides a more detailed examination of the data (Strauss, & Corbin 1998).

Reflexive Journaling. One of the primary methodological tools used and recommended within the literature employed to minimize subjectivity within the research process was reflexive journaling. This journal allowed the researcher to separate out subjective experience and unpack individual biases related to boundaries of difference in the community practice and research context. In this case, it enabled the researcher to hold a mirror up to their own preconceptions, biases, and interpretations in order to remain objective. The reflexive journal contained the researcher's own issues related to differences in the practice context. It will provided the researcher with the opportunity to unpack their own biases and presumptions related to difference in the given community practice context. Due to the emic positioning of the researcher, this tool proved particularly effective (Creswell, 2007; Strauss, & Corbin, 1998).

Emic essentially means that the researcher is investigating the social phenomenon under study from an insider's perspective. As a part of this grounded theory and model development

research project, the researcher has also been working as an organizer in the community, and the research questions have stemmed from both the researcher's experience as a community practitioner as well as detailed study of diversity, multiculturalism, and difference, as well as various community practice models. In this case the researcher is the worker, and the reflexive journal serves in mitigating contradictions that arise as a part of these dual roles.

The journal specifically documented issues that arose within the organizing project related to the research issue, and was be used in collaboration with an external peer reviewer. It provided an outlet to possible role contradictions that came up within in the tension between practice and the research. It allowed the individual researcher to process these role contradictions as well as unpack biases and question their own assumptions related to difference and oppression.

Setting: The Bounds of the Study

The initial model development was bounded within the Greater Fulton community. Participants were recruited based on their current community practice activities. As a major goal of model development was to establish transferability, the relevance of the research extends beyond the initial geographic boundaries of Greater Fulton to test its applicability to related, but distinctive community contexts. As shown in chapter 4, the subsequent practice model was built based on the theory generated from the grounded theory, relationships among the overarching concepts, and the tenants of intervention model development (Rothman, & Thomas, 1994).

The Greater Fulton community has a long history of tension based on class, racial, and other differences. These differences pervade the community work in which the community is greatly invested, and stands as a great barrier to progress. This is also a problem that the community of Greater Fulton is not alone in experiencing. The development of this model

allows us to begin to constructively deal with issues of difference in effective ways. It also enables practitioners to begin to base community practice initiatives and social movements on foundations of practice derived from the field.

Protection of Participants

This section deals directly with the potential harm that may arise from direct participation in this study on the part of community members, and issues related to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). It will discuss how the dual roles of both the researcher and the participants were managed within the research process. There will be a brief discussion of the issue of age related to informed consent, as well as risks related to accidental self-disclosure.

It was essential that all of the participants in the study felt comfortable enough to be able to participate and share honestly their views on effectively navigating differences in community practice. This study gained approval from the IRB before data collection began. The process of community engagement and building relationships among participants begun as a part of the broader community organizing initiative which enabled the process of trust building, recruitment, and participant engagement.

There still remained some considerations related to this project that need to be taken into account. Although this project was unique, some issues that arose when the living context was also the research context needed to be addressed to ensure participants protection from harm. There were clear benefits to this project taking place in the context of a broader community initiative, as well as benefits to the practitioner filling the role of researcher. There also could have been potential for negative fallout if these factors were not addressed responsibly with participants as a part of the research process.

The main issues related to participant protections were the dual roles of the researcher and the issue of confidentiality. Each participant was required to sign an informed consent form that will state that their identity will not be disclosed as a part of the study and that the researcher will not disclose to anyone else their participation in the study. They also signed a confidentiality agreement. This agreement let them know that none of the information that they shared will traced back to them including all identifying information, all confidentiality dynamics were be separated out, and research findings covered general statements on process. They were free disclose to anyone that they are a participant, but their participation was not revealed to anyone else in the community by the researcher, and results cannot be presented in such a way that would reveal their identity. For example, specific information, such as specific names and events and other identifiable information were removed from results.

Summary

This project fits the National Institute of Health's (NIH) definition of community engaged research. Its values and fundamental principles are grounded in the principles of grassroots community organizing. They are empowerment, self-determination, community participation, and social justice (NIH, 2011).

The goal of the research project: the development of a community practice model based on effectively crossing boundaries of difference in community practice. Data collection and analysis methods are grounded theory, and intervention model development (Rothman & Thomas, 1994; Strauss, & Corbin, 2008). This very deliberate use of the research process including a review of literature, constructing of overarching research questions, and methodology, build the groundwork for a rigorous analysis of data and subsequent development

of a solid community practice model grounded in data systematically collected and analyzed in the field as chapter 4 demonstrates.

CHAPTER 4- FINDINGS: BUILDING A PRACTICE MODEL

Introduction

The chapter contains a structure centered on demonstrating the theoretical foundation discovered within the data analysis, and the subsequent practice model built from data provided by participants. The discussion begins with an overview of the pragmatic use of grounded theory in building the practice model. It continues with a summary of the core theoretical phenomenon used to guide the succeeding practice model construction. Next, the core process themes and applied structural components of the model are presented in detail, followed by a presentation summary of the practice model concluding the chapter. In brief, the chapter contains a review, an overview of the theory developed to guide model development, the categories discovered within the data, and an explanation of practical model application within the field.

Using Grounded Theory to Build and Effective Model of Practice: A Brief Review

As stated in the previous chapter, the grounded theory methodology of Strauss and Corbin (1998) guided the research process. Strauss and Corbin offer a post-positivist orientation ideally structured and flexible to build a theoretical foundation transferrable to multiple contexts. The use of the research methodology entailed three stages of data analysis. Strauss and Corbin promote a structured formula for data analysis, but carefully highlight the need to allow the data to guide inquiry rather than adhering to a fixed, prescriptive formula. The first stage, open coding, involves generating categories from existing data. The second stage of data analysis axial coding seeks to systematically relate categories to their existing sub categories. Only in the final stage of coding when the categories become integrated into a larger theoretical scheme does the theory take shape (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

For the current inquiry, the theory developed guides the orientation and the scheme inherent within the practice model. The theory lies embedded within the practice model, guides its development, and implementation. Both remain derived from the data collected and analyzed in the field. Therefore, grounded theory advanced by Strauss and Corbin (1998) becomes a heuristic with which to build a practice model only after the theory emerges, and constitutes a tool for guiding the practice model development. The theory articulated in subsequent sections introduces the practice model following a summary of the interrelated concepts apparent across categories.

Participant Responses to Boundaries of Difference

Differences consist of various ubiquitous traits, cultures, identities, personal attributes, memories, histories, and representations often manifested through assorted intentional power displays of separation, homogenization, and/or inclusion. Practitioners must recognize that differences are inevitable and omnipresent in community practice. Therefore, working in community demands unavoidable knowledge building prior to community entry centered in what is possible, what is known, and what specific anticipated differences may arise. Culture, inextricably tied to the development of meaning, can stand out as a difference either implicit or explicit depending on the level of communication, relationship care, and knowledge building that has taken place as a part of the organizing process. History, memory, and background not only integral to relationship care, but a pervasive difference in community creates multiple inexorable perspectives. Personality and interests, certain to appear in community work, generates unavoidable differences forming an indispensable sub-category.

Challenges and barriers also arise in the arena of general boundaries of difference. These include representation, separation, and homogenization. Separation and homogenization occurs

when people align themselves with like-minded, similarly attributed, and comparably related partners excluding differences all together. Cliques, sects, and factions begin to emerge when this takes place, and are antithetical to building alliances as well as effective organizing.

Invisible differences transcend many general surface differences, and pervasively subsist even among apparently homogenous groups. Although intercultural, racial, and socio-economic differences persist, and often cause conflict, according to participant responses differences remain enveloping, all encompassing, and ubiquitous in nearly all community practice contexts. The critical lynch pin involved the practitioner's ability to remain open and inclusive to differences among community members, leaders, and participants at the table. Differences contain within them potential to both separate and align. The antidote to allowing boundaries of difference become barriers to the community effort requires a commitment to inclusion. One participant stated a dominant sentiment related to differences:

> "…some may be old-timers, some may have gone to the same college, some might live on the same block, and trying to get through those groups and somehow you have to encourage those groups to open the groups to everyone and be inclusive. I think that's the only way of forging alliances is if you're inclusive."

Though specific nuances of how differences manifest in groups and shape participant experience might illicit a vastly different line of inquiry, participants' perception of how to navigate these differences effectively was integral to the research project. Their responses shaped what discernible differences get displayed in the practice arena. The researcher asked participants to talk about what came to mind when they thought about differences in community work. Prompted by questions they talked about both successful and unsuccessful organizing projects with groups and individuals different from them. Specific research and interview

questions can be reviewed in appendix 3 and Chapter 3. The distinctive subcategories that surfaced from their responses within the category of boundaries of difference were omnipresence; known differences; culture; history, memory, and background; personality and interests; and representation, separation, and homogenization.

Omnipresence

Within community work various arenas exist saturated with multifaceted differences among people, individuals, and groups. This category reinforces the imperative to develop effective intercultural practice tools enabling practitioners to forge lasting alliances across the often invisible boundaries of difference. Also, it emphasizes the need for community leaders and practitioners to remain vigilant in making the often invisible differences apparent.

> "…there will always be differences that you'll have to deal with in a community unanticipated, but you're gonna have differences in you know economics, um, even if the community is racially homogeneous, you're gonna have economic differences. You're gonna have differences in you know age: young people vs...you know the elderly. Um, so that it's always important to be really conscious about it. And to be proactive about how you do work in the community so that you remain open to your process so that all voices can be heard. That's what I've learned."

Known/ Expected Differences

Certain differences have a strong tendency to remain visible within the practice context. These generally manifest themselves more externally or explicitly stated in early conversations with residents, community leaders, and stakeholders. Differences discovered in prior ethnography or research conducted before gaining entry. They also include differences that the practitioner may anticipate. Known differences are defined as race, socio-economics, sexual

orientation, geography, age, or any other explicit difference. Known differences generally do not catch the practitioner by surprise, tend to be the ones that community members have lived with for years, and either grown used to or have a pattern of dealing with in maladaptive ways if they have not incorporated the use of relationship care, communication, and knowledge building throughout their work together. One volunteer community leader discussed working with young people in the community.

> "Okay um, well because of my age I notice that I'm very frequently trying to communicate and work with much younger people. And I'm always conscious of trying to overcome a reticence that they might have about why they're having a conversation with me."

Culture

Other differences may be less visible on the surface. Cultural differences tend to lead to misconstrued meanings without deliberate and intentional shared knowledge building on the part of both practitioners and community members. Both are co-teachers and co-learners. Critical to opening cultural differences often invisible prior to thorough investigation; communication aids this process of relational knowledge building. Cultural differences in communication also arise as a boundary in organizing work between community members and helping professionals. This boundary becomes a potential barrier when a lack of attention is paid to knowledge building and communication in crossing cultural boundaries. Furthermore, if practitioners and community members have taken care in the three dimensions of relationship care, communication, and knowledge building, cultural boundaries of difference can become powerful strengths and assets to be built upon. If not thoroughly explored, communicated with care, and learned, these differences can lead to challenging barriers, such as misinterpretation, false assumptions,

alienation, animosity, disempowerment, and community disengagement. A participant discussed one such incident.

> "And I think in the early days, [redacted] we failed there on that. We failed on accounting for some of the cultural differences in the African American community, how African Americans raise their children compared to the average white people raise their children, and there's a huge difference about that. I think we failed there."

History, Memory, and Background

Community memory and history will be explored later as a critical component of relationship care in the practice of forging alliances across boundaries of difference. As history, memory, and background manifest themselves as a specific boundary of difference in practice, again developing meaning based on these multiple perspectives brings about the question: how can we relate across multiple meanings? In this instance, history, memory, and background stand out as an explicit difference that may not become visible without relationship care, communication, and knowledge building. A community is made up of people from various backgrounds, histories, and memories carried with them in community. With those histories, memories, and backgrounds often bring both privilege and marginalization. Privilege and marginalization within communities can bring anguish, resentment, mistrust, and confusion. These can be enormous blocks to progress and consolidation of power within communities.

> "…when you get deeper, building alliances is also about dealing with the history of pain, rejection, disappointment, abuse, and oftentimes individuals that are in that room represent that to the other. And you don't always know who represents what…"

Personality and Interests

Often invisible personality and interests represents a fundamental difference among community members. People bring various traits, interests, perspectives, and infinite ways of working collaboratively. With those come diverse expectations of the process. One participant discussed experiences working within a team of diverse residents.

> "I think of the example of the dynamic between [redacted], [redacted], and [redacted]. …[redacted]'s way was push hard against the Mayor and write all these crazy emails or very aggressive emails. [redacted]'s was more, let me invite you over to see it, and let's have coffee. And [redacted]'s was like disarm both of you and when the real work is happening, I'll be there. He didn't want to have anything really to do with the letter writing or the meetings. He wanted to make the Google Map where it showed where all the issues were. Um, and those three different people, you know, [redacted] has a loving, warm approach, [redacted] has an aggressive, nasty approach, and [redacted] has no interest in approaching at all. He only wants to do the tasks. It's like [redacted]. [redacted] only wanted to be involved when we actually did things, but she and the group clammed up and shut down. She didn't want to be involved in who's going to do it. She wanted to be told what she was doing."

The above example shows how personality and interests can cause a breakdown in group cohesion if communication, relationship care, and knowledge building are not intentionally incorporated into the organizing and teambuilding process particularly at the beginning. Had this group known those dynamics earlier at inception, they may have had an easier time achieving synergy.

Representation, Separation, and Homogenization

Nearly every category contain challenges and facilitative barriers. Representation, separation, and homogenization characterize how participant community members respond when difference remains ignored, downplayed, unacknowledged, unrecognized, or hardened. Representation, separation, and homogenization are negative effects of not intervening through relationship care, communication, and knowledge building in response to manifestations of difference listed above.

Representation of various dimensions of difference signifies openness and willingness to practice intentional relationship care, communication, and knowledge building. Too often, participants either willingly or unintentionally ally themselves with people of similar social status, culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, personality, or interest. When this phenomenon takes place, homogenization ends as the practical result. Ideally each group, initiative, or project needs a diverse set of people at the table in order to meet the unique challenges of each endeavor.

Often when participants feel they are not heard or valued, they may begin to withdraw from the process. Homogenized groups may withdrawal or dominate change initiatives as cliques begin to form. Individual and group separation occurs as a result of unintentional or deliberate exclusion, and can only damage any community effort. Many participants do not come to the table of community equipped to give care to diverse representation and perspectives, but can be equipped through the proper application of relationship care, knowledge building, and communication.

“Because when you look at the groups, it's that same thing again. It's that same old clique

again. It's the old-timers, with the economic development, you know, which is the people that are interested in civic associations and things like that. And you've got your little parks and recs and whatever and education so those are more the newcomers. Uh, ultra-liberal white people, you know, all together you know. The granola eaters.....all together....So yeah. . .”

The various aspects of difference outlined above involve the broader aspects of how difference manifests itself in practice.

Overview of the Core Phenomenon: The Theory Guiding the Model

Three core conceptual process themes of knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care encapsulated the dominant successful positive exchanges among participant responses as well as each stage of the engagement and organizing process. The three core process themes saturate all of the categories discovered within the data that inform the subsequent practice model. Knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care, compose the foundation of the theory. In propositional terms, the foundation of effective alliances forged in the presence of difference lie in the practitioner’s ability to model and exercise inclusive skills of knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care at every stage of the community engagement and planning process.

In order to avoid reductionist interpretations of the theory and the subsequent model, thorough concrete clarification of each category, sub-category, and their inter-relatedness in early sections of the chapter define the three core process themes, and demonstrate how they manifest themselves within the subsequent categories integral to both the theory and the model. These three core process themes cross cut every other category embedding themselves within the existing categories in uniquely dynamic, multifaceted, and complex ways. Although the theory

argues the imperative need for community practitioners to enact vital knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care skills, ultimately the theory engages valuable relational qualities in multiple contexts of community among groups that contain significant differences. The subsequent sections discuss participants' views on difference, and provide a further detailed explanation of the three core components introducing a more detailed picture of the theoretical construct. A brief discussion of participants' responses directly related to difference introduces the more comprehensive elucidation of the theory and succeeding practice model.

Introducing the Integrative Roots of Forging Alliances

The most prominent themes that run throughout all subsequent categories are relationship care, knowledge building, and quality communication. These make up the core phenomenon associated with effectively crossing boundaries of difference in community practice. As Figure 4.1 demonstrates below, as the categories that make up the core phenomenon are integrated, critical practical action oriented subcategories emerge that allow the enactment of the core phenomenon in practice. For example, when knowledge building is integrated with relationship care, a people centered focus guides interactions among practitioners and community members engaged in difference practice. The same is true for the creation of trust building through integrating quality communication and relationship care. Likewise demonstrated as a part of Figure 4.1 is the demonstration of practical skills through the integration of all three components of the core phenomenon. All of these are discussed in much greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

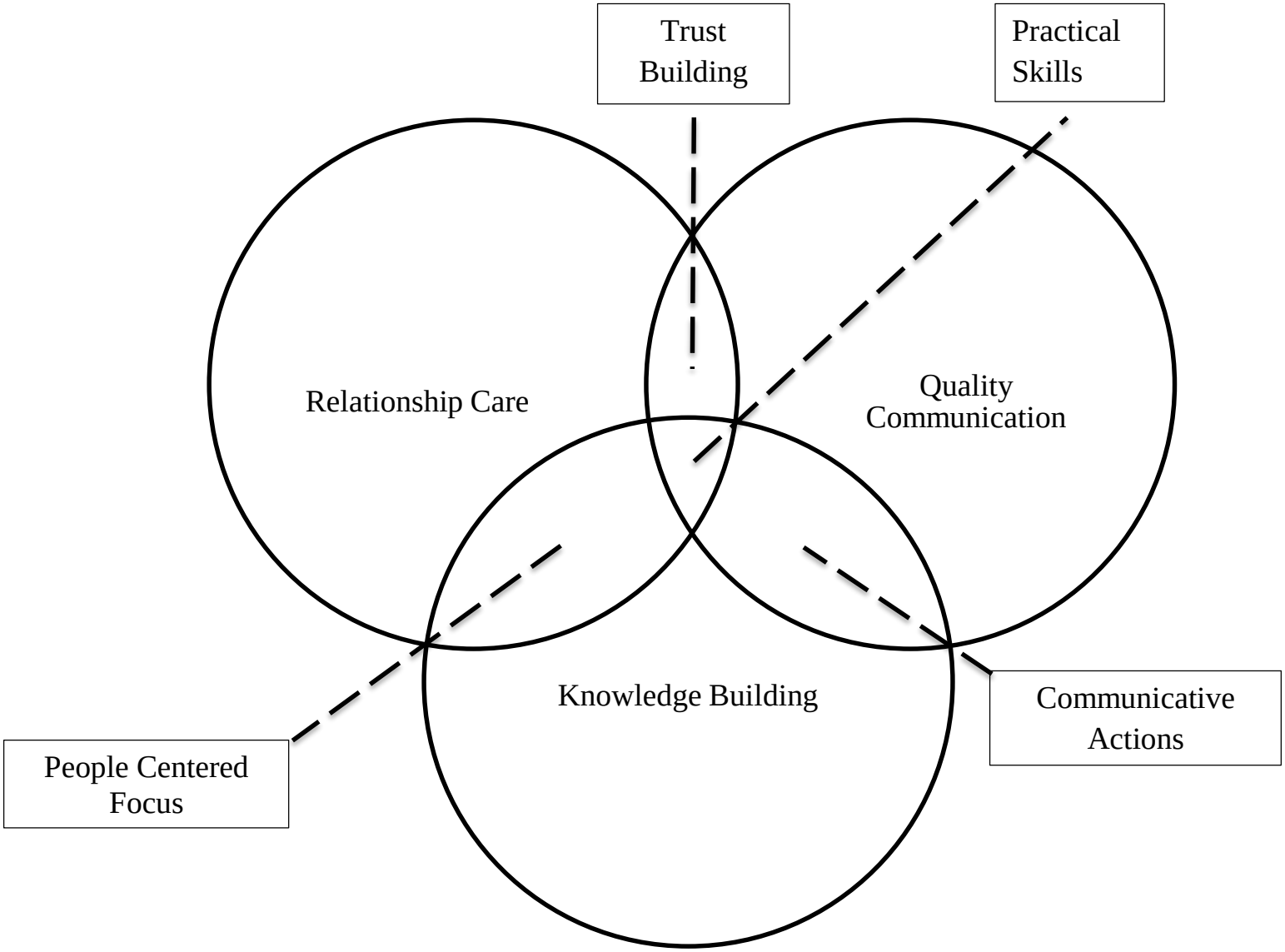


Figure 4.1- Core Phenomenon: The Integrative Roots of Forging Alliances

Critical Difference Engagement Theory: The Core Phenomenon

The basis of the core phenomenon guiding the Critical Difference community practice theory rests in the integration of the most prominent categories among the data. The practitioner begins the process of building alliances through knowledge building, and the core process themes of quality communication, and relationship care guide the alliance building process through the critical structural stages of the practice model. As the practitioner navigates various critical structural stages, from coming together, to common cause, to creating common ground, to moving forward, the three core practice domains of quality communication, knowledge building, and relationship care integrate throughout each stage of the organizing process forming the foundation to guide the practitioner from one stage to the next. The success of crossing differences depends upon the effective integration of the core process themes at the community level.

- Proposition 1.) Creating community alliances rest in the practitioner's ability to both model and exercise knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care at every stage of the community engagement and subsequent planning process.
- Proposition 2.)Fundamental practice behaviors embedded within quality communication, knowledge building, and relationship care, integrate throughout the various stages of the community engagement and organizing process.
- Proposition 3.) Differences have various implications of privilege and power.
- Proposition 4.) Boundaries of difference are omnipresent, ubiquitous, pervasive, complex, nuanced, and often invisible.

- Proposition 5.) Differences become the roots of division and manifest as barriers to solidarity when insufficient attention gets paid to knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care.
- Proposition 6.) Community practitioners must develop the ability to critically pinpoint, address, and respond to facilitative barriers with effective intercultural practice behaviors significant to the process of forging alliances across boundaries of difference.

Categories Guiding Practice: The Foundation of Forging Alliances

Due to the integrative nature of the core foundational process themes, an overview is given of each, and they are subsequently discussed in greater detail. Knowledge building involves equalized co-creative learning among the organizers, volunteers, and community leaders. Quality communication clarifies action among the various organizing participants, and it rests on the shoulders of the organizer(s) to practice, create, teach, and model. Relationship care centered in honoring people, building trust, and patience fosters leadership, empowerment, and capacity for forging alliances.

The core process themes serve as the foundation of the theory guiding the development of the practice model. The later stage based categories contain essential components of knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care, but go a step further in their unique focus and individual role. Coming together, common ground, common cause, and moving forward make up the applied structure of the engagement process.

Core Process Themes: Integrative Roots of Forging Alliances

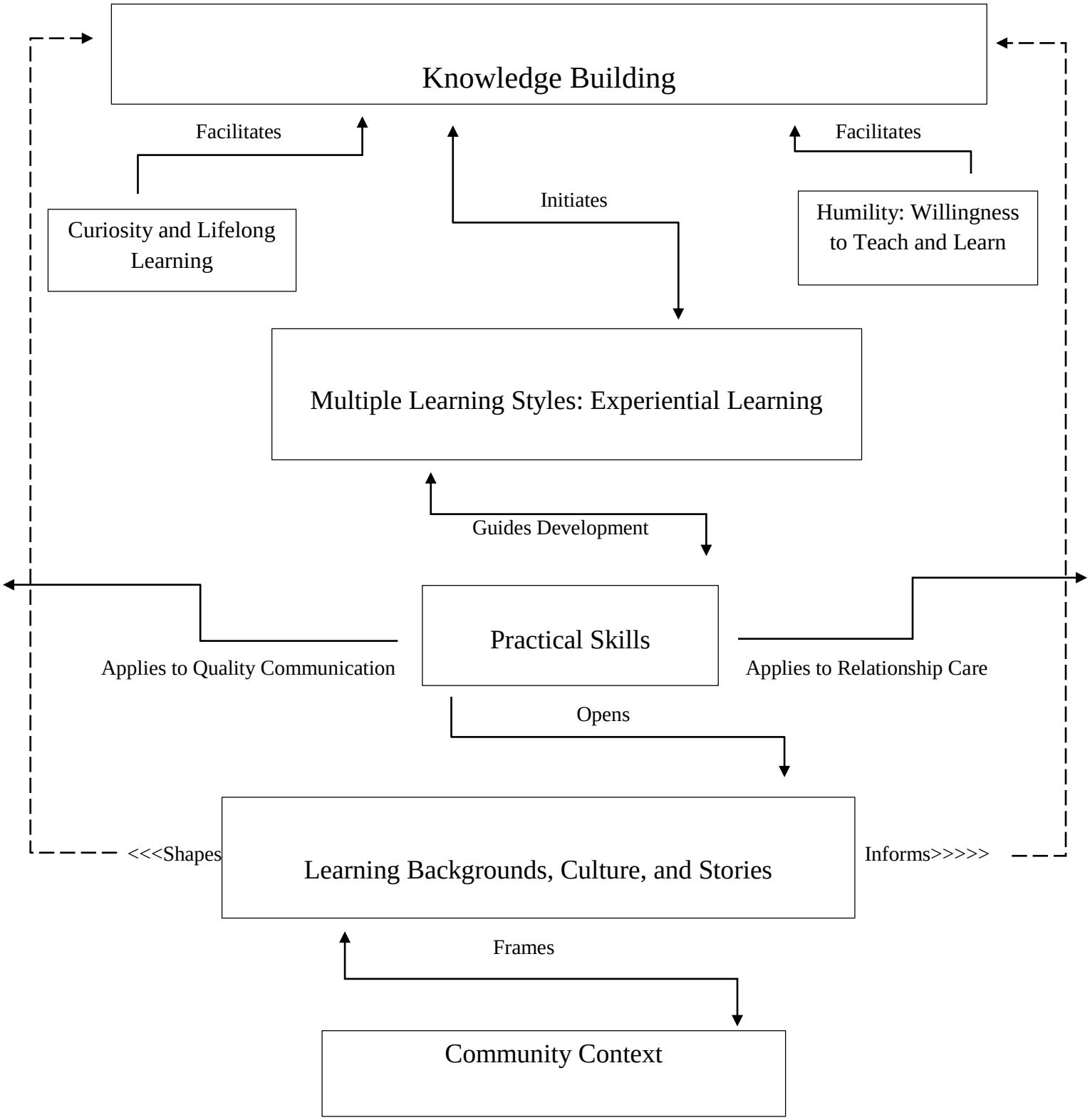
One key participant response demonstrates how these integrated foundational process themes guide each stage of the engagement, practice, and implementation process intricately linking knowledge building, relationship care, and quality communication.

> "It's such a process of learning based on the process of each project that is planned and implemented. Going through the work team meeting and developing relationships, by talking to community members, interacting on a regular basis, learning what each person's triggers are, what their strengths are as far as project planning or anything like that. . . "(**Int. 17-Tr. 16-Lines 116-119**)

Theme One: Knowledge Building

Knowledge building as shown in Figure 4.2 is a complex category within the core phenomenon. Pictured below are the interrelated concepts that make up the category and sub-categories of this essential piece of the forging alliance process. Curiosity and Lifelong learning along with humility facilitate the process of knowledge building. Knowledge building and the use of multiple learning styles each initiate one another. Likewise multiple learning styles and practical skills each guide the development of one another in a symbiotic process of learning. Practical skills also serves to open up the process of learning backgrounds, culture, and stories within the community, thus framing the community context. It is these stories that inform and shape the knowledge building process. Each of these categories is discussed in the subsequent section in much greater detail.

Figure 4.2- Knowledge Building



The first core process theme provides a fundamental foundational component of the model. Knowledge building encompasses the applied, collaborative, interactive, co-creative process of community level teaching and learning. Community leaders, volunteers, residents, and organizers work together to build, learn, teach, and guide each other. Knowledge building contains within it potential solidarity. In other words, solidarity begins with the essential building block of mutual knowledge generation. As a result, the Practitioner must remain aware of power dynamics, dominant discourses, history, and lessons learned from prior research regarding known differences within the community, such as demographics, race, age, gender, and socio-economic status while remaining open to new lessons and discoveries. A professional practitioner working on the ground in various neighborhoods within a metropolitan city characterized knowledge building in this way.

> "Well, I think it opens the conversation and it's a great place to start community work. I think it should be the beginning. If everybody is learning um, at the very onset of the process, then you're sort of beginning a new experience which is what it needs to be."**(Int.16-Tr.15- Lines 382-387)**

Situated first due to the need to begin building knowledge before the organizing and engagement process begins, the practitioner begins at a place of humility defined as a willingness to learn, teach, to lead, and be led. Social justice workers partnering with communities assume that community members hold the informational keys to their own experience. Contrarily, practitioners set up immediate barriers by assuming expert specialized professional knowledge trumps community experience, background, history, and culture. Curiosity and lifelong learning set the stage for subsequent component categories of knowledge building. Prior and upon entrance into the community, the practitioner initiates a process of learning differences, cultures,

backgrounds, and stories beginning with themselves, and intentionally model these principles in their dealings in the community.

The practitioner commits to both model and embody curiosity and lifelong learning by continually seeking and finding new information to guide the forging alliance process. Knowledge building includes within in it an applied element, and contains various dimensions and complexities. A vital component deals with practical skills including people skills, organizing skills, and project based learning. Utilizing common sense; keeping language, concepts, and learning simple; and taking advantage of experiential learning opportunities equalizes knowledge building by creating opportunities for community leaders to teach various critical lessons to practitioners and each other. Consequently, all those engaged in forging alliances with the goal of community change need to obtain anticipated awareness of barriers to knowledge building. The seven essential elements of knowledge building detailed in the following section include curiosity and lifelong learning, humility, learning backgrounds, community context, practical skills, experiential learning, and facilitative barriers to knowledge building in crossing boundaries of difference.

Curiosity and Lifelong Learning: Seeking and Finding Information. Participants discussed the need to continue to learn in the process of community practice. Community practitioners and community leaders practice and model passion for co-learning.

> **"**Um, it's like a crucial part of my life. It's a crucial part of my learning. I feel like I have learned more through this work than I have through any organized education or work experience. Um, this is what, you know, engaged in, helped me evolve past some of the limiting beliefs that I grew up with. Um, if it hadn't been for just working and volunteering.....you know, that to me was the best experience and the best, you know, the

learning and I'm learning through this work. And that's, it's a little bit more than just being a clinic or.....organizing an event or whatever. It's like, this is the stuff that, you know it creates larger purposes, but it's also an eternal, it's an eternal journey as well. You learn a lot through building communities…." (**Int. 11-Tr. 10- Lines 520-528)**

Intellectual curiosity as a key component category of knowledge building contains three embedded goals. The first involves the practitioner's need to co-create an open supportive environment where community participants feel empowered to ask questions, remain safe, and seek out new information. The second goal focuses on providing opportunities for community members to research, find new information, and communicate the need for community members to seek information for themselves. The third entails demonstrating a commitment to never ending continued patterns of learning and teaching. One participant captured this third goal in the following response.

"To be able to provide and find your own information and stop relying on people to tell you, hey this service is available over here. You know when you need something you need to know where to look to go find it yourself…" (**Int. 1- Tr. 1- Lines 310-312)**

As all of the core process themes subsist in relationship to one another as well as in relationship to the later stage categories of the practice theory and subsequent practice model. Not only are the core process themes linked to one another in their complexity, but integrated in multifaceted ways within each of the various stage categories. Much of the success related to the three goals associated with intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning rest on the quality of communication among participants, leadership, and community practitioners.

Humility: Willingness to learn, teach, and question assumptions. Participants discussed the need for practitioners, community members, and community leaders to enter with a

willingness to be taught. They discussed the need for genuine authenticity in the area of accumulating new knowledge and building understanding. One participant discussed the notion of sincere ignorance as not knowing something. Admitting our own knowledge limitations opens possibilities for individual and collective learning as well as opportunities to actualize leadership.

> "Sometimes ignorance isn't a terrible thing like we try to make it out to be. Ignorance is just, not knowing something. You know what I mean? If I don't know, if nobody ever told me, I can't be mad…" (**Int. 1- Tr.1- Lines 39-44)**

Humility provokes images of openness to new ideas, of an education dissimilar to the traditional classroom where the student and the teacher are looked down upon in their ignorance. It emphasizes questioning deeply ingrained assumptions. Within the context of a humble learning community, individual participants acknowledge that there is much to learn. The participant above goes on to stress the importance of honestly admitting our own limited understanding rather than misrepresenting what we know.

> "And when you don't understand something, say you don't understand it. Don't try to pretend like you understand it and then say something or do something. You know what I'm saying?" (**Int.1- Tr.1- Lines 298-300)**

Remarkably participants reported that when they remain open to learning, they are more willing to working with those different from themselves, because they make new discoveries and share new possibilities. Remaining open, willing, and humble allows participants to discover what exactly they can learn and contribute as a result of that new knowledge.

> "It is better to work with a bunch of different people than all of them being the same because all I've done heard it. You know because they feel that they have already been

there even if they want to give you a chance, they really don't, you see. Give her a chance. Okay, I'm here and that's the chance you getting, but ya da ya da ya da. No, if you got other people, ...the reason that they're there is to experience something different. And you have something to give them different and a different perspective, you know. So they can't relate to it, and they'll be easier to work with because they want to know, you know. They're not there just because. So it is better I think with other ethnic groups of people." (**Int.2-Tr.2-Lines 552-560)**

In terms of practice behaviors, invitations often aid in eliciting responses from participants. Assuming that the organizer is a professional, community members may not be quick to share their knowledge. Some community members often view professionals as experts. If professional practitioners as well as community leaders remain humble, willing, and teachable, participants contribute more insight and knowledge, because all participants acknowledge their importance.

"But I feel like that was pretty powerful opportunity for people to kind of get outside themselves, of what they're doing and learn a little bit more. And maybe learn some new things that they can contribute. I mean, even if they didn't want to necessarily change groups or, or be a part of that group, to have something to contribute, they have an insight to give." (**Int.11-Tr.10-Lines 469-472)**

Intellectual curiosity and humility are both essential components of knowledge building in forging alliance in community practice. Practitioners' work to instill, model, and practice behaviors associated with humility and intellectual curiosity. These first two critical components trump all other dimensions of knowledge building, because without humility and curiosity, the

practitioner cannot appropriately gather adequate information basic to building alliances across boundaries of difference in community practice.

Knowledge building also remains deficient without adequate attention to learning difference, culture, backgrounds, and stories of both individual and collective experiences of community members. Intellectual curiosity and humility allow these subsequent categories to be actualized. A likely consequence of intellectual curiosity and humility allows attention to be paid to the key details of difference, culture, background, and stories. The result of this focused awareness creates numerous effects related to accumulation of knowledge, relationship building, and cultivating trust.

Learning difference, culture, backgrounds, and stories. Developing even limited understanding of other's culture allows practitioners and community members the opportunity to celebrate and honor differences. These acts also aid in building solidarity among various groups. One participant discussed ways she utilized learning differences, culture, backgrounds, and stories in building solidarity among postal workers by integrating learning opportunities into programming in various fun and creative ways.

> "we can talk about organizing as a co-chairperson of the diversity committee. Of a monthly thing, you know, we put on, um programs for the U.S. Postal Service to, um, you know, um inform the Post Office as to what that particular race of people. You know, their customs, their um, traditions, and um, the foods that they ate, and things like that so um, a matter of fact, um, I got a proclamation, um for the Native American pow-wow that I put on there at the Post Office in '96 from the Governor. And a proclamation for the diversity black history program that I put on there, And um, we also had an Asian program that I coordinated.....with you know, the organization. Um, we had a gay

rights one as well. We just put on different um, programs monthly throughout the year for the post office and it was fun working with all the races." (**Int. 4-Tr. 4- Lines 38-52)**

Other participants discussed the magnitude of learning about difference, culture, backgrounds, and stories in order build solidarity and work effectively in groups collaborating in the change process. One participant in particular succinctly summed up the effects of this specific mode of co-learning emphasizing knowledge building prior to beginning the collective change making process.

"But I really feel that if we know a person's history, understand their background, understand their families, understand the sorts of things they have gone through. Whether It's white, Chinese, black, African American, or Asians. Whatever, we have to understand their history and the trials that they have gone through in order to work with them effectively then within a specific group." (**Int. 9-Tr. 8- Lines 67-73)**

Culture, backgrounds, and stories in particular are not limited to the core process theme of knowledge building. They also exist in other key categories specifically associated with building relationships in other components of the difference theory and model. As stated earlier vital aspects of the theory and model are integrated and multidimensional. Various core process themes may concurrently interact within certain other categories and stages. The key difference between the presence of this subcategory within knowledge building centers in the learning component. Its presence as the subcategory of community history and memory within Relationship care has to do with its practical use and application. As a result, community history and memory closely linked to learning difference, culture, background, and story is equally integral to both relationship care and knowledge building.

Community Context. The fourth essential element of knowledge building concerns not only learning about the community, but simultaneously entails basics of learning how to build and create community. Some participants reported on community as a nostalgic element of a bygone era. Others reported not knowing creating, building, and sustaining community comprises a series of sustained calculated acts of planning. These reports coincided with a sense of not being taught community principles and practices or taking community for granted.

> "I was never taught anything about communities or you know anything like that. Because we always lived in the military community, which I didn't even think of it as a community. You know, you always help your neighbors in a military community. If one of your neighbors dies, you know everybody's over there, you know helping the surviving members of the family. You know what I'm saying? Like, whoever your dad worked with was like his best friends. You know what I mean?" (**Int. 1-Tr.1-Lines 257-263)**

He went on:

> "So coming from that to here where everybody is fending for themselves and. I wasn't a kid when I moved here, but I wasn't grown. You know what I'm saying? Like I found out how life really was when I moved here. I didn't know much about disadvantaged people you know what I'm saying? Like I didn't understand why. Because my dad had white friends; my dad had every kind of friend you could think of because he was in the army with them." (**Int.1-Tr.1- Lines 267-272)**

Additionally community context exists as a natural outgrowth of learning differences, culture, background, and stories.

> "You know, of Admiral Gravely. You will have to know the history. . .full impact that it has on the community, because we live in a mixed community. So that's where

education comes in. Because a lot of whites might not know that Admiral Gravely was, you know, the first black admiral of a ship or whatever. And then they might want to know if they move in this area, why did they name a street after him if they don't know who he is? For the impact that he has made on the community. If they know that, it's when you are working together. Like when we were working on education teams."

(**Int.9- Tr. 8- Lines 40-52)**

Practitioners engrossed in various complex acts of crossing boundaries of difference diligently create opportunities to teach, co-learn, and model community building practices while demonstrating a commitment to permanent contextual community knowledge building. Creating, building, and learning community coexist continually, concurrently, and simultaneously. This opens the door to practical skill building laying foundations for crossing boundaries amicably.

Practical Skills: Keeping it simple. The fifth essential element fundamental to knowledge building first begins with emphasizing common sense. Common sense is at the core of practical skill building. Keeping lessons simple allows community participant confidence to build, equalizes power, and when necessary, minimizes conflict. Exercising the use of simplicity in building practical skills in no way minimizes the value of those skills. On the contrary, proficiency in these fundamental techniques explicitly outlined by participants reinforces their relevance. Various types of applied skills including people skills, organizing skills, and project-based skills allow opportunities for practical co-learning, problem solving, and community building. Shared experiences of problem based learning and skill building, strengthen relational ties and create new collective memories. The following subcategories within practical skills

comprise people skills, organizing skills, and project based skills, and act as key components to the functional aspects of knowledge building.

People skills: Knowing and working with neighbors. Various skills related to trust building, communication, respect, and developing a people centered focus arise in later categories and core process themes. Specific people skills within the knowledge building category emerge uniquely due to their applied, teachable, and learnable characteristics. Other categories, such as relationship care contain relational aspects, embedded practice behaviors, and play a vital role. People skills sit at the intersection of knowledge building and relationship care due to its focus on building connections among participants. People skills captures participants' responses connecting learning to working with others.

Self-knowledge and awareness. A critical subcategory of people skills begins with the practitioner building knowledge informing use of self. In order to facilitate change across boundaries of difference, practitioners need perpetual commitment to self-knowledge, know the limitations of their understanding, and be willing to properly act upon that awareness. As participants experience glimpses of what could be an inspired self-knowledge and awareness takes shape. Closely associated with empowerment, participants and practitioners become aware they have a voice, they can take action, and that they hold sway over potential decision making both within traditional halls of power and their own community. One participant described her own experience in great detail.

> "I think well, for me, and, huh, it depends on the situation. I mean, and sometimes it's learning that you have a voice, you have a voice and a life around you. It's like you have a choice. You're not always at the whims of other institutions, um, directing your life. You can take um, part in the decisions that affect your community. I feel like that's

something very strong within the Fulton community work that we're doing. Um, that it's like, yes, it's like these these opportunities, you know, such as you know, a better transit system, a community clinic, you know, how, HIV testing." (**Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 213-219)**

Relational difference readiness. Conceptually relational difference readiness refers to the practitioner's constructive preparedness for the unexpected. Relational difference readiness involves a willingness to take risks, remain open to unforeseen developments, and prepare for various ways that people respond, interact, and behave around difference. These not only concern behaviors generally associated with difference, but the unpredictable nature of the complex relational context of difference. Learned behaviors associated with difference often have implications for power, meaning, and interpretation. One participant suggested that in order to do community work effectively across difference, we have to be ready for people to behave in unpredictable ways.

"So you have to, um, you have to be ready for any kind of way somebody's gonna come to you. When talking to you about whatever, you know, if I don't understand, when I'm going to somebody to help them, because I'm in this project that I have to go out and talk to different people, and the people that I have to go out and talk to. You know, some of the people are well-off, some of the people are, um, not so well off. You know. Some of them have education and haven't did anything with it. Some of them don't." (**Int. 2- Tr. 2- Lines 203-208)**

Specific skills on the part of the practitioner need to be developed to thrive in many relational contexts. Organizers who are able to relate to people from various backgrounds across numerous dimensions of difference prove successful in complex community practice contexts.

A practitioner's level of relational difference readiness directly relates to how prepared they may be to deal with the often apparently contradictory nature of difference within communities.

Learning Communication Skills. Learning how to communicate effectively across boundaries of difference cannot be understated. In some cases these communication skills can be learned before entry into the community, but cannot be fully honed until learning what boundaries of difference need crossing within the community context. Learning communication skills rests at the intersection of knowledge building and quality communication. Quality communication, one of the principal core process themes, contains within it many key practice elements not fully actualized without prior attention to the learning imperative.

Learning effective communication skills may seem simple enough, but differences often obscure intention and meaning when it comes to conveying messages. Therefore, practitioners need to develop nuanced knowledge of communicative flexibility based on a myriad of difference factors including developmental, racial, cultural, and socio-economic depending on the individual receiver. One participant with experience organizing with youth explained the relevance of approaching communicative knowledge.

> "With the older kids, actually, I take a much different tone than I do with the younger ones, because you know, they're budding adults. So I don't usually take a real tone of authority with them. Um, unless there's something that's completely out of control. But, for the most part, you know, I relate to them and talk to them more like we're peers. Um, and like, let my guard down a lot more. Like, we're just, you know, we're hanging out. And also like a lot of, I make a real, I mean for one, I just enjoy their company. Um, it's a really, it's nice to have some conversations with people that aren't eight and nine. I mean I love talking to my eight and nine-year olds too." (**Int.13-Tr.12-Lines 143-148)**

Learning to listen. Along with learning communication, another concept closely associated with communication emanated from the practical people skills participants discussed within knowledge building. Working effectively across difference requires learning to listen. Also inextricably linked to another core process theme of quality communication discussed in future portions of this chapter, learning to listen suggests through participant responses that listening contains multiple positive effects on connecting people. Examples of these positive effects encompass learning diverse points of view, what community members view as the practitioner's role, and learning to think before speaking. Listening also provides information for the organizer related to organizing skills, what they may need to give attention, and what they may have the ability on which to focus. According to responses, as with most any skill, listening improves with time and practice.

> "I mean, in some ways I feel um, like just learning how to be quiet and absorb other people's stories for the moment and then figuring out what do I have, what do I have to give. And sometimes, I have a lot more to give, and sometimes I really realize that all I have to give is just being there and listening or being there and just answering people's questions." (**Int.11-Tr. 10- Lines 380-382**)

Practical concepts closely associated with listening logically emanate from learning communication skills. Repeatedly emphasizing the act of listening as a fundamental aspect of communicative action, create various individual and collective learning opportunities. It also sets the stage for learning related to language and meaning generation.

Language: Learning and Simplicity. An aspect of people skills closely associated with learning communication skills requires effective use of language. The knowledge building aspect of language suggest learning language along two domains. The first directly relates to

earlier statements at the beginning of this section regarding applying common sense to practical skill building. The second emphasizes a crucial language learning element. Participants overwhelmingly reported the indispensable necessity of speaking in a language that people can readily comprehend. In order for community practitioners to forge any kind of alliance across difference they must learn to speak plainly. Secondly, a uniquely diverse community context necessitates learning how residents communicate. Organizers may equate this process to learning a new language or set of languages depending on the specific community context. One participant described it this way.

> "And a lot of times, the people don't support you, it's because they don't understand what you're doing, you know. And they don't know why you're doing it or what. And I've been in, gone to meetings and I hate abbreviations. Because people that's knowledgeable about attempt, they use all these abbreviations and you sitting there knowing what in the world they're talking about." (**Int.9-Tr.8-Lines 181-185**)

One professional practitioner utilized language simplicity as a vital part of training organizing staff.

> "We talked to people; we had to learn the language of the community and that meant that and again, one very deliberate thing to do was in our training, in the training that we did for our staff, we had to say that there, that you talk to people in ways that your grandmother would understand. So you, you know, you throw out all of that stuff you learned in college and you talk to people like they're your grandmother." **(Int.14-Tr.13-Lines 80-84)**

Another approached the language issue by discussing interpretation, and creating a collective language.

> “Of course. We do need to speak the, um, and that goes back to education. Because when you got education, um, there's always some form of language. And I think everybody has a language other than their native tongue that they would like to learn. And um, if I can't, if you can't understand the language in which I'm speaking, then how are we gonna communicate what it is that we need to know? We're spending too much time.....trying to understand each other as opposed to getting done what we need to get done because we aren't communicating well. So you have to have the same language or at least someone to interpret and that's really not good when you're trying to accomplish something as a group or a body. Organizing. Well, no I'll take that back. In organizing that would help. Because if you go down to a group of people, in a community, and you've got, you've got Spanish people... You've got people that speak Spanish...You've got people that speak French, maybe. Or any other language that you choose, you see. If you'll aren't communicating together, what it is, that either you've got to learn their language or they've got to learn yours or somewhere in there, there has to be a communication where there's no gap. So we can get things done as one. (**Int.2-Tr.2-Lines 596-616)**

She goes on to discuss how this might be done on a practical level, and describes it with unique simplicity.

> “Hey you wanna learn my language? And you can teach it and help each other to understand. You know it don't have to be a drawn out thing where you know you gotta go to school to learn this. “(**Int.2-Tr.2-Lines 619-621)**

Learning the unique and simple language opens the potential for building relationship. According to participants, the key ingredient incorporates language co-learning opportunities within the engagement process. Some of these language learning skills may have to be learned

through practice, but they remain critical to establishing meaning, building trust, and guiding the process. They pave the way for building lasting working relationships across difference.

Building Relationship. Building relationship describes the practical nature of coming together in relationship. Building relationship prevails at critical intersections of the foundational core process themes of relationship care and knowledge building. It demonstrates a vital ability to be developed and utilized in practice. This imperative functional people skill requires the practitioner to directly learn about the people he/she works alongside either formally or informally. Getting to know community members on a personal basis, what their likes and dislikes are, seeking out certain opinions, and following through by learning about those opinions opens possibilities, opportunities, and builds trust. Knowing how people excel, what their professions are, and what talents they may have also provides opportunities for leadership and building on assets. One must build a relationship before encouraging participants to lead the process.

> "Uh, um, because a lot of these people that live down here, they're educators, uh, they work in the business sector. Uh, they um, um, some of them, uh, like for instance, my neighbor right across here, he works for uh, Dominion. And, um, um, my next door neighbor, she's a State employee. Um, and another neighbor next door to her, she and her sister both are State employees. We have a lot of people that are not, I would not call professionals, but semi-professionals. They have pretty nice jobs, you know. So, uh, now in order for them to hold those jobs, a lot of them are degree holders too. Right here. In this community. Yeah, so they know what they're doing. And they can use that. Yeah, they can use that, right." (**Int. 3-Tran. 3- Lines 433-442)**

As forged relationships build and flourish, doors begin to open. People become willing

to collectively gather to address problems. The emphasis on facilitative skills in the group setting becomes an essential imperative. In order to forge alliances effectively across difference within this process of collective idea generation and group forming, practitioners need to be willing to co-learn, co-teach, and co-model teamwork and collaboration.

Teamwork and collaboration. Teamwork and collaboration link community members together in productive partnerships with recognition of strengths, challenges, talents, and gifts. Building knowledge of teamwork and collaboration allows for actualization of multiple possibilities. Productive relationship skills contribute to both knowledge and success within this essential subcategory of knowledge building and people skills. Teamwork and collaboration gets optimally maximized when proper attention has been paid to learning the preceding people skills subcategories, such as learning to listen, learning communication skills, and building relationships and these often take time. Skills associated with teamwork and collaboration requires constant communication connection, knowledge of skills and talents, leadership and mentorship, structure, flexibility, the ability to agree to disagree, and a perpetual willingness to seek accept input. In discussing teamwork and collaboration, participants emphasized the relationship between knowing people, communication, leadership, and how they all work together.

> "You also get to know whom you can depend on for getting stuff done, that you got too much on you plate and you need some help. You'll know within that group of people who it is that you can ask to get the help from because you feel the people, because you know, who's shown the most interest. You know, you know you've got leaders and you've got followers and then you have too many people that want to be the chief. You can weed

them out, but they all still can work together if you get it organized in the correct way." (**Int.2-Tr.2-Lines 87-93)**

The participant goes on:

"You've got to keep a constant contact with all the other members. You also have to let somebody know, at least one other person, what you're doing so it won't come back being wrong for the person that's always asking the question that's got the negative response." (**Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 404-407**).

Leadership Lessons. Vital lessons in leadership remain key people skills in which to learn throughout the forging alliance process. Similar to self-knowledge, leadership lessons emanate from participant responses as fundamental knowledge to be grasped. These lessons encompass information gathering methods, encouraging leadership, coaching, teaching, and remaining transparent.

Organizing skills: Nuts, bolts, and process of community work. A crucial component of the practical skills subcategory entails co-creative knowledge generation related to community organizing and engagement. Participants come to the community change process with varying levels of organizing expertise. Many may not know the basic elements of the organizing process or lack the primary skills associated with community work. Some members come to the change process with more familiarity, experience, or know how. Many come with crucial life stressors that may create barriers to both participation and collective learning. Any one of these differences hold within them the potential to become barriers if not explicitly acknowledged and navigated with great care. One participant discussed this issue within their neighborhood organizing team.

"I, I think well, I mean, our committee in the Greater Fulton Futures is learning a lot. I mean, very slowly, but um, I do think that we're learning a lot of how to like do this work in addition to the work of ourselves. We're learning a lot about focusing um, either a lot of ideas. And um, just talking from my own experiences, there are a lot of ideas in our group and we have a lot of enthusiasm, but we also have a lot of people who are overtaxed already, but who have such enthusiasm for the work. And so we are all individually learning how do we create these spaces within our own lives through this. And then how do we focus? We've got a lot of ideas, but then we're just scattered, you know. And we're starting to focus more, I feel like in the past few weeks or past few meetings we've been more focused. We're starting to get down and come down. We've got some more to do. So, but I feel like that's an individual learning for all of us involved." **(Int.11-Tr.12-Lines 335-346)**

Organizer: A learner first. Participants did not hesitate to emphasize the necessity for practitioners to acknowledge the role of an organizer in the community as a learner. Community organizers operating as residents and in professional settings recognize the fundamental role of an organizer as a learner. Accepting that an organizer is a learner first requires a shift in traditional perspective, and opens new possibilities for the practitioner to view learning as a skill integral to the process of forging alliances. More specifically, it promotes allowing learning to guide the individual skill building process. Individual practitioners may learn what skills contain relevance depending on the specific community context.

"And one of the things that my role has pointed out is that when you're going into a community, you know, with the intention to help, you know hopefully bring some transformation you have to go in as a learner." **(Int.10-Tr.9-Lines 29-31)**

The organizer as learner approach places a non-traditional perspective on leadership. The organizer accedes power acting as co-learner in partnership with community members. In this way, the practitioner learns both from and with community members. Supporting the notion of the organizer as a learner first, begins the process of collectively learning key practical organizing skills, as well as indispensable local knowledge.

Research and presenting research. Just as community change participants need freedom to lead and learn, this involves research and presenting subsequent findings. Research can relate to problems within the community, access to resources, organizational research, or any vital information important to the engagement, planning, and change process. The community leadership may take part in a collective research action where members visit other organizations, neighborhoods, communities, and institutions to learn about various innovative tools transferrable to their specific community context.

Community members themselves exercise the tools to seek, record, and present findings related to critical truths mitigates conflict obstacles by encouraging seeking information when faced with difference of opinion or a lack of knowledge. This is another way of equipping community members and leadership. A participant described this phenomenon in practice related to outside forces affecting the community.

> "You know, say hey we were talking about xyz the other day, and you this was your opinion, but this is what they said right here. And sometimes when people see stuff in black and white, you know, they get you saying. I got it from such, encyclopedia online or whatever. That's the way you can get to them so they can see what you're saying, because sometimes, you can tell people stuff and you know that you're telling them the correct stuff, but it's theirs is different. The way that they interpret is totally different.

And I found out when those things happen, I have what they said, and then I have other research. I said you can go and look at certain things. That decision is going to affect what I'm trying to do." (**Int.9-Tr.8- Lines 518-526)**

Formal opportunities to practice community based research allow participants to build knowledge alongside community practitioners.

Workshops, education, and trainings. Other learning opportunities linked to research combine the intentional use of workshops, educations, and trainings in building various dimensions of individual and collective knowledge. Practitioners describe a combination of outside trainers and educators to facilitate workshops on specific organizing related topics. Trainings may offer lessons learned from organizing efforts in other community contexts.

"Oh you definitely have to have what do you call it? Uh, you know, you have to have workshops. Facilitators, instructors. You know, a lot of times, um like say for instance, when you had your national night out and things like that. If this is like a convention. You know, a lot of organizations have conventions. And at conventions they have classes and breakouts and things like that where they have invited facilitators to talk about different areas. Like if this was the union, we would be talking about recruitment and membership." (**Int.4-Tr.6-Lines 420-428)**

Particularly in marginalized communities, formal education systems often fail to meet residents' educational needs. People bring these challenges with them to the community change process. Others may be highly successful within the formal education system, and possess varying degrees of privilege and power. As a result participants come to the process with varying degrees of expectation. This is beautifully summed up in the following response.

"Uh, like little workshops and things like that. Uh, I think that would have been helpful. Just... ...teaching. I think what we forgot was that most people don't know what you take for granted. We didn't, we forgot that most people have never been in a meeting situation like this and what the protocol is, you know. Uh, you know not to speak when somebody else speaks, not to interrupt people, or be disrespectful. Things like that that we take for granted. I think that that would have been a good one to start up with first of all and uh, uh, and then just have a a few experienced organizers once in a while come through and and talk about uh what what what may be the pitfalls, what to look out for uh, whatever. And because I think from what I can tell from our work on the team, people got frustrated at the beginning, really frustrated because they were like, 'I don't see nothing happening.' It's always talk talk talk talk talk talk talk. People always want instant gratification and so we should have let them know that this is a very slow process. There's going to be a lot of talking, a lot of planning, a lot of waiting." (**Int.6-Tr.5-Lines 318-331).**

Project based skills. As a logical outgrowth of people skills and organizing skills, project based skills cover another set of honed abilities in the community change context. Diverse activities in the community change process involve project based competencies, and as members engage and participate at varied levels, skills related to individual projects act as assets. As research participants answered specific questions associated with co-teaching and co-learning, many immediately discussed practical learning within the context of working alongside people different from them. One respondent went as far as to suggest that all learning needed to directly connect to individual community projects.

> "Job-specific. Because there's more than just teaching between the ears part. It's making available the tools. You know, and in my case, building what we were building in the park was all construction sort of related." (**Int. 8- Tr. 7- Lines 516-520)**

Providing opportunities to build diverse project based competency based on existing local knowledge increases community potential to build alliances in the presence of difference. In this way difference brings multitudes of talents, gifts, experience and skills to bear in facilitating the change process. It capitalizes on collective strengths to build capacity. Obtaining project related abilities rests on community members' willingness to teach and mentor fellow each other through a process of practical learning, as well as openly acknowledging the limits of one's own comprehension. Another participant summarized their experience learning project related skills in the context of creating a community garden.

> "[redacted] came up with the idea that each, each of the um, it's a wavy wall, and it has these sections that divide it. And each section that you put a tree in has to have the dirt that corresponds to that tree. So blueberries really like sand, for example. The fig tree needed a huge amount of nitrogen. And I didn't understand any of this." (**Int. 12- Tr. 11- 273-276)**

Project related skills incorporate a multitude of activities and competencies.

Multiple learning styles: Experiential Learning. Experiential learning, often understood as learning in the act of doing or by the act of doing, refers to the obligation to learn by taking action. It also incorporates learning from the experience of doing. A practitioner discussed its successful use in this way.

> "You know, when we first started the garden, we didn't know what we were doing. And nobody was doing it then. We did it before, about two years before anybody else was

really into it. Because the [redacted] garden is one of the first ones that [redacted] built. I think it is the first one they built. It might even be when Lisa was even just considering doing [redacted]. So, here's [redacted] saying [redacted], [redacted], and I with [redacted] just winging it. And when it came time to bring the children in, they were like, "Can you bring the kids?" Ha ha ha, I was like, okay. And we're out there and I have no concept of gardening; I've never done it except flower gardens with my mom. I had no under, really, I was still learning what this group of kids was capable of, both in positive ways and in negative ways. So like, I was very nervous giving them shovels. I was very concerned that they weren't gonna be able to stay outside that long. That they were gonna complain about bugs and I didn't know if any of the food was gonna be eaten or how we're gonna cook it because at that time we had no real kitchen. And so, what I learned, or what I saw was kids, delighted children, just delighted." (**Int. 12-Tr. 11- Lines 146-161)**

Experiential learning often runs counter to dominant education system. Community based learning occurs in various embodied reciprocal acts. In community, when crossing boundaries of difference, participants do not remain passive observers as in the formal institutional setting. Furthermore, this traditional hierarchal education system poorly serves many marginalized communities. Alternatively community members act as co-participants in teaching, learning, and demonstrate acts of knowledge generation. It also reinforces the relevance of the previous essential elements, because in the absence of the other essential knowledge building elements experiential learning remains one of the only tools community members possess.

"I think we still have, we still have a ways to go in teaching. Uh, right now we're just trying, it's been trial by fire. More than anything. Uh, and I guess this is how we

> learn.....to uh to we learn what works and what doesn't work, pretty much, because, uh, I think that's natural because most people in there, they're inexperienced. (**Int. 6-Tr.5-Lines 305-309)**

Facilitative Barriers to Knowledge Building. All core process themes and key components within the model contain specific facilitative barriers. These barriers act as barometers to gage progress and determine what practice skills embedded within each category and core process theme to exercise. Additionally, they consistently challenge the practitioner in facilitating the process of effectively crossing these boundaries.

The following barriers demonstrate blocks to knowledge building as a key component of effectively crossing boundaries of difference. Participant responses relative to facilitative barriers fall within five categories: an unwillingness to teach or learn, minimizing a lack of knowledge, assumption prior to investigation, formal educational systems, and esoteric language.

Unwillingness to teach or learn. Behaviors demonstrating unwillingness to learn or to teach others represent actions antithetical to co-creative knowledge generation. Poisonous to the community learning process, an unwillingness to teach or learn obstructs interconnectedness and transforms difference boundaries to nearly insurmountable blocks exacerbating perhaps already existing divisions.

This barrier often manifests itself implicitly, and in many cases fails to explicitly appear in practice. Often unwillingness to teach or learn latently arises as a result of unexpressed expectations, impatience due to time constraints, or unrecognition of the need to teach and learn. One participant strikingly shared his first experience on serving on a board that demonstrates its implicit effect.

> "When I first heard about the (insert organization name) when it was first started, I was all about it because I didn't understand the politics of it. You know what I'm saying? I didn't know anything about the politics of it, man. When I was in them board meetings and I was clueless. Nobody was trying to teach me anything. You know what I'm saying?" (**Int.1-Tr.1- Lines 250-252)**

It remains unknown as to why organizers failed to provide lessons pertinent the proper role of a board member within a community based organization. Evidently, the effect left a sting on this volunteer community leader for years to come if s/he found it worth mentioning these many years later. Whether or not this participant communicated thoughts regarding politics and learning remain a mystery. In the case below a participant reflects on their own unwillingness to learn.

> "And at the time I was unwilling to admit that I think, because I came from this place of solidarity when really solidarity would have been more, I want to learn more about this." **(Int.17-Tr.16- Lines- 215-217)**

If unintentional or implicit, an unwillingness to teach or learn contains increased potential to manifest as a simple barrier mitigated through utilizing practice behaviors linked to the three core process themes. When explicitly present, an unwillingness to teach or learn can serve as one of the most difficult barriers to deconstruct.

Minimizing a lack of knowledge. Another facilitative barrier with dire potential to significantly impede inclusion, minimizing any lack of knowledge can cause practitioners and community members to gloss over crucial conditions affecting life in community. In this case participants may deliberately trod on toward a goal without adequately learning principal factors

associated with achieving their short, medium, or long term goals. Community members run into particular trouble when minimizing a lack of knowledge of those different than them.

This facilitative barrier can also thwart relationships. Minimizing a lack of knowledge often comes into play when bringing community members into leadership. Community leaders responsible for mentorship, teaching, and sharing expertise may gloss over key knowledge building features to expedite the change process. As a participant points out below, it can be jarring, and unsettling to face feeling so unprepared.

> "I didn't understand the importance of it. Because they picked me to do it. You know what I mean? I didn't understand what the magnitude of the decisions that were being made. You know what I mean? That they really affected people." **(Int.1-Tr.1- Lines 250-252)**

Minimizing a lack of knowledge can quickly turn to making unwarranted assumptions, and disregarding much needed information. As stated in earlier sections, information generation and dissemination remains a key foundational component of crossing boundaries of difference in practice.

Assumption prior to investigation. Making repeated assumptions prior to thorough investigation or in the complete absence of examination blocks potential and can quickly lead to unwarranted stereotyping, labeling, and perpetuate obfuscation particularly when directed at others particularly those different from oneself. One participant not only demonstrated a long held potentially false assumption, but touched on how easy it becomes for people to be deceived by them.

> "I mean the sad fact is that most people are followers. That's a sad fact and they're becoming more and more sheep. Because you didn't see that in in on the internet in the

news. Somebody said something, it becomes true, you know." **(Int.6-Tr.5- Lines- 532 534)**

Assumption prior to investigation does not end in its direct effect on people and relationships, it also may cause community leadership to act upon conditions with limited knowledge. This can seriously harm community initiatives, impede potential, and mislead community members at critical points within the community engagement and organizing process. When observed and experienced in practice, intellectual curiosity, humility, and practical skills can serve as actionable antidotes to dangerous assumptions.

Formal education systems. Some participants, particularly those without privileged higher education lamented the need for increased access to education. Others discussed how sub-par formal education within the school system did not provide adequate education to children in need, therefore many children and adults begin the process of knowledge building in community work at a disadvantage.

"Um, but I feel that the parents should become more involved down here because you see that the schools that their children do have to attend aren't producing, uh, the lessons, or the curriculum that the children really need." **(Int.3-Tr.3- Lines- 332-334)**

This particular resident goes a step further by putting the knowledge building onus on the parents and the community for assuring the necessary cultivation of young minds. In this way, parents and community implement corrective countermeasures to an imperfect formal education system. In some cases this may make up for the fouls of the formal education system, in many it may not.

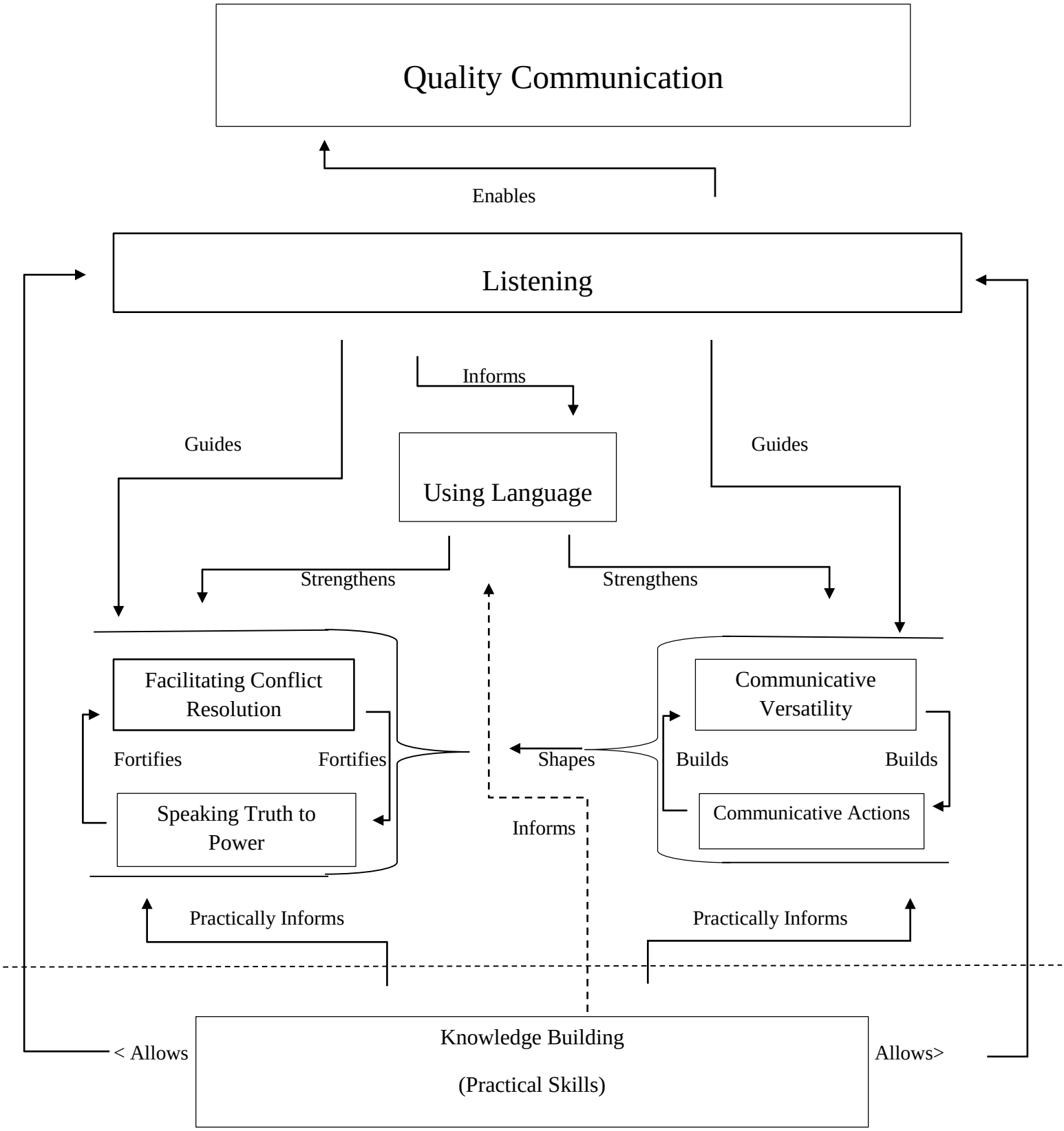
Esoteric Language. Esoteric language tends to act as a barrier to both knowledge generation and communication. Touched on in earlier sections of knowledge building, and

expanded in later sections, speaking in simple broad language easily understood opens up opportunities for both knowledge building and creates various relational opportunities.

Theme Two: Quality Communication

Quality communication acts as another fundamental core process theme within the data. As Figure 4.3 demonstrates, it relates to its subcategories in multiple complex ways. The first, and most dominant of the subcategories is listening. It informs the practitioners' use of language, and guides facilitation skills, speaking truth to power, communicative versatility, and communicative actions. Specifically how language is used in crossing boundaries of difference in the community practice context strengthens communicative versatility, communicative actions, facilitating conflict resolution, and speaking truth to power. The practical skills within knowledge building also practically informs the iterative process of speaking truth to power and facilitating conflict resolution as well as communicative versatility and communicative actions. Knowledge building also allows listening to take place. It assumes practical knowledge as integral to the listening process so critical to quality communication.

Figure 4.3- Quality Communication: Framework of Conceptual Relationships



Quality communication, as a second core process theme, brings together various aspects of mediated interactions among community members, organizers, practitioners and stakeholders. Participants repeatedly emphasize quality communication as a fundamental imperative. Situated as a central component of effective intercultural practice and an integral element in forging alliances across boundaries of difference, quality communication remains an indispensable foundational practice tool. One community practitioner articulated its useful relevance in this way.

> "We can talk about the city, the state, and the community, but at the end of the day, it's about people relating, communicating with people." **(Int.15-Tr.14- Lines- 242-243)**

Following on this notion, quality communication as a tool to creates genuine interrelatedness. Relationships cannot be built, maintained, and cared for in the absence of quality communication. Therefore, forging alliances across boundaries of various differences depends on the intentional implementation of quality communication among the many stages of the organizing and engagement process. Another community practitioner goes on by concisely summing up the quality communication imperative.

> "And you know it's interesting that communication is only important because it brings people together, you know?" **(Int.16-Tr.15-Lines 32-33)**

As within other community practice theories, approaches, and models, respondents concur that communication is an important practice skill. Multiple communicative issues arise when difference enters the practice dynamic. With the myriad of ways in which to communicate according to age, identity, culture, and socialization, quality communication becomes less cut and dry and deeply complex. The following section grounded in participant responses provides insights into the multitude of ways communication can be utilized to build bridges across

difference, and create a space of inclusion within community. It also outlines multiple challenges in the form of facilitative barriers to quality communication. These facilitative barriers serve as red flags for practitioners working to effectively cross difference boundaries in community practice.

Seven distinctive essential elements emerged as categories from participant responses within quality communication. These seven properties included listening, communicative versatility, communicative actions, using language, speaking truth to power, conflict and facilitating resolution, and facilitative barriers to quality communication. Along with their sub-categories, they work together to form a conceptual scheme highlighting vital aspects of quality communication in effectively navigating difference in community practice. These tools also provide practitioners with pragmatic methods to enact quality communication in the field. Their sufficient use increases the likelihood of building solidarity among various constituent groups situated within community.

Listening. As an incredibly major component of quality communication, listening stands out as the lynch pin to all subsequent essential elements within the core process theme. Without attention to listening, the remaining elements of quality communication remain arrested in practice. Listening sets the tone, demonstrates openness, and begins the process of quality communication. Listening works to bring people together. It demonstrates appreciation for people, and as later sections will reiterate, establishing and maintaining caring relationships bridges differences because it builds trust. This all begins with listening. One participant summed this idea up in this way.

> "what I know that is if you show interest in people and listen to them and allow people to talk about themselves and don't dismiss them, and uh, listen listen listen. People will

appreciate that. People will want to, start to want to know more about you." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines- 489-491)**

She goes on by directly linking listening to building trust.

"I think that's the only way you can do it is just listen to people and validate what they have to say. Let them know that they're heard. I think that's how you form alliances. They know they can trust you to come to you and you will listen." **(Int.6-Tr.5- Lines- 493-495)**

The listening sub-categories determine associated focus, intent, and specific actions. A myriad of justifications and actions exist related to listening. The sub-categories outlined below represent themes discussed by participants in their responses to interview questions.

***Listening to learn*.** Listening to learn centers on the critical intention behind listening. It reminds the practitioner of the listening imperative. Without listening to learn, practitioners cannot know what they can give to the process, what is needed, and how to go about building alliances in the particular community practice context. In this way, silent, active, listening acts as a bridge from quality communication to both knowledge building and trust, lays the foundation for relationship care. As the practitioner listens, s/he learns about their role, expectations, differences, stories, culture, and individual and collective community needs.

"As an organizer, oh, most definitely. You really got to learn being an organizer because that gives you insight on what promotes the people that you're dealing with. So if you listen to what it is that they're saying, you can put it together because you already got a plan before you go. But you can take their ideas and put them with yours, and make it work. For you to get their cooperation.....to go along with whatever it is that you'll

trying to accomplish. Yeah, you have to be a good listener. Yeah, you listen to learn. That's how you learn, to listen. "**(Int.2- Tr.2- Lines- 583-591)**

Another participant reinforced the listening to learn obligation by reinforcing the need to stay open to learning throughout the entire process of organizing and engagement.

> "And so really lit, literally like you know, doing the work and listening, just sitting down listening, and kind of just putting all of those stories by my feet. And I feel that I still have a lot more to learn. I still, I mean, I'm still learning." **(Int.11-Tr.10- Lines- 375-377)**

One participant discussed how listening to learn expands practitioner knowledge, broadens potential possibilities, and creates critical unexpected learning moments.

> "You don't know everything, and people you think wouldn't have anything to teach you, do. You just have to listen." **(Int.17-Tr.16- Lines- 300-301)**

Listening to everyone. A second component of listening underscores the need to listen to everyone. Practitioners enter the community under the assumption that all voices are fundamental to the process of bridging alliances in all community practice contexts. In the community context certain people bring challenges and triggers. The listening imperative affirms that practitioners cannot discriminate when it comes to listening. They must listen to everyone which endures as an immense challenge.

A participant discussed a major success in bridging differences. According to her experience, community initiatives that work in forging alliances are the ones where everyone provides input and recognition that they have been heard. She summed it up succinctly.

> "Basically that, the one that was successful for everybody was able to sit down and have their input. That's the one that succeeds." **(Int.4-Tr.4- Lines- 215-216)**

For forging lasting alliances successfully, listening to everyone affirms a critical value of practice, and can be harnessed when building a foundation of trust through quality communication.

Listening before speaking. According to responses, listening cannot be utilized with great effectiveness after the fact, as a secondary, or even tertiary act of quality communication. In this way, listening before taking any action related to communication proves critical to establishing quality communicative skills demonstrating trust and care. Allowing participant community members to speak first without interruption, and decisively thinking in the moment before speaking can be a great tool for bridging difference. Nearly anything participants may say holds potential for inclusive community actions. Allowing silence, slowing down, and discerning before speaking encapsulate the essence of participant responses related to this listening sub-category.

> "And um, you know, I think a lot of it is just stepping back and being more thoughtful before speaking sometimes." **(Int.11- Tr.10- 429-430)**

Listening begins the process of quality communication and lays the foundation for communicative effectiveness. Failure to listen severely impedes executing the essential elements of quality communication. Subsequent elements of quality communication deal with specific practice skills, actions, and barriers to quality communication in practice.

Communicative Versatility. Communicative versatility stands out as a series of developed and practiced skills. In order to effectively communicate across difference, practitioners work to cultivate diverse communicative methods. Various communication modes involve adaptable technological, interpersonal, and language means. According to participants practitioners need to be able to communicate in multiple ways.

> "I think it's the most important thing. You have to be an effective communicator, and you have to understand different styles of communication, and you can't expect everyone to be able to communicate the way you do." **(Int.17-Tr.16- Lines 250-252)**

Communicative versatility occurs across two main subcategories, medium and difference.

Medium. Establishing competency across multiple communicative mediums strengthens practitioners' ability to bridge difference. Diverse communicative modes persist across difference, and communication mediums vary among individuals depending on socialization, culture, background, age, and other assorted differences. One participant discussed the need for communicative versatility across numerous communicative mediums.

> "I think I said that before, that you need to be prepared to communicate on all levels. So you've got to be able to text, you've got to be able to write, you've you you know, succinctly. You've got to be able to excite people when you're writing. You've got to be um, visual. You've got to have photos. People need that. I love before and after. They make me happy. Everybody gets happy over that. Um, but you also need to be able to verbalize and change your voice over and over. And you know, try at this angle, that angle, this angle, a lot of listening with, all with the goal that you're imparting everything to this person that they're willing to take in. You just can't give up. You just got to keep explaining it 'til they get it." **(Int.12- Tr.11- Lines- 627-636)**

This response reinforces the notion that communication happens across technological, visual, written, verbal, and non-verbal mediums. Using medium versatility strengthens messaging, builds solidarity, ensures flexibility, and allows collective messaging across difference. This involves practicing skills connected to learning, and concurrent relearning as

demonstrated in the knowledge building core process theme continually adapting practice skills to new knowledge.

Difference. The difference subcategory of communicative versatility challenges practitioners to manifest knowledge learned regarding the specific informational exchange differences within the specific community context. Community practitioners give attention to specific differences in development, ethnic background, culture, and other factors specific to the community context, because people communicate differently across these discrete domains. This subcategory directly links to acting upon both people skills and learning backgrounds, culture, stories, and difference within the previous core process theme of knowledge building.

Communicative Actions. As an essential element of quality communication, communicative actions summarize specific practice skills and behaviors key to establishing patterns of quality communication among community members. Organizers practice, demonstrate, and model these actions related to effective exchange of information within the community over a prolonged period of time to integrate them into the group's collective behavioral consciousness.

Ten specific communicative actions arose within collected participant responses. Breaking the ice opens the door to communication as an action critical to beginning the process of exchanging useful information. Face to Face communication involves the need to meet with people one on one, and discuss community conditions in a safe setting. Establishing boundaries exhibits willingness to let people own their own space, and allows the practitioner necessary objective distance. Asking clarifying questions and articulating kindness offer tools to the practitioner to utilize in the numerous interactions with community members. Influence refers to the ability to share multiple perspectives, gently challenge embedded assumptions on the part of

participants within the community context, and select messengers based on relationship. Communicating the process allows participants foreknowledge related to direction and key priorities within the given initiative. Creating a communication guideline system spurs buy in, and bridges both structure and values in the healthy exchange of information. Group dialogue and decision making emphasize the development of competent meeting and group facilitation. Creating communication opportunities runs across each sub-category and directly links quality communication to knowledge building by staging intentional moments for communication to blossom.

Breaking the ice. Breaking the ice refers to the practitioner's either intrinsic or learned ability to draw people's attention. An experienced community practitioner discussed breaking the ice related to difference as disarming the power we sometimes give to differences allowing connections to be established at a more fundamental level.

> "And be completely, completely disarming, I think with it. And then once you acknowledge it and disarm it, you ignore it from that point forward, I think. I've noticed that that's really powerful because um, you know, you may have your own subtle thought processes going on or you may leave the conversation or the moment, and completely switch into whatever your culture says you should be like." **(Int.12- Tr.11- Lines 10-14)**

Breaking the ice begins the disarmament process, and puts difference into the light of conversation in a way that's open and respectful, thus taking away some of its negative power. She also emphasized calling out difference in the beginning stages of the process of bridging differences.

> "Well, I mean sometimes people just like, that's what I'm talking about when you first have to acknowledge the difference and call it out in the beginning of the conversation, in

the beginning of the meeting, you know, or the beginning of any kind of effort." **(Int.12-Tr.11- Lines- 29-31)**

Differences that could become barriers begin to break down as people become willing to discuss their differences in the light of day by openly acknowledging them.

Face to face: One on one. Devoting time to meet people face to face acts as a catalyst for open communication. As one participant stated, much of it simply involves making oneself available to community members.

"And at the end, sometimes, people want one-on-one with you. Allow some time for, you know, "If you've got a pressing question, I'll be here." You know, 20 minutes, or half, or 30 minutes afterwards. I'll be here to answer some questions. They give people a chance to ask the questions that they may be reluctant to answer, if you can go one-on-one with the person." **(Int.9-Tr.8- Lines- 322-325)**

Meeting face to face can be a useful practice tool.

A professional organizer discussed the power of face to face in the arena of outreach and engagement across difference. As a lesson hard learned through many trials and errors, this specific professional practitioner depended heavily on email, marketing, and outreach that was not based in face to face interactions. Below she discusses some of the lessons learned.

" So this next year we're going to be, you know, looking at our sort of immediate circle of people we know personally, and then getting them to talk to people they know personally and hopefully like tree-branching all the way out where we are doing boots on the ground sort of engagement." **(Int.13-Tr.12- Lines- 608-611)**

Later on she elaborates.

"And really try and do that related to fundraisers where instead of, you know, me sending like a semi-personalized email, like you know, investing time in calling and like having face-to-face meetings with people that I know to really ask them personally to do it. Um, and get them excited. And see if they can't get their friends more excited and see if that can't be more successful. So it was a big learning curve like about the um, the real value and necessity of like face-to-face and personal interactions. Because even with like, I was thinking this with emails too. When I get something that is obviously like an email blast, about like 99% I just delete it. But even if it is something that I don't want to hear or read, if it's like from an individual personal, I'm absolutely opening it. So there's like, effective communication is just coming from individual people talking to other individual people. In the internet availability of you know, mass communication tools, like hasn't made that be an effective means of communicating for the purpose of engaging people. Like, it's effective for, I think, for distributing information." **(Int.13-Tr.12- Lines- 613-626)**

Finally, face to face communication underscores genuine interactive connections. Primarily, face to face communication builds patterns of honest interactions critical to the engagement and organizing process.

"And there are so many different forms of communication. I mean, some people really need. They crave face to face communication just because they need to see that you are genuine." **(Int.17-Tr.16- Lines 254-256)**

Establish boundaries. Challenging to any deeply intense process of social change across difference, establishing healthy personal and professional boundaries underscores allowing participants to guide their own process of transformation. Forging alliances across boundaries of difference is challenging enough without taking on individual community problems as our own.

Maintaining objective distance and reinforcing the practitioner's role as facilitator keeps the focus on community members connecting and communicating with each other. Additionally, allowing anger often linked within community injustice to build in collusion with community members can be harmful to the process. Being objective by establishing boundaries actually allows communication to flow clearer.

> "One is that you take care of yourself. That that while you can care about a community, you have to be objective in caring about the community. And that that may sound like it doesn't go together, but you have to understand that you are not the community. You can become a part of the community's work and part of the community's life, but you are not the community. You have a job to do, and you can do it as a servant and as a leader and as a caring person, but you are not the community. So in being able to be objective and not get so engaged in people's personal pain and challenges. I think that's really hard to do. To be objective about, about people's real pain. It's hard. But you got to step back, and you got to be objective. Being objective means that you can listen to a (Insert name) and understand his pain and his anger about the racism and the economic injustice. You can understand it and know it and you can feel it, but you can't help him and help the community if you get down in it with that same anger. You've got to have enough emotional distance and enough knowledge to be able to see what needs to happen in order for that injustice to be remedied. And it's not getting in it and fighting with him about it. It's not, it's not adopting that same level of anger. It's having emotional distance and a knowledge base, and the courage to be able to speak the truth to him and other um, other folks who can make a difference in the community. I think that's being objective."
> **(Int.14-Tr.13- Lines- 266-294)**

This participant goes on to discuss being emotionally compromised, and how that clouds judgment, and if practitioner judgment is clouded, communication inevitably follows.

Another practitioner discussed an experience talking candidly about racism within her community organization, and how a lack of established boundaries caused the conversation to become railroaded.

> "The problem with that particular group was I think things got too personal and we never established boundaries. So we couldn't have honest discussions about it because it immediately became personal. So if I say we need more black people that are making a living or a black person that that that in power, a black programs director or something, then it was, it immediately became you're accusing us of being racist. So then it became personal and we lost focus. So if we would have had boundaries and said, 'Look this is not personal, this is just my opinion. This is how I see it, this is business. It's no reflection on you, personally.' Because I don't think they're racist, I really don't." **(Int.6- Tr. 5- Lines 427-437)**

E**s**tablishing boundaries means practitioners allow participants to be where they are, and keep their role as facilitator clear. It is not up to the organizer to solve the community's problems, it is up to the organizer to work alongside community members to facilitate connections among each other.

Asking clarifying questions. Asking clarifying questions also demands the asking of questions without judgment, and remaining open to learning even if the lessons may run counter to deeply embedded, personal, social, and political assumptions related to difference. One participant suggested that more successful groups stay open and ask more questions regarding their role in the initiative, and how they can be of service to the group.

"I mean, I think that maybe there are more questions being asked in the more successful group, rather than just an injection of stories or um, I don't want to say excuses, because we all have our time. I mean, we all have what we, or reasons, reasons why you can't participate. Like there are more, I think in a successful group, more questions or how do I help, how do I serve kind of discussions, rather than I don't have time discussions." **(Int.11-Tr.10-Lines 285-290)**

Clarifying questions also incite conversation and open dialogue among community members who may be unable or unwilling to engage one another. Willingness to ask clarifying questions potentially builds bridges of commonality that may not have existed before these questions were explored. They may also act as voice for community members unable to concisely and clearly articulate critical questions. Practitioners and community members can utilize this essential skill, and practitioners must be open to asking and responding to clarifying questions, as well as acknowledging their relevance if challenged. They may act as catalysts to guide the process, and conceivably redirect the initiative.

"And so, we you know, we trained people to to do that. For instance, when we talk to people about their children, um, and we wanted to know what kind of um, what kind of programs to provide for their children, we asked them, we asked them to tell us what kinds of questions their kids were asking them when they were coming home, you know." **(Int.14-Tr.13- Lines- 84-88)**

Articulate kindness. Messages tend to be well received when packaged in compassion. In crossing boundaries of difference, and in community work in general passions often get the best of community members. Anger can often be either misdirected or misplaced. Other times negative feelings may be rightfully justified, but to respond in kind can often damage

relationships and the process in general. The group as a whole generally respects the practitioner more when they are able to articulate kindness, and welcome even the most difficult people into the process.

> "Sigh. What I mean by that is you can have some unruly person and there's a nice way to say what you want to say to him meanly that you will get better results to say it in a nice way. The same thing. It don't have to be in the same words.....but it has to have the same meaning of, you know, "You are disruptive." There's a way to say "You are being disruptive" without, in a nice way. We we got what you're saying, thank you very much. You know, you gotta do it in a nice way. Take it and turn it. If if it's going on a sour note, take it and turn it around, and make it be something pleasant. Because you're gonna get more people's attention. Ooh, that was nice, you know. I wouldn't have had it like that because I would have been like this. But no, you don't have to be that way."**(Int. 2- Tr.2- Lines 466-475)**

As the community leader above implies, the standard is higher for community practitioners particularly outsiders. Additionally, practitioners get more people's attention when we practice radical kindness in community.

Influence. Influence contains many multifaceted dimensions. First, it highlights the need to mold minds, attitudes, and communicate ideas.

> "Because the leader has the opportunity to express change for people to see change take place. To mold attitudes. To mold attitudes, I think." (**Int.4-Tr.4- Lines 513-514)**

Secondly, influence indicates a willingness for practitioners allow community leaders to exert communicative influence and act on their expectations.

"Then as long as it doesn't, as long it's not going to be problematic, um, you know as much as I can, you know, respond to them, speak to them, you know act on their expectations." (**Int.10-Tr.9- Lines- 396-398)**

Influence also plays a role in incrementally creating a culture of inclusion and care. From a communicative standpoint, how people exchange information indicates how that information is accepted. This means, the quality of the interaction has a broad effect on future interactions. Lastly, relationship plays a vital role practicing influence. The receptivity of a message has nearly as much to do the messenger as the message itself. Often, people listen more openly to people they know and trust then those they do not. Practitioners can use this strategically to their advantage.

"You um, so it was really up to me and my team to learn the language. And so I, you also identify who's best at communicating. I was really best communicating with um, with the businesses. And the youth. Oh wow! And the rest of the community. My deputy was best at communicating with the providers, the service providers. So um, the libraries, the folks who were United Way, the folks who were doing the in-home visitation programs. Because we created a program that was really designed to begin at birth, and then, birth through third grade. And so she was best at doing that so I had to identify the people in our network who were best at communicating. I had a great Board of Directors. And so they were, they were really the folks who I had to talk to and engage and educate so that they would take the message to the potential supporters. So it would generally be a team that would give it to the Chamber of Commerce and me. Um, my Board Chair and me. Or that kind of thing. So you get people who are the right people.....to speak to an audience. Um, and you got to understand who that audience is going to listen to because you know,

I could talk to them, but they're not going to listen to me if I'm not sitting there with them." (**Int.14-Tr.13- Lines- 446-447)**

Communicate the process. Communicating the process establishes knowledge of structures collectively created within a community initiative. It not only opens communication lines, but it allows participants opportunities to reshape the process if done in the ideally inclusive way. Communicating the process occurs as an ongoing communicative action repeatedly set in motion by community leadership and practitioners to ensure transparency, structure, pattern, and knowledge building. It both points and redirects the way forward.

"You know you have to keep doing it constantly, for them to know. You know because there's one group that we're in and we've been having some problems. And if the, if the people knew that this is what we supposed to do and to do it on do it daily, do it regularly, and especially when we're meeting, that we won't have those type of problems." **(Int.2- Tr.2- 357-360)**

She goes on later affirming the need to integrate it into the regular interactions among community groups.

"You know, don't call it a rule, but you have to promote it and you have to do it all the time. You know, I don't wanna, I want to know what's going on with your meeting. I want to know what's going on with your group. You got something that you wanna tell me? Is there anything that I can do to help your group?" **(Int.2- Tr.2- 368-371)**

The process dimension of this sub-category refers to constantly communicating the structure of the initiative, the direction, what comes next and why, reiterating goals, reminding participants of the relevance of next steps. It remains critical that practitioners and community

leaders communicate the process openly and demonstrates humility. In no way do community leaders want to manifest condescension.

Creating a communication guideline system. Creating guidelines for communication among people either individually or in the group setting goes hand in hand with communicating the process, and various other communicative actions. It accentuates the intentional application of multiple dimensions of quality communication. In this way community members actively participate and lead the co-creation of this communication guideline system.

> "We need to really come up with a structure where we are constantly communicating."
>
> **(Int.11-Tr.10- Line 503)**

As a way to begin establishing norms, if utilized creating a communication guideline system can lay the foundation for trust building. Practitioners as facilitators dedicate themselves to drawing out differences in order to incorporate those differences into creating communication guidelines. They establish norms, and realistic expectations. If this is not done in a deeply intentional way, the guidelines hold less collective power to bring people together. In the example below a participant underscores what can happen when the system breaks down or ceases to exist.

> "And that's what, I tried to point that out to them too that there's an aspect where we weren't wanting to shout it from the rooftops because we weren't sure that they would be coming ourselves. It was just a little bit too good to be true. But that wasn't good enough because my observation was they were thinking from you know the perspective of the people who need so much in the community that it would be you know a way to you know. I really don't know what their motivations were, but they were basically implying that information does really need to be dispensed quickly and broadly. And um, I mean I

was telling you, we don't have the date that they're going to open. And you know, here is the information that they're accepting Medicare/Medicaid. Whichever one they're accepting. Um, and other than that we don't know a whole lot. We're just really hoping that nothing happens to prevent them from actually opening." **(Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 224-237)**

Group dialogue and decision making: Willingness to compromise. A main skill associated with communicative actions links adept group dialogue facilitation with bridging differences. Group dialogue, decision making, and compromise go hand in hand with one another, and for a community initiative to achieve its potential, differences need to be confronted in group interactions. With a communication guideline system in place, agreed to, and consistently followed, group dialogue, compromise, and collective decision making can reinforce principles of communicative inclusion and fairness.

Practitioners highlighted the need to learn the essential skills, and follow principles of inclusion, allowing everyone to have a voice.

"I think you should go to the group. The group all decided and they all thought it was fair. And there was really no conflict about it. It felt very fair to everyone, because there was no one person like sort of forcing their opinions or decisions about it, including me. I said what I thought, but I also tried my best to leave a lot of room to like, you know, this is a solution that feels pretty fair to me, but if it doesn't feel fair to you, it's not what we're going to do. We're going to do what you guys think is fair. And they decided and it worked. And that's how we dealt with a lot of our decision-making processes. Is it's the group coming to consensus together and like I view my role as just like a discussion moderator. Like, let's make sure like we're not being mean to each other. And this is a

respectful environment, but like you know, that's it. And otherwise, like, my opinion counts the same as, well, actually, in some ways in counts less." (**Int.13- Tr.12- Lines-183-195)**

She goes on by outlining her role, and what that means in the group dialogue context.

"Because I'm just sort of moderating, like I don't have a vote in things. I'll tell you what I think, but it's up to you, you know, because it's your group." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 198-200)**

Secondly, practitioners covered specific aspects of how to structure group dialogue, group decision making, and compromise.

"Um, and that's the nice thing about breaking up into small groups. When a small group discusses something and you take careful notes and you report back to the larger group, usually you found that all the small groups are covering the same, about five or six broad points." **(Int.16- Tr.15- Lines 276-279)**

The third practitioners demonstrated the power of community once decisions are made by bringing outsiders into the dialogue process.

"I see collaboration so much with community members with people outside of the community, um, it's just actually not the community organizer going and talking to local government or groups outside the community that affect the community, but actually bringing community members into the conversation so that they're collaborating so that they're brought into power, so that they have input into the meetings." **(Int.17- Tr.16- Lines- 305-309)**

Creating communication opportunities. Creating communication opportunities highlighted intentional moments ranging from a telephone call, to a conversation over coffee, to

a facilitated workshop depending on the community practitioner's ability to discern what situation fits the specific communicative need. These opportunities occur in an infinite number of spaces and contexts depending on the need and intention.

One experienced community practitioner discussed creating communication opportunities to find ways to talk about differences in community.

> "And to create a way not just to know it, but to create a way for folks to talk to you about it. And how it affects their lives so that when you're doing a project or approach that you are supposed to help folks that you really are conscious of um, of what folks' needs are, and then you have, to because I think one of the things we know about difference is that if we aren't able to help people see their common ground, their commonality, the differences between them will blow up any efforts or any work." **(Int.14-Tr.13- Lines 23-25)**

Another practitioner discussed her work with youth in a food access program. According to her, creating communication opportunities often required finding opportunities in various programmatic contexts, because setting up a structured meeting environment risked generating barriers to communication.

> "Which was a big learning point for the sort of program planning. With the center. And I also got to hear a lot of interesting conversations with the kids.....and hear a lot of their questions and thoughts and things related to stuff outside of what the group would normally talk about. And I also found that the time in the kitchen and doing some of that other stuff is our best conversation time because it's so low pressure." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines- 494-498)**

As stated earlier, communicative actions point out critical tools useful to practitioners in the community context. Practitioners in nearly every initiative must deal with omnipresent differences among their members. These differences contain various implications of power and privilege. Communicative actions aid practitioners in building actionable communication skills relevant to practice in the field.

Using Language. As a specific dimension of communication, language is often perceived as our primary means of communication. In discussing communication, community practitioners recognize language as a key essential element of quality communication. Using language effectively, intentionally, and thoughtfully means giving attention to how language can be used as a tool to bring people together.

Five main sub-categories were discussed as a guide to using language as a tool to bridge differences. Common language compels organizers and community leaders to use language that people can readily understand. Effective use of words has to do with avoiding cultural triggers, labels, and generalizations and emphasizes using key words and phrases in communication. Encouraging word choices affirms the use of positive language in communication with community members. Repetitious language refers to the willingness to use key terms and phrases to connect each other and ground the group.

Common language: Speak Plainly. Speaking plainly revolves around not only using simple word choices, but specifically using strong verbs, few generalizations, exaggerations, and hyperbole. Many communities may also choose either explicitly or implicitly to develop their own language. Practitioners may intentionally use creating a common language as an open and broad facilitative tool or decide to use it as more of an interpersonal tool in working with leaders. Both ways of working are relevant, necessary, and can mutually co-exist in practice.

One professional organizer with many years of experience discussed the successful use of creating a collective language to bridge differences. She implied that practitioners need to find a common language or create one only after learning the community language.

"Um, we had to find common issues, common language." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Line 344)**

She went further by describing her experience.

> "And so, we literally, we literally created a new language. And I'm not talking about a foreign language. We created a set of ways, created ways to talk about education that people can understand." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines- 368-370)**

Other community leaders and practitioners explained how language should be used based on their experience, and overwhelmingly came to a consensus that language needs to be simple and readily comprehensible.

> "I think words should be kept, especially in a community like ours, should be kept as simple as possible. I don't think you should use bad English because that's as simple as possible, but that's also talking down to somebody. If you all of a sudden say, "Hey yo" or whatever, you know. That's talking, you know, that's like, but you should try to use language that's as simple as possible." **(Int.6-Tr.5- Lines- 149-153)**

Language bridges understanding through actively enacted clarity and simplicity.

Effective use of words. Speaking plainly and effective words go hand in hand, but effective use of words demands that once the practitioner learns and begins to implement common language simplicity, they start deliberately avoiding triggers, labels, and overgeneralizations.

> "Well I know that you shouldn't say Fulton Bottom. I have learned that. Fulton goes all the way to the river!!" **(Int.-17- Tr.16- Lines- 78-79)**

Later this organizer elaborated on triggers and linked effective use of words to developing relationships.

> "I don't know, different people have different triggers, so it's hard to always know what they are to people if they're not vocal about what they are, because not everybody is. Unless you really develop a relationship with them, and they feel open to telling you about what they are." **(Int.17- Tr.16- Lines- 79- 82)**

This reinforces the learning component of language, and the need to build knowledge as emphasized under practical skills within the knowledge building core process theme. Another community practitioner covered using repetitious key words as a result of learning.

> "Because we're doing this together. And those are key words. You have to use the right words too, like I was talking about with, um, not using the word, rule, rules. You want to use a different word other than that. Oh, what would I suggest? Our plan. We have a plan that we're going to abide by. It's just our plan. It's our plan. You know, it's not my plan. It's not nobody else's plan. It's for us, to make us be a better, uh, to make our plan structurally the best that it can be." **(Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 651-661)**

Effective use of words also requires the practitioner to act upon knowledge learned within the community. Triggers, labels, and other particulars associated with language manifest differently depending on the specific community context. Using the fundamental key words effectively directly relates to lessons learned in knowledge building, and the practitioners' ability to recognize those key words and repetitively integrate them into the practice vocabulary within the field.

Encouraging word choices. Positive, encouraging, strengths based language builds solidarity across boundaries of difference. Even in the face of negativity, stress and strain from

community participants when barriers appear, practitioners report the need to remain respectful, open, and affirmative.

> "You know there's just a good balance of saying things in a way that gets your point across, but also maintains the respect." **(Int.17- Tr.16- Lines- 89-90)**

Another person goes even further in describing encouraging word choices in practice.

> "You know, if they're moody or, you know, really don't know the correct way to say something that they want to get across, but not say it nicely, you can always calm them down with something that you say to them, that makes it an even ground for them, so to speak." **(Int.2- Tr.2- Lines- 15-18)**

Skilled practitioners can even find useful ways to demonstrate this respect as an expectation in working with others. This strategy works best if implemented in the beginning stages of the initiative to set patterns for respectful communication and interactions.

Speaking Truth: To Power and Each Other. Speaking truth often takes great courage, on the part of practitioners and community members, and has the potential to initially create conflict if community participants remain unwilling to question assumptions, move past long held prejudices, or fail to break down barriers to bridging difference. Speaking truth requires courage when speaking to deeply entrenched systems of power, privilege, and control outside the community that may be impeding not only community progress, but bridging differences. It also requires courage to respectfully confront fellow community members in order to promote that greater good. One participant discussed this difficulty in great detail.

> "But people put forward these problems, but they won't take any ownership of them, so somebody has to have the courage to say this is how you could do, this is how you could do this thing. Like euphemisms in terms of like, completely ignoring the fact that the

person that's complaining could easily be the person that fixes the problem. Um, another example is, you know, people want um, people don't want kids selling drugs on the corner near their store. But they won't call the police when they see people selling drugs on the corner. They won't sit there and write down what time they saw that thing happen or take notes so that the police can actually prosecute. I think it takes courage on the part of the people who are bringing these people together and asking for their opinion to, to task them a little bit more and be honest with them and say this is something within your power to do something about. Um, so I guess what I mean in in terms of euphemisms is you know, what I'm really talking about is honesty. Calling it like you really see it. We do a lot of, we do a lot of talking around um, the history of racism in Greater Fulton. Um, but I think up until recently we haven't really given people voice and had them have the space and actually sit the same people down in a room and have them all listen to one another speak on how they feel about things. Like, I still don't think [redacted]'s really gonna say out loud what she really thinks, but she has said in private what she really thinks." **(Int. 12-Tr.11-Lines 39-55)**

Speaking truth to power and each other requires assertive honesty in the face of adversity. It recognizes the need to remain respectful but requires a willingness to be active in the face of injustice rather than remaining silent. This can be a delicate balance. One volunteer organizer within the community discussed her personal struggle with speaking truth to power.

"I think that I've become a lot more outspoken. Become a lot more outspoken. I think that I still need to learn to be outspoken without being offensive to some people. Not being a bull in a china closet, because yeah, now I'm a lot more outspoken, even at work, since I work in an all white company. Even at work I'm more outspoken. So, but when it

> comes to the community uh, I'm way more outspoken than I used to be. I think for me firstly, I think it's the best way to go that people know. But I don't take one side. I'm not going be one-sided outspoken. I mean, it's just like with our last meeting you know, when [redacted] stood up, I understood her side, I completely understood her side. And I will stand, you know, if it's right, I'm not going stand with one side because it's the black side. I'm standing with the right side and as long as it's what I think is right, then I'm standing by it. And I'm not going be quiet just to keep the peace going." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines- 472-481)**

This willingness to speak truth to power and each other when it is not convenient is also integrally linked to bridging differences. Being honest particularly when it is difficult can catalyze solidarity.

Openness. Transparent communication among community leadership, organizers, and community members bridges differences and builds trust. In openness honesty is paramount. Organizers model and practice honesty and openness, so community leaders and participants begin to practice these communication skills. Holding each other accountable brings groups together, and strengthens alliances across difference.

> "Basically, I feel like everything needs to be on the table. Everything, no secrets, no whispering, you know? No one feeling left out. Just put your cards on the table." **(Int.4-Tr.4-Lines-375-377)**

When participants communicate openly, individual agendas can become integrated, blended, or adapted into the overall goals of an initiative. When secrets and hidden agendas permeate among certain members, homogenization and fragmentation occurs. Groups begin to

splinter, and differences become barriers to maintaining prolonged connections across difference. But when practitioners start at a place of accountability, openness, and honesty, trust begins.

> "So we start to have like these conversations, like you know, I'm just trying to be really honest with them. And in turn, invite them to be honest with me, and it works very well, I think." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines- 163-165)**

Using learning tools. Speaking truth to power and each other also involves using accurate information in communicating with community members, community leadership, and other stakeholders. Various tools exist to assist practitioners and community leadership in gathering accurate information. As stated in earlier sections, many means for knowledge building aid practitioners and community members in the process of speaking truth to power. These learning tools are vital instruments to inform, to guide, and to direct practitioners toward goals. These learning tools can also mitigate conflict by providing evidence for taking certain action or moving toward a specific goal.

> "You know, say hey we were talking about xyz the other day, and you this was your opinion, but this is what they said right here. And sometimes when people see stuff in black and white, you know, they get you saying I got it from such, encyclopedia online or whatever. That's the way you can get to them so they can see what you're saying, because sometimes, you can tell people stuff and you know that you're telling them the correct stuff, but it's theirs' is different. The way that they interpret is totally different. And I found out when those things happen, I have what they said, and then I have another research. I said you can go and look at certain things. That decision is going to affect what I'm trying to do." **(Int.9- Tr.8- 518-526)**

Communication and Facilitating Conflict Resolution. Facilitating difficult conversations among community members different from one another comprises a diverse set of communicative skills. This key quality communication element guides dialogue, and provides a practical heuristic for amicable conflict resolution based on participant responses.

Setting the tone, creating the table. The first aspect involves setting the tone for quality communication. Creating a disarming, welcoming, inclusive, and open environment is the first communicative step for any organizer/facilitator. The environment does communicate, and creating a safe space begins the process of forging trusting alliances across difference. One organizer discussed this need with the utmost importance.

> "That is again, sitting down with people face-to-face, honoring their issues, and um, creating a table where they can all come together and have a facilitated conversation."
>
> **(Int.14-Tr.13-Lines 311-312)**

Another community worker discussed watching her mentor skillfully model facilitation by first setting the tone and creating a table that she described as "getting rid of fear".

> "And we're sitting around with coffee, a lot of really long pauses. And [redacted] knew exactly what she wanted out of the meeting. She was always like that, she would sit down. She would act like she didn't know. You you'd see and you'd feel like she didn't really know what the point was, and she'd even say, "I don't know what the hell we're doing." But she knew exactly what we were doing, and she knew exactly what she wanted out of that meeting. It was crazy. It was very disarming, and at the same time, it was just really cool because you didn't, she just got rid of any kind of fear of innovative thought by doing that." **(Int.12-Tr.11-Lines 194-201)**

Linked to later stage based categories of the model, setting the tone and creating the

table, is the integral first step to facilitating difficult dialogues across boundaries of difference. Situated first due to the highly sensitive nature of conflict resolution across difference, people need to feel welcomed, included, and acknowledged in the community building process. This critical step cannot be overlooked and must be taken or all subsequent skills become muted. This step also needs to be repeatedly implemented as a constantly reiterated and reinforced practice in order to build trust. In this way it links to relationship care, and establishes trust even in the presence of both conflict and difference.

Relational orientation. Effective communication brings people together. The result of effective communication establishes relational orientation. It requires connecting personal motivations among the group as the conversation moves.

> "It's interesting that communication is only important because it brings people together, you know?" **(Int.16-Tr.15-Lines 32-33)**

Drawing connections among the group, and asking critical questions linking experience, ideology, identity, and other common elements brings to light certain associations among participants that might previously remained unrecognized. These connections allow boundaries to be crossed and offer potential alliance building opportunities to grow. They allow people to connect to one another as people, and the stage is set by the way in which the facilitator guides the conversation.

> "And so you have to, it has to be so much more relationally oriented, particularly when there's a conflict or tension. And when there is conflict or tension, sometimes when there's not you really have to be relating to the person based on what's they're personally.....motivated to do. Um, not because you know, the plan says they should do it." **(Int.10-Tr.9- Lines 153-157)**

Communicate role. When organizers communicate their role, participants realign their expectations. This aspect of facilitating conflict resolution mitigates misunderstandings before they arise. If done early, in communicating their role, the organizer staves off future resentments that may arise when community members misunderstand the role of a community organizer.

> "Being able to explain how I see my role versus how another cultural perspective might see my role as different so that it leaves less room for disappointment and frustration." **(Int.10-Tr.9-Lines- 337-339)**

This participant also discussed having to explain her role to community members later in the community organizing process.

> "I was saying I'm willing to do that as long as I have time for it and if I can do it well, but is a part of that where you shouldn't be putting huge expectations on me just because you see that I wear that hat. So, I will as long as I can. So, I feel like that really clarified some things for him and for them. And I think it really helped him. What I got out of it was that he was like way more willing to be an advocate and a partner um, and do more legwork because he understood more where I was coming from. From a practical perspective, not just hey this is the way I do things." **(Int.10-Tr.9-Lines- 203-213)**

We will listen, we will hear you. Often in the tension of community work participants need to know that they have been heard and they will be heard. Letting people know off the bat often curbs some of the tension in the room. It also may be a great way, as one participant pointed out, of respectfully letting people know they have been heard if they are taking up space.

> "You know we hear you loud and clear. They keep going over and going over the same thing. Okay, we got it. And that's a nice way to say shut up other than, "Can you just shut

up?" Because then that will cause more confusion, you know." **(Int.2-Tr.2-Lines- 447-450)**

Demonstrating a commitment to listening to everyone manifests a willingness to communicatively build trust. This goes a long way in bridging differences among community members.

Acknowledge respect. Acknowledging respect opens the gateway to relationship care. Acknowledging respect for those in dialogue begins the process of building relationships. Treating people with respect begins with acknowledging acts of respect in others. It also demands communicating in respectful ways when in the community. One particular organizer describes her experience utilizing this facilitative tool in practice.

> "He told me how things were going from his perspective on this particular topic. And in the big picture and then you know. I hope that I told him how much we appreciated what he was doing." **(Int.10-Tr.9- Lines 109-112)**

Acknowledging respect involves recognizing acts of respect in others and communicating those as well as consistently communicating respectfully to all community members and leaders active in any community initiative.

> "And so, I think years ago in getting people to just vent their stuff. I thought that that had value, but there's a way to do it that's with the bottom line of respect for another person's humanity. I think that, for me, that kind of line in the sand is you treat people with respect and you treat them like they're human beings. And that's the basis for the work." **(Int.14-Tr.13-Lines 319-322)**

Acknowledge all perspectives, communicate all perspectives. Along with acknowledging respect and other communicative conditions of facilitating conflict resolution,

acknowledging all perspectives by communicating all perspectives increases transparency and demonstrates all voices as fundamental to bridging differences. It also recognizes the need to allow people with divergent perspectives to voice those without being relegated to the margins. It is up to the facilitator to set the tone for acknowledging all perspectives and to also draw people out if their voice has not been heard or if they have a different point of view, but are not voicing it.

Some groups facilitate this by having conversations about work style, and how to come together. This opens the dialogue, and sets up an environment that allows diverse perspectives to strengthen the process. In this way, it is expected to face difference, acknowledge it, and use it to strengthen the group.

> "We have long discussions about work style preferences of different cultures before we start working together." **(Int.10-Tr.9- Lines 417-418)**

Being open to acknowledging all perspectives further establishes trust that everyone will be heard. This essential facilitative skill in conflict resolution communicates that all voices are honored and valued. People need to know that they are heard and valued in the process.

Commit to Compromise. Commitment to compromise was described as an essential attribute to be practiced and demonstrated. One organizer discussed facilitating a conversation where both parties came to the table unwilling to compromise, with very strong differences, and left the table with a highly successful compromise.

> "And she came to the table just adamant that there should not be housing in um, in the building, but through this conversation where we talked about um, adaptive reuse and finance. And we talked about what is possible financially with this property. We talked about light and the impact that that has on a neighborhood. And we talked about

responsible development. Um, and the developer was also able to promise that none of the housing would be subsidized. She compromised and he compromised." **(Int.16-Tr.15- Lines 99-104)**

Respectfully agree to disagree. A critical facet of agreeing to disagree was described as respectful commitment to communicate in the face of disagreement. Closing communication, silence, and disengagement indicate clear signs of impolite disagreement. Respectfully agreeing to disagree means that communication remained open in the presence of disagreement and that both parties remain willing to communicate with one another despite differences of opinion, ideology, or world view. The work continued in the presence of disagreement.

> "So do you need to still communicate if you disagree. Yes, yes, you've got to let everybody know what's happening, even if you don't agree." **(Int.2-Tr.2- Lines 432-434)**

Another community leader discussed her experience in dealing with a disagreement with another community leader.

> "Because I got to go back to my committee and explain to them what happened. But anyway everything is fine because of the way that I addressed the letter, I addressed the situation, I let him know that I was disappointed, but I respect him as the leader. Just because I respect him as the leader, that don't mean I agree with everything that you do." **(Int.9-Tr.8- Lines 567-571)**

Facilitative barriers to quality communication. Responses also demonstrated various barriers to quality communication that include moving forward without communicating, taking up space, remaining silent, not listening, avoidance and exclusion, esoteric language and acronyms, generalizations, negativity, linguistic cultural assumptions, cultural dissonance,

absence of communication systems, lack of participation, and the importance of the messenger. These are discussed below in more detail.

Moving forward without communicating. Participants discussed experiences of going to meetings to dialogue on specific issues, and arriving to find out that decisions regarding topics and specific plans had already been made without their input. They also discussed when facilitators did not provide adequate time to dialogue on the nuances of taking a specific action. Many organizers also examined their past shortcomings related to moving forward without providing adequate time to dialogue and listen to multiple divergent perspectives.

> "We didn't explain what we were doing when we were doing it. Then there was all of these emotions, and all of these reactions that were just kind of left there, so the administration got all up in arms, and we had a discussion and explained what we intended, and members of the community which was the college, could discuss their thoughts, emotions, concerns related to it, and actual change could take place if these things were documented, but we just had an activity. We didn't actually talk about what any of these issues were then it wasn't really going to be change, because we hadn't allowed it to get to the point where we could have a constructive conversation about what the change should be." **(Int.17-Tr.16- Lines 141-148)**

She goes on to explain what effect this had on the community.

> "Just kind of, we don't want you to speak for us!! I think that a lot of people wanted to be able to say it themselves, and they weren't given that choice." **(Int.17- Tr.16- Lines 179-180)**

Taking up space: Talking over. Participants suggested that one of the crucial jobs of a competent facilitator requires all participants speak their own truth and voice their opinions.

Participants stated facilitators must act in a respectful, authentic way to allow others to comment and have their voice heard by redirecting the conversation.

> "If you're doing all the talking, and nobody listens to you, you're not communicating. Ha ha ha ha. You're just a dictator." **(Int.9- Tr.8- Lines 513-514)**

Remain silent. Remaining silent, according to participants indicates reticence, and often remaining silent may manifest as not communicating clear thoughts and intents. People can remain silent about their intent by lacking clarity.

> "People can't, if you don't make yourself clear, people can't read your mind. And if you sometimes have to be willing to rock the boat if you know it's right." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 415-417)**

This participant even goes so far as to suggest that even if perspectives create conflict, speaking is a better option than remaining silent. In this way, facilitator/organizers become open to conflict to effectively draw out multiple viewpoints which lays the foundation for building alliances.

Do not listen. A failure to listen may not always be intentional, but when it is, it signals an unwillingness to consider various mindsets. One participant specifically discussed how it felt to be shut out of a process, because community colleagues did not want to listen.

> "...for me personally as the [redacted] was not a success because of that. Because that was my, that that was my, lack, I mean, the [redacted] itself is successful. For me personally, it was a failure, my failure because for five years I've struggled and I've preached and I tried to make them see that perception is a big part of what the [redacted] is all about." **(Int.6- Tr.7- Lines 356-359)**

Avoidance and exclusion: Tiptoeing. According to participants exclusion is closely associated with exclusion.

> "I think people tiptoe around each other a lot. We tiptoe around a lot of shit. We don't want to make each other mad. You know what I mean? And that's one reason why I kind of stay away from the meetings, because I'm not the type to tiptoe around anything, but I'm also the type to respect my elders. You know what I'm saying? So, I'd rather just not put myself in that position where I got to call somebody out on their bullshit. That's older than me. That probably knows a lot more about life than I do." **(Int.1- Tr.1- Lines 153-163)**

Ironically this participant discussed the importance of not avoiding conflict, but justifies not going to community meetings by stating he does not want to offend people. Another participant reviews her experience in community work witnessing exclusion manifested as a reaction to difference.

> "So the one meeting, in one meeting, one of the youngest professional African Americans stood up and said, "we don't want these people in our community. They don't represent our community. They're all immigrants. They're all illegal anyway." And so the, and so the Latino members of the community responded by saying, "that's just not true. Youu're lying". And then it became, it became just a very tense exchange. Once that lone African American young man stood up, it gave permission for the whites to support him. So it became an African American and whites against the Latinos. It was awful, it was just awful. And so um, I would say that's one situation that blew up because we couldn't do enough intensive work in that community to address, to address that difference. And we have to, we have to do it." **(Int. 14- Tr.13- Lines 298-210)**

Another participant succinctly discussed the solution to avoidance and exclusion. On participant succinctly summed this up.

> "Basically, I feel like um, everything needs to be on the table. Everything, no secrets, no whispering, you know? Um, no one feeling left out. Um, just put your cards on the table." **(Int.4- Tr.4- Lines 375-377)**

This again underscores the value of drawing people out without a fear of conflict, and with a confidence that common connections can be made before avoidance and exclusion establish a permanent maladaptive pattern within the community initiative.

Esoteric language and acronyms: "Speak down to earth". Participant responses demonstrated that special attention must be paid to language and its power. One participant discussed how esoteric language gets in the way of building connections among participants.

> "They want you to go through it, tear it apart, and talk about it. And they do it in a language that is completely foreign to everybody." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 365-366)**

Successful community organizers working in the presence of divergent difference and multiple viewpoints took the time to learn the language of the community, and practice this knowledge within the community. Participants characterized this as speaking down to earth, speaking plainly, or avoiding certain triggers and terms. These included the use of acronyms.

> "Acronyms. I say that all the time. If you use acronyms, you make someone, that that does not travel in those circles, you make them. First of all, they don't know what you're talking about. If there are a lot of people there that know what they're talking about, then they're not going to ask unless they are bold enough to ask. Acronyms should never be used unless.....everybody knows, is on the same page. Never." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 138-**

147)

Generalizations. According to participants, over generalizing in communication with community members can build barriers of division, and create harsh miscommunication patterns. Generalizations can easily construe conversations perpetuating conflict, stereotypes, prejudice, and defensiveness.

> "Like, you never use the word always. I feel like, when you use adverbs like always you kind of set people up in the feeling of, getting a sense of stance. Because you're overgeneralizing and maybe they think that they're talking about them. You know, when you're talking about somebody always. Or just like you, you you you you. You know, when it's always I and you statements, rather than listen to the we's. **(Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 146-153)**

Negativity. Practitioners reported that people will come with complaints, and organizers need the willingness to tolerate those complaints in order to build solidarity across differences. Creatively shifting those complaints into solutions is difficult. One community leader with years of experience in organizing discussed negativity and his response to it.

> "You know, if your only comment and contribution is to give me a litany of your complaints, I'd just as soon as you go home. Cause that's not constructive. That not doesn't produce anything except letting you vent. And I'm not very patient with letting other people vent or telling things." **(Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 28-30)**

Linguistic cultural assumptions. Linguistic cultural assumptions often dictate how language is both perceived and used across difference. Participants discussed how practitioners must be keenly aware of their own assumptions around use of slang and how individuals construct meaning across difference. Divergent identities, backgrounds, and viewpoints

complicate communication particularly when groups adopt certain vernacular across difference. They highlighted how language must be used in an authentic way, and practitioners must be slow to adopt the vernacular of those different from themselves if at all.

> "Like what? My bad? I mean if there now, some cultural phrases have been adopted by everybody now. But I tell you one thing, my boss who is a Tea Party person and he says 'my bad' to me all the time and I get irritated. You know, like why you saying that to me? You assume that's the way I speak. Because I know he has, you know, a kind of cultural sensitivity. He just assumes that's the way I speak." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 161-166)**

Difference dissonance. Difference dissonance encompasses the effect of differences based on the development of meaning often resulting in miscommunication, lack of communication, inconsistent, and contradictory behavior. Some participants explained this conflicting cultural dissonance the direct or indirect challenging of certain values across difference.

> "It's just different, you know. So I think we failed there to make uh, make sure there's a communication with the parents about raising the children and come up, and come to some kind of a balance because all we did, you know, set them loose at the [redacted] and then 'Yeah yeah yeah.' And all they get is this stupid little time out chair. And they're like, 'What the heck. I don't care.' And at home then they come in and 'Yeah yeah yeah,' and mom's like hmmph, 'Where's my belt?' There's a cultural difference." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 235-242)**

Difference dissonance, according to participants, can be mitigated by addressing differences in the open or identifying areas where dissonance may appear if unaddressed.

Absence of communication system. According to participants, miscommunication and information breakdown often happened when there was a lack of effective communication system(s) across difference. The result was discussed in various ways. In some instances critical information may not have gotten out to certain community members, leaders may have taken action incoherent with the broader community vision, and groups may not have had a system of effective communication in meetings and gatherings. One participant discussed communication issues in initiatives in her own community.

> "You can reach them, yeah. So, but that's still a problem with excuses. Communication is our biggest problem. I think that's why we're losing a lot of people. They're like, 'I don't know what the heck is going on." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 626-630)**

Another participant talked about how the absence of an effective system was mitigated through honest facilitated dialogue after clear issues arose.

> "And there really wasn't talk… it was kind of…there wasn't a community discussion until we decided to have one, but that was like an after- thought, so I guess the dialogue wasn't there. Once it was there, it was angry. There was a lot of anger, and it was up to us to. . .I guess, frame that anger in a constructive way, and keep the conversation positive. And let people know that it was okay to be angry, that that was something we expected. We expected that emotion to happen." **(Int.17- Tr.16- Lines 156-161)**

Lack of participation: Communicating interest and reaching people. Another facilitative barrier linked to quality communication concerned lack of participation, communicating interest, and reaching people in the community. Community practitioners found that after initial periods of high community engagement, attendance at meetings and general

participation sometimes dropped. Reportedly, the reasons for this are often complex and multifactorial.

> "How do we reach these people? How do we reach these people and get these people to say, well, we are, we would like to see one community and let us all come together and work together? That is something that I would like to see happen." **(Int.3- Tr.3- Lines 76-78)**

She goes on to talk about how common issues bring people together, and how once they are solved, community members become difficult to engage again.

> "And as soon as as it quieted down and people down here stopped meeting, people who wanted it, moved on it, and then we had it. And nobody down here has said one word about it." **(Int.3- Tr.3- Lines 151-153)**

Participants covered the magnitude of communicating with the community, and the critical necessity of communicating to make positive change. Also explained were ways that communication can be utilized to increase participation, reach out to community members across difference, and how lack of participation was an extension of failing to adequately build alliances across difference.

> "Well, the first thing that comes to mind, uh, with community work is um, just the magnitude of the effort of communicating with people in the community." **(Int.16- Tr.15- Lines 9-10)**

Organizers reported that community leaders remain keenly aware of what the community membership cares about in order to maintain participation, have a system in place to communicate those issues, and simultaneously provide ways for community members to speak back and change the community process.

Saturation. Saturation refers to the point of overload reached when engaged in dialogue about specific community issues, conditions, and problems. One participant discussed saturation as the point where community members grew weary of dialogue.

> "Saturation. At some point I think it's not helpful to talk anymore. Hopefully that's the point where um, a project will sort of shift and move towards some type of project realization." **(Int.16- Tr.15- Lines 201-206)**

The importance of the messenger. Reported as both a barrier and an asset that sometimes goes unexamined related to who carries the message for the group. One participant discusses how the importance of the messenger intersects with difference, and has implications for power, privilege, and influence.

> "People listen to unfortunately, give more validation to people of power. If our councilwoman sits down and talks about bridging differences than if I sit down and talk about the same, say the same identical thing. You know same subject, nothing different. Yeah, and then if some powerful white person sits down even among black people, then it becomes law." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 526-530)**

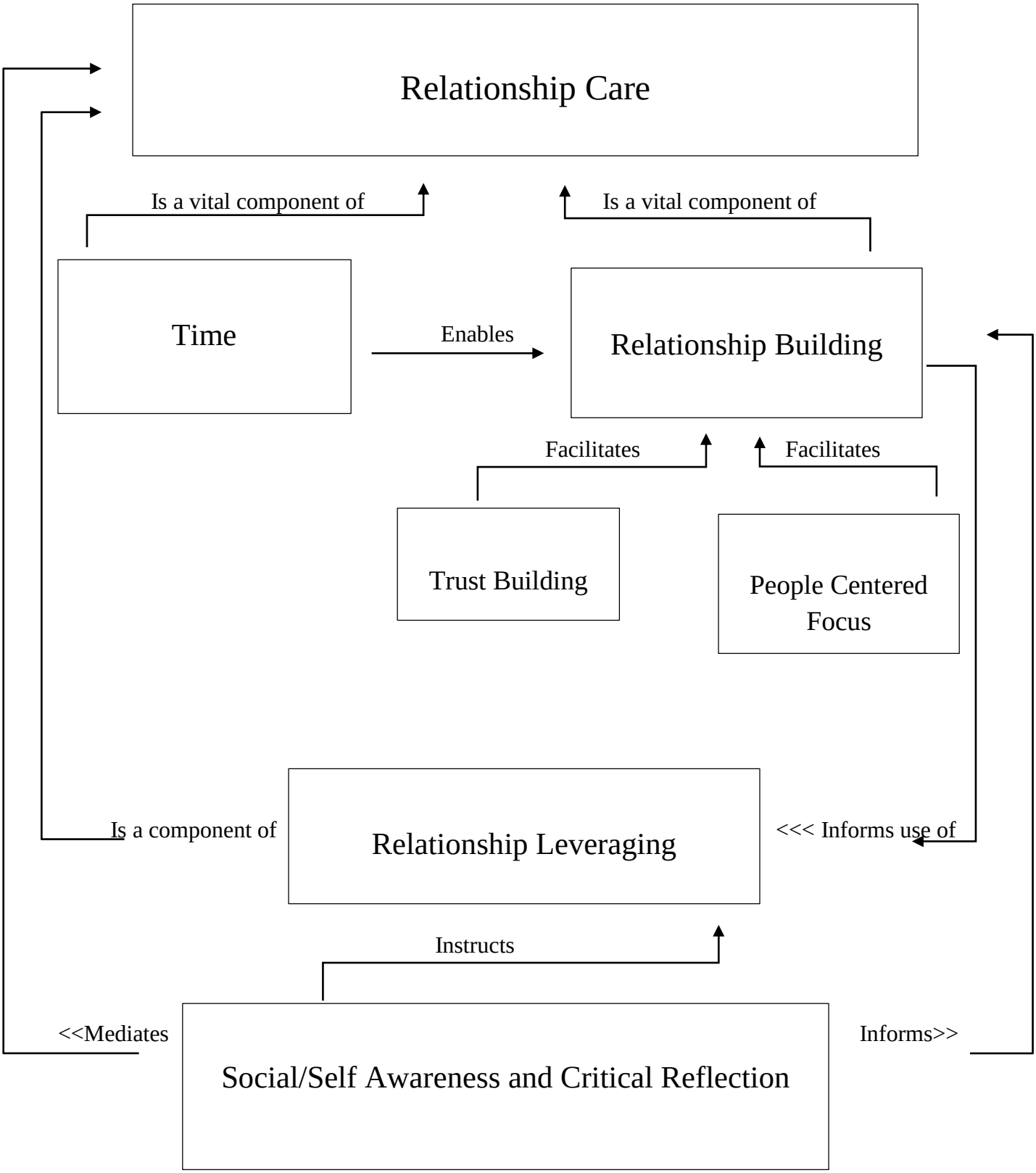
Speaking for "the other". Vital to forging alliances across boundaries of difference participants reported allowing people to speak for themselves, speak their own truth, and validate their process, builds trust, consolidates power across difference, and builds common understanding. One practitioner discussed the danger of privileged practitioners speaking for the community.

> "If it was something that they didn't think was a big deal or just wasn't relevant then I can't come from my place of white privilege to speak for them." **(Int.17- Tr.16- Lines 217-218)**

Theme Three: Relationship Care

Relationship care as a fundamental core process theme is no less crucial within the theoretical framework than any other. Dominant key components within relationship care include time, relationship building, relationship leveraging, and critical social/self-awareness. Time enables relationship building to take hold, and in conjunction with trust building and a people centered focus, relationship building is facilitated. Only then can relationships be properly leveraged and maintained throughout the community practice process. Social/self-awareness both informs the relationship building process and mediates relationship care. In this way, practitioners and community leaders are perpetually self-critical and self-reflective.

Figure 4.4- Relationship Care: Framework of Conceptual Relationships



Relationship care encompasses values and practical actions inherent to building, maintaining, and repairing positive interpersonal relationships. One participant discussed specifically how being in relationship and caring for that relationship brought people together in a community initiative where, as a practitioner she needed to cross boundaries of race, socio-economic status, gender, and age, and build lasting alliances in order to effectively create lasting positive change within a public housing community.

> "I think one of my first lessons before I ever started working with it, I had family who lived in public housing, and so I was aware of the difference between that family and my my kind of nuclear family. But also aware that it didn't seem to make much difference when we encountered each other personally, when we were dealing with each other personally. We all loved each other, but the differences were there. The world made the difference, kind of pointed out the difference." **(Int.14-Tr.13- Lines 42-47)**

The previous quote exposes a critical truth often overshadowed by persistent difference in the community context. Many drastic interpersonal differences that seem to be internal to the community are often caused, perpetuated, misdiagnosed, and mistreated by outside forces. As a logical extension attention to relationship, its care, building and maintaining positive interactions among people, establishing a people centered focus, a proper attention to time, and responsible critical practitioner self-awareness difference becomes either secondary to shared humanity or strengths among people connected through long lasting bonds of trust.

> "And as they developed those relationships, I do feel that the dialogue became a more genuine, more respected among everybody that was a part of this. So you really did see progress." **(Int.15-Tr.14- Lines 245-247)**

The first critical aspect of relationship care involves the ability to effectively establish and build relationships by valuing people. Relationship building skills emerge as the first essential element within relationship care, and a bridge to trust. Establishing a people centered focus demonstrates respect and trust building sets an environment of caring relationships in community. Other essential elements include attention to time, leveraging relationships, and social/self-awareness.

Relationship building. The foundation of relationship care begins with the often slow process of building relationships utilizing lessons and skills learned from previous core process themes. According to participants, the cyclical process of building strong, caring, relationships catalyzes the trust building process.

> "Because it was about building relationships, and when you build relationships, you build respect. And when you build respect, you build trust." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 250-251)**

This quote reinforces that building relationships, building respect, and building trust lead to solidarity among diverse peoples. Critical subthemes of relationship building involve a people centered focus, attention to community memory, boundaries, encouraging supportive leadership, and trust building. These subcategories clarify relationship building by breaking down its practical elements based on participant responses.

People centered. Establishing a people centered focus means treating people as equals first and practicing principles of appreciating everyone, acceptance, meeting people where they are, and honoring shared humanness according to organizers interviewed.

> "When you're working with people that are different, one of the things that I have come to understand is you have to meet people where they are. And different people are at different places. But it doesn't matter where they are if you're talking about community

work, creating community unity, you have to understand that they're all vital, they're all important, and they're all equal. So the ability to meet people where they are and to help people feel valuable." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 18-25)**

Whatever differences manifest in the practice context, people do share a common humanity, and recognizing that everyone needs to be valued at the table is instrumental according to participants.

"There's an acknowledgement of another person's value in the process. I think we see that in [redacted]. Slow, painful, but I think we're beginning to see some of that." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 400-401)**

Community memory/history. According to those interviewed community memories and histories are diverse, intensely personal, and often deeply contested. A participant discussed dealing head on with the complexity, invisibility, and difficulty of oppressive histories in the community context.

"When you get deeper, building alliances is also about dealing with the history of pain, rejection, disappointment, abuse, and oftentimes individuals that are in that room represent that to the other. And you don't always know who represents what." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 37-42)**

He goes further later on expanding on his point of dealing directly with representations of oppressive history in building alliances across difference.

"I think one of the failures in trying to build alliances is one group and more often, the group that is considered to be the dominant group will come into the community thinking they can give them something and not think that they can get something from that community. And the truth is when you have that that train of thought, you're not playing

on an equal playing field. And eventually, um, that shows up. And when that shows up, all of that history springs up. So um, you know to build alliances you have to understand the dynamics of uh, the group and again, many times those dynamics um, is driven by history. That may not even be in the room." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 60-68)**

A participant indicated that a person's story is closely related to who they are.

"So the most important thing is to acknowledge who that person is, because it's a whole life that they're bringing to the table and that they're using to talk about whatever issue it is. I just think that that cannot be overemphasized." **(Int.16- Tr.15- Lines 151-153)**

Trust building. Trust building is made up of consistent manifestation of qualities and values that bring people together. Within this category participants discussed honesty, respect, empathy, treating people as we want to be treated, and collective decision making. Trust building behaviors encompass repeated acts of kindness, respect, loyalty, acceptance, and tolerance.

"First of all you have to gain people's confidence, you know what I mean? Trust. I feel that once you do that, people will sort of loosen up and feel as if, you know what I mean, that what I have to say or how I feel is important. Wherein that I can speak my mind as to what I feel that that that needs to be done or, how it should be done." **(Int.3- Tr.3- Lines 371- 375)**

The quote below demonstrates how trust has to be shown, exhibited, and repeated. A participant discussed how trust gets questioned when actions fail to align with what practitioners say.

"You can say a lot, you know. You can say a whole lot. I can say all night long I love red-headed people with freckles, but when it comes down to having one live in my house or marrying my child and all of that, then I'm like, I've heard, well, okay red-haired

people with freckles, we might need some extra security for them. Because I don't think they're all that trustworthy, but we're not actually saying that. We're just coming up with different things that were never needed before. You know, because a red-haired person with freckles was going to join and have power, okay. When you walk into a place and the only person of color there is mopping the floors and cleaning the toilets and you claim to me you cannot find another person of color to do another job. Just not there, can't find them, nobody qualified in this entire city of Richmond, but this old man. You found him. You found him to mop your floors and clean your toilets. Volunteers you can find people of color, but for paid position, you can't find them, then you're lying to me. You're not living what you're preaching." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 342-353)**

Non-contradictory trust building acts reciprocally gain people's respect, and lay the foundation for lasting relationships. She goes on to discuss demonstrated respect for cultural differences, and how those acts build trust.

"You might not agree with them all the time, but they will respect you and you will be heard and you won't be dismissed. I think you form alliances when you respect people's cultural differences. You don't have to agree with them, but you respect them. You know, they're Muslims or atheists, any of this that you might not know about. I mean, if it's an atheist and they're comfortable to tell me why they're an atheist, I would listen to them. Uh, probably will never agree with an atheist, but hey, that's your thing, you know. I'm good with you, you know. Also a Muslim, tell me your cultures and whatever, you know." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 495-502)**

She goes further reinforcing the practical consistency of trust building.

"And it's something that, you know, talking about being open to differences. You can't really, you have to back up what you say. You have to show it. And you have to know how to show it." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 646-648)**

Leadership development. Finding, building, encouraging, facilitating, and working with community leadership complicates an already divergent concept. Leadership means so many different things to different people, but one thing remains clear to participants. They reinforced that leadership needs to be inspiring and encouraging, and any community initiative must be led from within.

"Leadership, I don't think leadership is the same thing as power. I think leadership is a more a thing of inspiring people. Having people's respect, inspiring them. Inspiring so that they want to do what you do. Or they want to do what you suggest we might want to do, you know. They might want to work with you. Not the same. There's no fear."

(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 545-549)

On the surface this may seem paradoxical to community practitioners, but participants clarified overwhelmingly that organizers should foster community leadership and allow that leadership to guide the process. One of the first participants interviewed emphasized this notion.

"I think the movement in the community, I think the movement should be separate from the, like the [redacted] is a good place, but it should be what it is. It shouldn't be the whole movement. It should be a resource. You know what I mean? But I think they've taken on a lot more than, you know what I mean? It's up to people to come there and find out what they have and find out. It shouldn't be overseeing the whole movement. And it shouldn't be about that organization. That should be a resource. That's what it was intended for from the beginning." **(Int.1-Tr.1- Lines 112-124)**

A professional organizer reiterated this same notion.

> "And then, from the organizing side, um, I really don't see um, see organizers as leaders per se. I think they're just that, they're organizers. So when I, it's my job to recruit enough facilitators so that there's one for every seven or eight people and um, hopefully, um hopefully two if we can." **(Int.16- Tr.15- Lines 247-250)**

One community member had a practical action oriented definition of leadership.

> "I wouldn't think they were following me. I think they were working with me. It was a common goal. Basically, the idea sold themselves. I didn't create the idea; I just took it on myself to see that it happened." **(Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 562-564)**

He goes to expand on the practical nature of leadership in community.

> "Not in leadership, in terms of what's important and micromanaging. I really do believe in K.I.S.S. Keep It Simple Stupid." **(Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 585-586)**

In this way, enacted community leadership is a natural outgrowth of relationship, therefore an essential element within relationship care. This process, further outlined by participants in the subcategories of leadership cover encouraging and supporting leadership, leadership flexibility, gifts and talents, and empowerment.

Encouraging and supporting leadership. According to participants, as leadership continues to be supported and encouraged, leaders begin emerging in unexpected ways and from unanticipated places. One participant discussed how an act of welcoming can be a form of leadership.

> "So I guess what you have to figure out is to find people that uh are like ambassadors.....and come uh try to get people together and uh and find out what are our differences and find out what we all have in common because this will get us together,

> what we have in common. Uh, so that's what we really need. Like at our work team meetings when a new person comes, have an ambassador that says, "Hey welcome," you know, "We're so and so" and each work team should have somebody that makes somebody feel welcome." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 63-69)**

Participants take on leadership in ways that practitioners cannot anticipate, and begin to drive the initiative in new directions.

Flexibility. When working alongside people from diverse backgrounds, participants pointed out specific leadership qualities. One of these was flexibility. Possessing flexibility in one's practical life was well as a part of one's direct skill set in communicating, adjusting to new factors on the ground, and a willingness to change direction as new developments occur all characterize the practical flexibility.

> "So you have to be flexible, you have to be completely open to any changes in the plan, but at the same time, you have to have a goal and a plan before you can bring the people to the moment." **(Int.12- Tr.11- Lines 596-598)**

Another leader emphasized that as practitioners and leaders, particularly as outsiders, we have to be willing to be flexible and change our direction.

> "And we kind of worked things out from there and like, the students had a fantastic school and he and his staff loved working together and we like, really loved having him lead. We all had to make our adjustments." **(Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 124-126)**

Gifts and talents. Practitioners discussed gifts and talents as a way that difference acts to strengthen community ties. One participant explained her job related to gifts, talents, and leadership.

> "My job as an organizer is to match people that come through the door with the job that they will excel at and they'll really be bringing something to. . ." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 692-694)**

She goes further explaining the benefits of utilizing gifts and talents specifically in leadership development.

> "So you get the win-win for everybody, and it's something that I'm really working on, still trying to cultivate in myself, is to make sure to view people for their strengths, what they're really bringing, and not see their you know, not see them as a burden because they came through the door and you're busy you know?" **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 703-706)**

Empowerment. Individual and collective empowerment are effects of community based leadership development according to participants. A neighborhood leader eloquently put the process of individual empowerment into words.

> "You know, a park, these kinds of things haven't been given to us; we're creating these opportunities for ourselves. I see that that happened a lot with Occupy as well." **(Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 221-222)**

She goes on moving from more specific to broader examples of the links between leadership and empowerment.

> "People seeing that they have the ability to make changes, and make immediate changes, immediately visible changes. I think it's pretty empowering, especially in a culture that's again where a lot of these communities, if you do not have a certain level of socioeconomic um, status or, level of education, you're not encouraged. You're not encouraged to speak up. You're not encouraged to lead. You're not encouraged to take

part in the process that directs your life, you know, because you're not valued." **(Int.11-Tr.10- Lines 224-228)**

Collective empowerment can have much the same effect when communities work together. One practitioner discussed collective empowerment, and how it continues to drive community members' in the process of community change.

"People came out of that experience empowered to do other things. And several of them went on to um, serve in leadership roles and their own right, because they were empowered in the way that they hadn't been before and once that light comes on that I can, it doesn't just go out that easy. So the success was what came out of the community." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 215-217)**

He goes on to discuss how collective empowerment breeds tangible results.

"So in spite of all of the challenges, there were some good things, and more importantly, there were some individuals in the community that were empowered and it was a group of women that pushed for the family resource center all over the community. We just backed them and once we backed them, we had the desire, but it was their idea. And it's still there." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 299-304)**

Another professional practitioner discussed the development of community conscience through leadership development and collective empowerment.

"Ideally, leadership gets built that can take on the mantle, that can really take on the role of being the community conscience. And that's when organizing works, when over time you have built that community conscience that can hold the community accountable for staying together." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 250-253)**

In this way, leadership as an outgrowth of healthy relationship interactions generates empowerment and forges alliances that last creating a collective conscience guiding the community change process.

Relationship leveraging. Relationships act as bridges to creatively find access to resources. One community leader discussed his experience establishing a community park utilizing his relationships to move the process along.

> "I would negotiate with the city. I was the guy. If you need something for this clean up. You come to me, I can get it somehow." **(Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 390-391)**

Participants overwhelmingly discussed scenarios where they asked people to donate resources, to aid the community, to reach out to the city, or to call someone they knew to initiate a process. They also talked about pushing people within the community to take on certain tasks or even risks for the broader community initiative. They emphasized how deep trust needs to be developed before relationship leveraging takes place.

Time. Building and maintaining healthy quality relationships takes time. This essential factor cannot be overlooked. Practitioners repeatedly reported that individuals, especially funders, often underestimate how long engaging a community and building relationships might take.

> "I think a lot of people have no concept of how long it really takes. It's not a weekend project. It's not a building and leave project. It's, it's got to be about subtle shifts and naming things and calling them out in reality. Because if we spend our day with euphemisms, we'll never ever get to the real problem." **(Int.12- Tr.11- Lines 15-21)**

Another practitioner covers time as a critical factor of organizing across difference.

"So organizing is years long. Its years of deep investment. Its years of organizing, becoming enough a part of the community to understand its culture, to understand the community's fears and challenges, but also long enough to build that leadership that can take, that can take the effort forward." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 255-258)**

Social/self-awareness and critical reflection. According to participants, successfully crossing boundaries of difference can depend on a practitioner's ability to critically self-reflect.

"You really have to be, first of all self-aware, strong in yourself and realize that this could get messy and you might be wading into a very messy conversation." **(Int.12, Tr.11- Lines 33-34)**

A practitioner discusses how this might not work if the community worker remains unprepared for difficult dialogues.

"But you got to get out the way to be able to do that, because I have my own shortcomings and sometimes your shortcomings can rub against my shortcomings. And if I don't handle that properly, then I can still mess up the process or create problems for the group." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 361-365)**

Participants covered how social/self-awareness and critical reflection deals directly with empathy to avoid personal triggers.

"Because, I know if I try and relate that back to myself, which is how I try to understand every, all experiences. Let me put this in my own lens. What would it be like if I wasn't accepted? Something similar to times when I'm very frustrated in a group where I feel different, it's because I don't feel like my perspective is being understood because of the differences in our background." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 32-36)**

Often practitioners work in communities very different from their own. According to participants, it is critical to attempt to see things from the perspective of the community members and leadership. As shown below this means stepping out of comfort zones, personal experience, addressing triggers and questioning false assumptions.

> "Because we didn't, we needed to acknowledge that there were some issues facing that community that I didn't grow up with. That fact was an issue." **(Int.14-Tr.13- Lines 75-76)**

She goes on to describe the power of acknowledging difference within the community, and how that applies to practitioners.

> "Because while we as organizers can come into a community because it's our job, whether volunteer or paid it's our job, we are, we are impacting people whose lives are very different." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 241-243)**

One practitioner described the relationship between self-awareness and objectivity as a great lesson learned throughout her decades of experience as an organizer.

> "So that's different for me from years ago. I get less emotionally engaged than I did years ago because I realize that it's not helpful, and that it clouds my judgment, and that it doesn't help if I'm emotionally compromised." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 325-327)**

Facilitative barriers to relationship care. Many facilitative barriers stand in direct contradiction to the essential elements within the relationship care. Practitioners covered not listening, dominant groupthink, impatience and stubbornness, artificial unity, dictating, marginalizing respect in the presence of conflict, paying unequal attention, exclusion, rumors, stigma, and misinformation, inconsistent behavior, and time manifested in behaviors antithetical to relationship care. Participant practitioners also offered valuable remedies.

Not listening: Leaving stories behind. One of the many effects of not listening expresses disinterest in individual and collective story. The participant response below expresses frustration with the repetitious nature of one community story.

> "Just like, who I was talking about earlier. He's been left behind, man. Eventually, he's gonna get left behind because people gonna get tired of hearing that same old story that they're just gonna disregard him. You know what I mean? And not to say that it's not a legitimate story, but we've all heard it before. I've never even met the guy and i heard it ten times." (**Int.1- Tr.1- Lines 323-327)**

Dominant groupthink power displays. Participants repeatedly contended that traditionally dominant group members often have an idea of what the community needs and wielding that power without adequately building relationships, breaks down trust and creates barriers.

> "I think one of the uh, the failures in trying to build alliances is one group and more often, the group that is considered to be the dominant group will come into the community thinking they can give them something and not think that they can get something from that community. And the truth is, when you have that that train of thought, you're not playing on an equal playing field. And eventually, that shows up. And when that shows up, all of that history sort of springs up." (**Int.15- Tr.14- Lines-60-66)**

Impatience and stubbornness. Impatience and stubbornness can act as a barrier to genuine relationship building. One participant discussed the antidote to impatience and stubbornness being authentic kindness.

"Because that's how you get, for people who don't want to, who want to be mean and stubborn, the best way to get through to them is kindness." (**Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 222-223)**

Impatience and stubbornness is in reference to how participants treat each other, and this signals the practitioner to act in a respectful, kind, authentic way.

Artificial unity: Forced oneness. As relationships build in community, participants may show a wariness, due to a host of issues. A way to avoid this critical barrier, as stated below, involves honoring everyone's individuality and recognizing differences as a tool for strength by accepting disagreement as a part of the process.

"Not putting everybody together as one. Not putting everybody together as one. Because we're all individuals and we've got individual, knowing up front that you gonna have people who are gonna disagree." (**Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 387-389)**

Direction before relationship: Dictating. Applying direction to individuals before reaching out to build a relationship amounts to dictating. Even if done with positive intentions, community members and leaders expect to build relationships with those they work alongside as well as fellow community members. The quote below exemplifies the feeling community members often get when practitioners provide direction without first developing relationships with fellow community members, and how it gets interpreted.

"My thing was that these people are living in here and they, uh, are going by and a lot of people were coming down here that used to live down here in Fulton dictating to us." **(Int.3- Tr.3- Lines 21-23)**

Heated conflict: Marginalizing respect. One participant explored how heated conflict lead to community space being taken away and caused participation to dwindle.

> "So it got to the point where and it got so heated. We used to meet at a church and they put us out the church because it got too heated. It got out of hand. So then the people started dwindling down here coming to meeting. And we looked around and we only had about two or three people that were participating. And we were fighting this fight down here by ourselves. You know, all of a sudden, boom, there was no organization down here at all." (**Int.3- Tr.3- Lines 29-36)**

Unequal attention. According to respondents, to build respect, trust, and therefore, capacity, equal attention must be paid to each constituency within the community. A participant below talks about how dominant groups within the community may control the agenda depending on who sits at the table rather than asking themselves why certain groups are not present.

> "And so I started to go to the meetings, uh, to bring Fulton meetings. And nothing was being said about down this way. So I went around to talk to one of my friends that was very active when I first moved down here and she says, well, you know Dolores, it's going be hard for us to do that because these people don't want to listen. We went and knocked on everybody's door and they had to work or they couldn't come to meetings and you know it was just all, you know. . ." (**Int.3-Tr3- Lines 49-46)**

According to the quote above, the effect of consistent unequal treatment among organizers causes a huge lack of engagement that once embedded into the culture of the community is difficult to counteract.

Exclusion. Purposive exclusion and separation lead to mistrust, division, and persistent conflict. One participant discusses how these exclusive ideas are planted, sowed, and practiced in community.

> "It's only wrong, I only think people's differences are wrong when they hurt other people. Because sometimes people just people have a look, but people may come in there, and they might not look or dress like you think that they are. And they're just as intelligent as they want to be. And they look at them and say, "Uh they don't know nothing." They look, look how she dressing and all that, but clothes don't make a person. It's when they start speaking and start talking to you." (**Int.9- Tr.8- Lines 448-454)**

Another participant discussed how exclusion can be used as a mechanism of power and how to overcome it.

> "But they saw the community as a board member to them. Um, so their approach was to look, we are just going to take charge of this and you tell, we tell you what to do and you do it. And the community pushed back uh, against that. Uh, the good thing that [redacted] did was um, they had advisors to each community. Um.....and those advisors, they called them technical assistants, they were very firm in and clear in their understanding of what they wanted. So the technical assistants or technical advisors helped bridge some of the divide so it sort of forced um, the city and the state to um, to be more considerate of what the community was saying." (**Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 266-273)**

In this same way, community leaders and practitioners can work together to bridge these gaps if they are open to bridging differences.

Rumors, misinformation, and stigma. Another huge obstacle to relationship care involves the use of rumors, acting on misinformation, and pervasive stigma. Participants provide various examples in their responses of both individual and collective use of misinformation and stigma.

"Not saying, um, I know that one time I wanted, um, gaslights on those, you know down here on [redacted] and over here on [redacted] and I was told by the representative at that time on the city council that the reason why we didn't have the lights down here because this was a high crime area, which I was very insulted by that. Because you know that wasn't true."(**Int.3- Tr.3- Lines 111-117)**

She goes on to discuss how the neighborhood was perceived many years ago when she was growing up.

"Because as far as a lot of blacks are concerned in this town, [redacted] was taboo when I was growing up. You know [redacted] was supposed to be the worst place in the world anybody to live and this was, you know, a vibrant neighborhood down here. [redacted] just had a bad name." (**Int.3- Tr.3- Lines 459-462)**

One respondent also discussed how her upbringing influenced how rumors, misinformation, and stigma can effect difference. If one grows up suspecting people who are different, then that has a huge effect on their ability to engage unless they actively work to change those misconceptions.

"You know, I mean, I grew up in a very racist household, you know. Like, and homophobic, very much like if you weren't southern Baptist you were going to hell. You know so everybody who wasn't southern Baptist was pretty much suspect." (**Int.11- Tr.10- 46-49)**

Mistrust and inconsistent behavior. Participants repeatedly alluded that inconsistent behavior leads to mistrust. As earlier quotes indicate, trust begins with respect, and practicing the values of respect for people. One participant describes below the damaging effect of inconsistent behavior and mistrust in practice.

"You can say a lot, you know. You can say a whole lot. I can say all night long I love red-headed people with freckles, but when it comes down to having one live in my house or marrying my child and all of that, then I'm like, I've heard, well, okay red-haired people with freckles, we might need some extra security for them. Because I don't think they're all that trustworthy, but we're not actually saying that. We're just coming up with different things that were never needed before. You know, because a red-haired person with freckles was going to join and have power, okay. When you walk in into a place and the only person of color there is mopping the floors and cleaning the toilets and you claim to me you cannot find another person of color to do another job. Just not there, can't find them, nobody qualified in this entire city of Richmond, but this old man, that he, you found him, you found him to mop your floors and clean your toilets. Volunteers you can find people of color, but for paid position, you can't find them, then you're lying to me. You're not living what you're preaching." (**Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 342-353)**

Time. Time can be both an asset and a barrier according to participants. Too little time stands in the way of authentic relationship care. One interviewee discusses an initiative below regarding the use of time, and how it stood as an obstacle to progress.

"And help them identify commonalities, get them working on the project. But because we were working in the context of the city and the county, we didn't have the resources at the time to do that." (**Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 194-196)**

The Critical Structure of Forging Alliances: Applying the Integrative Roots

The remaining discovered categories represent the mechanism through which the preceding core process themes utilize in building lasting alliances in the difference context. The critical structure provides the practical framework to exercise knowledge building, quality

communication, and relationship care. The final four themes exemplify the instrument through which the integrative roots enact connection among participants. Coming together, common ground, common cause, and moving forward form a platform for sustained, prolonged, and lasting alliances.

Theme Four: Coming Together

Coming together encompasses specific actions that build capacity for people to come together to address change within community.

> "It was all this is this is fun. We had coffee and donuts at the beginning. We had a free picnic in the afternoon after it was over. You could ride in the trash truck and it was face-to-face. And you want to see that piece of crap go away its really fun to watch that trash truck crush up a sofa. And so it was fun and it was, it was a community picnic." (**Int.8-Tr.7- Lines 296-301)**

The quote above captures nearly every aspect of coming together. Preparation, co-creating structure, multiple meeting opportunities, and breaking bread make up the essential elements of coming together. Participants emphasized the need to thoroughly prepare for actions or gatherings to assure success through outreach and create the environment by setting the stage. This first structured element of coming together, community practitioners in partnership with community leaders also co-create a structure for learning, communication, and how to treat one another based on values of respect and dignity. A myriad of meeting opportunities are offered designed to increase participation from diverse constituencies from within the community. Practitioners and community leaders also intentionally plan gatherings solely focused on sharing and relationship building. One organizer with years of experience bridging differences outlines this in his response to coming together to build alliances.

> "Well if there was a process, the first thing to do is to identify why you're assembling. The second thing is to gather information about why you are assembling. The third thing would be to ask who needs to be at the table. And along with identifying knowing who should be at the table, if you have an issue in the community, everybody that's being affected by that issue should be represented." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 372-376)**

Preparation. Practitioners creatively engage during preparation and apply lessons learned from knowledge building. Outreach and setting the stage arose from participant responses dominant necessities within this essential element of coming together.

Outreach. A vital stage of preparation in coming together surrounds the need to engage in effective outreach. Participants expressed the many ways this is done from using existing social networks, to various forms of communication technologies, to identification of informal and formal community leadership, and making sure that there are diverse voices at the table.

> "And that means that you have multiple methods to deliver the information. You know, some people like to prepare for a meeting with information first. Some people like to know what socially is going to happen in order for them to come to the meeting, or the learning opportunity. Um, and so, it's important, I think it's important to have things written, but I personally, the way that I teach, I rely heavily on verbally doing it, with the understanding that it might take me four efforts, four tries to get that person to understand what I'm saying." **(Int.12- Tr.11- Lines 299-305)**

In this way, difference is sought after. Actions associated with outreach as an aspect of preparation mentioned by participants encompass door knocking, passing out fliers, and having one on one meetings with key people.

Setting the stage: Creating the environment. Within this essential element, practitioners discussed striving to create a free, open, and comfortable space for people to gather. Every intricate detail intentionally planned and directed toward making people feel welcome, honored, and valued. The idea of making people feel welcome is simple, but it is often difficult to execute. One experienced participant points this out.

> "Let's see, I know opening up the space, you know for people to come in, but I don't even know if I understand fully how to create that space where everybody feels comfortable."
>
> **(Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 441-443)**

According to various participants the initiative has to be inclusive and work to pull everyone into the process. One of the most experienced participants discusses this in great detail.

> "And in terms of building alliances across, across these differences, this is, again, very basic to me. It almost sounds like to me, it doesn't really matter what the differences are, as long as you value everyone at the table. And everyone's a part of the process."
>
> **(Int.15-Tr.14- Lines 391-395)**

Another fundamental aspect of setting the stage and creating the environment have to do with intentionally creating the effect that the practitioner wants to have. This includes remaining positive, creating a positive and welcoming mood. One participant discussed having food at meetings to make people feel welcome.

> "Because I mean, we had food, but that's not really you know, [redacted] made a joke about, I come for you know, good food has a good meeting, crappy food has a crappy meeting." **(Int.12- Tr.11- 355-357)**

Co-Creating structure. On one hand there is how people treat each other, and on the other is how practitioners co-create the structure of the work in partnership with participants. One participant described the process of co-creating a structure for change making across difference.

> "But you, if you participate in a group, and you're structured like that you know, you've got a leader and somebody assisting him. And then you break it down, if you know you're topic, you break it down this has to be done at this specific timeline, this has to be done. This is the time. And you break it up so everybody will be doing something different, but still, all of these little groups got to come together. If you're trying, all of them come together, because you, I'm assuming you're working for one common goal.
>
> So even if you've got these subgroups, you've still got to come together to discuss the whole. And make sure that each person is doing his part because you don't want Group A doing more than Group B and then Group C is saying I've got too much to do." **(Int.9- Tr.8- 239-251)**

One experienced organizer discussed using community needs as a guide to building a structure, and how she implemented it.

> "And so we had, we did an analysis of what each group found important. So we did a series of focus groups with kids, with youth. We did focus groups with business people. We did focus groups with the African American community. We did focus groups with teens. We did focus groups with everybody. And we came up with a set of issues um, that were um, important to people. Um, and they happened to center around education. It came out that it just happened to center around education." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 344-350)**

One participant discussed how beneficial having a conversation and building knowledge around culture, various work styles, and needs contributed to the process of coming together before building a structure for the work to be done.

> "We have long discussions about work style preferences of different cultures before we start working together." **(Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 417-418)**

Varied meeting opportunities. Allowing for varied meeting opportunities builds on the idea of meeting people where they are. The key lesson gleaned from this essential element of coming together centers on applying knowledge from key leaders and informants. One community leader with years of experience in organizing emphasized the value of meeting in people's homes to ease tension in crossing boundaries of difference, and the effect it had on relationships within the group.

> "And get really get to understand the other side. And be a little bit more um, I don't know, it just opens up your eyes a bit. I think that the times when we've had house meetings like those have been where it's by I don't know just seeing each other in a different, in a different level. Um, because we are going into our own personal spaces. We're kind of like breaking those boundaries down. It's not like somebody else is is creating the space for us. We're inviting each other into our space. And I think that's what has to happen honestly in order for our work to be um, truly effective. We've got to be willing to have people in our, in our space, rather than just this me, you...Divide. It's awesome that we have places at the [redacted] and the churches and so forth, and they're necessary. Those are great safe spaces to be, you know, as far as at the beginning. But I think we're in the deeper work, where it's like, I can't be afraid to go into a person's house." **(Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 32-44)**

Breaking Bread. Breaking bread centers on those moments when gathering focuses solely on relationship building. A community leader expressed the need for people to come together in community centered on building relationship as integral to the process.

> "You know so people be friendly about each other. You know, um, I don't know. There should be a time when it's not work time. And time for people to get to know each other." **(Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 371-373)**

One participant discussed incorporating relationship building activities relevant to the culture of the group.

> "So at our [redacted] we kind of do that somewhat better in some areas than other areas. But um, areas of working together, having fun together, and eating together are really where you get to know people and where different cultures have very strong sense.....of different directions. I mean, we try to have international friendly food on a regular basis. And we don't do quite so well in the fun category, but I mean, definitely try to include a lot of fun. And we, you know, when you're an international community, you play soccer." **(Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 413-420)**

Facilitative barriers to coming together. The structure of coming together also contains various barriers related to coming together. Each of the subsequent barriers emerged within coming together and further aid the practitioner in drawing participants together to forge alliances across difference. Inconsistency, cultural misinformation and assumptions, traditional hierarchies, and foreign language all represent barriers within the applied structure of coming together.

Inconsistency: Leadership, structure, and behavior. As in certain barriers associated with other categories, inconsistency in leadership, organizational structure, and/or behavior can create problems at an essential time when trust remains crucial.

> "And a lot of them, you know, they write the manual, but they don't go by it." (**Int.4-Tr.4- Lines 126-127)**

The above quote gets at two main issues. Not only do rules of the road in terms of structure need to be co-created with practitioners, leadership, and community members, but when they are agreed upon, they must be followed. This inconsistency keeps people from coming together, and if it is that unwilling tension that practitioners alongside community leadership work to change within coming together.

Cultural misinformation and assumptions. A participant discusses at length how behavior based on cultural misinformation and assumptions kept boundaries from being crossed and engagement from happening with the faith community in a certain neighborhood.

> "We just made the assumption that they would want to and have the time to get really involved in the community and that we could help facilitate that discussion as a neutral. We thought we were a neutral organization, because we aren't a church so it's not like we're competing members or anything like that. But um, I think I mean, internally there was some, there was some complications as well where it wasn't facilitated as well as it could have been. But I would say that culturally there was a big breakdown, not breakdown, but culturally I guess, culturally there was a big breakdown too. Because, we were, the model we were kind of using was a low leadership distance model let's get together and people will volunteer their ideas and their time and initiative because that's what you do in a low leadership distance context." (**Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 258- 272)**

She continues.

> "But when they put it together that we wanted to find out what they wanted to do and support it, they were like oh this, you know, I can't fit this into my schedule. This is a waste of time. There's not already something put together that's that I think is important. Does that make sense? So, so yeah, so I mean obviously they wouldn't find a reason to come after you know a couple meetings of realizing, we're looking to support them and they were not looking to be supported with anything. They're you know, part of it I mean, you know I'm sure their schedules were already full anyways, and it's not like they don't care about the neighborhood." (**Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 279-288)**

There were also real cultural issues that created barriers related to who facilitated the conversation.

> "Just that, yeah the other piece that didn't work out with that too was that we found out they weren't really thrilled about us being facilitators because we weren't clergy. And like that just um, just kind of illustrated what I was saying as well. If you're, if you're not, there's a big divide between whether you're clergy or whether you're not and you know, much higher expectations, much higher respect put on the clergy." (**Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 322-326)**

These fundamental truths regarding working with the faith community could have signaled practitioners, leaders, and community members to change strategies in attempt to engage the faith leadership. Since this was not done, a potential alliance remained lost.

Traditional hierarchal Leadership Structure. Traditional hierarchies can also impede coming together. The quote below exemplifies how community members often get so used to a hierarchal structure.

"I think good and bad. I think that's something that is a goal, but it, it's successful in execution. And because people are used to being led, people are used to a hierarchical organization structure." (**Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 173-175)**

Foreign Language. One of the barriers to coming together also addresses language. One practitioner discusses below the use of foreign language in community work when working alongside academics.

"They want you to go through it, tear it apart, and talk about it. And they do it in a language that is completely foreign to everybody." (**Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 365-366)**

A co-created, simple, common language links people together within the structure of coming together.

Theme Five: Common Ground- Creating Connection to Build Capacity

Common ground deals with the process of connecting community members to one another equally in their experience, similarities, and commonalities. Community members discussed ways to connect community members through varied means. This applied element centers on bridging differences to build common purpose and common goals. Each category covers means through which facilitation guides community members from asking critical questions to common purpose.

"Because we all live in this community together. So we need to be doing things together." **(Int.2- Tr.2- Line 618)**

Bridging the gap. Bridging the gap intends to create lasting community connections across difference in community. One participant relates it to communication and emotional connection.

"Um, so I keep going back to the verbal and tangible thing and also the emotional connections. You have to have it to be an issue." **(Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 604-605)**

It takes commitment and deep focus. One participant describes how once it becomes a learned skill, it almost become automatic, and it takes people off guard particularly those with which the practitioner shares a common cultural background.

"I think probably one of the things that really is a challenge because working cross culturally is so much work, is that sometimes it is actually easier to put my focus on bridging the gap with the with people of the opposite culture and then leaving you know those that I have more in common with, you know what I mean, like assuming that they'll get over it if I do something that they're not expecting." **(Int.10- Tr.9- 339-344)**

Bridging the gap allows the process of building connections to take on a tangible structure to ensure its enactment. It creates a way for participants to see their similarities, their commonalities, and how difference plays into those.

"I think one of the things we know about difference is that if we aren't able to help people see their common ground, their commonality, the differences between them will blow up any efforts or any work." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 26-28)**

". . .so how do we address the common ground issues? Both individually with people and in group settings, creating ways that people can see their commonalities." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 30-31)**

Practitioners work to find creative, practical, sustainable ways for people to connect to actualize commonalities steadily over time setting not only a pattern of thinking, but working towards a goal of establishing patterns of behavior.

> "And so people aren't, if people aren't continuously reminded of their commonalities, the differences will take over because it's what they're comfortable with." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 245-246)**

Constant reminders of common similarities open possibilities for new patterns of behavior to take hold.

Asking common connecting questions. Asking the question begins to engage community participants in exploring how they may work together across difference. How can the people within the community/initiative relate to one another across difference? This question is not hypothetical. It can be explored with intention as a tool to begin a series of visioning dialogues, as well as bring new people to the process. One participant summed it up in framing one simple question to guide conversation and critical thinking.

> "What's going to relate to them from the motivation that, you know it'll make them more comfortable and honored: their culture and who they are is if they find it easier to relate to me." **(Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 398-400)**

In asking this question, others like it, and exploring them alongside the community, practitioners and community leadership keep an open mind and affirm participant's experiences.

> "And I think it's really important actually in being successful to look for what's the same like way more than what's different, but also to keep it in mind like not to negate other people's experience because of your own." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 22-25)**

Exploring these common connections in no way negates already existing differences. Existing differences are real, and can manifest in divisive ways. As stated below, practitioners in asking common questions explore those similarities that transcend existing differences.

"I mean really I think like a big part of successfully working with people is about looking at what is the same. And I think there are a lot of experiences that transcend socioeconomic background and race and gender and sexual orientation and all of that." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 15-17)**

Common space. Working proactively to create a common space within the community encourages bonding, attachment, and solidarity. It ensures safety and strengthens community bonds to inspire connections.

"I mean, but I feel that you know, having a common space where people feel safe to speak and that they feel that their voice will be heard and they won't be dismissed or talked over." **(Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 447-449)**

She goes on to discuss how the common space leads to the development of common goals built on connection, and emboldens participants to buy in and lead the process of community change from within.

"Well, I mean I, I would think that having, having space to talk about common goals or common concerns in an agenda, rather than just all the agenda being four steps from someone else." **(Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 455-45)**

Common anchors. Common anchors of connection provide starting points for practitioners to create connections among participants. These anchors represent common domains that often resonate with community members. Common issues, common humanity, shared experience, mutual interest, and community/neighborhood based connections offer practitioners a broad guide in their attempts to create connections across difference.

Common Issue. Communities often engage around certain specific issues that arise

within the community. One participant discusses how the common issue of crime and drug dealing acted as a mechanism to build both capacity and solidarity within the community.

> "The only one that I could find that was very successful was running out the drug dealers. They had set up shop on the lawn of the church. And this little fella would stay out there every day so we organized, we organized a group of people together and we marched on them. Down in front of the church and we told them that they had to go. And these young guys says, well, we were here first. But then yeah, but you got to go. And we were able to clean it out with the help of, uh, you know the police." **(Int.3-Tr.3- Lines 120-127)**

Common issues can transcend difference in many ways. It depends on how pressing and lasting the issue, but it can be a useful tool in creating connections.

Common Humanity. Connecting across difference with an understanding of shared humanness. Relating back to relationship care and establishing a people centered focus, common humanity appeals to participants' universally human experiences. One African American female organizer discussed the universally human experience and how it can act to connect community members.

> "Even when it comes to race. You know, the different races. If you can get them to see that hey, we we're different outside, but we're all the same inside. All that blood is red, you know. All of their organs are the same. All of us got the heart." **(Int.9- Tr.8- Lines 58-62)**.

Shared experience. People often instinctively build connections to others through shared experience. Shared experience refers to finding common experiences that work to link community members together in relationship. In this subcategory, respondents emphasized the

need to build on these shared experiences across difference to create community connections. One participant in particular discussed her experience organizing for increased breast cancer funding as a survivor.

> "And you know, its breast cancer. That's why I said, sickness doesn't see age, race, color, or anything. So, if you white, you got breast cancer, Latina got breast cancer, Chinese got breast cancer, African American got breast cancer, we all have that common bond there because we have been through this this thing. And we can relate to each other on that level." **(Int.9- Tr.8- Lines 133-138)**

She elaborates further to discuss the bonds that can be created through the struggles of shared experience, and how community can strengthen resolve.

> "Because what we have gone through and you can share, you'd be surprised how close you get to people. You don't see the color, you just see the struggle they have had with the same sickness that you've had. And you say hey, this is what I went through. This is what we did. And unless that you know that you're not alone in this, and the most important thing, the most important thing, is that those sicknesses, I don't care whether it's cancer or Alzheimer's or any kind of uh devastating disease. It does not care about color. It does not care about race. It does not care about age. It doesn't, it affects all of us the same way." **(Int.9- Tr.8- Lines 143-151)**

Experiences can inspire community members to thinking critically about their own lives, and can be a tool to create empathy.

> "And I think that experiences that are, the details are very different, I think are very relatable no matter what your background is if you come to it open-minded and

empathetically and you can relate it back to like your own life and experience to be able to understand where people are coming from." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 19-22)**

Shared experience may not be limited to already known shared experience. Practitioners also work to create shared experiences in community through intentional relationship building. Creating opportunities for shared experiences such as community block parties, events, and community actions. These open possibilities for new shared experiences to emerge. One participant talked about how the simple act of picking up trash relates to shared experience.

"And like, now you're together picking up trash on the street, like probably at the end of the day, you'll at least have one thing about the other person that you feel more positively about, just like, you shared this experience together. You both obviously care about this thing, like, there can't be everything, everything can't be different, you know." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 751-754)**

Shared experience is twofold. It involves dual processes of both discovering shared experiences and intentionally linking those, and it encompasses creating shared experience within community initiatives.

Mutual interest. Mutual interest links people together in community, and establishes shared bonds even when people have certain differences.

"So it's creating that that mutual interest. The mutual interest." **(Int.9- Tr.8- Line 140)**

Some of these linkages through shared interests can drastically reshape the direction of a specific community initiative. A community leader discusses below how her community's housing team developed through mutual interest.

"For me that's what you look at, you know. It was just, it's a natural development. Because it helps to all have the same interests. Housing is a bunch of old chicks. We see

it coming, we're going to need it soon. Some of us already do and the rest of us just see it coming and we like being proactive. Yeah, we're going to have somebody fix up my house soon." **(Int.6- Tr.6- Lines 105-108)**

One leader who has been working in the same community for nearly thirty years discusses how horseshoes helped to cross boundaries of race and class in the neighborhood park.

"You're talking about differences, I guess that race is the most prominent difference, but if you want to look at how I work with race, look at the horseshoe pits. You know. What's the issue? The issue is playing horseshoes. Throwing the horseshoe, just playing horseshoes. There are three people who built those things. Two whites and one black if you want to keep score. . ." **(Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 45-50)**

He goes on to talk about how difference gets bridged through a simple community building act of throwing a horseshoe.

"It was success, yeah. But the local Wednesday night thing is still going on. But the real whole thing was publicity. And that just said okay here it is. They put pictures in the paper showing all the people playing and they gave a description of where it was. And we had about 20 people show up, which is a lot in a horseshoe group. And so and then over the years we've had, we had a black lawyer who provides food. And uh, he can afford it and he does. But he came down to play horseshoes because he used to play horseshoes with his dad 25 years ago and he missed it. So, he came down here. And he was back there now. He comes out almost every Wednesday night. . . A shared interest. Yeah."

(Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 62-78)

Shared interest can also act as a tool for facilitation. One practitioner discussed using mutual interest as a tool for facilitation across difference.

"And then you've got to bring them back in around the common ground. You've got to take all of that and help them feel the common interest that they have." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 500-502)**

Community/neighborhood based. The final common anchor is a powerful tool for creating common ground. People come together over their concern for the community. Many community members, particularly leaders can come together around their love for the community.

"It was all about cleaning up the neighborhood and helping the people." **(Int.8- Tr.7- Line 305)**

One participant talked about the power building unity in the presence of differences to improve the community and the neighborhood as a whole. Coming together to build common ground can prove powerful when establishing bonds based on community ties.

"And we don't look at race. We don't, it's not a race thing. It's about keeping our community clean and safe. So if you've got the same goal, that goal should deter any differences that you may have as far as the race is concerned. Because all of us are homeowners, basically. We've got some renters in there too. But all of us are homeowners, we want our yards clean, you know, we participate in the neighborhood thing." **(Int.9- Tr.8- Lines 473-481)**

Common purpose/goal. Community leaders discussed extensively how common purpose can build strong lasting bonds in community even in the presence of ubiquitous difference.

"With people different from me? Wow! With people different from me? Every one actually. Hoping the one we're doing now will be successful, but it's still you know to be

seen. I think I don't know if it's really community organizing, but I guess it is. When we when we started up the NRC, I was definitely among people that were completely different from me. In almost every kind of way, but we had a purpose, we had a common purpose and we worked together and it was very successful because the NRC was very successful. So I guess that's what, that's what brought us together, the common purpose and in this case, the, it was more, it was easier because it was such a small group. So we were kind of forced to work together because we were such a small group." **(Int.6- Tr.6- Lines 74-82)**

Often success depended on diverse people working together to make the common purpose happen, but it took an initial idea that had buy in from all groups.

"I wouldn't think they were following me. I think they were working with me. It was a common goal. Basically, the idea sold themselves. I didn't create the idea; I just took it on myself to see that it happened." **(Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 562-564)**

This same respondent emphasized the need to be focused on the solution, and envision real possibility to create change as a part of working towards a common purpose.

"I'm not interested in having you come on board and be disruptive. So you either agree when we start; you're going to be part of the solution or I'm going to classify you as part of the problem and have nothing more to do with you." **(Int.8-Tr.7- Lines 625-627)**

Many participants discussed the need for clear, understandable, and actionable goals that everyone involved in the community initiative can get behind.

"And it was different, you know races or whatever, but the commonality that we had was that we all wanted the same goals and objectives. And we were trying to reach the young people because that's our future." **(Int.9- Tr.10- Lines 54-56)**

One practitioner with more than thirty years of experience living and working in marginalized communities emphasized common goals must be established in all community initiatives if they are to be successful.

> "So we, the common language piece, what I learned is that in every, in every environment, there is a way to create a set of common goals that people, a common vision that people can have different ways to contribute to. And they don't even have to like each other, but if you get people working together towards a common goal, that ultimately there's a respect." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 395-398)**

He also underscored the broad goal or mission for the initiative needs to be inclusive, understandable, and for the collective good. Not only can this create respect for one another across difference, but it can create interest and buy in.

> ". . .the goal has to be clear and the goal should be beneficial to all. **(Int.15- Tr.14- Line 59)**

He goes into more detail to talk about how to create a team around making the goal beneficial and interesting to everyone in the community not just one group or person.

> "Otherwise, it's not our mission or it's not our goal, it's my goal. So, and that's where how you help build ownership for the project. And the more ownership that the group can have of the project, the more successful the group is going to be in attaining that mission or meeting that mission or obtaining that goal." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 82-87)**

Various groups/projects. Offering diverse ways for community members to be involved, once a broad common goal/mission gets established allows differences to be used to strengthen the broader initiative. Aided by community leadership, diverse community members

practice leadership by exercising their gifts and talents. This builds community knowledge and capacity. One participant discussed his experience facilitating this process.

> "So um, some of the things that we did um, was we had um, individuals from the community sit on every committee—finance committee, budgeting, program planning and program development—so that they would have firsthand um experience in doing these things." **(Int.15- Tr.14- Lines 128-130)**

Focusing on various projects allows boundaries to be crossed through a holistic approach.

> "And how do we do that, despite our differences in approach? It's not focusing on one aspect." **(Int.11- Tr.10- Line 277)**

Facilitative barriers to common ground. In this essential element, participants discuss their own experiences related to facilitating common ground. The categories below highlight ways in which building common ground through establishing connections can be impeded in the practice process. Fragmentation and homogenization, problem focus, individual vs. collective interest, intragroup resentment and confusion, and resources and time all represent ways in which barriers manifest within common ground.

Fragmentation and homogenization. According to participants, some people in community instinctively draw close to people of similar beliefs, identities, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. This quote, although used in a relatively early portion of this chapter holds true when acknowledging how groups form to address community issues.

> "Because when you look at the groups. It's that same thing again. It's that same old clique again. It's the old-timers, with the economic development, you know, which is the people that are interested in civic associations and things like that. And you've got your little parks and recs and whatever and education so those are more the newcomers. Uh, ultra-

> liberal white people, you know, all together you know. The granola eaters.....all together....So yeah, you know." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 97-103)**

If community leaders begin saying statements similar to the series of statements above, practitioners can begin utilizing the common anchors.

Problem Focus. Below a community leader discusses his intolerance for being disruptive and continually focusing on problems rather than coming together around solutions, which could also indicate a bit of impatience for processing community problems.

> "I'm not interested in having you come on board and be disruptive. So you either agree when we start; you're going to be part of the solution or I'm going to classify you as part of the problem and have nothing more to do with you." **(Int.8-Tr.7- Lines 625-627)**

This quote highlights the sensitive nature of how community issues are approached, and how sensitive facilitating conflict across difference can be as well.

Individual interest vs. collective interest. When individual interest fails to align with collective interest, connections toward common ground can become blocked. The quote below reinforces what happens when community members get directed toward jobs they are not interested in.

> "It was numbers. They were, they had to do numbers and me, I'm I just, I just couldn't see it. I don't, I don't think worked out. And I know it's not working out because I haven't heard from him this week. You know, I haven't, I haven't. I don't know what he's doing. He was advising us to work with the Obama campaign, the day November 6th. And I told him I was committed to working the polls, but he was saying that, "Well, we've got to, you'll be more effective if you were to, you now, work with Obama, getting the people to the polls." I said, "But you must remember, once those people get to the polls, they've got

to have somebody to check them in," you know. You don't want to have all of those people standing up there and the last thing they'll remember, I'll go to the polls and it was crowded as I don't know what, you know. I told him both of it is important. You know, one is no more important than the other. You going to get the people there, but there have got to be some people there. When I went to take the class, they needed like 600 people to be election officers. Um hmm. They needed 600 and she said that please help us, you know. Please help us because I kind of was on the fence, you know. But anyway, I feel personally that it didn't work out. It didn't work out and like I said, I feel that it was just that his goals and achieving it was different than what I perceived it to be. That's the only thing I could think of." **(Int.9- Tr.8- Lines 369-389)**

Intragroup resentment or confusion. A downside of a community leader working to cross boundaries may lead to intragroup resentment or confusion. Often this might be a result of a certain group feeling as if they are not heard or respected as the quote below indicates.

"But I wouldn't say that that is one of big challenges is sometimes you're so focused on bridging that gaps that you know, for those of your own culture, who aren't up to speed are thinking like what the heck are you doing, in this, you know, are annoyed or confused and you know frustrated because following is so hard and really outside of what they're expecting. Because you're white and you're supposed to be somebody that they can relate to. So I've been on both ends of the spectrum on that." **(Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 375-380)**

Resources and time. The amount of resources and time can both stand as an obstacle to building common ground. The quote below highlights how funders often overlook this vital aspect of community organizing, often to the community's detriment.

"And help them identify commonalities, get them working on the project. But because we were working in the context of the city and the county, we didn't have the resources at the time to do that." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 194-196)**

Theme Six: Common Cause- Self Interest, Giving Back, and the Greater Purpose

Once a structure for coming together and common ground are cultivated, the common cause leads the community in pursuing and constantly reevaluating goals as the initiative flourishes through the intentional bridging of differences. Common cause both integrates and builds on the final subcategory of cultivating common ground, common purpose/goal setting. One participant simplified crossing boundaries of difference by stating that working collaboratively for a greater purpose, builds alliances and overcomes difference.

"But I think that a great way for differences to be overcome is to be working side by side with someone for a greater purpose you both believe in." **(Int.13- Tr.12- Lines 718-719)**

Stoking Motivation: Fired up and dreamy eyed. Participants also covered the specific aspects of community life that motivate them to do the work. They talked about the gifts and talents they had, and those they hope to cultivate. Practitioners can use these self-disclosures as indications of how to use their self-interest for the collective good. One participant discussed how much she enjoys the work of a diverse choir in which she sings.

"And it's wonderful the things that we do. We go out and sing for the, um, nursing homes. We go out and sing for, um, the um, clubs and anybody that wants us to come out and sing. But it's geared mostly to the people that don't have people to come and see them on a regular and we come in and spread our joy with song and we do skits. You know, make them laugh." **(Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 110-114)**

True success at this stage involves stoking motivations and passion to spur a sense of ownership among the group for achieving the community's goals.

> "I think that it's important, if you're going to try to change something, you have to get the people that you're working with to acknowledge and get fired up over the problem. And get excited and dreamy-eyed over the solution, and I think the way you do that is you have to be fired up and dreamy-eyed. If you're not, it's not going to happen." **(Int.12-Tr.11- Lines 589-595)**

Ownership. One participant underscores what potentials can be actualized when practitioners are able to tap into community members' motivations to pursue the greater good. It leads to ownership.

> "And so when it comes to organizing I think that one was the successful one. Uh, just in terms of organizing, it's the most successful one just now in this short time period. Because it involves more community members, they don't come for handouts for anything. That's not how, you know, they own the project, the organizing project. They actually own it. Everything that's done, it's owned." **(Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 261-265)**

Facilitative barriers to common cause. Cultivating motivations can prove challenging in practice. Participants discussed few barriers within this category indicating that stoking motivations for leadership at this point may be a process of supporting. Community members and leaders at this stage may prove to be the ones most committed to the collective end goal or set of goals.

Numbers. Participants reported that a byproduct of success may be the sheer numbers that become involved in a successful initiative.

"Definitely presents challenges regularly, but there's a, you run into so many more people than, I run into so many more people than I expected or thought would be out there who cared, basically." **(Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 18-20)**

Resources. If the resources are difficult to garner once goals are set and initial progress made, participants report that community members may revert back to previous stages of disempowerment often encountered in marginalized communities. One community leader talks about how early success without resources to pull the community through can be challenging.

"I mean, I'm not saying that that's not there either, but it seems like maybe in the more successful groups, people are really struggling to find the resources and the time in order to accomplish the work, you know." **(Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 290-292)**

Practitioners discussed the need to be honest and prepare community leaders in how long and how taxing finding resources to accomplish goals might be, so that initial passion is not lost.

Sustaining Motivation. According to participants, sustaining motivation takes huge effort on the part of the community practitioner and community leadership. The passion also can be spurred by the enthusiasm of the practitioner. Creative problem solving can be utilized through the long and arduous process, but practitioners report that community workers have to practice unparalleled determination.

"And we have to do the work as ours. We have to do that work. And you have to be relentless." **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 505-506)**

Theme Seven: Moving Forward

Moving forward means that community practitioners in partnership with community leaders practice healthy boundaries conducive to sustainable relationships, and implement lessons learned from previous integral core process themes and applied structured categories.

Numerous sub-categories work together to create possibilities to move forward towards collective purpose across difference. Intensive up front work of all previous categories, acting upon accurate knowledge pertaining to both the "other" and the intended goal, making sure that the attempted change is realistic, letting go of previously held resentments and reservations, making amends, disagreeing with respect, remaining action oriented, collectively facing adversity, following a clear direction, utilizing diverse skills, practicing staying power, and taking note of facilitative barriers all make up the actualized potentials within moving forward.

Intensive up front work. Practitioners responded candidly to what it takes to move forward and cultivate solidarity in the presence of difference. One participant talked about what she might have done differently in a community where intensive up front work did not happen and the process of forging alliances impeded.

> "So ideally in the best of all worlds, we would have been able to work. Just really do intensive one-on-one work with those two communities, create a process to bring them together." (**Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 191- 192)**

She goes on to elaborate on what could have been done.

> "Going forward, we have to um, create a way to heal that difference, heal that rage so that something great can happen in the, that communities around [redacted]."
>
> **(Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 212-213)**

Accurate knowledge. Accurate knowledge of personal and community history particularly struck participants. Also the need to have accurate knowledge of each other and each other's struggles. One participant discussed how accurate knowledge enables moving forward.

> "You know what I'm saying? But I think we need to move forward and I think you know Fulton history is good to know so it won't be repeated. (**Int.1- Tr.1- Lines 50-51)**

Realistic change. This same participant discussed how in order to move forward community workers, leaders, and members need to know what changes are possible. According to him, many problems may not be solved, and when goal setting, realistic change can help guide what might be possible.

> "There's problems that we can't solve, that we need to move on from." (**Int.1- Tr.1- Line 201)**

Having a clear sense of that actually creates more potential, because practitioners can do the community harm by tackling issues that might disempower, separate, and block connections rather than build up, connect, and empower.

Letting go. One experienced organizer discussed the importance of letting go of long held resentments.

> "But, [sigh] it all boils back again to self. And see we've come a long way, uh.....since slavery and all of this stuff" (**Int.9- Tr.8- Lines 106-107)**

Another participant reinforced this notion.

> "It's kind of hard to tell somebody that's been hurt to their heart, let it go. You know what I'm saying? But that's all we can do to move forward and make sure it doesn't happen again." (**Int.1- Tr.1- Lines 163-165)**

Often letting go ends up being the result of enacting other aspects of moving forward, such as making amends, intensive up front work, or disagreeing with respect.

Making amends. One participant discussed the process of making amends as turning the other cheek. In order for people of various backgrounds to stand together, community members, practitioners, and leaders recommended looking at their part in perpetuating division.

> "So I don't treat her in the manner in which she treats me. Being the Christian and it's always in a church setting...So I'm already in God's house and I'm not going to be violent whether in there or out, but especially in. So I try to turn the other cheek, and that's really not easy, but like I said, in dealing with other people...You have to know when to do that, not be, not to be quick to get offended. I deal with prejudice very well. . . (**Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 31-39)**

Disagree with respect. Participants reported that as community members move forward in a maintained process of connection, trust, and solidarity, conflict is inevitable. They reiterated, moving forward does not constitute and environment free of conflict and disagreement. Participants emphasized sustaining a commitment to respectful discourse in the presence of conflict.

> "Okay, we can disagree. We can, we can. We can talk about this. And we all going to agree. I don't care how much we talk about it, but can we agree to disagree? But you know exactly what's happening and what's going on. Because it isn't going to be 100% every time. It's not, it's truly not." (**Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 427-430)**

She elaborates by directly relating agreeing with respect to crossing barriers.

> "We don't want to get stuck in a place, but we've got, everybody's got to agree. Of course, we want everybody to agree. But if by chance we don't, we have to agree to disagree. But with understanding of what you're disagreeing about. I'm saying cross barriers."
> **(Int.2- Tr.2- Lines 435-440)**

Action oriented: Act on what we learn. Being action oriented means focusing on how to make ideas that fall within the common goal/purpose reality. Participants had many thoughts related to this. Some responses focused on simplicity like the one below.

> "And if the answer is yes, then okay, when are you available? And that's the mechanics of doing it." (**Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 25-26)**

Others had more detailed ideas to characterize action oriented focus.

> "And I think that's the biggest thing I wish I had known too, is that it does take energy to take on a new thing. And the nature of our, of what we're doing, attracts a lot of new ideas from people. And I wish I had known starting out, what I know now about getting those right questions answered when people unveil new ideas to you so that you don't leave the table and nothing happens from that great idea. I wish we had a box full of ideas because I know there's a million people who have come out of woodwork over the years with great ideas. So I think you're learning that too, just that whole like, "What's the tangible result of this meeting?" Besides you telling me your great idea. Action, you know." (**Int.12- Tr.11- Lines 565-564)**

An action oriented focus accepts that achieving goals takes a large amount of individual and collective energy as well as exploring the question, "what's the tangible result of this meeting".

Collectively facing adversity. Throughout the study participants discussed collectively building power to face adversity. Community leaders discussed how much stronger communities are when they stand together, and professional organizers discussed times when they took part in effective community change. One participant concisely described how to build power through numbers.

> "The use of power as a community is in our numbers. That's how, I think that's how we should use our power in our numbers. That's how we'll be heard, that's how we'll get things done." (**Int.6- Tr.5- Lines 520-521)**

Moving forward means acknowledging the importance of collectively facing adversity and being willing to stand in solidarity across difference in common unity.

Clear direction. Related to common purpose/goal in common ground, clear direction keeps the initiative moving forward, and keeps people engaged. One participant discusses the frustration of not knowing what direction their group might be going.

> "I wish that I knew what course of direction they wanted to go. I mean, really on the big scope. You know what I'm saying? And, uh, I want to know what else I could do to contribute to help it get that way. Get there, you know. And um, I'd like to know where they're going. Exactly where, the whole goal. You know? Because I want to participate in you know, broadening the scope. You know what I'm saying?" (**Int.4- Tr.4- Lines 323-329)**

Utilizing diverse skills. Participants discussed how differences can be turned to barriers or strengths based on the effects specific behaviors within the community. Utilizing diverse skills allows these strengths to be consistently actualized over time. As an essential element of moving forward, practitioners pointed out that utilizing diverse skills opens opportunities for community members to demonstrate their practical utility in service to others.

> "And I feel like they're so many skill sets that we have that we can take out into the larger communities." (**Int.11- Tr.10- Lines 258-259)**

Staying Power. The final essential element of moving forward assures dedicated commitment to community capacity, solidarity, and sustained action toward the goals set by the

community members. One seasoned practitioner described staying power as readying the community for the organizer's exit.

> "So that you walk away in the community, the community stays strong, stays moving on, going forward, whatever happens." (**Int.14- Tr.13- Lines 260-261)**

Facilitative barriers to moving forward. Participants discussed these values and practical signals as blocks to moving forward. Moving too fast, unwillingness, unresolved pain, disparate direction, difference blindness, and exclusion when manifested block alliances from being built. These also keep the community from reaching their collective goals.

Moving too fast- Resentment and expectations. The quote below exemplifies the specific type of resentment that can happen when community members establish individual readiness to move forward before some others within the group.

> "Managing the differences? I think everybody just needs to move forward with whatever beef they have with each other, and just let it be, man. You can't go back in time. So we should be doing more talking about what we're going to do now instead of what happened before." (**Int.1- Tr.1- Lines 13-16)**

Although the above sentiment comes from a place of moving forward, it can escalate to marginalizing certain voices.

Unwillingness. Unwillingness indicates a reticence to trust the process, and acts as a huge obstacle to moving forward. Often demonstrated unwillingness, according to participants, links to either personal or community history. Addressing the underlying root can enable the practitioner to address the issue.

> "You know. And if we're going to live in the past, then we might as well be in the past when it was even worse than it is now." **(Int.1- Tr.1- Lines 182-183)**

Unresolved pain, bitterness, and prejudice. Unresolved pain, bitterness, and prejudice according to participants often manifests as an unwillingness to participate in the process or reticence to move forward. One community leader discussed frustration with dealing with unresolved prejudice, pain, and bitterness in the community.

> "Just for instance man like the clean-up mom had last weekend. It was at an old lady's house and she was from back in those days when all that stuff was going on around here. You know what I'm saying? People had the nerve to get mad because they were helping her. You know what I mean? Like why aren't you helping this person? That's just as prejudiced, as you know. She might have been prejudiced back in them days. You know what I'm saying? But we got to move on. It might have touched her heart that she seen black and white people out there working on her yard. You know what I'm saying? It might not have meant nothing to her. You know what I'm saying? But it made the neighborhood look better." (**Int.1- Tr.1- Lines 343-356)**

This leader proved that hearing unresolved pain, bitterness, and prejudice indirectly breaks down trust and community capacity.

Disparate direction. Crossing difference boundaries can often be such a daunting task that groups fail to establish clear and direct goals. According to participants these goals are one thing that bind the group together, and without them the group becomes disconnected. The following quote implies that community groups get together to cobble together an action.

> "Our group just kind of you know, uh, tries to get something together." (**Int.6-Tr.5- Line 122)**

Difference blindness. The quote below assumes that a desired aspect of moving forward should be not to look at differences at all in an effort to completely disregard them. This does not take into account the positive qualities that difference brings to the community.

> "Well, you know, I don't think in terms of differences. You know, I think in terms of you're Jason and Jason has a problem I need help working on. Are you interested or not? Again, I don't care whether you're black or blue or whatever." (**Int.8- Tr.7- Lines 32-34)**

Exclusion: Closed tables. Exclusion comes up within other categories, and runs counter to moving forward. The quote below exemplifies what can happen when traditionally marginalized leaders are excluded from vital community decisions, but it also demonstrates how bridges can be built, amends made, and trust forged when these exclusions are brought out in dialogue.

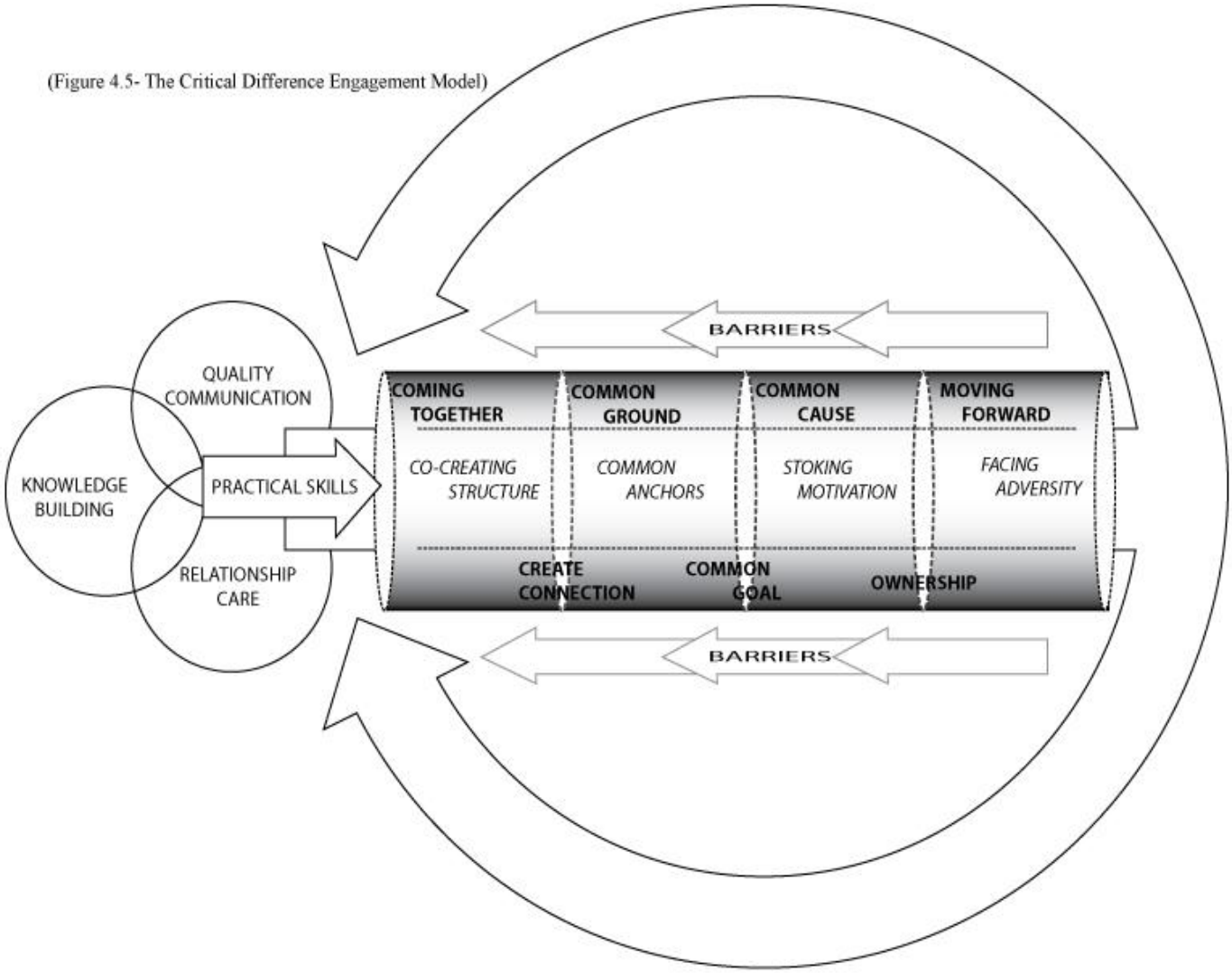
> "And so I was trying to avoid that at all costs [redacted] because he actually doesn't sit that quietly when that happens. So I told her you know I know I was doing that, and that was to my intention was to prevent you know, the ramifications of what might happen, but he felt excluded. And I just made the assumption that the other white people knew him could get over it. It isn't, it isn't.....respectful to them if they're not on board or understanding what kind of practical gestures I'm trying to make." (**Int.10- Tr.9- Lines 366-373)**

The Critical Difference Engagement Model of Community Practice

The theory presented above provides the foundation for the subsequent practice pictured in Figure 4.5. The practice model begins with the core process themes of knowledge building, relationship care, and quality communication. As the integrated roots of forging alliances, they combine throughout the critical stage based structural categories of coming together, common

cause, and moving forward. Throughout these critical stages, the dominant practical categories, such as co-creating the structure within coming together and common anchors within common ground are employed by practitioners and community leaders to move to the next critical stage. Other subcategories, such as creating connection, common goal, and ownership represent what has to happen at the intervals and intersections of these critical stage based categories for practice to move to the next stage. The barriers inherent within all of the categories also serve to challenge practitioners to remain vigilant, because if these barriers take hold, they can take community practice back to the previous stage.

(Figure 4.5- The Critical Difference Engagement Model)



CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Community practice envelopes a broad spectrum. According to Popple (1996), it encapsulates community development, social and community planning, community education, community organizing, and community action. Hardcastle, Powers, and Wencour (2011) emphasize applying practice skills to change behavioral patterns of communities, their interactions with organizations, institutions, and relationships with each other. Weil and Gamble (1995) underscore participation in the democratic process, empowerment based interventions, broadening the efficacy of human service systems, advocacy, and organizing for social justice in their definition of community practice. Lee (2001) relies on citizen participation as an integral part of community practice.

Given the need for broad based partnerships, the multiple difference intersections, dependence on both formal and informal community leadership, difference becomes an inescapable facet of work within communities. This final chapter begins with an overview of the project. The overview starts with a review of history, prevalent community practice models and approaches, and a brief discussion of difference practice. It continues with a synopsis of the study rationale and the research study design. The chapter then moves to a concise discussion of relevant findings along with results from a focus group of organizers speaking to transferability and generalizability of the critical difference practice model. Implications and recommendations follow in the areas of socially just practice, evidence based practice, policy, social work education, and research. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an examination of limitations and next steps along with guidance and justification for constructively moving the research forward through reasonable dissemination.

Reviewing Community Practice History: Approaches, Models, and Difference

Since the Settlement House movement of the early twentieth century, community practice has been an underlying force within the social work profession (Addams, 1910; Garvin, & Cox, 2001). Social work began as a response to the social problems of the industrial revolution and often colluded with various social movements of the time, such as the labor movement, women's rights, and child labor (Reisch, 2008). In the first decades of the twentieth century, charity workers also began to envision ways to bring their work under a singular professional distinction (Axinn, & Stern, 2005). The duality between clinical and community practice emerged as early as 1917 and grew with the pressures of professionalization which depended on positivist notions of science driving work with individuals and the influence of the emerging fields of psychology and medicine. As a result, a bifurcated divergence took effect within the field. As social work professional prominence grew and schools of social work began to emerge, the practice literature primarily focused on micro level interventions (Fisher & Stragge, 2001; Rothman, Erlich, & Tropman, 2001).

Reviewing community practice models, approaches, and practice theories. Although the preponderance of scholarly literature within social work centered on micro level, direct practice with clients, many macro level social work practitioners and scholars answered by producing literature relevant to macro level intervention (Gamble & Weil, 2010; Hardcastle, Powers & Wencour, 2010; Netting, Kettner, & McMurtry, 2008; Rothman, 1979; Weil, 1996). This literature along with articles and texts from various other disciplines, such as critical pedagogy, feminist scholarship, urban planning, and sociology influenced development of a myriad of conceptual models, frameworks, and community practice approaches (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2010; Freire, 1970; Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999; Hardina, 2002; Horton, 1998; Pyles, 2009;

Weil & Gamble, 1995; Weil, 1996). These frameworks along with various case studies served to guide macro practice within communities (Gamble & Weil, 2010).

Despite this counter cultivation within community practice literature, the vast majority practice models, approaches, and conceptual models remain based on tacit knowledge, expert knowledge, and practice wisdom, rather than methodologically driven empirical evidence (Payne, 2005). Only most lately have scholars and pracademics begun to address this issue. Brady (2012) recently began development of a formal practice theory centered on the critical stages of organizing by sampling organizers from the civil rights and union organizing traditions. Their responses were used to begin building the Dialectical Practice Theory of Empowerment to practically guide practitioners across the community practice spectrum. The Critical Difference Model adds to that trend by linking the ubiquitous factor of difference to data methodologically gathered and analyzed from the field.

Difference in community practice. Concepts, such as cultural competence, multiculturalism, intercultural practice, pluralism, and separatism are all derived from responses to difference (Johnson & Munch, 2009; Parekh, 2000). Pluralism refers to changing battles among various interest groups (Parekh, 2000). Separatist identity based movements as an extension rather than a rejection of pluralism use common identities and similarities as tools to build solidarity (Dobbie, & Richards-Schuster, 2008). The contentious concept of cultural competence reviewed in a previous chapter, implies effective intercultural practice, but its effects remain hotly contested within practice literature (Dean, 2001; Furlong & Wright, 2011).

Study Rationale Review

The general absence of community practice models associated with crossing boundaries of difference, the challenged nature of cultural competence within various helping professions,

and the overall lack of methodologically driven community practice models, drives the rationale for this study. Productive intercultural practice often eludes both social work and community practitioners. There exists a great need for pragmatic methodologically driven models and approaches to guide effective practice across boundaries of difference.

The process of building a community practice model from data derived in the field of practice integrally links practice wisdom with systematic inquiry. Utilizing grounded theory methodology developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), the model development served various purposes. In review, the following practical needs stood out as critical justification for undertaking the research project:

- Practical knowledge utility
- Development of evidence-based community practice tools
- Absence of practice models addressing difference
- Engaging community based participants, neighborhood residents, and community leaders in formulating practice tools
- Contribution to scholarly practice literature

Additionally, the overarching goal of the study was to develop practical theory, and provide a foundation for practitioners to apply this theoretical construct to various practice contexts.

Research Design and Methodology Synopsis

The research design orientation of model development or developmental research guided the line of inquiry (Rothman, & Thomas 1994). The goal of the research was to develop a formal practice model based on forging alliances across difference in community practice. A post-positivist grounded theory methodology was used to categorize the data and link patterns

associated throughout into a practical scheme of conceptual relationships that make up the components of the model (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998).

Research Questions

The primary research question examined the underlying basis for the study. How do community practitioners effectively cross boundaries of difference in community practice? Four research questions directed the overarching line of inquiry lead by the primary research question. They were (1) what elements to existing models and approaches provide in relations to boundaries of difference, (2) what are the key components of effective community practice across difference, (3) how can the issue of difference be addressed effectively during the engagement process, and (4) are adaptations needed in order for the model to be effective in various practice contexts, if so what?

Each of these research questions remain addressed by specific aspects within the study design. The first two questions were principally addressed by the extensive literature review within chapter two and confirmed through structured interview questions and prompts. The third and fourth questions were addressed through emergent themes within the sample resulting in the subsequent development of the Critical Difference Engagement Practice Model.

Sampling

The sampling frame was intentionally structured to gain multiple heterogeneous perspectives. Eighteen people were purposively sampled using maximum variation across difference. Specific boundaries of difference targeted consisted of age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, and sexual orientation. Specific intersections of various boundaries of difference within the sample were carefully considered (See Table 3 below also shown in chapter

3). Community level leaders were interviewed first, and the study moved to incorporate ideas of professional level community practitioners.

Table 3. Sampling Frame: Participant Characteristics

Expertise	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Economic Status	Sexual Orientation
Community	African Amer	34	Male	Low SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	60	Female	Low SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	78	Female	Low SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	63	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Community	White	74	Female	High SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	57	Female	Low SES	Heterosexual
Community	White	62	Male	Low SES	Gay
Community	White	76	Male	High SES	Heterosexual
Community	African Amer	63	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Comm/Prof	White	32	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Community	White	44	Female	Low SES	Heterosexual
Comm/Prof	White	33	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Professional	White	25	Female	Middle SES	Lesbian
Professional	African Amer	55	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Professional	African Amer	60	Male	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Professional	White	27	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual
Professional	White	26	Female	Low SES	Lesbian
Professional	White	63	Female	Middle SES	Heterosexual

Totals: 18

Expertise/Power

Professionals- 8
Community Leaders- 12

Race/ Ethnicity

White- 10 (6 Professionals, 6 Community Leaders, 3 Lesbian/Gay)
African American- 8 (2 Professionals, 6 Community Leaders, 0 Lesbian/Gay)

Sexual Orientation

Lesbian/Gay- 3 (2 Professional, 1 Community Leader, 3 White, 0 African American)
Heterosexual- 16 (11 Community Leaders, 6 Professionals, 8 White, 8 African American)

Age

Young Adult (Under 35 years) – 6 (1 African American, 5 White, 2 Gay)
Middle Aged- (36 to 60 years) – 5 (4 African Americans, 1 White, 0 Gay)
Senior Citizen- (61 years and over) – 7 (3 African American, 4 White, 1 Gay)

Socio-Economic Status

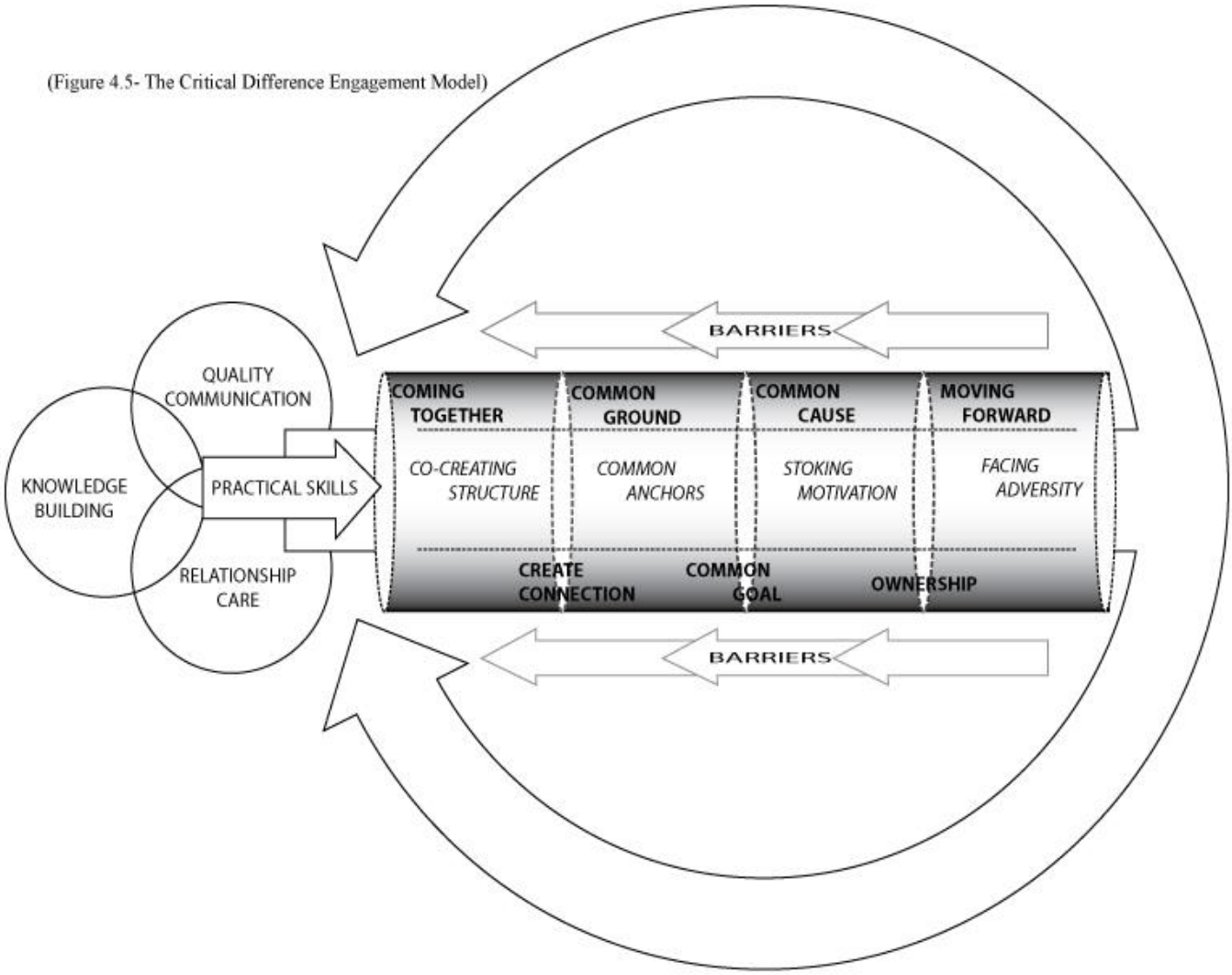
Low Socio-Economic Status- 7 (4 African American, 3 White, 5 Female, 2 Male, 2 Gay)
Middle Socio-Economic Status- 9 (4 African American, 5 White, 8 Female, 1 Male, 1 Gay)
High Socio-Economic Status- 2 (2 White, 1 Male, 1 Female)

Subsequent to the development of the practice model, as a part of phase II of the study, a focus group was formed consisting of a diverse group of practitioners who were not formal research participants in order to ensure trustworthiness, transferability, and generalizability to other practice contexts. 2 were African American women under the age of 55 working in neighborhood based community practice. 2 were white women under the age of 35 working in LGBTQ issue based organizing and advocacy. 1 was a white male under 35 with experience organizing in neighborhoods and in public housing communities. Their responses to the initial findings were insightful and will be discussed later in the chapter.

Review of Relevant Findings

The study contributes to knowledge development within community practice by presenting a practice model based on grounded theory findings. It consists of three core process themes conceptualized as the integrative roots of forging alliances and four critical stage-based structural themes contributing to how to effectively forge alliances across boundaries of difference within a neighborhood based community practice context. The three core process themes of knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care begin the foundation of the theory and integrate throughout the further critical structural stage based-themes. Within each theme lie practicable tools to comprehensively guide the practitioner in forging sustainable alliances across difference. Each category also includes facilitative barriers indicating vital behavioral signs. These signs offer opportunities for direct interpersonal problem solving and conflict resolution among community members related to difference within each of the integrative roots and the critical structural stage based categories.

(Figure 4.5- The Critical Difference Engagement Model)



Core Process Themes: The Integrative Roots of Crossing Boundaries of Difference

As Figure 4.5 shows, the core process themes integrate throughout the critical stage based categories. Therefore, without attention being paid to knowledge building, relationship care, and quality communication, attempts to build alliances across difference will result in separation, fragmentation, and homogenization. Furthermore, knowledge building, relationship care, and quality communication conceptually integrate their subcategories to create a practical skill set practitioners can enact consistently within the field. The model provides a flexible practice blueprint.

Knowledge building. Knowledge building comprises comprehensive applied elements of the co-creative teaching and learning process of forging alliances in community practice. It takes into account curiosity, humility and willingness to learn, learning backgrounds and stories, community context, practical skills, multiple ways of learning, and facilitative barriers to knowledge building. These are the key components within knowledge building. All references to learning allow for the applied co-creative nature of teaching and learning rather than mainstream institutional models of learning. The community leader and organizer participate continually as perpetual partner teacher-learners in the applied process of persistent collaborative knowledge building.

Knowledge building commences before the organizer/practitioner steps foot into the community. Detailed, quality research must be initiated before arriving to learn what differences may be present in the community according to history, various demographics, power dynamics, and other factors. This prior research helps organizers anticipate some of the known differences inherent within the field of practice. It begins well before entering the community, continues throughout the engagement and planning process, and its ending is interminable.

Quality communication. Quality communication guides interactions among stakeholders, partners, community members, and participants in the forging alliance process. This core process theme mediates interactions among all players. As these mediated interactions take place both at the relationship level and levels of knowledge change. In quality communication, connections initiated become maintained through consistently implemented practical categories of communicative actions, speaking truth to power, effective use of language, conflict resolution, and critical knowledge of barriers and challenges to communication within each stage of the forging alliance process.

Relationship care. Valuing everyone at the table is an essential element to building alliances across boundaries of difference. Treating people as people first, treating people as equals, meeting people where they are, appreciating everyone, the uniqueness of difference, honoring the values that foster togetherness, and bringing people together at the table of collective decision making generates a sense of belonging and shared humanity. Relationship care incorporates these person centered values and actions to serve as a guide for building and maintaining quality relationships across boundaries of difference. Consequently, relationship care enactment occurs through the key components of trust building, establishing a people centered focus, acknowledging community memory/history, time, relationship building, leveraging relationships, and social/self-awareness.

Forging Alliances: The Critical Structure

Applying the critical structural stage-based categories allow the enactment of knowledge building, relationship care and quality communication in the community context. Integral to the success of forging alliances across difference, the stages illicit an ongoing integrative parallel process of executing both the core process themes within each critical structural category as well

as the practice components of each stage. Knowledge building, relationship care, and quality communication simultaneously interact throughout the applied critical structure as the community pragmatically works towards tangible collective goals.

Coming together. The first critical structural stage based category is coming together. It covers the work of the practitioner in facilitating effective knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care among community members. Coming together guides the community practitioner in bringing people together to engage in difficult dialogues across difference. Essentially, it represents how people gather in community, and how to make that as intentional a process as possible.

Preparation. After the perpetual knowledge building commences, preparation for coming together begins. Where, how, and other critical questions depend on the specific context, but follow the same general framework. Knowledge from lessons learned guide the practitioner in preparing for how the community will come together. Preparation involves learning what will draw people to a gathering. Will people come to a community meeting because they are generally used to it? Is this a community where people are used to attending informative meetings? Will the organizers need to mix fun with information gathering? Should the organizers bring together plan a block party, or should community leaders gather in a small group to begin? Whatever the strategy will depend on how the community traditionally gathers, primarily context dependent, and include diverse voices, perspectives, and backgrounds particularly those that have been marginalized or traditionally excluded.

Setting the stage. If the initiative does not begin by being inclusive from the outset, and practicing these values at every stage, then the initiative rapidly loses credibility and fragmentation and homogenization manifest as a result. This could mean having designated

people to welcome community members when they come to the door. It could be beginning the meeting with a facilitated welcome or an icebreaker, or it could even mean serving culturally relevant food before the meeting begins.

Mainly practitioners need to create a welcoming environment by committing to detail and inclusion. Again, this takes deliberate thoughtfulness and creativity, but practitioners can apply lessons learned from the community in setting the stage. Practicing tools from the relationship care core process theme can also aid in creating a welcoming, respectful, and open environment.

Co-creating a structure. Designing and implementing participatory methods for communication and rules for decision making and leadership. This may take place over time, but the framework needs to be put in place in partnership with a diverse set of community leaders, so that all voices are not only heard, but have power. The first structure that created pertains to quality communication and relationship care (how the group treats each other).

How co-creating the structure becomes enacted depends on the specific needs, desires, and cohesion among the community participants. Rules and structure are not finalized in a finite way during this stage. They are mapped out in a framework generally consisting of values, guidelines for interactions, beginning steps for decision making, and how to structure individual/project groups.

Varied meeting opportunities. Knowledge building remains critical, because practically applying meeting opportunities depends on community context. Not only do practitioners need to provide various opportunities to meet at multiple times, but they also need to be keenly aware of venue. Certain locations within community hold significant symbolic meaning. Some participants prefer to meet in their homes, and other may wish to meet outside their home. Some

community members would be comfortable meeting in a church, and others may be turned off by that notion.

Breaking bread. Participants need to know each other as people and develop relationships across difference. Often coming together to work precludes attempts to build genuine connection. This is not true in all cases, but often participants experience meeting fatigue or even worse, they work alongside people in their community, but are not able to bridge differences, because they have not taken time to build relationship. Failing to connect as people can perpetuate conflict, and build barriers between people who disagree. Meals, social gatherings, and celebrations can serve to mitigate this, and are fundamental to building relationship among community members and leaders.

Common Ground. As the second applied stage, the primary function of common ground is in creating connection among community members across difference. Differences are not minimized, avoided, or condemned. On the contrary, they are celebrated, deliberately incorporated, and used as tools for building connection. Common ground begins with intentionally creating connection and toward common cause through collective common goal setting.

Bridging the gap. These involve practical actions taken to create connection by bridging the gap between differences to commonality in order to build capacity. These initial connections are in no way superficial, they are lasting, personal, and intense. It takes a deep commitment to establishing emotional connections across difference and spurring those in intensely practical ways, such as reminding each other of similarities, connecting on an emotional level, and communicating that, asking unifying questions, and recognizing and acknowledging emotions in

others. How practitioners ask questions directed towards creating those connections becomes fundamental.

Asking common connecting questions. Building on exploring commonalities, asking common questions directed at establishing shared connection opens opportunities placing difference at the forefront in a way that builds links rather than barriers. These questions can spur dialogue, visioning, and open new opportunities for knowledge building and relationship care. Examples of these connecting questions include the following: how can people within the community tangibly relate to one another across difference, what are some of the commonalities, how can everyone be honored in their cultural differences, how do community members celebrate their uniqueness, and what cultural differences may be the same or similar across various existing boundaries of difference within the community.

Common space. Common space alludes to the need to create a safe community space of freedom where people can gather. This allows bonding, relationship building, and common learning to take place. Environmentally, it also sets the stage for quality communication enactment. It creates connections through shared safety, and begins the process of moving towards goals through claiming a common space.

***Common anchors*.** Common anchors serve as foundational starting points for establishing strong connections across difference in community. They include the common issues, common humanity, shared experience, mutual interest, and community neighborhood based interest. These serve as suggested building blocks within the model to anchor practice, and guide the practitioner. They stand out as typical paths to connection based on participant responses. Utilizing stories, community memory, history, and background in conjunction with specific common anchors informs their use in practice.

For example, a community practitioner may work with community members to facilitate learning around shared interest. Some differences might be so pervasive in certain communities that they appear as highly divisive barriers, and block people's ability to identify shared interest. In this instance, facilitating activities that highlight shared interest act as a vital tool for creating the common ground. These activities could also be a vital stepping stone to creating a common purpose.

Common purpose/goal. Once participants are able to build capacity through common ground, common purpose can be explored. It may include one single goal or an inclusive set of activities under a broad spectrum of goals. This category, as a component of common ground, stands for the willingness to envision sets of common goals towards an essential common purpose in the specific initiative. The common purpose also acts as a bridge to common cause.

Various group projects. As a vital part of building connections critical to common ground, leaders provide varied opportunities for community engagement. These various group projects are targeted extensions of both personal leadership interests and the common purpose/goal set by community participants. Relationship care and knowledge building play crucial roles in visioning potential projects. People engage in community based projects due to their interest, talents, and gifts. Providing multiple opportunities to engage within a set of common goals allow opportunities for relationship care, knowledge building, and quality communication among community members which build connections among community members and opens potential for building the common cause.

Common cause. The third stage concerns building the common cause. The main focus of common cause surrounds cultivating individuals' passions for the community mission and goal, appealing to leaders' sense of the greater purpose, and stoking the motivations of the group.

As a part of this stage, bonds are further solidified, capacity built and actualized, and motivations intentionally harnessed. The main crux of this stage involves the practitioner's ability to facilitate the greater purpose, and cultivating passion and motivation to achieve the community's collective goals and vision. Common cause aligns common goals with participant motivations. Practitioners can ask themselves what may motivate this person to do good keeping in mind that people within the initiative must have within them an intentional desire to take part in the work and truly own it themselves.

Moving forward. Moving forward represents structured facilitated nurturing of capacity and trust among community members, particularly those with struggling to maintain connection in the face of pervasive difference. Forgiveness, if needed, and amends are made, and relationship care and quality communication thoroughly integrated into the culture of the community. This stage allows cultivation of solidarity and the nurturing of healthy relationships. This does not mean there is no conflict or disagreements.

Intensive up front work. Community workers to effectively facilitate connections among diverse community members need appropriate time to remain embedded in the knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care process in order to enact social change across boundaries of difference alongside community members. Intensive work that goes into building alliances and connecting across barriers takes time, and is a necessary aspect of moving forward in solidarity.

Accurate knowledge. Practitioners interact alongside community members based on accurate knowledge of how to come together without alienating those who might be different. This is why trust must be cultivated long before moving on is possible. Trust may not be

actualized, but it must be constantly cultivated based on accurate knowledge of community and one another in order begin moving forward.

***Realistic Change*.** Realistic change represents the need for practitioners and community leaders to take on projects that will empower rather than disempower. Practitioners bear the responsibility for facilitating practical change that can be realistically achieved. When moving forward, practitioners must have the forethought to take on initial projects that can bring the group together and build solidarity and momentum for the next change.

***Letting go*.** Modelling and practicing critical self-reflection and awareness acts as a bridge to enable community members to let go of past beliefs, experiences, and false assumptions that no longer serve them. Letting go on both the individual and collective level is imperative to moving forward. Trust must be built among the group for the process of letting go to take hold. Some members may not ever get to complete trust, but continually building trust must be a consistent commitment among the group leadership.

***Making amends*.** Community members share histories. In the past certain community members, individuals, or groups may have to turn the other cheek and look at their own part in perpetuating division. Using common anchors in the previous category can help facilitate the making amends process.

***Disagree with respect*.** Relationship care plays a vital part in commitment to maintaining underlying respect for fellow community members. Making the process about shared principles rather than personalities allows community members to disagree with an underlying respect for one another as people. Without dedication to the practical principles of relationship care, disagreeing with respect cannot take hold perpetuating division.

***Action oriented: Act on what we learn*.** Being willing to act on the process of brainstorming, and move the general initiative forward collectively as knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care begin to take hold within the culture of the community. Embedded within moving forward lies a willingness to collectively act upon lessons learned and collective and individual experience. As connections are built within the previous stage based critical structural categories, community members are able to build solidarity and act on shared knowledge.

***Collectively facing adversity*.** Collectively facing adversity takes into account the acknowledgement across difference that standing together can have lasting effects positive on creating change in communities. It is the comprehensive enactment of the learned practical principles within the core process themes and the previous critical stage based structural themes. In this sub-category of moving forward community members are able to capitalize on their connections and stand together across difference.

***Clear direction*.** Clear direction provides immeasurable aid to initiatives. A challenge of moving forward exists in the apparent paradox of relationship building across difference and goal setting. This apparent paradox actually takes on a parallel process of practical community goal setting and the integration of knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care. If the parallel goal of building authentic alliances is downplayed, then neither be actualized. One is not attainable without the other. This recognition and dedicated goal setting allows for clear direction to take hold.

***Utilizing diverse skills*.** An advantage of unity of difference in solidarity, diverse skills serve the community in various ways. The more difference present in a group, the more prepared the community will be in initiating change. Diverse skill sets that come with the

presence of difference bring many opportunities. If the intensive up front work has been done, and the core process themes integrated into each stage, community members will be more willing to share their diverse skills in the effort.

***Staying power*.** Demonstrated acts of commitment throughout the previous applied structure, and the core process themes inform community readiness to exhibit staying power. This aspect of moving forward signals to the outsider practitioner when to begin exiting the community. To the insider practitioner, it indicates a shift in relationship, and a time when new connections can be forged with people inside the community who may not be involved. Staying power cannot be present without the necessary capacity building associated with building common ground. Staying power reveals community capacity to practice the core process themes as well as the applied structure to forge sustainable alliances that lead to maintained community change. It also attracts new participants to the change actions.

Establishing Rigor: Trustworthiness and Model Adaptation

As stated in Chapter three, after the initial model was built, organizers were sampled to discuss their responses to the model. The goal was to preliminarily evaluate transferability of the practice model to various other practice contexts. Four participants were chosen based on their professional experience working in diverse community practice settings to help establish trustworthiness, transferability, and potential generalizability. Focus group participants were introduced to early study findings, the practice theory, and the subsequent practice model.

At the end of the selective coding stage of the grounded theory data analysis, rough model sketches were made to contribute to focus group data collection. Practitioners offered critique to both the draft figures and the narrative description of the model. During the discussion field notes were taken, and subsequent sketches were drawn. The final iteration of the

critical difference engagement model shown in Figure 4.5 incorporates focus group feedback into the final model.

Six open ended interview questions were used to spur dialogue among focus group participants. They were structured around strengths, challenges, transferability vs. generalizability, and practical utility of the model. The following questions guided the conversation.

- Based on your experience, and what you see within the model, how does it compare with your work?
- What are the strengths of the model?
- What elements are appropriate to your practice context?
- What are some challenges you see in this model?
- What aspects might you change if any?
- Do you have any other feedback?

Focus group field notes were analyzed for themes related to trustworthiness, the overall strength of the model, and its practical limitations. Utilizing Rothman and Thomas (1994) in guiding the model development. The focus group addressed the initial pilot testing of the model. Dominant themes that emerged spoke to strengths, challenges, and detailed nuances within the practice model structure. These emergent themes were boundaries vs. authenticity, contextualizing relationships, bonding, replacing old history, privilege, model structure, and measurement.

Boundaries vs. authenticity. Within exploring relationship care, there was discussion around the question of how to create authentic relationships and still have healthy boundaries within the context of practice. Participants acknowledged that boundaries within community

practice settings as fundamentally different from clinical relationships. This is reinforced within the literature, but the community practice literature provides little guidance in navigating this in the field of practice (Harcastle, Powers, & Wencour, 2010). The model also provides some guidance, but respondents offered suggestions in the form of critical questions.

The potential paradox of boundaries vs. authenticity arises from a lack of clarity around what type of relationship we are trying to create. Questions that arose within this theme are (1) how do we define this relationship, (2) what kind of relationship are we trying to have? Is it possible for us to do both? Can we have clear boundaries, and still remain authentic? Where does manipulation come into play?

Contextualizing relationships. Participants also noted the power inherent within the model of initially contextualizing relationships without goals. Before beginning the stages of organizing, participants noted the value of working to build relationships. Time was also mentioned within contextualizing relationships, and how just showing up for a year is critical. It reinforces the notion that the organizer does not want anything from community members. This time allows relationships to become contextualized, nurtured, and flourish.

Bonding. Feedback related to integrating knowledge building, relationship care, and quality communication throughout the critical structural stages was emphasized as well. They highlighted opportunities for bonding within the process. Bonding subthemes that arose were bonding around project, bonding around process, and bonding around conflict. This was conceptualized by the respondents as building common experiences.

Replacing old history, rewriting oppression. These common experiences when consistently reinforced replaces the old history with new experience of overcoming barriers. The oppressive history, not forgotten, becomes rewritten, relived, and re-experienced in a different

way. This was one of the positive aspects of the model. Its intentional recognition and emphasis on connecting community memory, relationship, and common goals was touted as effective.

Privilege. Some issues related to privilege arose, and providing the practitioner with additional practical tools to deal with the complexities of practitioner privilege in the field came up. Questions asked were how can privilege and ignorance work together? What does it mean to have to rely on other people to do the job? This inherently sets up a power dynamic, and how do practitioners navigate that? Can practitioners be be truly vulnerable within that context?

This also relates to boundaries. Participants discussed our roles as professional social workers, and raised the following questions. Does the NASW code of ethics maintain this power and privilege, and if so, how do practitioners address that? Are our boundaries personal or professional, and if they are professional, does this reinforce notions of power and privilege?

Model structure. Much was highlighted in participant responses to the overall model structure. Participants touted the dual parallel process of bridging differences while creating practical organizing goals. One suggested that in their experience this was an ongoing challenge for organizations that work at the community level around race, history, and difference. It was mentioned that often the goal is to facilitate a conversation around difference when the goal is to educate, but without practical goals, community members miss out on the potential bonding. Often within these organizations traditional organizing goals are not incorporated into the structure, and community members end up being left feeling as if they are not accomplishing any practical goals.

Participants also commented on the simple iterative structure of the model as an overall positive. Practitioners stated that the practice model being both linear and circular allowed for necessary flexibility and increased the likelihood that it could be transferrable to other contexts.

One member stated that the model could be plainly communicated to community members and leaders as well. It was framed as incorporating better relationship, new understanding, and new language.

Measurement. The iterative structure also offered some challenges. Participants suggested that measuring the effectiveness of the model offers significant challenges. One participant plainly asked, "what does this look like to measure". How do researchers effectively measure relationship, communication, and knowledge building? Additionally, participants may not meet their practical goals, but this could set them up for a victory in the future, because they were able to learn from certain challenges they were able to overcome.

Overall these results reinforce many positive findings within the initial data analysis and subsequent model development. Positive aspects include an emphasis on building strong relationships before commencing practical goal setting through bonding and contextualizing relationships. Another positive aspect has to do with the structure of the practice model itself being iterative emphasizing both building alliances across difference and practical organizing goals. Rewriting oppressive history through relationship care by creating new experiences of overcoming barriers stand out as critical to forging alliances across difference.

One of the main contributions of the focus group responses was the model went from ending at the final critical stage of moving forward to circling around to the integrative roots of knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care. Another contribution reinforced the parallel integrative process of the core phenomenon into the critical structural stage based categories within the model. One practitioner discussed it by emphasizing the utility of crossing boundaries through a process while still working toward a collective goal.

Challenges mentioned within the model involved how to navigate specific boundaries and remain authentic without reinforcing privilege. How can being a professional be reconciled with relinquishing privilege? Specific concerns also arose around how to measure the model's effectiveness. How does the practitioner know when they have achieved success around forging these alliances?

Implications and Recommendations: Seven Domains

The model and overall study findings suggest implications and recommendations in seven specific domains: models and approaches, just social work practice, difference practice, evidence based practice, policy, social work education, and research. Implications and recommendations incorporate overall study findings, the subsequent model development, and a thorough review of existing literature. Findings from focus groups inform specific implications and recommendations in the areas of models and approaches, just social work practice, difference practice, and evidence based practice. This section discusses study findings in the context of these seven specific domains. It also anticipates how findings may drive trends, next steps, and scholarly critiques within the seven domains of models and approaches, just social work practice, difference practice, evidence based practice, policy, social work education, and research.

Implications and Recommendations for Community Practice Models and Approaches

Existing models and approaches within the field of community practice offer many strengths and limitations. Primarily, with the exception of a distinct few, community practice models and approaches remain based on the combination of tacit knowledge and practice wisdom. Most recently Brady (2012) constructed a practice theory based on methodologically driven data from structured responses of practitioners with years of practical experience in the

field. Others have looked specifically at difference within youth organizing through a thematic evaluation of youth led organizing initiatives by sampling adult organizational mentors and thematically analyzing the data (Dobbie, & Richards-Schuster, 2008). Many scholars focus primarily on formulating typologies of organizing based on the specific goal, whether it be coalition building, neighborhood maintenance, social planning, or social action (Rothman, 1979; Weil & Gamble, 1995). Many also base their models and approaches to practice on values, such as the case in strengths perspective and empowerment approaches (Lee, 2001; Saleeby, 2009).

The Critical Difference Engagement Model of Community Practice was shaped by dominant components of prevailing practice theories, models, and approaches within informed interview questions and prompts. The analysis demonstrated alignment in vital areas and divergence in some critical areas when comparing results to predominant models and approaches within the community practice lexicon. The following discussion compares and contrasts the established models and approaches within the field with the Critical Difference Engagement Model of Community Practice and offers subsequent recommendations for developing future models and approaches.

Knowledge building. Various prevailing community practice models and approaches incorporate knowledge development, co-learning, and the learning process into their practical philosophy and methods (Freire, 1970; Horton, 1998; Lee, 2001). Freire's Transformative Model centers on education through literacy based on non-institutional principles and increasing understanding of oppressive systems (Freire, 1970). Myles Horton's Highlander Model reinforces social analysis based on the lived experience of those encountering social problems (Horton, 1998). Lee (2001) as a part of the empowerment perspective emphasizes critical consciousness raising as a result of learning about structural issues of power and oppression.

These models and approaches also reinforce the notion, along with the Critical Difference Engagement Model, that knowledge development is co-creative, and driven by those experiencing community life.

Other models and approaches assert assumptions contradictory to current study findings related to knowledge building. For example, Alinsky (1971) has been criticized for an expert driven approach to knowledge development and for avoiding differences rather than utilizing them as potential tools for teaching and learning (Bradshaw, Soifer, & Gutierrez, 1993). Rothman, Weil and Gamble, and Fisher's traditional models and approaches utilize a view of the practitioner as teaching professional reinforcing hierarchal distance between the practitioner and the community member contradictory to study findings suggesting that community members want their experience to be honored and utilized as a fundamental part of bridging difference and the overall organizing process (Fisher, 1994; Rothman, 1979; Weil & Gamble, 1995).

Quality Communication. Many of the dominant practice models and approaches directly emphasize the importance of communication and dialogue within their fundamental practice scheme (Freire, 1970; Hardina, 2002; Horton, 1998; Pyles, 2009). Freire (1970) explicitly outlines the critical link between communication and building trust within the Transformative Model suggesting that communication is the bridge to trust. Feminist organizing values the group process, dialogue, and building consensus as a tool for building capacity and creating relational connections among community members in alignment with the core tenants of the Critical Difference Engagement Model (Hardina, 2002; Pyles, 2009). Lee (2001) in outlining the empowerment approach, underscores the critical importance of dialogue in community practice. The dimension of communication was so highly emphasized within prevailing models

and approaches that although some emphasized quality communication more than others, none downplayed its fundamental relevance.

Relationship care. Relationship care arose as an imperative component within the core phenomenon, the practice theory, and the subsequent practice model. Other predominant models and approaches within the field view relationship in various ways. Asset Based Community Development depends on the knowledge and use of gifts and talents of residents within the community (Block, & McKnight, 2010). These gifts and talents cannot be leveraged without building strong relationships with community leaders. Feminist approaches also place a high level of emphasis on relationship care, relationship building, and people often above winning essential issues (Gittell, Ortega-Busamente, & Steffy, 2000; Hardina, 2002; Pyles, 2009). Both strengths perspective and empowerment also value the crucial power of relationships within the practice context (Lee, 2001; Saleeby, 2009). Blundo (2009) even goes so far as to assert that the quality of the practitioner's relationship with the client within strengths perspective trumps any practice theory utilized within the field.

Some expert driven models and approaches fall short of explicitly downplaying relationships in practice, but latently deemphasize them within their hierarchal, expert driven, professionalized approach (Alinsky, 1971; Fisher, 1994; Rothman, 1979; Rothman, 1995; Weil & Gamble, 1995). Alinsky Model (1971) highly emphasizes a professionalized approach that distances the practitioner from the community member through hierarchal power dynamics. According to current study findings, this places unnecessary barriers between the practitioner and community leadership and assumes that the quality of the relationship between practitioners and community members remains secondary to winning issues.

Critical stage based structural categories. The critical stage based categories within the Critical Difference Engagement Model of Community Practice integrate essential organizing goals with underlying principles embedded within knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care. Many prevailing community practice theories, models, and approaches address congruent principles inherent within the critical stage based structural categories providing practical guidance, many emphasize values, some offer prescriptive practice guidance, while others center on practice typology (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2010; Hardina, 2002; Weil and Gamble, 1995). To briefly review, models are defined as a general blueprint for guiding practice (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2010). Approaches by design are more flexible based on a combination of values and practice assumptions, and operate at a higher level of abstraction than more prescriptive models (Netting, & O'Connor, 2008).

Typologies and difference. Many of the models reviewed in earlier chapters demonstrate typologies of practice rather than providing prescriptive stage based guidance of how to execute effective strategies within the field (Mondros, & Wilson, 1994; Fisher, 1994; Rothman, 1979; Weil & Gamble, 1995). Weil and Gamble (1995) provide detailed descriptions of various typologies of community practice, but fail to offer instruction on how to operate within these typologies particularly in addressing difference. Rothman (1968) offers various descriptions within his threefold models of social planning, locality development, and social action. Like Weil and Gamble's eight model framework, these frameworks are critical for practitioners to understand particularly within the context in which they work. However, they offer little practical guidance in both bridging difference and in working in the complex practice field.

Principles, values, and guidance. Others feature practical themes within their approach underscoring crucial components in work with community members (Hardina, 2002; Lee, 2001;

Pyles, 2009). Feminist approaches, strengths perspective, and empowerment approaches as stated earlier emphasize vital relationship and knowledge based assumptions, but do not offer fundamental structural guidance within their approaches apart from providing overarching value based principles for practice (Gittell, Ortega-Busamente, & Steffy, 2000; Hardina, 2002; Lee, 2001; Pyles, 2009; Saleeby, 2009). These values which include a process focus, consensus based decision making, valuing diversity as strength, and a heavy emphasis on relationship building, though meaningful, offer little in terms of pragmatic guidance. Many of these run parallel to findings within the Critical Difference Engagement Model, but they do not answer the question of how to integrate these principles into practical manifestations within the field.

Comparing and contrasting prescriptive models. Likewise many of the more prescriptive practice models have fallen short in finding significant ways to integrate knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care into their practical guidelines. As a result, they provide insufficient guidance on how to build sustainable alliances across difference in ever shifting field of practice. For example, the Alinsky Model recognizes the fundamental need to develop relationships among indigenous community leadership and build capacity around shared interests (Chambers, 2004; Alinsky, 1971). It falls drastically short in its tendency to downplay or avoid differences altogether within community (Bradshaw, Soifer, & Gutierrez, 1993). Integrating shared interest in the forging alliance process seems a logical extension of building solidarity which the Critical Difference Engagement Model demonstrates.

The Midwest Academy of Social Change also provides valuable prescriptive tools for practical knowledge building, but tends to overemphasize task oriented knowledge. Certain elements of the Midwest Academy Model coincide with practical findings within the Critical Difference Engagement Model, and could be integrated not only within knowledge building, but

within certain critical stage based themes. Certain guidelines on how to communicate, conduct outreach, workshops, and facilitate meetings provide tools that could be practically integrated into the task oriented aspects of the model, but do not provide guidance on building solidarity across difference (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2010).

The transformative models of popular education embodied in the work of Myles Horton and Paulo Freire coincide with the Critical Difference Engagement Model in various ways. The Highlander Model focused on three main elements. These are (1) leadership development, (2) social analysis, (3) development of meaning and subsequent learning based on that meaning (Horton, 1998; Pyles, 2009). Although his structure was different than the critical stage based structural categories of the Critical Difference Engagement Model, his three main elements correspond to knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care.

Freire's transformative model focuses on education, critical and cultural literacy, and consciousness raising. Concepts central to his model congruent with the Critical Difference Engagement include praxis, hegemony, dialogue, and critical consciousness. Although his model is less stage based than the Critical Difference Engagement Model, it includes vital elements of dialogue, praxis, and critical consciousness that cut across knowledge building, relationship care, and quality communication. He regularly reinforces the importance of all three of these in his own words (Freire, 1970).

Integrative aspects of existing models and approaches. The Critical Difference Engagement Model also offers opportunities to integrate certain aspects of other models and approaches into specific aspects of its implementation. For example, the Midwest Academy of Social Change offers practical guidance on various topics including facilitating meetings, hosting workshops, grassroots fundraising, and other essentials (Bobo, Kendall, & Max, 2010). In this

way, it can be integrated into certain stages of the model, and can be used as a tool for knowledge building.

Asset based community development (ABCD) also resonates as crucial to relationship care within communities. Study findings assert that leadership development is a key component of relationship care. Asset based community development centers on finding assets within the community, mapping them, connecting them, and harnessing them (Block & McKnight, 2010). These assets are relationship based, and tools from ABCD can be valuable insights into how to utilize relationships in practice, and run parallel to the Critical Engagement Model. When examining whether to integrate certain aspects of other models into the Critical Difference Engagement Model, practitioners must analyze the embedded assumptions within the model to ensure model alignment.

Recommendations for current and future model development. Recommendations for development of new practice models and approaches are based in study findings, the subsequent practice model development, and a critique of current models and approaches in comparison and contrast to the Critical Difference Engagement Model derived from participants in the field. Results from the study suggest that comprehensive models and approaches are ideally developed in the field alongside community practitioners and indigenous community leaders through a methodologically driven process of systematic design, data collection, and analysis. This takes time, trust, and commitment on the part of the practitioners and researchers, but it must be where the next frontier of community practice model development lies.

Findings also indicate that effective practical models and approaches must integrate values and practical knowledge to be useful. Study findings incorporate broad based themes as in the approaches reviewed along with prescriptive stage based practical structures. The

uniqueness of integrating the two is rare in existing models and approaches. As a logical extension, researchers must remain open to using integrative strategies of values and practical knowledge as well as both linear and circular model structures.

Models and approaches must also move from their foundations of descriptive typology, broad value laden principles, and rote prescriptive limitations to practical skill based learning centered in community realities. These community realities also acknowledge the barriers that community practitioners may face on a daily basis. Very few models and approaches specifically outline what the many barriers are and how to effectively navigate them in practice. As a result, practitioners are left with tools that provide broad principles and values on one hand and on the other, prescriptive skill based models that fall short in providing insight into barriers and tools for building alliances across difference.

Implications and Recommendations for Just Social Work Practice

The social work profession stands apart from other disciplines in its dedication to promote social justice at various levels in guiding practice (Finn & Jacobson, 2003). Challenged by the lack of a singular formalized definition of social justice, the social work profession generally defines social justice within the code of ethics as a value and challenging social injustice as an ethical principle (NASW, 2008). Over time enactment of this principle has come to include advocating for oppressed groups, ensuring access to resources, challenging systems of injustice, and fighting for equal rights for marginalized people (Reisch, 2008). Aligned with study findings, the social work profession integrates issues of diversity and difference into its framework of social justice. In its ethical principle section, the National Association of Social Worker's (NASW) Code of Ethics states:

> Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people (2008).

The above definition demonstrates principles that the study findings practically address. The quote above repeatedly mentions words, such as change efforts, activities, striving, and their relationship to poverty, social injustice, equality, and diversity. The Critical Difference Engagement Model offers a practical framework of community practice activities conducive to bringing people together across boundaries that have historically stood as immense barriers to social change, social justice, access, and equality. It exemplifies a practical step in actualizing the goals and activities embodied within the NASW (2008) definition of social justice.

Ironically no community leaders mentioned social justice as a practice concept in their responses to interview questions. This implies current conceptualizations of social justice as esoteric, and distanced from the direct daily experience of marginalized people so often engaged alongside community practitioners in social change initiatives. Although, principles inherent within the ethical principle of social justice exist throughout study results and the subsequent model developed from findings particularly related to diversity and difference, the clear absence of this language throughout participant responses underscore its esoteric essence within the field of practice. That being said, this esoteric essence does not downplay its practical relevance.

Participants still discussed a clear distinction between right and wrong, a sensitivity to issues of difference, equality, collective decision making, knowledge development, and social change.

Practical demonstrations of socially just practice so critical to community practice remain difficult to manifest due to the sharp disconnect between broad ethical concepts and practice. Social justice persists within the profession as a mostly conceptual construct. More practical social justice frameworks need to be envisioned and further developed, so that social justice can move beyond principle to the effect of competently enacted intervention.

Finn (2008) begins this crucial work through the Just Practice Approach mentioned in chapter two made up of five domains of meaning, history, power, context, and possibilities. This approach mirrors various aspects of study findings and the subsequent model. For example, the first domain of meaning incorporates knowledge development, quality communication, and relationship care. Developing meaning is associated with all three core process themes. History also links to the Critical Difference Engagement Model. Community history is embedded within knowledge building and relationships care. Participant responses to power were mixed. Many discussed collective power, but often participants would respond to power as something systematically imposed upon them, so it may aid in knowledge building. Context repeatedly came up within participant responses as a component of knowledge building, and possibility relates to the model through realistic knowledge of what change can take place.

Recommendations for just social work practice. Recommendations for just social work practice stem from the NASW code of ethics, study findings, and thorough review of relevant literature. In order for practice to be socially just, practitioners and scholars must seek ways to practically demonstrate the ethical principle of social justice as an integral part of future models and approaches to practice. This is ideally done in partnership with people experiencing

social problems which is why community engaged research, community based participatory research, and participatory actions research serve as valuable tools. Also, when practicing within communities, findings suggest social justice needs to be conceptualized differently, because of its esoteric nature. It is not a part of the normative language lexicon within many marginalized communities. How can this language be integrated into the field as a part of quality communication? This opens a potential area for future research.

The critical difference engagement model does offer some of these practical tools and begins to open up some of the barriers associated with broad ethical conceptual terms such as social justice and cultural competence. The model addresses these in a variety of ways by emphasizing learning, communication, and relationship as well as critical structural stages of building capacity for crossing boundaries of difference while working towards effective social change. In this way it begins the process of moving social justice and cultural competence into a practical dimension.

Implications and Recommendations for Difference Practice

The foundation for implications of difference practice stem from a thorough analysis of the history, epistemological foundations, and critiques of cultural competence. The base of these implications also incorporate crucial study findings related to building alliances across boundaries of difference, and provide new directions for difference practice. Cultural competence has been enshrined in the NASW code of ethics as an essential ethical responsibility (NASW, 2008). As highlighted in chapter two, it is not without its critiques and limitations. Critiques include assertions of reinforcing white privilege, institutional racism, practical and conceptual ambiguity, and contradictory definitions (Harrison & Turner, 2011; Johnson & Munch, 2009; Nyland, 2006; Pon, 2006). Implications and recommendations discussed in this

section will examine various critiques, epistemological underpinnings, and history in the light of study findings.

Findings bring to light various value based, conceptual, and practical tools for practicing across difference. This study is unique in its focus on cross difference practice. The social work profession conceptualizes effective practice across difference as cultural competence (NASW, 2008). Like social justice, cultural competence exemplifies use of esoteric language in the field of practice among community members. Community members and study participants never once mentioned cultural competence within the study. Mainly, they discussed ways to effectively build alliances in the presence of difference.

Study results suggest that working cross culturally involves moving away from expert notions of culture, diversity, and competence to working alongside those different from one another to build knowledge, build and maintain relationships, and to participate in quality communication. Findings also suggest that this is an ongoing integrative process at all critical stages of practice. Knowledge building is demonstrated through an equalized co-creative learning process among community members and practitioners. Relationship care is made up of a people centered focus, respect for everyone, and repeated trust building acts. Quality communication provides guidance on listening, vital communicative versatility, and essential communicative actions. These three core processes offer practical tools for difference practice along boundaries of difference including age, race, ideology, ability, socio-economics, and sexual orientation. In this way multiple world views can subsist in contexts where these essential skills are consistently practiced, modeled, and demonstrated.

These intercultural practice tools also contain the potential to span the micro/macro practice continuum. As community practice holds elements of both micro and macro practice,

this study has the potential to offer guidance to direct, generalist, administrative, and policy practitioners (Hardcastle, Powers, & Wencour, 2011). Knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care exist at various levels of social work practice, and can inform practice beyond the micro/macro practice dichotomy.

Recommendations for difference practice. Recommendations for practice across difference incorporates study findings with existing cultural competence critiques, and a review of existing literature. Recommendations also directly stem from study implications. They relate to the effects of cultural competence, moving from broad concepts to practical application, and integrating the micro/macro practice dichotomy.

Practitioners and professionals need to reshape cultural competence from a broad, contentious ethical standard into a more practical construct. Findings reinforce the notion that cultural competence is not conceptualized in a way that can effectively guide practice across difference. Re-conceptualizing cultural competence to difference practice incorporates those aspects of difference that may transcend culture. Study findings also fly in the face of notions of competence, but do reinforce notions of knowledge as constantly shifting and ever evolving. Cultural competence falls short in guiding effective practice across difference. The term needs to be rejected and re-conceptualized to be relevant to practitioners in the field.

In difference practice, practitioners must begin to develop tools that move from broad based concepts to practical action. A major downfall of present constructs of working across difference are their focus on broad based conceptual themes. The Critical Difference Engagement Model begins contributes to this need by moving from the conceptual to the practical. In this way, practitioners can be guided through the fundamental aspects of effective difference practice.

Clinical practitioners struggle with many of the same issues of difference as community practitioners. Considering the efficacy of the tools provided in the model, they contain the potential to effectively span the micro/macro practice continuum. As stated in the previous section, many of the skills put forth in the model transcend the false micro/macro practice duality. Direct service practitioners can utilize aspects of the model in their practice with individuals. For example, knowledge building, relationship care, and quality communication are all essential to practice with individuals (Blundo, 2009; Saleeby, 2009).

Implications and Recommendations for Evidence Based Practice

Evidence based practice (EBP) is defined as interventions based on empirically driven, objective, formalized inquiry that can be measured and replicated (Turner, 1996). Community practice contains an overall absence of empirically driven models and approaches. Furthermore, the development of evidence based practice tools for the past fifteen years has primarily focused on micro level interventions (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). Community practice models and approaches largely center on history, general conceptual frameworks, and case studies (Payne, 2005).

Scholars have pointed out this distinction, addressed the need for the development of EBP models and approaches in community practice, and begun the process of developing such practice tools (Brady, 2012). Formal inquiry, testing, and validation can lead to effective evidence based interventions in community practice (Payne, 2005). The current study continues the recently begun process of breaking down the evidence based fixation on primarily micro level interventions.

The new dimensions opened by scholars beginning the process of developing evidence based tools also calls into question how EBP in the micro context may differ from EBP in the

community practice context. Critiques of EBP run the gamut spanning from ultimate rejection, partial reformulation, and complete acceptance within community practice circles (Brady, 2012; Fisher, & Shragge, 2000). Study findings exhibit possibility for creating formalized inquiry within the field that can be tested for intervention effectiveness. The current model adds to discussions regarding the possibility and relevance for EBP in community practice.

Recommendations for evidence based practice.

In order to demonstrate increased relevance community practice scholars and practitioners must begin a more formalized process of intervention development. EBP can prove to be a valuable tool for demonstrating the relevance of specific interventions, but current trends fall short in the field of community practice. EBP privileges a specific world view within the realm of practice that fails to take into account various dimensions, such as difference, context, history, and the complexities of human relationships (Boehm, & Cnaan, 2012; Fisher, & Shragge, 2001; Mulally, 2007). Although some within the field suggest that those challenging current modes of EBP may face resistance, demanding changes in the context of community practice is imperative (Reisch, 2011). There is a need for further development of EBP tools in community practice particularly related to difference in a way that balances the divisively contentious debate around this issue by repeated, replicable demonstrations of effective planned change within communities. EBP must look different within a community practice context.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy

An essential focus of the social work profession is advocacy, policy development, and social action through community organizing. Social workers work alongside communities across boundaries of race, socio-economic status, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and other

differences to develop socially just policies. Grassroots, bottom up approaches to policy development are in alignment with social work values and ethics (NASW, 2008).

Study findings add to the tools available for building capacity and solidarity for organizing for policy advocacy and development. It adds specific dimensions to guide practitioners in connecting across difference and building common purpose. If this collective common goal or purpose has to do with policy change, development, or advocacy, the model can prove a useful practical tool. When a broad base of constituencies coalesce around specific policy changes, they are more likely to be successful in their advocacy effort, the Critical Engagement Model of Community Practice allows community members to become equal partners in the process. Knowledge building, quality communication, and relationship care also offer guidance regarding how to build capacity for multiple efforts over time. Much like feminist approaches, relationships built and lessons learned inform subsequent community actions and advocacy efforts.

Recommendations for policy. Policy recommendations involve elements of both policy advocacy and policy development. Current methods for developing policy center on expert driven ideals of an elite privileged few. The proposed model opens potential for collaborative policy advocacy and development across difference. These collective grassroots approaches incorporating a respect for difference have already been implemented in small scale at the local level through Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed and legislative theatre in which facilitators work with policy makers at the community level to create legislation around the needs of communities (Boal, 1979; Boal, 1998). The Critical Difference Engagement Model continues this drive towards inclusive policy development and advocacy.

Implications and Recommendations for Social Work Education

The Critical Difference Engagement Model of community practice offers numerous opportunities for integrating difference practice education into the spectrum of direct and macro practice pedagogies. It emphasizes a set of practice behavior within its core phenomenon and the critical structural stage based categories. Being empirically driven it provides ample evidence that these specific practice skills and behaviors prove valuable for students in the classroom and within the field.

Entering communities as partners, building relationships, learning new things, and communicating as equals also allows opportunities for quality field education in community practice. When educators build and maintain prolonged engagement within communities, students can be provided with significant educative experiences. The community also benefits through a steady stream of partners and students to work alongside.

The model itself can also become a tool for demonstrating critical pedagogy and teaching effective intercultural practice. The field of social work has not yet found effective ways of practically addressing difference (Harrison, & Turner, 2011). The study results can be used to teach students by making concepts practical and tangible. It can be a tool for both practice and pedagogy. Academics need only be open to them.

Implications and Recommendations for Research

Research needs within the area of community practice remain immense. The lack of formal methodologically driven community practice models and approaches opens multiple opportunities for community based research (CBR), community engaged research (CEnR), community based participatory research (CBPR), and community based participatory action

research (CBPAR). The current model demonstrates the added value of working alongside research participants to develop effective practice approaches respecting indigenous knowledge.

Accepting these research approaches does not come without its challenges. Given the pressures of tenure and politics within the university setting, scholars tend to gravitate towards more traditional research paradigms (Pitts, & Smith, 2007). Community based participatory research and community engaged research often take more time due to unanticipated constraints, barriers, and the need to build collective community knowledge. Also depending on community factors, it can be less rigorous (Hills, & Mullet, 2000). Scholars often respond to this in various ways. One tendency is misrepresentation. Researchers may say they are conducting CBPR or CEnR when they are conducting community based research with limited community engagement using expert driven perspectives. Many reject CBPR, CEnR, and PAR due to its lengthy commitment, its positioning outside the mainstream, and its challenges associated with rigor.

Researchers also often fail to acknowledge the relevance of research outside of their own world view. Research methodology encompassing design, collection, and analysis stem from a research question. Not all pertinent research questions can be guided by inquiries within traditional paradigm research. Although the current study findings were oriented within a post-positivist framework, a multi-paradigmatic research perspective aids in systematically seeking, finding, and creating new knowledge. This is particularly appropriate in developing new tools for practice (Thomas, Netting, & O'Connor, 2011).

Recommendations for research. Recommendations related to research logically extend from the study's research implications. There obviously exists the need for scholars to develop more formal methodologically driven practice approaches and models related effective community practice and difference. One main shift in perspective that can open

methodologically driven practice approaches is a willingness among scholars to embrace community knowledge. Additionally, utilization of CBPR, CER, and PAR creates possibilities for new empirical discoveries within the field of community practice. Opening doors and new direction for CBPR, PAR, and CER within the academy will also break open barriers within other fields. This takes a commitment among many academics to challenge the status quo. The final recommendation also intends to move inquiry forward by challenging embedded assumptions within the academy through the use of multi-paradigmatic research within the field of community practice and difference.

Study Limitations

Limitations within the study were present as in any research endeavor. Capturing the myriad of difference within the sample proved trying. Therefore, practitioners utilizing this model should know that people from all backgrounds, cultures, and ethnic groups were not included as participants. For example, Native American participants were not included within the study sample, however it would prove implausible to sample across the infinite variety of differences. Ironically, a major finding involved the pervasive and ubiquitous nature of difference among groups. This was the most glaring limitation present within the study.

Another limitation relates to the general grounded theory methodology chosen. Strauss and Corbin throughout their careers changed their perspectives surrounding grounded theory research moving from positivism to more subjective orientations (Corbin, & Strauss, 2008; Strauss, & Corbin, 1990). This study situated within a post-positivist orientation which seeks objectivity as an ideal could be criticized from an interpretive paradigm as being too rigid to incorporate the lived experiences of the multitude of differences particularly when examining findings within the data related to community memory, lived experience, and learning stories.

These critiques do not take into account the goal of a functional practice model to provide tools for practitioners. The researcher does not presuppose that this model is sacrosanct or that it stands above all other models of practice. The researcher only asserts its relevance and usefulness in the field within certain contexts.

Conclusion

Community practice struggles with a lack of formalized methodologically driven practice models and approaches (Payne, 2005). Practitioners working across boundaries of difference within the field of social work currently use concepts, such as cultural competence to conceptualize effective intercultural practice. These ambiguous abstract concepts fail to adequately guide practice, and often reinforce white privilege, institutional racism, and are hotly contested within the field (Furlong, & Wright, 2011; Pon, 2006).

The overarching intent of the research study was to develop practical knowledge utility for community practitioners engaged in building solidarity across difference. Other research goals included beginning development of evidence based community practice tools, filling gaps in existing model development literature, and to engaging community residents as equal partners and leaders in the process of developing practice tools. This study was also an attempt to bring community practice across boundaries of difference from the ambiguous and abstract to the clear and practical.

Study findings fill an existing gap in community practice model development literature, effective intercultural practice scholarship, and within community engagement studies. The study also represents one of the first systematic processes within the field that addresses practice across difference, effective community practice techniques, and equal partnership among community members and practitioners. Further research is needed in testing the efficacy of the

model, in demonstrating its effectiveness, and in addressing development of evidence based practice within community organizing. The results do suggest that equal partnerships among community members and organizers are possible as well as attainable. It also implies that the new chapter of pervasive difference in practice does not have to be a daunting obstacle for practitioners to fear. Tools exist to build capacity, solidarity, and understanding across difference in the pursuit of social justice within communities experiencing oppression.

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Appendix 1

Methodological Journal Entry Example

11-17-12

Memo #2
In looking over the field notes, and transcript of my first interview, I think I need to use silence a bit more in between questions before heading into prompts to allow respondents to think about how they are going to respond.

Themes that came out of the first round of field notes and initial analysis include:

Moving forward
Building Trust
Leadership
Organization
Barriers to healthy process
Roles
Communication
Knowledge Building
Common Goal
Common Unity

These categories are preliminary and may change within further analysis of the transcript or once other data are incorporated into open coding.

11-21-12

Memo #3
Below are what how categories changed during the initial stage of open coding during constant comparison in the analysis of the first interview. These will likely change in various ways as the analysis and some likely become subcategories or collapsed into other categories upon axial coding.

Transcription- Open Coding- Interview #1

Categories:

Common Ground- Defining our common humanity, our people-ness, not our differences. Similarities not our differences.

Building Trust- Honesty, Respect, Empathy, Golden Rule

People Focused- Treating people as people and valuing them and their contributions. Rejecting judgment.

Knowledge Building- References to learning

History/Community Memory/Experience Perception

Barriers to Progress- Blame, lack of participation, misinformation, Resentment, prejudice, Organizational power, Manipulation

Preparation- Well planned initiative

Leadership

Communication

Roles- Organizer, Community, Organization

Unity- One community

Empowerment

Appendix 2

Reflexive Journal Entry Example

10/5/2012- Difference, Relevance, and Trust

Many new discoveries are beginning to take shape regarding my dual role as an organizer and a researcher. I'm noticing that people's notions of difference do play an integral role in how they shape the process and how they take part in the organizing process. This has been an interesting discovery since beginning data collection. I have had the privilege to be able to observe people after I have interviewed them, and I have been able to reflect on their role in the organizing project after hearing what they say about crossing these boundaries of difference. The Hope in the Cities dialogues have also served to open some insight into notions of difference as well.

I'm wondering if organizing dialogues on how to bridge differences in partnership with Hope in the Cities will affect my objectivity as a researcher working in a post-positivist position. I know that in operating from that perspective, objectivity is a regulative ideal. It is something to strive to attain, and that we are guided by it. This means that it is something to be aware of, and I can't help but think that organizing and taking part in these dialogues may change the research process in some way. For example, I'm starting to realize that in order for there to be any healing when these boundaries become large barriers. Both sides have to change their thinking. Both sides have to move, and both also have to work to understand the pain of the other. I've seen this so much in working in a community that is often paralyzed by its division.

I have also witnessed what happens when people come together in small moments of unity, and how powerful those can be. A few of the interviews that I have conducted have given me great insight into the minds of the individuals that I have been working with for at least two

years. It has also served to distract me a bit and take my eye off of the content of the research itself. I'm also shocked at how much a person's privilege plays into what they have to say about organizing and community work.

I've also began to be a bit jaded on the practice end. I'm fairly sure that this came out in a meeting that I was in this weekend. We have had serious issues with a community member who has been standing in the way of us establishing rules for leadership. The steering committee and the work teams have been working on establishing guidelines for voting and leadership for nearly a year. We had to vote on the final version of them, and a work team chair who has held every leadership role in his committee, is taking issue with some of the rules. The main one includes the need to have community members only hold one office at a time. I've been wondering how to handle it. Once this community member began to get a larger group of members in his team, I suggested that he give up one of his positions and put it up to a vote. He refused, and stated that he would only give up one of his positions if he were forced to. Furthermore, his team has not confronted him about this, or forced a vote. Many have left the process, and others seem willing to allow him to manipulate the process. The steering committee on Friday voted on the policy guidelines for voting, and the rule regarding one person one position is going to go into effect in Jan.

The meeting was very heated and I got fairly tough in the meeting, and called this person out for not allowing others to weigh in. The overall meeting was very positive, but that portion was a bit uncomfortable. This person has been working as a gate keeper to his group, and began to manipulate the process. I have done much of what I can to confront him, but I really think that I need to move past it, and allow community members to call him out. I can't be the one to check this person's behavior. The community must.

This is what I mean when I say that everyone must move. I really think that I am dealing with someone who may have a personality disorder, and may have the inability to trust. How do we cross these boundaries effectively if there is no trust? Much of what I have heard in my first few interviews is that trust is at the core. Building trust is essential. What do we do as organizers when someone is so wounded in their thinking and actions that they alienate other people, and push others out of the process? It is difficult, because this behavior really makes me question whether or not a model for practice can even be built. So much has happened, and I go back and forth between having hope that this is possible, and thinking that it is so dependent on the people we are working with.

Appendix 3

Interview Protocols

Overarching Research Questions

The overarching research questions serve to guide the inquiry, methodology, and the interview protocols. These questions will not be asked as a part of the interview process, but guide the overall project.

1. What elements do existing models provide in relation to the issues of difference boundaries? What gaps can be identified in existing models?

2. What are the key components of effective community practice across boundaries of difference?

3. How can the issue of difference in community practice be addressed more effectively during the engagement process?

4. What adaptations are needed in order for this model to be effective in various practice contexts?

Interview Protocols

Interview Questions will be used to guide the participants responses as they talk about issues related to difference in community practice. The prompts will be used to guide the conversation, and are linked directly to key components from the models and approaches included in the literature review. It is unlikely that they will change throughout the interview process, due to their relationship to the key components of the models and approaches within the literature. The interview questions are listed below in bold and the corresponding prompts are indented beneath each of the interview questions. Prompts that may apply to more than one question are listed at the bottom of the page under further potential interview prompts.

1. **Tell me a few things that come to mind when you think about community work and difference.**

   What comes to mind when you think about managing differences in community work?
   What comes to mind when you think about forging alliances across differences in community work?

2. **Tell me about a time when you took part in a community organizing project with people different from you that was very effective or successful.**

   How did people talk in a group setting?
   Were there any specific words or phrases people used?
   Were there certain triggers or cultural phrases that were used or should be

avoided?
What was the tone of the language used?

How did community members and organizers work together with those different from them?

How was leadership structured among community leaders, residents, and organizers?
How was power used?
How were decisions made?

What learning took place?

How was teaching and learning emphasized?
How should the process of learning be used in community work?

3. **Tell me about a time when you took part in a community organizing project with people different from you that did not go as planned.**

How was the way people talked different than when the group was successful?

What was different about the tone of the language?
Were there any specific words or phrases used?
Any triggers or phrases to be avoided?

What was different about the way that residents, organizers, and community leaders worked together with those different from them?

How was the leadership structured?
How were decisions made?
How should they be made
How was power used?

What learning took place?

How was teaching and learning emphasized?
How was it addressed?

4. **What are some things you know now about bridging differences that you wish you knew when you began community work?**

What are some things you may have changed?
How has your approach to bridging alliances across boundaries of difference changed?

5. **Finally, take me through the process of how to effectively forge alliances across boundaries of difference in community practice.**

What about communication?
What about power?
What about leadership?
What about learning?
What about collaboration?

Interview Protocols- Focus Group

Interview protocols for phase II will be structured the same way as the protocols for phase I. The purpose of phase II of the project will be to strengthen findings by providing insight into the transferability of the practice model. One focus group will be gathered to begin preliminary evaluations of the model. Findings will guide the researcher into the next phase of research, and will work to shape how the model may be used in future practice. As in phase I, the questions will be in bold, and the prompts will be established based on the conceptual constructs of the practice model. The discussion will begin with a presentation of the model and an overview of the research process. Participants will also be chosen based on maximum variation as well, and key domains of difference. The group is expected to number 5 to 7 people.

1. **Based on your experience and what you have seen in this model, how does it compare with your work?**

2. **What are the strengths of the model?**

3. **What elements are appropriate to your practice context?**

4. **What are some challenges you see in this model?**

5. **What aspects might you change, if any?**

6. **Do you have any other feedback?**

Appendix 4

Vita

Jason Michael Sawyer was born on October 7th, 1976 in Grapevine, Texas and is a United States citizen. He graduated from Lloyd C. Bird High School in Chesterfield County, Virginia in 1995. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Theatre Performance from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2000, and worked in Regional Theatre in Richmond Virginia and Chicago, IL until returning to Virginia Commonwealth University in 2005 to obtain a Master's Degree in Social Work. He graduated the program in 2008, and began his work in the PhD program that same fall.

JASON SAWYER

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PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVE

To dismantle structural elements of oppression by formulating pragmatic solutions through research, practice, and pedagogy towards practical social change. Additionally to facilitate individual, and collective social transformation through the use of empowerment approaches and leadership development with particular attention to working across boundaries of difference.

TEACHING INTERESTS

Social Work Practice; Social Policy; Social and Behavioral Theory; Human Behavior in the Social Environment; Youth Empowerment and Positive Youth Development; History of Social Work; Social Research; Social Movements; Community Organization Practice; Community Engaged Learning; Social Justice and Oppressed Groups; Theatre for Social Justice; Social Theatre; Arts and Activism; and The Intersection of Arts and Social Work.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Community Based Participatory Research; Positive Youth Development; Community Engaged Learning; Historical Research; Program Evaluation; Model Development; and Arts based interventions in social justice work.

EDUCATION

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Richmond, Virginia

Ph.D. Candidate
Adviser: Dr. Sarah Kye Price
Graduation: May 9, 2014
Substantive Area: Community and Organizational Practice, Positive Youth Development, and the Intersection of Media, Art, and Social Work.

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Richmond, Virginia

Master of Social Work
Graduation: May 2008
Concentration: Macro Social Work Practice
Scholarship Focus: Generalist Practice, Community Organization, Social Policy, Policy Analysis and Advocacy.

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Richmond, Virginia

Bachelor of Fine Arts
Graduation: December 1999
Major: Theatre Performance
Minor: English

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

FAMILY LIFELINE

Richmond, Virginia

2013- the present ***Program Manager***

Currently, I manage an Early Childhood Home Visiting program using the Parents as Teachers Model based on empowerment, attachment, strengths perspective, and the critical stages of child development. Main tasks combine directly supervising two clinical social workers, three parent educators, coordinating community outreach, conducting assessments and counseling clients. Administrative duties also involve facilitating staff trainings, compiling numerous monthly data reports to funders, and competently utilizing three database software packages.

NEIGHBORHOOD RESOURCE CENTER

Richmond, Virginia

2010- 2013 ***Community Organizer***

Primary duties included facilitating a resident, community led initiative called Greater Fulton's Future. Through community engagement, outreach, data collection, and asset building, community work teams created goals, implemented projects, and partnered with city government, the local school board, and other community based organizations and non-profits to implement neighborhood projects. My activities involved project planning, meeting facilitation, volunteer and data management, communications, and organizational capacity building. Various projects encompassed an oral history, a memorial park instillation, targeted zoning changes, physical infrastructure improvements, a healthy corner store initiative, a micro-grant program to local business owners, a jobs program, and a youth led organizing initiative. The community built a sustainable community-based organization made up of residents and community partners to meet the needs of Greater Fulton residents.

VCU SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Richmond, Virginia

2008-2010 ***Graduate Research Assistant***

Working under Dr. F. Ellen Netting and Dr. Mary Katherine O'Connor, I researched the history of human service agencies in Richmond VA. I also assisted in research on policy analysis models in social work and public policy in preparation for Netting and O'Connor's publication, *Analyzing Social Policy* published in Jan. 2011 by Wiley Publications. We presented at the Council on Social Work Education's annual program meeting on using technology to teach social welfare history.

ART 180: AN URBAN BASED YOUTH ARTS PROGRAM

Richmond, Virginia

2008-2010 ***Program Evaluator***

I conducted two program evaluations with ART 180 concerning the effect of an arts- based intervention on youth in their program settings. The first evaluation was a quasi-experimental quantitative design, and the most recent one was a mixed methods design using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

VCU OFFICE OF RESIDENTIAL LIFE AND HOUSING

Richmond, Virginia

2007-2009 ***Resident Director***

Essential functions included counseling residents and students on housing options, mediating resident issues, responding to emergencies as a first responder, and referring students to other medical and psychosocial services both within the University and the Community. Other activities involved aiding and managing Resident Assistants and student leaders in developing and implementing programs involving community development, academic achievement, and health and wellness.

VIRGINIA INTERFAITH CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Richmond, Virginia

2007-2008 ***Policy Fellow***

The main focus of my position was to assist the policy director in community organizing, research, and advocacy efforts in our legislative agenda supporting our mission of building a more just and compassionate Commonwealth. Duties included community outreach projects, conducting research, preparing policy briefs, organizing events, video documentation, fundraising, and reaching out to legislators and community members.

HOME AGAIN EMERGENCY SHELTER

Richmond, Virginia

2005-2008 ***Tutor and Child Case Manager***

Duties included developing and implementing curriculum to ensure higher outcomes and performance for elementary, middle, and high school aged clients in all areas of specialization as a part of program curriculum in conjunction with their performance in school. This work enhances their experience in school and provides additional assistance in achieving the goals of higher grades and comprehension.

RICHMOND HOUSE

Richmond, Virginia

2005-2006 ***Residential Counselor***

I served as a counselor, and in that role, I developed assessments, individualized service plans, and provided counseling and interventions to clients in a group home setting for adults with high functioning autism.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

VCU SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

2011-current ***Field Instructor*** Richmond, Virginia

As a part of my work at the Neighborhood Resource Center and in partnership with the VCU School of Social Work, I supervise and coach interns in the Master's program in the School of Social Work at VCU in the SWAPP (Social Work Administration and Policy Planning) program.

VCU SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Richmond, Virginia

2010- current ***Adjunct Faculty***

Courses taught:
SLWK 230 Communications in the Helping Process
SLWK 330 Person In Society II- Families and Groups
SLWK 431 Person In Society III- Communities and Organizations
SLWK 602 Social Work and Social Justice

GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS
THEATRE DEPARTMENT

Norfolk, Virginia

2003-2004 ***Guest Artist in Residence***

Courses taught:
THE 102 Improv I- Short Form Improvisational Acting
THE 103 Improv II- Long Form Improvisational Acting
THE 120 Playwriting I
THE 111 Stagecraft I
THE 301 Sketch Comedy

PUBLICATIONS

Ooten, M. & **Sawyer, J.** (Under Contract) From the coal mine to the prison yard: The human cost of Appalachia's new prison economy. In. W. Schumann (Ed.). *Appalachia Revisited.* Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Publications.

Brady, S.R., Schoneman, A., & **Sawyer J.** (In press). Critiquing and analyzing the effects of neoliberalism on community organizing: Implications for practitioners and educators. *Journal of Social Action in Counseling Psychology.*

Sawyer, J., Sarver, J. (2013) One city, two stories: Community engagement, hope, and rebirth in Richmond. In D. Holtzman & J.R. Phillips (Eds.), *The greater commonwealth: Stories about planning and places in Virginia 2011-2013* (pp. 36-46. Virginia: American Planning Association.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Sawyer, J. & Prorock-Ernest, A. (2013) *Teaching Cross-Cultural Practice: Beyond competence to effective engagement.* A paper presentation presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education in Dallas, TX.

Schoneman, A. & **Sawyer, J.** (2013) *Prescription or Improvisations: Gauging practitioners' use and awareness of the creative process in community organizing.* A paper presentation presented at the annual Conference of the International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry, Urbanna, IL.

Sawyer, J. (2012). *Anchors Aweigh: The role of health institutions in resilient neighborhoods and communities.* Presented at the annual Governor's Housing Conference, Roanoke, VA.

Sawyer, J. & Brady, S. (2010). *Opening the dialogue: A Foucauldian discourse analysis of a theatre based community arts program.* A paper presentation presented at the annual Conference of the International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry, Urbanna, IL.

Osgood, J. & **Sawyer, J.** (2009). *The use of performance ethnography as an intervention tool with street children in Kenya.* Presented at the annual Conference of the International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry, Urbanna, IL.

Fauri, D., Netting, F.E., O'Connor, M.K., & **Sawyer, J.** (2009) *The use of technology to make social welfare history come alive.* An electronic poster presentation presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, San Antonio, TX.

VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY SERVICE

ART 180

Richmond, Virginia

2009-2011 ***Program Committee Member***

THE CONCILIATION PROJECT

Richmond, Virginia

2009-2011 ***Board Member***

RECOVERY CENTER OF RICHMOND

Richmond, Virginia

2004-2005 ***Volunteer Program Assistant***

BARRETT JUVENILE FACILITY

Richmond, Virginia

2004-2005 ***Volunteer Mentor***

HONORS AND AWARDS

VCU DIVISION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/

PARTNERSHIP FOR NONPROFIT EXCELLENCE

2011-2012 *James Ukrop Leadership Scholarship*
Emerging Non-Profit Leaders Program

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

2008-2010 *Graduate Research Assistantship*

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

National Association of Social Workers, *Member*
Council on Social Work Education, *Member*
International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry, *Member*
Association for Community Organization and Social Administration, *Member*
Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, *Member*